NEPAL
UNDER THE RANAS

Adrian Sever

photographs from the collection of

Jharendra Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana

OXFORD & IBH PUBLISHING CO. PVT. LTD.
New Delhi           Bombay           Calcutta
Nepal is a land of stunning beauty with a mysterious and exotic culture. It is also a land with a fascinating history. Carved out of the Himalayan foothills by the raja of Gorkha in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Kingdom of Nepal was closed to foreigners until a mere thirty years ago. As a result, although it is famed far and wide for the fighting prowess of its Gurkhas and the mountaineering skills of its Sherpas, its colourful and turbulent history is virtually unknown in the West.

In 1846, a young and ambitious general named Jang Bahadur Rana was appointed Prime Minister of Nepal. He quickly suppressed the power and authority of the King and made the prime ministership hereditary within his family. This situation, analogous to that of the Shogun and the Emperor in contemporary Japan, was to last for 104 years until, in 1951, the regime was toppled and the power of the monarchy restored.

This is the story of Nepal during that period; the story of Nepal under the rule of the Rana family.

I hope that readers will find it to be a history of peasants as well as prime ministers, and I hope that they will gain some small insight into the world of the unnamed, unsung peasantry of rural Nepal. For I would like this book to be thought of as essentially their story. It was written with a verse from Gray’s “Elegy written in a Country Churchyard” in mind:

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

I have benefited greatly in writing this book from correspondence with Dr. John Whelpton, the pre-eminent scholar of nineteenth century Nepalese politics, and from correspondence and discussions with Rishikesh Shaha and Dinesh Raj Pant, two of Nepal’s leading historians. I would particularly like to thank Dr. Whelpton for his patient and constructive advice and guidance. My thanks also go to the Australian artist, Alexandra Alderson, for the superb portraits of Jang Bahadur at the beginning of Chapter 3 and Bam Bahadur at the beginning of Chapter 4, and for her sketches of Queen...
Laxmi Devi, Badri Narsingh Rana and Krishna Bahadur Rana. Given the present state of Nepalese historiography, Appendix 3 (Shah-Rana Matrimonial Connections) was particularly difficult to compile. My thanks are due to Greg Hickman, who kindly made available his exhaustive research on the genealogies of the Shah and Rana families and provided some of the more elusive data. I am also indebted to the staff of the India Office Library in London, the National Library of Australia in Canberra and the Keshar Library in Kathmandu for their kind assistance with my research.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank Jharendra Shumsher Rana and Rani Manju Rana for making available to me their collection of historic photos of the Rana family, most of which have never been published before. It was, in fact, our shared wish to see these photographs published that motivated me to write the text that would bring them to the world for the first time.

ADRIAN SEVER
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PART ONE

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF RANA
1

The Setting
1. The Setting

In 1743 there began a series of cataclysmic events throughout the hills that lie in the shadow of the massive Himalayan Range. In that year, Prithvi Narayan Shah, ruler of the tiny fiefdom of Gorkha, set out to conquer the surrounding hill states and the three ancient principalities in the Kathmandu Valley. The Kingdom of Nepal was in the making.

The mini-state of Gorkha, located some 50 kilometres to the west of the Kathmandu Valley, was one of scores of tiny fiefdoms that dotted the western foothills of the Himalayas. By and large, these fiefdoms were little more than subsistence farming communities, isolated from each other by language and custom and the rugged mountain terrain. Those that straddled the foot trails that served as the trade routes between India and Tibet, and those that were fortunate enough to possess a copper mine or a silver mine, were relatively powerful and secure. The rest, like Gorkha, without geographical advantage or natural resources, were constantly on the alert against the depredations of their neighbours. These mini-states contracted dynastic marriages and entered into shifting alliances and none too stable confederacies in an effort to preserve their independence. But intrigue, treachery and violence were the real hallmarks of the political order and only by force of arms could they guarantee their survival.

Many of the principalities had been founded by adventurers from Rajput clans displaced from western India by successive waves of Muslim invaders. These immigrants raised families with the local womenfolk and trained the local population in arms. They had an influence upon, and were in turn influenced by the local customs and social habits. A mixed race of mixed culture was born, with militarism as its predominant feature. Gorkha itself had been founded in the mid-16th century by one such Rajput noble, Dravya Shah, who imposed his rule on the indigenous Khas tribe.
and the neighbouring Gurungs and Magars. The religion of the Gorkha state was Hinduism and its language Khas-kura, the language of the western hills that was later to become the *lingua franca* of Nepal.

Gorkha had always stood resolutely aloof from the other leagues in the hills. As a result, when its fortunes waned it became a vassal of the King of Kathmandu. When its fortunes improved it was able to assert its independence. As soon as Prithvi Narayan Shah, ninth in succession to Dravya Shah, ascended the throne of Gorkha in 1743 he resolved to eliminate the threat from the Kingdom of Kathmandu once and for all. In a decision that could well have spelled the extinction of his state, the young ruler made up his mind to conquer the Kathmandu Valley.

The Kathmandu Valley—a fertile, well-watered plain of some 800 square kilometres surrounded by hills that rise to a height of 2,000 metres—was divided into three kingdoms. In the centre stood Kathmandu; seven kilometres to the west stood Patan; sixteen kilometres to the east lay Bhaktapur. These were the capital cities, virtually within sight of each other, their domains stretching away behind them. Traditional enemies, their political inter-relationships in a state of permanent tension, the three rulers constantly probed each others' territories for signs of weakness or internal dissent that could be exploited. The kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley were, however, economically sound and militarily secure. They controlled the lucrative trans-Himalayan trade between India and Tibet. Cloth, indigo for dyeing, pearls, coral, amber, spices, hides, tobacco and

![The palace of the raja watches over the hills and valleys of the tiny principality of Gorkha in western Nepal.](image-url)
sugar moved up through the Himalayan passes to be exchanged for Tibetan gold dust, musk, yak tails and wool. The bulk of this trade was carried out by the Newari merchants of the Kathmandu Valley, the same group that controlled most of the retail trade in Lhasa as well. The fields of the Valley were well irrigated and extremely fertile and, as the three kingdoms had a combined population of over a quarter of a million people, there was no shortage of fighting men to defend them.

By contrast, the tiny principality of Gorkha, whose population numbered about 100,000, faced enormous constraints in terms of financial resources and manpower when contemplating military adventurism. The first priority in allocating manpower was to till the fields, for in an agricultural society this could never be neglected. The next priority was to defend the homeland during the campaign. So long as all the hill states were small, all were safe. Any state that departed from the mutually held determination to maintain this delicate balance of power became a common enemy and invited universal opposition. Furthermore, there was a limit to the number of men a hill state could afford to lose on campaign before it was so weakened as to be an easy prey for its neighbours. As Gorkha had no mines or any income from commerce, the war would put a heavy strain on her primitive agrarian economy. Equipment had to be purchased and the army had to be fed. To buy sufficient food grain was impossible and to loot the conquered territory would be self-defeating. The only option was for the villages of Gorkha to supply the staple diet of maize and parched rice required by the troops. Once Gorkhali control was established in an area and the first crop harvested, the revenues of Gorkha would be substantially increased. But for the first few years at least, the people of Gorkha would have to suffer greatly from the strain of supporting the campaign.

The people of Gorkha were carried into a campaign that was to last for 25 years by the outstanding leadership and vision of their raja. In contrast to the other hill rajas, whose rule was characterised by a total lack of concern for the welfare of their subjects, Prithvi Narayan Shah was heir to a considerable legacy of good relations between the peasants and successive rulers, and his interest in their well-being was rewarded by an uncommon loyalty. His vision was simple but shrewd. He knew that to be without land in the agrarian hill communities condemned a man to the precarious fringes of society, while to have land gave him the means of survival. So he calculated that once the initial momentum of conquest was gained it could easily be sustained by assigning conquered land to his soldiers. The practice of assigning land for the support of a military force was common enough in the hill states—Prithvi Narayan Shah's genius lay in its application to individual soldiers. Land would become the currency of conquest. The army could expand so long as there was land to be
conquered, and land could be conquered as long as the army was strong enough to take it.

While awaiting the opportune moment to launch his campaign, Prithvi Narayan Shah made a pilgrimage to Benaras, stopping off along the way to visit the military establishments of the East India Company and acquainting himself with their training, discipline and organisation. On his return to Gorkha he applied what he had learned to his own soldiers and provided them with weapons made in workshops that he had established. The army was divided into Companies, numbering about 150 men and further divided into 10-man platoons, each with an establishment of artificers. They travelled light and were expert in mountain warfare. The soldiers of the day fought with swords and kukris, and bows and arrows were still in general use. But Prithvi Narayan Shah issued his soldiers with firelocks purchased from the gunsmiths of Lucknow and Cawnpore, and previously unknown in the hills.

The Conquests of Prithvi Narayan Shah

Prithvi Narayan Shah struck first at Kirtipur, a walled town on an isolated rise about 100 metres above the plain in the southwestern corner of the Valley. The townspeople put up a fierce resistance, the King of Kathmandu marched to their aid and the result was a complete rout of the Gorkhali forces. Prithvi Narayan Shah barely escaped with his life. The date was 1757. Foiled in his attempt to capture the Kathmandu Valley, Prithvi Narayan Shah swept south and annexed the principality of Makwanpur, whose domains stretched down to the Indian plains. He then completely encircled the Valley, cutting it off from all external trade and supplies. After this blockade had been in place for a year, he attacked Kirtipur a second time, and a second time he was forced to withdraw.

In 1765 he laid siege to Kirtipur again. Putting aside their traditional enmity, the kings of Patan and Bhaktapur combined forces to repel the invader but the Gorkhali army, supported by defecting noblemen from Kathmandu, was able to beat them off. After a siege lasting six months the townspeople of Kirtipur, who still had the will and the resources to continue their resistance, accepted a promise of a general amnesty and surrendered. As soon as the Gorkhali troops had occupied the town, Prithvi Narayan Shah ordered them to cut off the lips and noses of every inhabitant. The fall of Kirtipur sent shock waves throughout the hill kingdoms. In the west, the raja of Lamjung moved to invade Gorkha but was repelled without difficulty. The reaction of the King of Kathmandu was even more serious and, had it succeeded, his plan would have totally rearranged the political order that was being put in place in the hills. He sought and obtained military assistance from the East India Company, which responded in the hope of gaining some commercial advantage. Fortunately for Prithvi Narayan Shah, the British expeditionary force was
Prithvi Narayan Shah.
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poorly organised and poorly led, and it was easily beaten off with the loss of two-thirds of its numbers by death and desertion.

The Gorkhali army, by now a battle-tested and confident fighting machine, led by a solid cadre of seasoned and capable officers, moved on to lay siege to Kathmandu. The city, rotted by treason, fell an easy prey while the citizens and the garrison were celebrating the Indra-jatra festival. The date was 25 September 1768. The Gorkhalis then turned on Patan. Eleven days later, under the threat of the same fate as had befallen the inhabitants of Kirtipur plus the loss of their right hands, the townspeople capitulated. Bhaktapur resisted for a further 13 months, finally surrendering on 12 November 1769. After 25 years of campaigning, the Kathmandu Valley belonged to Prithvi Narayan Shah, and it had been delivered to him by an army that at no time numbered more than 1,200 men.

While mopping up operations continued in the Valley, Prithvi Narayan Shah despatched a force northwards to secure the country right up to the Kuti and Kerong Passes through the Himalayas, thus forestalling any interference by the Tibetans. He himself marched east to subjugate the Rai and the Limbu, warrior tribes whose territory extended from the Kathmandu Valley to the borders of Sikkim. The campaign was bitter and hard fought and Prithvi Narayan Shah, whose military resources were being dangerously overtaxed, was only too ready to offer generous terms to the eastern

People of Nepal. An engraving from William Kirkpatrick’s book An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul. 1811.
King Prithvi Narayan Shah, founder of the Kingdom of Nepal.
highlanders when they sued for peace. While their territories were placed under Gorkhali overlordship, the problem of governing such a vast expanse of newly acquired territory led the Gorkhalis to rely at the outset on local administrative infrastructures and on local chieftains. In fact, the early years of the Gorkhali conquests were characterised generally by an adaptation of their administrative system to local conditions and, as a consequence, by a decentralisation of authority.

The peasants of the conquered hill states had shown no interest in the fighting so long as they were not affected personally. They were in no way disposed to come to their ruler’s defence. An attack on their state that merely replaced their raja with another of the same mould barely disturbed their daily round of activities. Life under the Gorkhalis remained fundamentally unchanged: their taxes were the same, their festivals were honoured, their shrines and holy places were preserved and, most importantly, their homes and families were safe.

Returning to the Valley, Prithvi Narayan Shah established his capital at Kathmandu. His kingdom, the Kingdom of Nepal, now comprised the Kathmandu Valley, the great expanse of the eastern hills up to the borders of Sikkim, the stretch northwards to the Kuti and Kerong Passes and the lands westwards to the old principality of Gorkha.

The Gorkhali State

In the few remaining years of his life, Prithvi Narayan Shah devoted himself to organising the administration of his kingdom. As he laid the administrative framework upon which future rulers built, it would be helpful to digress from the chronology of historical events at this point to consider the nature of the Gorkhali state.

At the apex of power stood the King, whose royal authority rested on traditional Hindu concepts of kingship as a divinely ordained institution. He alone had the power to grant or withdraw tenancy rights to the land, to appoint or dismiss officials and to raise or lower a person’s caste. That is to say, he exercised unchallengeable economic, social and religious power. Most of his subjects regarded him as the reincarnation of the god Vishnu. The King carried out the administration of the country with the advice and assistance of the Bharadari Sabha or Council of Nobles—literally “the bearers of responsibility”. The Council of Nobles consisted, in descending order of precedence, of the chautariyas, the kajis, the sardars, the khardars, the kapardar and the khazanchi.

The chautariya or Chief Minister was always a close relative of the King. In Prithvi Narayan Shah’s time there was only one chautariya but as conquest added territory to the state the number was increased to eight. One of their primary duties was to deal with intractable or inefficient officials and to bring them to the notice of the King. They also appear to
The Setting


have acted as chief administrators of the realm when the King was ill or absent on military campaigns. Their income came from lands granted by virtue of their office and from a commission on the ricefields of the Kingdom.

The four kajis were responsible for supervising all civil and military affairs of the Kingdom and managing the revenues and crown lands. As the government was organised along military lines the kajis usually held the rank of General in the army. The senior kaji was entrusted with the Lal Mohur, the Red Seal of the King, which was appended to documents along with the royal signature as the legal instrument by which the monarch conferred titles and lands, ratified legislation and issued ordinances, proclamations and decrees.

The four sardars commanded the armies and governed the provinces. The two khardars were the Secretaries of State who prepared all the King’s despatches, both to his own officials and to foreign powers. The kapardar was the comptroller of the royal household. The khazanchi was the state Treasurer.

The rajgurus or royal priests were amongst the most important functionaries in the Kingdom. It was their duty to advise the King on matters of Hindu law and to decide cases requiring explanation or interpretation of Hindu scriptures. One of their number, known as the dharma adhikar, functioned as a Chief Justice.

The law derived its authority not from the King but from the Hindu vedas and shastras upon which it was based. Traditional Hindu law was
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conscened principally with an individual's duty in society. Society was the first judge of a person's conduct and it was primarily through social pressure and social sanctions that a person was induced to conform to society's rules and norms. However, if the community itself was unable to cope with a recalcitrant individual then force, which legally resided in the King and was delegated to the courts, could be invoked. The highest court in the land was presided over by the \textit{dharma adhikar}. Four \textit{bicharis} or judicial officers investigated and reported on all civil cases, including land and property disputes. Assisting the \textit{bicharis} was the \textit{dittha}, whose role was a combination of Chief of Police and Public Prosecutor. In the event of a dispute or petty crime in the provinces, a \textit{panchayat} or council of local elders was convened to hear the case. Its verdict could be appealed to the \textit{bichari} and his verdict could be appealed in turn to the provincial \textit{sardar}. In all cases, the King was the final court of appeal. Evidence was seldom taken on oath, though there was provision for doing so by placing the hand of the witness on the sacred Hindu scriptures. Serious offences were punishable by death, confiscation of estates, banishment of the whole family, loss of caste or amputation of ears, nose or hands. Lesser crimes were punished by fines or imprisonment. In accordance with Hindu custom, though, Brahmins were exempt from capital punishment. The kings of Gorkha were the first to introduce trial by ordeal, the most familiar of which was the ordeal by water, which was resorted to when the accused insisted on his innocence, the accuser insisted on the truth of his accusation, and there was a lack of independent evidence on both sides. After a great deal of religious ceremony the name of each litigant was written on a piece of paper which was rolled into a ball and stuffed into the end of a piece of bamboo. Two men, not known to the litigants, then dived to the bottom of a pond or lake, each clutching one of the pieces of bamboo. The first man to surface was deemed to carry the name of the guilty party. No torture or coercion was used and, as the ordeal was undertaken voluntarily, the litigants had no right of appeal against the outcome.

Out in the provinces the \textit{sardars}, the governors, upheld the civil and military power and superintended the work of the \textit{mir umraos} and the \textit{subbas}. The \textit{mir umraos} were not unlike the lords of the manor in medieval Europe. It was their duty to administer a fort and its surrounding territory, to maintain well equipped and trained soldiers and to provide services and material in time of war. The \textit{subbas}, or district governors, were responsible for the maintenance of law and order, the administration of local affairs and tax collection.

The state derived a portion of its income from transit dues on the movement of goods and people along the mountain trails from one district to another, and from a monopoly on the trading of commercial crops such as cotton, cardamom, indigo, opium, sugar cane and tobacco. The bulk of
its income, however, came from land tax on government land. As a consequence, the state placed great emphasis on colonising the newly conquered territories and making them agriculturally productive.

Both by law and tradition, land was the property of the Crown. In a society in which wealth and prestige were intimately bound to the land, this ownership of land gave the King the ultimate political mandate. However, there were three means by which he could alienate to individuals his ownership rights to land and, in some cases, his sovereign power of taxing land. These were as follows:

A few principalities in the far western hills were incorporated into the Gorkhali state by diplomacy rather than by conquest. The erstwhile rulers were allowed to retain some of their lands and, subject to the suzerainty of Kathmandu, they continued to exercise a large measure of internal autonomy. Such an arrangement enabled Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors to unify their kingdom with a minimum of administrative effort, thus freeing their military resources for further conquest. The property holdings of these vassal rajas were known as rajya lands.

Occasionally the King would grant land to individuals in recognition of their service to the state, as a mark of respect or as a ritual gift. The recipients included soldiers, priests, the nobility and members of the royal family. Land granted in this manner was known as birta land. Unlike rajya land, birta land could be subdivided, sold or mortgaged.

The state preferred to pay its soldiers and employees by grants of land rather than in cash. This assignment of newly incorporated territory not only eased the cost of military expansion but appeased an army that was composed mainly of peasants, whose hunger for land was the dynamo that powered the conquests. Such land grants were known as jagirs. The holders were not permitted to transfer or subdivide their land.

The holders of rajya, birta and jagir lands—the rajas, birtawalas and jagirdars—had a right to a share of the produce of the land, a right to the proceeds of miscellaneous taxes and levies collected from the inhabitants of their lands and villages, a right to extract unpaid labour from them, and a right to dispense justice. The inhabitants, then, were directly answerable to the rajas, the birtawalas and the jagirdars in matters concerning agricultural rents, taxes, corvee labour and the settlement of their disputes. In the ordinary affairs of their lives, they had no direct contact with the state. In effect, there were large areas within Nepal that owed full allegiance to the government but which were exempted in most day-to-day matters from the jurisdiction of that government. For all practical purposes, the government’s direct jurisdiction extended only to the Kathmandu Valley, the jungle tracts along Nepal’s southern border with India, the western hills and parts of the central hills.
The **rajas**, **birtawalas** and **jagirdars** derived their political and economic rights from the state and not from any services that they rendered to the peasants. Unlike the feudal landowners of medieval Europe they had no duty to protect or defend the peasants who worked their land. In fact, they were usually absentee landlords, rarely living in the villages where their lands were situated. Eventually, as the absorption of more distant territories meant the allocation of more inconveniently located land, **jagirs** became mere assignments of rent which the **jagirdars** collected on the authority of certificates issued for each crop every year by the central government.

The **birtawalas** and **jagirdars** enjoyed their status and privileges at the pleasure of the King who, in turn, exercised his authority over them by the time honoured practice of the **pajani**—the annual screening of all civil and military office holders, from the highest to the lowest rank, after which they were either confirmed in their posts for another year or dismissed. As **jagir** grants were only valid for as long as a government servant held office, the **pajani** resulted in constant changes not only in the composition of the nobility but in the ownership of land as well. Consequently, the landowning **élite** were interested only in maximising the exaction from their properties and were not at all concerned for the welfare or the condition of the cultivators. Needless to say, the peasants, the economic backbone of the country, were left at a minimum level of subsistence.

**Village Nepal**

The national economy rested almost exclusively on the agricultural produce of village Nepal. In the hills, the lower and better-watered fields produced rice, wheat and some oil seeds, while the higher land was given over to the cultivation of corn, millet and other dry crops. In the plot of land around his house the peasant grew vegetables and raised chickens and goats. The wealthier villagers kept a buffalo or a bull to pull their plough. Economic opportunities outside agriculture were very scarce and limited to such service occupations as the village carpenter, shopkeeper and blacksmith. Village society was simple in its wants and content with what it could produce itself. The villagers made their own agricultural implements, spun their own cloth, wove woollen garments, made bamboo baskets and matting, and produced excellent utensils of iron, brass and bell metal. Their greatest external needs were salt, which is scarce in the Himalayan region, and cotton for the village looms. As long as a man had land he could provide for his family until his children were old enough to provide for him. Land was not only a means of livelihood in the hills, it offered the sole access to wealth and, along with caste, it determined a family’s prestige in the community.

Along Nepal’s southern frontier, where the vast north Indian plain meets the foothills of the Himalayas, is a narrow strip of dense scrub and
An early nineteenth century engraving of a Nepalese village house.

View of Kathmandu. An etching published in 1811 by William Kirkpatrick, one of the first Europeans to enter Nepal.
tropical jungle, forty to sixty kilometres wide, known as the Tarai. It is inhabited by tigers, elephants, rhinoceros and other wildlife. It was also home to a deadly viral fever known as awal that made the area virtually impenetrable during the monsoon. Here, the economic situation in the villages was somewhat different from that of the hills. The land was extremely fertile, making the Tarai the most valuable of Gorkha's territorial acquisitions. The peasant cultivators produced rice, oil seeds, cotton, jute, tobacco and sugar cane. Here, the state's share of the produce of the land was only one-third. Wasteland was available in abundance for reclamation and the government encouraged its development as a means of increasing its revenue. In order to make such efforts attractive, no land tax was imposed on reclaimed land for the first four years. The extensive forests of the Tarai supported a thriving export industry based on the processing of timber, the collection of wax, honey and medicinal herbs, and the capture of elephants.

The Kathmandu Valley

By contrast, the Kathmandu Valley had a mixed rural-urban economy due to the density of its population and its location on the principal trade route from India to Tibet. Besides the three cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, there were many smaller towns and villages dotted amongst the terraced and irrigated fields. These cities and towns were not built on any regular plan, but consisted mostly of narrow, winding lanes flanked by substantial brick buildings up to four storeys high.

The buildings were generally constructed in the form of hollow squares connected to the street by narrow doorways. The ground floor of the quadrangle was an open verandah supported by timber posts, and here the servants lived in company with the livestock of the house. Access to the upper floors was by way of stepladders through trapdoors which made the upper storeys readily defensible in times of danger or disturbance. The walls of the better class of buildings were finished with plaster and they had large wooden balconies projecting over the street and enclosed by intricately carved, pierced timber screens. But in all the houses the ceilings were low, the doorways small and the windows, which were without glass, could only be closed by wooden shutters. As a result, the rooms were badly lit and poorly ventilated. In the overcrowded, poorer quarters of the cities where families grouped themselves by caste or trade, the central courtyards of the buildings were common receptacles for the washings and filth of the surrounding lodgings. They were a fertile breeding ground for fever and disease and for regular epidemics of cholera and typhoid. The streets that wound through the cities were crowded, fetid and completely devoid of any drainage system. Stagnant ditches did the duty of sewers and into them most of the refuse of the adjacent dwellings found its way.
The largest and most important building in each city was the royal palace or darbar. It was centrally situated and opposite its main facade was an open, irregular square flanked by temples and shrines. The darbar complex was divided into a number of quadrangles of various sizes surrounded by audience halls, public reception rooms, temples, private apartments, servants' quarters, armouries and guardhouses, kitchens, storerooms and stables for the horses and elephants. The palace in Kathmandu had 50 such courts while the one in Bhaktapur had twice that number. The inner courts were connected by a confused labyrinth of passages and small doorways that could be easily closed and secured in case of danger or disturbance, thus enabling the occupants of the palace to isolate themselves into different parts of the building and defend themselves against a large number of assailants.

Before the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley each city had been surrounded by a high wall pierced at several points by huge gateways. After the conquest the walls and gates were allowed to fall into ruin but the limits of the city were still strictly marked along the lines where the ancient walls had stood and Hindu outcastes such as sweepers and butchers were not allowed to live within their precincts.

Land Revenue Assessment and Collection

Since they paid no regular taxes to the government, the birtawalas and jagirdars contributed virtually nothing to the public exchequer. As a result, the fiscal burden of the state rested primarily on the non-privileged groups: the peasants who cultivated state land and the village craftsmen and traders. This took the form of tax on government land, the obligation to supply unpaid labour and a staggering array of levies and taxes.

The traditional tax on government lands and the rent for tenure on birta and jagir lands in the hills was half the crop. When the harvest was brought to the threshing floor, landlord and tenant farmer simply divided it equally. Although the rent was high, the system had two distinct advantages for the farmer. Firstly, the rate was fixed so that he knew exactly what his obligations were and he knew that if he met them then his tenure of the land was reasonably secure. Secondly, the system was flexible: if the crop was poor, farmer and landlord bore the resultant hardship equally; if the crop was good, both profited from the surplus.

The central government and the jagirdars, however, were not satisfied with this system of revenue assessment as their income was too dependent upon the weather and the unpredictability of the crops. The government, particularly, felt the need for a guaranteed, predictable revenue from its lands to fund an expanding bureaucracy. So at the turn of the 19th century, at the time when the Gorkhali conquests had reached their greatest extent, a new system of rent assessment was introduced into the hills and the
Kathmandu Valley. The new system, called *kut*, assigned lands on the basis of competitive contracts: tenancy rights went to those peasants who were willing to pay the highest rents. That is to say, a peasant could be evicted from his land if another peasant offered the landlord a higher rent for his fields. The *kut* system satisfied the landlords because it maximised their income and it satisfied the government because it guaranteed its revenue. But it spelled disaster for the peasants. With rental costs entering on an inflationary curve and with no means whereby they could improve their productivity, the new system edged them towards permanent impoverishment.

The farmers' problems were further compounded when taxes on government land and rents on *birta* and *jagir* lands were gradually converted from payments in kind to payments in cash, for coins were extremely scarce in the hills and the villagers, who for centuries had lived outside a cash economy, had neither a ready supply of money nor the means of acquiring any. There was no market for their grain in the immediate vicinity of the villages because all the other farmers in the area had grain and only grain to sell as well, so they were obliged to sell their produce to a middleman who could transport it to a marketing town. This additional cost further reduced their already meagre resources. Alternatively, they could borrow cash to meet their tax obligations. But as the only thing that they could offer the moneylender as a guarantee against their loans was their labour and the labour of their families, they were often forced to place a son or daughter in bondage in the household of their creditors to work for them until the loans could be repaid. And this, in turn, meant that the family had less labour available to earn the income needed to repay the loans.

Land tax was traditionally collected on government land in the hills by private revenue collectors called *ijaradars*, who contracted to collect taxes in a given area and who paid the government, in advance, the amount that they contracted to collect. Their profit lay in subsequently collecting more from the villagers in taxes than they had paid the government for the right to collect them. They were, in effect, investing in a futures market by gambling that the crop would be good and their contracts profitable. Their risk was not as great as might appear, however, for payments in services and in kind could be extracted from the villagers in a bad year to offset their losses. With the introduction of the *kut* system of revenue assessment, a completely new method of collecting the revenue was needed on government lands, so the services of the *ijaradars* were dispensed with and settlements were henceforth made by government revenue officials directly with the village headman. He was assessed for the tax liability of the whole village as a single unit. He then apportioned each farmer a share of the village's tax bill. If the crops were damaged by drought or if some peasants lost their fields to those two constant hazards in the hills, erosion and landslides,
The western Himalayas overlook the rugged mountain terrain from which the Gorkhalis carved the modern Kingdom of Nepal.

then the village headman found himself financially responsible for a situation over which he had no control.

Labour and Tax Obligations

Because Nepal's economy was largely non-monetised, the government was unable to pay wages to the thousands of porters and other labourers it had to engage in order to meet its administrative and military requirements. To solve this problem the entire adult male population of the Kingdom was obliged to perform jhara—compulsory and unpaid labour for the state whenever required. Irrigation canals, bridges, forts and public buildings were all constructed and maintained in this manner. Compulsory labour was also used to transport government supplies and to operate the hulak—the rudimentary postal system that carried official mail by runner along the mountain trails to the furthest corners of the Kingdom. Each caste and community was assigned tasks suited to its occupation and location. The services of stonemasons, blacksmiths and carpenters, for example, were requisitioned for the royal palace, while peasant labour was impressed by the army to process saltpetre, cut firewood for charcoal and make grinding stones for its gunpowder factories. The capture of wild elephants for the royal stables was also undertaken by jhara labour. On an average, each
person had to work for six days in the month to fulfil his labour obligations. Exemption was possible only by royal order.

Taxes in the form of levies and fees were collected either to finance the needs of the royal palace or to fund the government’s military and administrative activities. The palace imposed a regular levy called the walak for the upkeep of the royal household. Upon the accession of a new ruler, the gadi mubarak levy paid for the coronation ceremony. The chumawan levy financed the religious ceremonies associated with investing a young prince with the sacred thread worn by high caste Hindus. The godhuva levy financed the marriage ceremonies of a royal prince or princess. When a reigning monarch died, the godan levy financed his funeral rites. The peasants were required to pay these levies according to the amount of land they cultivated, while the merchants and traders paid according to the size of their enterprises.

The government charged a fee for the use of such communal resources as pasturage, water supplies and forests. Fees were collected from the people of any district affected by the promulgation of a new law or regulation. The proceeds were used to pay for the copper inscriptions issued to record them. In the eastern Tarai the government imposed a levy on people following specific occupations, such as curd vendors, barbers...
and midwives. Hunters were obliged to supply one hide or skin each year for the use of the army, while leather-workers provided two hides or skins each year. Farmers in the neighbourhood of a military encampment or garrison had to supply fodder for the horses and elephants.

But perhaps the most iniquitous financial burden for the peasants was the manner in which the holders of jagir and birta land exercised their judicial functions. The jagirdars and birtawalas were empowered to judge certain classes of offences, impose fines and then keep the proceeds as a legitimate part of their income. As a result, they came to consider justice to be a source of revenue and the fines imposed to be a fair profit. Justice, in the hands of such judges, was reduced to a means of extorting money from the people and many jagirdars and birtawalas imposed fines arbitrarily simply to enrich themselves.

In addition to collecting rents and taxes and extracting unpaid labour and judicial fines from the villagers under their control, landlords were entitled to collect "gifts" from time to time. As the nature of these gifts was nowhere defined, the villagers found themselves obliged to keep their landlords supplied with such items as fruit, vegetables, ghee, oil, chickens, eggs and firewood.

Gorkhali Foreign Policy

The Gorkhali state was deeply suspicious of foreigners and actively sought to eradicate all foreign influences from Nepal. The Christian missionaries were expelled from the Kathmandu Valley as soon as it was conquered in 1769 and all foreign traders were banned from entering the country. In fact, the elimination of foreign interests from internal and external trade was the cornerstone of Gorkhali foreign policy. Even foreign artists and musicians were excluded on the grounds that they would drain away the country's wealth and pass valuable information to the enemies of the state. No new mountain trails linking the Kathmandu Valley with the plains of India were opened and vigorous measures were taken to control the movement of people across the frontier—as is evident from the following government instruction to district officials:

If any person has constructed unauthorised tracks in your area, discover and locate such tracks and install pikes and plant thorny bushes there in such a manner that no person can pass through them. If any person tries to pass forcibly, capture him if possible or else fell him with poisoned arrows. . . . If you permit any person, irrespective of his status . . . to proceed onwards without a document bearing the signature of the passport authority, we will behead you.

Prithvi Narayan Shah established an isolationist foreign policy that was to remain unchanged until the collapse of the Rana regime in 1951.

The Making of "Greater Nepal"

Prithvi Narayan Shah, the dogged opportunist, the man of cold
determination who created the Kingdom of Nepal, died on 11 January 1775. He was an imaginative and courageous military commander and a shrewd diplomatist; and he remains to this day the pre-eminent national hero of Nepal.

To ensure his own peaceful succession, Prithvi Narayan Shah's elder son, Pratap Singh Shah, imprisoned his brother, Bahadur Shah, and then exiled him. With varying degrees of success, the new King attempted to settle affairs with the restless Chaubisia rajas, a confederation of 24 principalities that posed a security threat to the western flank of the Gorkhali lands, and to expand his territory eastwards at the expense of Sikkim. Pratap Singh Shah died in 1777 and was succeeded by his infant son, Ran Bahadur Shah. His exiled uncle Bahadur Shah, immediately returned to seize the regency from the Queen Mother but he failed in the attempt and was arrested and imprisoned. When the Queen Mother died in July 1785, Bahadur Shah was released from prison and, at the invitation of the Council of Nobles, took over the reins of government.

The regency of Bahadur Shah and the later reign of King Ran Bahadur were notable for the daring, almost reckless expeditions into Tibet and for the brilliant military campaigns in the west that resulted in the defeat of the rebellious Chaubisia rajas, the annexation of the Baaisi states—a confederation of 22 principalities to the west of the Chaubisia—and the expansion of Nepalese territory up to the borders of the Punjab.

In 1788 the Nepalese sent an expeditionary force up through the Kuti Pass in order to compel the Tibetans to settle a dispute concerning Tibetan currency minted in Nepal. It soon retreated before the threat of Chinese military intervention, but not before the Tibetans had agreed to pay an annual tribute to Kathmandu. The Tibetans paid their tribute once but let the matter lapse thereafter, an omission that quickly led to war. In 1791, defrauded of their promised tribute and determined to exact it in plunder, the Nepalese invaded Tibet. An army of 4,000 men under General Damodar Pande moved up through the Kuti Pass and across the Tibetan plateau to Shigatze, the second city of Tibet. Shigatze was heavily fortified and capable of withstanding a prolonged siege, but the lamas had ordained that heaven was opposed to fighting at that time—and, it must be assumed, so were the Tibetan commanders. The city was captured with little effort and the great monastery of Tashilumpo well and truly plundered. The loot was immense; about 50 million pounds worth in today’s terms. Heavily laden with treasure and pursued by a Chinese army of 15,000 men, the Nepalese withdrew, fighting a series of stubborn rearguard battles as they retreated down through the Himalayan passes and back into Nepal. The Chinese army continued to press forward and by September 1792 it was within a day's march of Kathmandu, at which point Bahadur Shah agreed to the Chinese terms for peace. The Nepalese handed their loot back to the
Pratap Singh Shah, King of Nepal. 1775 - 1777.
Tibetans and agreed to send a “complimentary” mission to Peking every fifth year.

The sheer character and enterprise of the fledgling Kingdom of Nepal can be measured from the fact that while one army was engaged in a war with Tibet, another was assailing Kumaon and Garhwal over 800 kilometres to the west of Kathmandu across the lower Himalayas. By 1806, the Nepalese army, now numbering about 12,000 men, held sway from the heart of Sikkim to the borders of Punjab. Only the mini-state of Palpa had managed to retain its independence. Nepal had been transformed from an insignificant Himalayan mountain state to a power to be reckoned with on the subcontinent. It was an achievement that rivalled the parallel expansion of the British East India Company down on the plains.

The Waning Monarchy

During these years of expansion and of menace to the Punjab, Tibet and British India, the Court in Kathmandu had been behaving in a manner that was to set a depressing precedent for the next six decades. Bahadur Shah, as Regent, had deliberately set out to debauch the young King Ran Bahadur, encouraging him in every kind of vice and indulgence. The boy’s mind became more and more disturbed. His first wife, Queen Raj Rajeswari, was childless but his second wife, Queen Subarna Prabha, bore him a son and heir, Ranodyut Shah. In 1794, deciding that the time had come to terminate the regency, he imprisoned his uncle Bahadur Shah.

The new ruler then developed an infatuation for a widowed Brahmin girl, Kantamati Devi, who extracted a promise that if she bore him a son the boy would succeed to the throne. In 1797 she gave birth to a male child, Girvan Juddha Bikram Shah. Two years later she contracted smallpox. The King poured treasure upon the priests in costly rites and she recovered, but at the first sight of her ravaged beauty in the mirror she committed suicide. In his maddened grief the King ordered his troops to imprison and torture the Brahmins and to desecrate the temples. Any soldiers who refused to carry out this sacreligious work were executed. He declared his rightful heir, Ranodyut Shah, to be illegitimate, handed the throne to the infant Girvan Juddha and abdicated. When he attempted to reassert his authority, the Council of Nobles, fearing that his continued presence in Kathmandu would further destabilise an already alarming situation, forced him into exile. He retired to Benaras and a life of religious devotion, accompanied by his first wife, Queen Raj Rajeswari. Among those who followed him into exile was a young scion of an influential Gorkha family, Bhim Sen Thapa. Back in Kathmandu, the ex-King’s second wife, Queen Subarna Prabha, assumed the regency.

In February 1803, tiring of her husband’s ill-treatment, Senior Queen Raj Rajeswari made her way back to Kathmandu where she was welcomed with open arms by the Council of Nobles led by Damodar Pande and
A contemporary portrait of King Ran Bahadur Shah. 1777 - 1799.
offered the regency. The dismissed Regent, the Second Queen Subarna Prabha, sought sanctuary in the temple of Pashupatinath.

Two years earlier, in 1801, Nepal had signed a commercial treaty with the East India Company, under the terms of which the Nepalese would accept an envoy at the Court in Kathmandu and the British would keep ex-King Ran Bahadur in honourable custody in Benaras. Accordingly, in May 1802, Captain Knox arrived in Kathmandu to take up his post as the first British Resident. But his total exclusion from any contact with the darbar and the populace at large made his position so futile and untenable that he closed the Mission and returned to India in March 1803. The British thereupon announced that, as the treaty was now null and void, they were under no further obligation to restrain the activities and movements of ex-King Ran Bahadur. He, in turn, lost no time in heading back for Kathmandu with the intention of seizing power from his first wife, the Regent Queen Raj Rajeswari. Damodar Pande, now designated principal kaji, assembled his troops and hurried south to intercept the ex-King’s progress. The two parties met, the ex-King managed to persuade the Nepalese soldiers to rally to his side and then, with Damodar Pande in chains, he continued on to Kathmandu in triumph. Once there, he banished Queen Raj Rajeswari and assumed the regency. Damodar Pande was executed and Bhim Sen Thapa appointed as the King’s chief adviser in his place.

Ran Bahadur then sought to win over the Raja of Palpa, the only remaining freestate in the western hills, by proposing marriage to his sister. Attracted by the security implicit in such a dynastic marriage the Raja travelled to Kathmandu where he was promptly arrested and thrown into prison. His lands were confiscated and no more was heard of the proposed marriage.

Sher Bahadur, the illegitimate brother of the now feared and detested Ran Bahadur, was then summoned before the Regent and the Council of Nobles in open darbar to answer charges of conspiracy and treason. When the Regent ordered Sher Bahadur’s execution, a violent quarrel broke out between the two brothers. In the heat of the argument Sher Bahadur drew his sword and cut the Regent down. Seconds later, one of the kajis present, Bal Narsingh Konwar, threw Sher Bahadur to the floor and throttled him to death with his bare hands.

Bhim Sen Thapa lost no time consolidating his position amidst the chaos that had suddenly engulfed the government. Having secured the support of the royal guard he surrounded the great hall where the Court and the Council of Nobles were assembled and massacred everyone who might stand in his way, under the pretext that they were involved in the late Sher Bahadur’s conspiracy. In all, 93 members of the royal family and the nobility perished. The hapless Raja of Palpa was executed by having his throat cut and Senior Queen Raj Rajeswari was forced to commit
A contemporary portrait of King Girvan Juddha Shah.
Damodar Pande had a long and distinguished military career in the Gorkhali campaigns to conquer the Kathmandu Valley and the western hill states. Appointed chief kaji of the Kingdom by the Regent Queen Raj Rajeshwari in 1803, he was removed from office and executed a year later when ex-King Ran Bahadur seized the Regency.
In 1806, Ran Bahadur Shah, King of Nepal, returned to Kathmandu and seized the regency, which he held until he was assassinated by suicide or his favourite wife. After three years of self-imposed exile in Benares, he died in December 1799, following the death of his wife.
King Girvan Juddha Shah (1799 - 1816) ascended the throne when he was only 18 months old and died at the age of 18.
suti on her husband’s funeral pyre, along with 15 other mistresses and maidservants.

Bhim Sen Thapa, Prime Minister of Nepal and Commander-in-Chief, was now in an unassailable position of strength. He offered the regency to the fourth wife of the late ex-king Ran Bahadur, the 12-year-old Queen Tripura Sundari, but retained total power in his own hands. The date was April 1806. From now onwards, for the next 145 years, the authority of the Prime Minister would transcend that of the Crown. The power of the King ceased to be felt altogether in the country’s affairs and the bearer of that empty title was no more than a state prisoner in his huge, ornate palace in Kathmandu.

Paradoxically, the territorial expansion of the Kingdom of Nepal had been accompanied by a contraction of the power of its king. A succession of minor rulers, combined with their traditional practice of marrying two queens, had resulted in a significant reduction in the authority of the Crown. The practice of marrying two queens was motivated by the desire to ensure uninterrupted succession to the throne, and though it succeeded in this it also led to a situation in which the queens, apart from competing for the status of favourite wife, were directly involved in the struggle for political power. Sometimes the struggle was aimed at securing personal power, but more usually it was aimed at securing the right of succession for their own children.

The principle of primogeniture had reduced the position of the King’s brothers, cousins and uncles to that of dependent relatives who had royal status but no power, unless they served as regent to a minor King or as chautariyas. The existence of illegitimate sons of the King, not all of whom could be accommodated as chautariyas, led to a fragmentation of the Shah family and provided an irresistible opportunity for the nobles to consolidate their position by setting the members of the royal family against each other. Until the rise of the Rana family these nobles were drawn mainly from four prominent Gorkha families who had contended for generations for positions of power and influence: the Thapas, the Basniats, and two families named Pande. Theirs was such a long established rivalry that one family could increase its political influence only at the expense of another, and the rise to power of one family could only be accomplished by the wholesale purging of the others and the liquidation of their leading members. In fact, the wholesale elimination of hostile groups or potential enemies was a family’s sole guarantee of security. Political alliances outside the family were not considered to be reliable or enduring and even cases of betrayal by members of one’s own family were commonplace. Conflicts and tensions within the royal family compelled the nobles to constantly adjust their political tactics in order to survive, but the members of the elite families were not always the losers in this process, for the throne often
allowed its rights and privileges to be encroached upon. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, the nobles were quick to enhance their own position at the expense of the royal family. Small wonder, then, that the political process was characterised by bloodshed and violence. As no post had its own independent privileges, and as there were no hereditary revenues or landholdings, the conditions for maintaining equilibrium amongst all the contending parties simply did not exist.

**War with the British**

Bhim Sen Thapa’s immediate problem, once he had removed all his rivals, was to keep the army gainfully employed. Traditionally, the soldiers were paid only when they were on active duty, so that between campaigns there was every risk that they would interfere in internal politics by playing into the hands of one political faction or another. As expansion west, north and east had been blocked by the Sikhs, the Chinese and the protectorate that the British had imposed on Sikkim, Bhim Sen Thapa looked south. For the next seven years the Prime Minister pursued a deliberate policy of infiltration throughout the Tarai, slowly absorbing village after village in disputed territory or actually inside British territory. The East India Company, sorely pressed by the Maratha Wars, did little to resist. But eventually their distress at the activities of a powerful hill state astride their strategic and very vulnerable lines of communication into northern India decided the British to take strong action to curtail the power and limit the territory of the Shahs. In November 1814 the Company launched an aggressive war against Nepal. The campaign was an arduous one in which both sides fought bravely. In the initial encounters the Nepalese army, despite its inferior weapons, inflicted heavy losses on a British army three times its size, led by veteran generals and armed with the latest weapons. But gradually the tide of war turned in the Company’s favour and when the British captured the strategic town of Makwanpur, only 50 kilometres south of the Kathmandu Valley, the Nepalese capitulated and signed a peace treaty, the Treaty of Segauli, in March 1816. The territorial expansion of Nepal by military means had come to an end. Under the terms of the treaty the British occupied Kumaon and Garhwal in the west, large tracts of the Tarai lowlands in the south and the Darjeeling district in the east. The Kingdom of Nepal had been stripped of one-third of its territory.

**The Fall of Bhim Sen Thapa**

In 1816 King Girvan Juddha died of smallpox at the age of 19 and was succeeded by his three-year-old son Rajendra Bikram Shah. The regency remained in the hands of Bhim Sen Thapa’s able and consistent supporter, the Regent Queen Tripura Sundari. In that same year Edward Gardner took up duty as the second British Resident in Kathmandu. From the outset he
Queen Tripura Sundari, the powerful patron of Bhim Sen Thapa, was the fourth wife of King Ran Bahadur. Widow in 1806 at the age of twelve, she became regent during the minorities of her stepson, King Girvan Juddha, and his son, King Rajendra. She held this position for 26 years until her death in 1832.
laboured under the handicap of having been appointed, not by an act of friendship but under duress. Realising the degree of interference that the Resident could exercise in the internal affairs of Nepal, Bhim Sen Thapa saw to it that this instrument of British imperialism was strictly confined to the Residency and cut off from all contacts with the Court and the government. And so Gardner served out his term in virtual isolation until he retired in 1829, to be replaced by Brian Hodgson. The Prime Minister’s policy of isolating the Resident was, in fact, well-founded, for he had observed the fate of those Indian States that had come under the protectorate of the East India Company and had been obliged to accept a Resident at Court. It was the role of the Resident to promote the interests of the Company and to report on the policies and activities of the State to which he was accredited. As the power of the Company had grown, so had that of the Resident, until the opinion of the Resident came to be synonymous with a Company directive that the ruler ignored at his peril. Despite the official policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Indian States, the Residents had eventually gained authority over every aspect of a State’s administration and had become the sole channel of communication with the British and with other princely States.

Bhim Sen Thapa’s fortunes began to turn in April 1832 when his powerful patron, the Regent Queen Tripura Sundari, died. A year later, after a youth of indulgence and irresponsibility, King Rajendra came of age. His senior Queen, Samrajya Laxmi, ranged herself with the Pandé family and the Brahmins against the Prime Minister. The Pandés, led by Ran Jang Pande, sought revenge for the massacre of April 1806. The Brahmins sought the return of the wealth that Bhim Sen Thapa had stripped from them at a time when there were insufficient funds in the treasury to pay for the administration of the government. The Senior Queen sought to curtail the influence of her younger rival, the Junior Queen. The King, wearied of his suppression by Bhim Sen Thapa, willingly joined the conspirators. His position was, admittedly, intolerable, as the British Resident reported to his government:

The Raja is hemmed into his palace, beyond which he cannot stir unaccompanied by the Minister, and then only to the extent of a short ride or drive. Even within the walls of his palace the Minister and his brother both reside, the latter in the especial capacity of “dry nurse” to his Highness. . . Of power he has not a particle, nor seems to wish it. Of patronage he has not a fraction, and is naturally galled at this, as well as at being sentinelled all round by Bhim Sen’s creatures, even within his own abode, and at being debarred from all liberty of locomotion, and of intercourse with the Sirdars and Gentry of the country. The Raja has been purposely trained so as to possess little energy of body or mind.

The beleaguered Prime Minister’s problems came to a head in July 1837 when the Senior Queen’s youngest son died. The Pandés at once spread the rumour that Bhim Sen Thapa had tried to poison the Queen but missed his
Bhim Sen Thapa, *mukhtiyar* (Prime Minister) and Commander-in-Chief. With the support of the Regent Queen Tripura Sundari he was the virtual dictator of Nepal from 1806 until 1837.
Nepal and Neighbouring Regions

Document content:

- Kingdom of the Sikhs
- Garhwal
- Baisi Lordships
- Chaubisia Lordships
- Oudh
- Sikkim
- Bhutan
- Bihar
- Bengal
- Tibet

Map annotations:

- 1806: Limits of conquest
- 1814: Borders imposed by the Treaty of Sagauli
- 1860: Area returned to Nepal

Borders of Nepal and its neighbours.
The Set

mark. He was arrested and thrown into prison along with his nephew, Mathbar Singh Thapa, the Governor of Gorkha. But even there his enemies feared to execute him. Ran Jang Pande was appointed acting *mukhtiyar*, or Chief Minister, and immediately began a systematic spoilation of everyone who had the slightest association with Bhim Sen Thapa. He called in all the lands that had been granted rent-free since the execution of his father, Damodar Pande, over thirty years before. His actions resulted in such frenzied protests by the nobility that the King was finally forced to dismiss him. The Junior Queen took advantage of the moment to persuade the King to release Bhim Sen Thapa and his nephew from prison. The nephew, Mathbar Singh Thapa, went into voluntary exile while Bhim Sen Thapa himself retired into private life.

The Monarchy in Crisis

King Rajendra now strove to govern by himself, but he failed to rise to
Nepal under the Ranas

Rajendra Bikram Shah became King of Nepal in 1816 at the age of three. In 1843 his inability to control his eldest son led to chaos in the administration until popular pressure forced him to hand over sovereign powers to his junior queen, Laxmi Devi.

the occasion and reassert the royal power to the advantage of himself and his dynasty. At this most crucial stage of its history, Nepal found itself with a weak, intriguing and vacillating monarch who was incapable of exercising power himself or of trusting others to exercise it on his behalf. A succession of puppet Prime Ministers passed in and out of office until finally, in 1839, Ran Jang Pande seized office again. His first act was to remove his family enemy and potential rival, Bhim Sen Thapa. The two-year-old charge of poisoning was resurrected at a show trial and the ex-Prime Minister who had ruled as the strongman of Nepal for 30 years again found himself in a subterranean dungeon. Still not daring to execute him, Ran Jang Pande ordered that the prisoner be driven to suicide. A *kukri* was placed in his cell but he resisted his tormentors until told the news, true or false, that his wife had been paraded naked through the streets of Kathmandu in broad day light. He pierced his throat. Alone and denied medical attention he died nine days later. The date was 28 July 1839. Ran Jang Pande and his ally, the Senior Queen, quickly compelled the King to sign a decree
barring any member of the Thapa family from holding public office or enjoying state employment for seven generations.

Under the prime ministership of Ran Jang Pande, relations with the British in India began to deteriorate again. Since the war of 1814-1816 there had been peace between Nepal and the British in India, but no friendship. A people whose total national experience had been based on expansion by conquest now found themselves hemmed in by a power which, as Bhim Sen Thapa had put it, "crushed thrones like potsherds". Bhim Sen Thapa had seen to it that relations with the British were distant but correct. From time to time the Nepalese intrigued with the Indian princely States and they had even sent envoys as far afield as Burma and Afghanistan to sound out the possibility of coordinated anti-British military action, but these endeavours came to naught. However, under Ran Jang Pande and that arch-enemy of the British, the Senior Queen, the policy of nibbling aggressiveness along the southern border with British India began again, culminating in the seizure of the district of Ramnagar. The Company threatened war and the King was forced to accede to the demands of the Governor-General that the Prime Minister be dismissed. Suspecting the most unpleasant consequences from this turn of events, the Senior Queen set out for a course of pious devotion at Benaras, only to fall victim to the deadly swamp fever as she crossed the Tarai.

With the death of his mother, the Senior Queen, Crown Prince Surendra found himself fighting for his very life against the Junior Queen who was determined that her own son would succeed to the throne. The Junior Queen insisted that the heir apparent was of feeble mind and unfit to rule—and with good grounds, for Prince Surendra had launched upon a career of unbridled licence and oppression of his father's subjects and of the King himself. The latter could in no way control his son and eventually came to have virtually no say in the government of his Kingdom. By late 1842 the situation had become intolerable and the Council of Nobles, backed by the army, forced the King to hand over all authority to the Junior Queen, Laxmi Devi. She immediately attempted to render Crown Prince Surendra powerless by suppressing his power base, the Pande family. Mathbar Singh Thapa was invited back from Simla, where he had been living in the comfortable detention of the British, to assume the office of Prime Minister. The inducement that the Junior Queen offered him was the execution of any member of the Pande family who might disturb his peace of mind upon his return. The offer was accepted, the Pandes bringing their own kukris in order to be certain of a clean execution.

When Mathbar Singh Thapa returned to Kathmandu in April 1843 to assume the prime ministership he was accompanied by his nephew, the man who was to set the course of Nepalese history for the next hundred years: Jang Bahadur.
The Rise of Jang Bahadur
Since the time of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the fortunes of the Shah dynasty had been closely linked with those of a distinguished family of Gorkha, the Konwars. Though not numbered amongst the most important families of the principality, they had nevertheless rendered invaluable service to their raja in military matters. Ram Krishna Konwar had been one of the King of Gorkha's most trusted generals, playing an important part in the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley and commanding the armies in the wars against the Chaubisia and Baisi lordships. His son, Ranjit Konwar, won his fame in the two Tibetan campaigns of 1788 and 1791. It was Ranjit Konwar's eldest son, Bal Narsingh Konwar, who throttled Sher Bahadur to death when the latter cut down his own half-brother, ex-King Ran Bahadur Shah, in the open darbar. For that spontaneous act of loyalty and courage, Bal Narsingh Konwar had been well rewarded with land and honours, including the privilege of carrying his own shield in the presence of the sovereign. He was elevated to the rank of kaji and the title was made hereditary in the family.

On the Periphery of Power

Bal Narsingh Konwar married Bhim Sen Thapa's niece and fathered seven sons, the eldest of whom was born on 18 June 1817. The parents intended to name him Birna Singh but at the insistence of the baby's maternal uncle, Mathbar Singh Thapa, this was changed to Jang Bahadur—the brave in war. The close association between the Konwar and the Thapa families was continued when, at the age of 10, Jang Bahadur was married to a girl of the Thapa clan.

A few months after Jang Bahadur's marriage, towards the end of 1828, Bal Narsingh Konwar moved the whole family to Dhankuta where he had been appointed Governor. Then, in the winter of 1832-1833, he was transferred to Dadeldhura. During his father's tour of duty there, Jang Bahadur was commissioned into the army. He soon became an expert
marksman and a swordsman of considerable proficiency. Though physically slight, he was athletic and strong, and the stories of his reckless escapades—from capturing wild animals to rescuing people from the jaws of death—are legion. Most of them are probably anecdotal, but he did have a well-founded reputation for being headstrong and restive under discipline. He was courageous, resourceful and completely unscrupulous. He was an inveterate gambler and a dare-devil, qualities that endeared him to the rank and file of the army. Academic pursuits, however, held no attraction for him, though he did have an innate capacity for administration—a capacity that his father was quick to develop. In January 1835, Bal Narsingh Konwar was transferred to Jumla and Jang Bahadur, who by this time had been promoted to the rank of second lieutenant in the cavalry, accompanied him to his new seat of residence. At the age of 17 he found himself assisting in the government of a province.

In 1837, during a purge of the followers of Bhim Sen Thapa, Bal Narsingh Konwar was dismissed from his post as Governor of Jumla and Jang Bahadur was dismissed from the army. All of their property was confiscated and father and son returned to Kathmandu as penniless private citizens. Unemployable and in financial difficulties due to heavy gambling debts, Jang Bahadur travelled down to Benaras to seek his fortune there. In January 1839 he returned to Kathmandu, no better off than when he had left, only to learn that his wife had died one month earlier.

In February 1839, Jang Bahadur married a daughter of a prominent member of the Basniat family. His dowry enabled him to pay off all his debts, while his wife’s family connections enabled him to mingle again on the periphery of Court life, where a series of daring exploits soon brought him to the notice of the King. In February 1840 King Rajendra organised an elephant hunting expedition and Jang Bahadur was included in the party. At one point during the expedition the hunters surrounded a wild elephant but could find no means of capturing it until Jang Bahadur ran forward and succeeded in securing a rope to its hind feet. The King was so impressed by this act of reckless bravery that he promoted him to the rank Captain of artillery on the spot. On 12 September 1840, a leopard created panic on the outskirts of Kathmandu by entering a merchant’s house. Attracted by the commotion, Jang Bahadur decided to capture the animal. He entered the house and stalked the leopard from room to room, finally cornering it with a large bamboo basket. The leopard was taken alive and presented to Crown Prince Surendra. In November 1840, one of the royal elephants ran amok, killing its keeper and breaking out of the royal stables. Capturing it seemed a hopeless task as there was no stronger elephant in the royal stables, and for several days the animal raged through the ricefields along the edge of the Bagmati River, always passing through a certain village on its way. With the King’s reluctant permission, Jang Bahadur set out to
Bal Narsingh Konwar, whose descendants were to rule Nepal for over a century.
capture it. He waited on the roof of one of the houses in the village until the rogue elephant passed by, then dropped onto its back. Using a goad and a dagger he manoeuvred it into a trap where it was secured with ropes and subdued.

While these exploits had the desired effect of bringing Jang Bahadur to the attention of the King, they also had the unwanted effect of bringing him to the attention of the mentally unstable Crown Prince Surendra, for the Heir Apparent's cruel and capricious behaviour was a source of constant fear and danger to all those involved with life at Court.

One day in March 1842, while Prince Surendra was walking on a bridge across the Trisuli River, he noticed an officer coming towards him on horseback. The officer, however, did not notice the Crown Prince and therefore did not pay him the necessary respect by dismounting. Enraged, the Crown Prince ordered the officer and his horse to be thrown off the bridge. As the drop to the water was about 15 metres, the officer was not slow to realise that, for all intents and purposes, he had just been sentenced to death. So he begged the Prince's permission to bid farewell to his family before he died. When the Crown Prince refused, assuring him that such a fall would not necessarily be fatal, the officer replied that the only man who could survive such a leap was Jang Bahadur. The hint was quickly taken. The Prince released the officer, sent for Jang Bahadur and ordered him to leap from the bridge on horseback. Jang Bahadur mounted the officer's horse and leapt. By disengaging himself from the saddle at the precise moment that the horse left the bridge, he was able to land clear of the animal. Badly shaken but unhurt, he managed to struggle ashore several kilometres downstream.

This feat seems to have planted a belief in the mind of the Crown Prince that Jang Bahadur was equal to any task. So barely a month later, on 22 April 1842, according to the official diary of the British Resident, he ordered him to jump down a deep well into which the local farmers used to throw the bones of slaughtered buffaloes. Fortunately for Jang Bahadur, the Prince's amusement had to be postponed by one day and he was able to use the delay to drop several large bales of cotton down the well in the hope of minimising the danger from the sharp bones at the bottom. The following morning the Crown Prince and his entourage arrived at the well and watched Jang Bahadur leap to the bottom. When he was hauled out he was found to have sustained a severe cut on his right ankle. Though the wound soon healed, his ankle became inflamed for a month or so every year for the rest of his life. In his old age he sometimes wore a larger shoe on his right foot than on his left.

Fortunately for JangBahadur, this perilous service under the Crown Prince came to an end in late 1842 or 1843—the exact date has not been
recorded—when he was ordered to join the staff of the King’s bodyguard. Two months later he was appointed to a position of auditor of government accounts in the Kumari Chowk, the Accounts and Audit Office. It was to be his one and only subordinate civil appointment.

Edging Towards Chaos: Tensions and Disarray in the Darbar

By the end of 1842 the political situation in Nepal was in turmoil. Crown Prince Surendra’s arbitrary and irrational actions had unsettled and alienated the nobility. The King, powerless to control his eldest son, had cynically avoided having to take responsibility for his outrages by according him an equal part in the administration of the Kingdom. To end the crisis that the King had caused by creating two nominally equal authorities—himself and the Crown Prince Surendra—the nobility convened a meeting
on 6 December 1842. Led by the Prime Minister, the chautariya Fateh Jang Shah, they drew up a petition demanding a just and responsible government. The next day 675 chiefs and officers of the Kingdom, accompanied by 18 regiments of soldiers and the leading merchants of the capital, marched to the Hanuman Dhoka Palace and presented the petition to the King on a golden tray. The King managed to procrastinate for a whole month but finally, on 1 January 1843, he signed a royal proclamation agreeing to manage the country and the government with the advice and consent of the Queen.

With this proclamation King Rajendra had been virtually deposed and authority effectively transferred to Junior Queen Laxmi Devi, whose single-minded objective was to have Crown Prince Surendra's claims to the throne put aside and those of her own son recognised. It was the height of weakness on the part of King Rajendra not to have chosen between abdication or the imposition of effective control over the Crown Prince. And it was the height of short-sightedness not to have seen that the Junior Queen's determination to secure the succession for her own son would lead to the ruin of the institution of the monarchy.

Queen Laxmi Devi knew that neither the chautariyas, being royal collaterals, nor the Pande family, being supporters of the late senior Queen and hence of her son Crown Prince Surendra, would countenance a change to the system of succession by primogeniture. She calculated that the only chance of securing the succession for her own son lay in rehabilitating the Thapa family. Her choice naturally fell on the one family member of any ability left alive after the purge of 1837: Mathbar Singh Thapa, who had been living in comfortable exile under the watchful eye of the British in India. She was confident that he would attach himself to her interests, partly out of gratitude for having been brought to power and partly out of a desire to avenge the murder of his uncle, Bhim Sen Thapa. She therefore prevailed upon the King to invite Mathbar Singh Thapa back to Nepal and appoint him as Prime Minister.

Mathbar Singh Thapa returned to Kathmandu in April 1843, accompanied by Jang Bahadur who had travelled down to the Tarai to meet him. His first act was to hold an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the removal of Bhim Sen Thapa from office. The Pande family confessed that the charges of attempting to poison one of the royal children had been fabricated. A dozen of the conspirators were beheaded. The outcaste Thapas were again admitted to caste and all their lands and properties were restored. The King viewed these proceedings with considerable misgivings and it was several months before he could be persuaded to dismiss Fateh Jang Shah from the prime ministership. But the Queen's influence finally prevailed and on 26 December 1843 Mathbar
Singh Thapa was formally appointed Prime Minister of Nepal and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The appointment of Mathbar Singh Thapa to the head of the executive did not, however, bring any stability to the government of Nepal. Despite the renunciation of power that he had made a year earlier, King Rajendra continued to interfere in the affairs of state, while the Crown Prince continued to flaunt the law of the land with impunity. At the same time, the Queen was actively wielding power and imposing her iron will. In effect, the country had a triple government. As the British Resident sarcastically put it in a despatch to the Governor-General in Calcutta, the country was now being run by Mr. Nepal, Mrs. Nepal and Master Nepal.

The Political Education of Jang Bahadur

Jang Bahadur steered his way carefully around the political quicksands of Court life, relying on his unusual capacity for calculating risk and his cool presence of mind. One incident that occurred early in his career
at Court provided an object lesson in survival that he never forgot. His cousin, Dev Bahadur Konwar, had unwisely made a reference to the Queen's liaison with one of the kajis, while pleading for justice for a young lieutenant who had been dismissed solely to make way for someone whom that kaji had appointed to his post in the name of the Queen. For this indiscretion, Dev Bahadur Konwar had been sentenced to death. Jang Bahadur begged Mathbar Singh Thapa to intercede for the life of his cousin, only to be told by the Prime Minister that he was not prepared to risk the Queen's anger by intervening. "If the Queen orders it" he is said to have remarked "I will kill you and you will kill me". Dev Bahadur Konwar's execution and the Prime Minister's prophetic words taught Jang Bahadur that there was no place for moral and ethical scruples in Court politics.

Mathbar Singh Thapa soon realised that he could never emulate Bhim Sen Thapa and gain complete mastery over the affairs of the state by remaining the Queen's man, so he shifted his allegiance to Crown Prince Surendra on the calculation that, if the King could be persuaded to abdicate in favour of the feeble minded Heir Apparent, then absolute power could be concentrated in his hands. It proved to be a flawed calculation. He had already alienated the Queen by refusing to endorse her son's claims to the succession, and now he had alienated the King by challenging what remained of his power. The Queen shrewdly played on the King's fear of Mathbar Singh Thapa by suggesting that the real reason the Prime Minister sought his abdication was not to enthrone Prince Surendra but to usurp the crown for himself. Thoroughly alarmed, the King agreed that Mathbar Singh Thapa should be assassinated and that Jang Bahadur should be entrusted with the task—on pain of death if he refused.

On 17 May 1845, at about 11 pm, Mathbar Singh Thapa was summoned to the Palace on the pretext that the Queen had met with an accident and his presence was urgently required. He was led into the Queen's chamber where the King and Queen were seated on a couch. Jang Bahadur, armed with a rifle, was concealed behind a trellised screen. As the Prime Minister entered the room Jang Bahadur coolly shot him dead with a bullet to the head and another to the chest.

The assassination of Mathbar Singh Thapa says as much about the character of Jang Bahadur as it does about the nature of Court politics at that time. Connected with but not a member of the old aristocracy, Jang Bahadur had no power base of his own. To survive meant giving no quarter. To prosper meant being a ruthless opportunist, unencumbered by scruples or principles. Perhaps this explains the account of a European who visited Jang Bahadur's residence in Kathmandu several years later. He related how Jang Bahadur showed him around the palace and how his attention was drawn to one of the paintings hanging there:
Mathbar Singh Thapa, Prime Minister for life, whom Jang Bahadur assassinated and then replaced.
It was a portrait of a strikingly handsome man whose keen eye and lofty brow seemed almost to entitle him to the position he held between the portraits of the Duke of Wellington and the Queen. "See" said Jang enthusiastically, "here is the Queen of England, and she has not got a more loyal subject than I." Then, turning to the picture of the man with the keen eyes and the lofty forehead, he remarked, "That is my poor uncle, Mathbar Singh, whom I shot. It is very like him."

Mathbar Singh Thapa's precipitate departure from the political scene left a vacancy which, the Queen determined, would be filled by somebody who could be relied upon to further her ambition of installing her own son on the throne of Nepal. As the older nobility had failed her, she sought to create a new élite which, because it would be her own creation, could be expected to be completely loyal to her. Gagan Singh Bhandari, her paramour and the tutor of her two sons, and Jang Bahadur, the adventurous young man who would support anyone for his own ends, would form the vanguard of this new nobility.

The Queen was adamant that Gagan Singh Bhandari should be installed as Prime Minister but the King objected, fearing that such an appointment would, in all probability, be the prelude to his own death and that of the Crown Prince. So the King, the Queen and the Crown Prince ruled as an interim triumvirate, issuing orders on civil matters through Gagan Singh Bhandari and on military matters through Jang Bahadur. After four months of debate within the royal family it was agreed that a coalition Ministry would be appointed, consisting of Fateh Jang Shah, Abhiman Singh, Gagan Singh Bhandari and Jang Bahadur. Fateh Jang Shah, as Prime Minister, was primus inter pares and commanded three regiments of soldiers. He was assigned the civil and military administration of Palpa and all the territories to the west, and was in charge of the Foreign Ministry. Being a chautariya, he was the King's man. Abhiman Singh was the second in order of precedence and he also commanded three regiments. He was assigned the civil and military administration of all the territories east of Palpa. He, too, was the King's man. Gagan Singh Bhandari ranked third and commanded seven regiments. He was responsible for all the magazines and arsenals in the country as well as Court affairs. He was the Queen's man. Jang Bahadur ranked fourth. He commanded three regiments and was entrusted with improving the discipline and systems of the army. He professed himself to be the Queen's man but he was keeping his options open. Later, a fifth member, Dal Bhanjan Pande, was added to the coalition to represent the interests of the Pande family. It was a coalition Ministry that could not coalesce, primarily because it was divided in its loyalty between the King and the Queen, but also because it contained members of two incompatible groups—the old and the new élite.

The King particularly feared the rise to prominence of the new élite. He decided that its influence had to be curbed and that the surest way to achieve this would be to engineer the removal of its leading member,
Gagan Singh Bhandari. He therefore ordered his two sons by his late senior Queen, Crown Prince Surendra and Prince Upendra, to remove the stain from the royal family’s honour by murdering his junior Queen’s low-born lover. Daunted at the prospect of murdering a kaji, Prince Upendra sought the advice of Fateh Jang Shah. The Prime Minister discussed the matter with Abhiman Singh and Dal Bhanjan Pande and advised Prince Upendra to hire the services of a professional assassin, since he himself was only a boy and his brother, Crown Prince Surendra, was emotionally unstable. They hired an assassin for him and two days later, on 14 September 1846, Gagan Singh Bhandari was duly murdered, shot from a nearby rooftop while at prayers.

The Kot Massacre

The murder of Gagan Singh Bhandari touched off a political crisis of fearful proportions. The prominent leader of the new nobility that the Queen had raised up when she realised that she could not rely on the Thapas had been murdered, and she was determined to destroy those who had contrived his death. That same evening she summoned all the chief officers of state, civil and military, to the courtyard of the Kot, the military stores depot. Jang Bahadur arrived first, accompanied by his six brothers and three regiments of soldiers. This was a more formidable array of strength than the Queen had anticipated but she was persuaded that Jang Bahadur was probably her only sure supporter now that Gagan Singh Bhandari was dead. Abhiman Singh was sent to fetch King Rajendra and by the time they returned most of the high officers of the Kingdom had already assembled. From a balcony above the courtyard the enraged Queen demanded to know who had ordered the assassination of Gagan Singh Bhandari. There was no response from the crowd. The Queen accused Kaji Bir Keshar Pande, whom she knew to have disliked her late paramour, and ordered Abhiman Singh to arrest him. Bir Keshar Pande vehemently protested his innocence but this only seemed to drive the Queen to greater fury. She ordered Abhiman Singh to execute him on the spot. Abhiman Singh turned to the King for confirmation of this death sentence but the King, who knew the real identity of the murderer, insisted there could be no execution without trial. At this juncture, fearing that his role in the murder might be revealed, the King slipped away to fetch the Prime Minister, Fateh Jang Shah, and then continued on to the British Residency.

By the time Fateh Jang Shah arrived at the Kot there was a palpable tension in the air as the crowd waited for the storm to burst. Jang Bahadur quickly briefed the Prime Minister on what had happened and suggested that the best way to defuse the situation would be to execute Bir Keshar Pande and Abhiman Singh—the former because the Queen wished it and the latter because he had refused to obey the Queen’s orders. But the Prime Minister, doubtless wishing to buy time for his fellow conspirator,
King Rajendra (1816-1847) inherited a prosperous kingdom and a loyal army but squandered the goodwill of his subjects because of his inability to control his headstrong and irresponsible son, Crown Prince Surendra.
protested to the Queen that there could be no execution without trial. Jang Bahadur joined the Queen on the upper balcony from where he could see the Prime Minister and Abhiman Singh conferring together. At the same time the latter’s relatives in the courtyard were being put on alert. Unaware of this development and hysterical with rage at having her orders frustrated, the Queen descended from the balcony and elbowed her way through the press of people towards Bir Keshar Pande, brandishing a sword with which she personally intended to despatch him. Jang Bahadur moved forward to intervene and to escort the Queen through the crush and confusion in the courtyard and back to the safety of the balcony. It was at this moment that the first shots rang out, wounding Abhiman Singh and killing Fateh Jang Shah and Dal Bhanjan Pande. As Abhiman Singh tried to escape from the courtyard to summon his troops he was cut down by Krishna Bahadur, one of Jang Bahadur’s brothers. With his dying breath he accused Jang Bahadur of Gagan Singh Bhandari’s murder. Pandemonium broke out as every man reached for his weapon. At this point Jang Bahadur’s soldiers forced their way into the courtyard and swept all before them. A general slaughter ensued in which 25 nobles and scores of soldiers and retainers perished.

The King, meanwhile, had arrived at the British Residency, but the Resident was in no mood to become involved in the King’s latest intrigue, whatever it might be, and sent word that Europeans did not receive visitors at so late an hour. The King then made his way slowly back to the Kot, but at the sound of the melee and the sight of blood trickling under the gates of the courtyard, his courage failed him and he hurried back to the royal palace.

Historians have long debated the question of who was responsible for the Kot Massacre. There is an argument to be made that King Rajendra, the man who was ambitious enough to play the role of a strong monarch but who lacked the strength of character to do so, should bear responsibility for having created a situation that was bound to lead to such a catastrophe. He was an expert at responding to the needs of the moment without considering the long-term consequences of his actions. On this occasion he virtually fled from the Kot in order to avoid the consequences of an investigation into a murder about which he probably knew everything. Had he stayed, the temper of the Queen and the actions of Jang Bahadur might have been controlled. At the same time, the Queen must bear some responsibility for convening the assembly and using her sovereign powers in such an arbitrary fashion by demanding the summary execution of Bir Keshar Pande. And while there is no evidence to suggest that the massacre was premeditated, the fact that the initial casualties included three of the four remaining members of the coalition Ministry lends credibility to the argument that Jang Bahadur initiated the killing.
Nepal and Pashu Jang Shah died a year later in the Koh Masseer. The ministry appointed in September 1965 faltered to bring political stability. The Pashu Jang Shah, a distant collateral of the royal family who headed the four-man coalition, is shown in the drawing.
Even before the slaughter was over, the Queen conferred the office of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of all 16 regiments of the Nepalese Army upon Jang Bahadur, in recognition of the services he had rendered both in saving her life and in avenging the murder of Gagan Singh Bhandari. The date was 15 September 1846. Jang Bahadur had reached the top. He was 29 years of age.

The Consolidation of Power

Immediately following the Kot Massacre Jang Bahadur moved to allocate all politically and militarily strategic posts in the Kingdom to his brothers and relatives. Then followed one of the worst purges in Nepal's history. Hundreds were imprisoned throughout the country, business came to a standstill and the administration of the Kingdom was virtually paralysed. The families of the nobles who had died in the Kot Massacre or fled the country were exiled and forbidden to return upon pain of death. Their lands and property were confiscated. Within a month British border officials were reporting that "six thousand souls have fled or been turned out of Nepal and they have suffered and are suffering much from the difficulty in getting their women and children through the Tarai, and a vast proportion are still in the jungles trying to attain this object." When the annual pajani came around late in October, Jang Bahadur saw to it that all important posts in the Kingdom were filled by members of his family.

The Kot Massacre and the purge that followed virtually exterminated the old nobility and deprived the King of his power base. Political power was now divided between the Queen, who held de jure power, and the Prime Minister, who held de facto power. Queen Laxmi Devi unceasingly demanded the deaths of Crown Prince Surendra and Prince Upendra and threatened another massacre, the like of which Kathmandu had never seen, if her own son was not placed on the throne. Finally, Jang Bahadur was constrained to write to her:

I feel obliged to protest humbly that such an act would be exceedingly unjust, inasmuch as the setting up of a younger son in supersession of the eldest is in contravention of all practice, and is directly in opposition to all laws, human and divine; and it would be the commission of a most heinous crime in defiance of conscience and religion; and on these grounds I regret I am unable to obey you. Over and above my duty to you as Regent, I owe another duty to the State which, in case of conflict, must override any personal considerations. My duty to the State bids me to submit that, should Your Majesty ever again repeat this order, you shall be prosecuted for attempt at murder by the law of the land.

As far as the Queen was concerned there was only one way to solve the problem of the man whom she had raised up to advance her plans for the enthronement of her son, and who had now betrayed her: Jang Bahadur must die. One of her trusted courtiers, Bir Dhoj Basniat, would decoy Jang Bahadur into the private rooms of the Bandarkhel Palace where 50 soldiers
Rajya Laxmi Devi, junior queen of King Rajendra. Her ceaseless efforts to have her own son enthroned in place of Crown Prince Surendra led to her exile and that of her husband to Benaras.
led by Wazir Singh Bhandari, son of the late Gagan Singh Bhandari, would be waiting to assassinate him. If the plot succeeded, Bir Dhoj Basniat was to become Prime Minister for life and the appointment would be hereditary in his family. In order to maintain themselves in office, he and his family were to be allowed a quota of up to seven murders each, without punishment, provided that no member of the royal family was included in the allowance.

The task of summoning Jang Bahadur to the Queen’s presence in the Bandarkhel Palace was given to Vijaya Raj Pande, the dharma adhikar. Vijaya Raj Pande, a rather timid, scholarly man, set out for the Prime Minister’s residence at Logantol where he was admitted at once and delivered his message. Jang Bahadur, wholly ignorant of the conspiracy, looked him up and down and asked him in such sharp tones to explain the reason for the summons that Vijaya Raj Pande, a poor conspirator if ever there was one, jumped to the conclusion that the Prime Minister was aware of the plot. In his fright he confessed everything. Jang Bahadur summoned his brothers and together with six companies of soldiers they set out for the Bandarkhel Palace as quickly as they could. Jang Bahadur realised that speed was of the essence, for if the conspirators got wind of his approach they might conceal their weapons and ostensibly receive him as a friend, in which event his arrival at the head of an armed force could easily be deliberately misrepresented as an attempt on the life of the Queen. It was just such a false charge that had brought about the destruction of Bhim Sen Thapa. They rode head on into Bir Dhoj Basniat, who had come to see what had delayed Vijaya Raj Pande. Pausing only for the few moments it took the Prime Minister’s trusted companion, Ran Mehar Adhikari, to despatch the chief conspirator, the party moved on to the Bandarkhel Palace where they surprised the rest of the conspirators and killed 23 of them. The Bandarkhel Massacre, as this incident came to be known, decimated the Basniat family, members of the old Gorkha nobility and staunch supporters of the Queen. Wazir Singh Bhandari escaped to India.

The Queen was placed under house arrest. Jang Bahadur summoned the Council of Nobles and the following sentence, sanctioned by both the King and the Crown Prince, was passed on her.

Whereas by your recent conduct you have exceeded the powers vested in you by Royal Proclamation, the sovereign authority vested in you by the said Proclamation is hereby withdrawn on account of your attempting to take the life of the Heir Apparent. You attempted to murder the Prime Minister only as a preliminary step towards the murder of Prince Surendra Bikram Shah and the setting of your own son Ranendra Bikram on the throne. Such an act clearly tends to the destruction of the royal family, and you were expressly prohibited from doing such acts by Proclamation, by violating which you have forfeited all rights under it. You have caused the death of hundreds and brought ruin and misery upon your subjects, whose misfortunes will not end as long as you remain in the country. Nor would the life and property of even the best classes be safe under this state of affairs. For the offences aforesaid you are commanded to quit the country and make immediate preparations for your removal to Benaras.
Outmanoeuvred, the Queen insisted on taking her two sons with her rather than leaving them in danger of their lives as hostages in Kathmandu. The King then announced his intention of making a pilgrimage to Benaras to expiate his sins. Crown Prince Surendra was appointed Regent and the rest of the royal family left Kathmandu to go into exile on 23 November 1846.

Benaras now became the centre of numerous intrigues against Jang Bahadur—intrigues by the King’s party, the Queen’s supporters, the Pandes, the Basniats and the families of the late Fateh Jang Shah and Abhiman Singh. To defuse the situation Jang Bahadur invited King Rajendra back to Nepal, but the King replied that he would not return unless he were accompanied by the Queen. This Jang Bahadur would not allow. He told the King that if he did not return forthwith, he would set Crown Prince Surendra on the throne in his place. The Queen’s response to this threat was predictable—she despatched two professional assassins to murder the Prime Minister. The King, in witless fashion, gave them a letter stating that they had been deputed to kill Jang Bahadur and that anyone who hindered them would be flayed alive when he, King Rajendra, caught up with them. The assassins were arrested in Kathmandu with loaded pistols and this astounding document in their possession. Jang Bahadur wasted no time in adroitly turning this latest threat to his life to his own advantage. Summoning the garrison to the Tundikhel, the vast parade ground in the centre of

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Distant view of Kathmandu seen from the road to Patan. A water colour painted in April 1853 by Henry Ambrose Oldfield, the surgeon at the British Residency in Kathmandu.

(Reproduced by kind permission of the India Office Library and Records, London.)
Raganath Pandit, the former mukhtiyar and raj guru who joined King Rajendra in exile in Benaras. He persuaded the ex-King to launch an ill-fated invasion of Nepal in order to regain the throne, but he himself did not leave the safety of British India.
Kathmandu, he held up the King's letter and called upon the soldiers to carry out Rajendra's order to assassinate him. The troops surged around him, demanding the deposition of the King. With popular feeling running strongly in his favour Jang Bahadur promulgated an order deposing King Rajendra and setting the Heir Apparent on the throne. The date was 12 May 1847. The next day the Prime Minister summoned the Council of State and the following letter was drafted, signed by 370 civil and military officers, and despatched to ex-King Rajendra in Benaras:

Whereas Your Majesty, leaguing with the Pandes, has caused the death of the able Minister, Bhim Sen Thapa, and then, allying yourself with the opposite party of the Thapas, has caused the death of large numbers of the Pandes; whereas, in conjunction with the Junior Queen Laxmi Devi, you have caused the murder of another Minister, Mathbar Singh; whereas, in contravention of law, established usage and family tradition, you have alienated your sovereign authority to the Queen and thus caused the massacres at the Kot and the Bandarkhel; whereas, from your residence in a foreign country you have sent orders for the murder of the present Minister, Jang Bahadur, it appears that you are unfit to rule the country over whose destinies Providence has placed you to preside. And hence by the unanimous will of the nobles and the people we have set up Prince Surendra Bikram Shah on the throne of Nepal. And be it known unto you that from this day you have ceased to reign. It is not our intention to keep you in banishment, should you wish to return home, but is quite determined that you shall have no share in the administration of affairs, nor possess any public authority. The Government is prepared to grant you a handsome allowance if you choose to reside in British territory. But if you should prefer to return to your country, we assure you that you shall receive every attention and honour as befits the position of an ex-Sovereign of Nepal.

When the Queen read the Council's letter she made another tactical error. She persuaded ex-King Rajendra to invade Nepal.

While the ex-King was still assembling his forces in the Tarai with the help of the late Fateh Jang Shah's brother, Chautariya Guru Prasad Shah, Jang Bahadur sent five regiments south under his brother, Bam Bahadur, to intercept him. In a surprise night attack on the royal encampment at Alau on 28 July 1847, about 100 of the invaders were killed and the rest, including Guru Prasad Shah, fled back into India. Rajendra was captured and escorted back to Kathmandu where he spent the remainder of his days in close confinement, though in a manner befitting his royal status.

By the end of 1847, then, Jang Bahadur had concentrated all political power in his hands. Ex-King Rajendra lived in obscurity and King Surendra himself was excluded from all affairs of state. The monarchy had been reduced to a formal institution. The political purges of 1846 had eliminated all the leaders of the old nobility and they had been replaced by a new aristocracy that depended entirely for its existence upon Jang Bahadur, who was now firmly established as the fountainhead of all power and patronage in the land.
PART TWO

NEPAL UNDER THE RANAS
3

Jang Bahadur
(1846–1856)
3. Jang Bahadur (1846-1856)

It was to take Jang Bahadur one full year from 15 September 1846, when he assumed the prime ministership in the bloody aftermath of the Kot Massacre, until he finally removed all political challenge to his rule: one full year during which he skilfully used a series of orchestrated and fortuitous events to destroy the old aristocracy and neutralise the influence of the royal family.

First came the reallocation of all key positions in the administration and the army to his brothers and relatives, closely followed by a massive purge in which the families of the nobles who had perished in the Kot Massacre or fled the country or were exiled and forbidden to return upon pain of death. Next, the Queen's ill-fated attempt to assassinate Jang Bahadur in the Bandarkhel Palace resulted in her exile to Benaras and King Rajendra's timely decision to appoint Crown Prince Surendra as regent and accompany his wife to India.

For his part, Surendra proved to be a totally compliant Regent. He had known Jang Bahadur's mettle since the days when he had ordered him to perform such dangerous and pointless feats as jumping off a bridge on horseback and leaping down a well. Any doubts he might have had about the man's thirst for power and the ruthlessness with which he was prepared to pursue it would have been dispelled when he was hauled against his will to the Kot in the early hours of 15 September 1846 to witness the ghastly aftermath of Jang Bahadur's handiwork. Moreover, the Prime Minister had begun to appropriate elements of the sovereign power. At the *pajani* of October 1846, it was not the King who reconfirmed or reallocated all civil and military offices, as had been the monarch's prerogative since the days of King Prithvi Narayan Shah—it was Jang Bahadur. And when the Council of Nobles considered the fate of the Queen following the failed Bandarkhel conspiracy of October 1846, it was not the King who summoned the *Bharadari Sabha*, as had been the monarch's prerogative since the founding of the Shah dynasty—it was Jang Bahadur.
King Surendra. 1847-1881.
Then, in May 1847, Jang Bahadur performed a feat unprecedented in Nepalese history: the deposition of a king by a member of the nobility. While the old nobility had, at times, been powerful enough to influence the choice of regent during the minority of a ruler, the new nobility was powerful enough to actually depose a reigning monarch.

Although King Rajendra’s departure for Benaras had removed one obstacle from Jang Bahadur’s path to absolute power, it had created another, for an essentially internal power struggle had now been externalised and the attitude of the British in India became a matter to be reckoned with. The British, for their part, thought it expedient to defer recognition of the new King. They cited their policy of waiting for family power struggles within the ruling houses of independent states to settle down before recognising the emergent winner. Moreover, the Governor-General, Lord Hardinge, regarded the means by which Jang Bahadur had gained power as “inhuman and reprehensible” and he was anxious to avoid any appearance of supporting a violent change of government in Nepal. He felt that Jang Bahadur’s violence had so unnerved Rajendra that he was frightened to return to Kathmandu and that he needed time to come to an accommodation with Surendra. Besides, he argued, the British could hardly recognise Surendra so long as Rajendra, who was in India on a holy pilgrimage as King of Nepal, remained on British territory. The British position, then, would be one of strict neutrality.

British reluctance to recognise Surendra unsettled Jang Bahadur considerably and he worked on the British Resident, Major Thoresby, to persuade his government that the delay was unreasonable and improper, and that recognition would offer the prospect of closer and more friendly relations. By the end of June 1847, Thoresby was arguing in his despatches to the Governor-General that the delay in recognising Surendra was violating the very spirit of neutrality that it was intended to uphold. In the event, the issue was decided by Rajendra’s ill-judged invasion of Nepal, his capture on 28 July 1847 and his return to Kathmandu as a virtual state prisoner. Two months later the British recognised Surendra as King. And so, one year after his assumption of power, Jang Bahadur’s political security was assured.

Attempts on the Life of the Prime Minister

His personal security, however, was not so assured, for one of the conspirators left behind in Benaras, the chautariya Guru Prasad Shah, laboured unceasingly to have the Prime Minister murdered. On 11 April 1848, two of his hired assassins were discovered hiding in a cornfield besides the road to Patan, minutes before Jang Bahadur was to pass by. They were put on trial and made a full confession before they were hanged. On 27 July 1848, three of his hired assassins were apprehended in a house in Kathmandu. One died trying to avoid arrest and the other two confessed
and were imprisoned for life. Shortly afterwards, the arch-conspirator induced a maid-servant in Jang Bahadur's household to lace the Prime Minister's drinking water with arsenic, but the plot was discovered. Some months later, judging the assassination business to be played out, Guru Prasad Shah sued for a pardon—and an annuity. Jang Bahadur pardoned him, restored all his confiscated property and made him a Colonel in the army. The following year he resigned his commission, purchased a farm in the Tarai and spent the rest of his days as a peaceful cultivator.

**Problems with British India**

Having established political control over the Kingdom, Jang Bahadur then set out to centralise the country's economy. The entire Rana period, in fact, was to be one of increasing administrative centralisation with the Prime Minister as the focal point. In the purge that followed his rise to power, Jang Bahadur had confiscated the vast *jagir* holdings in the Tarai of those nobles who had perished in the Kot Massacre or had subsequently been banished. This had increased the government's revenue considerably and, since the entire budget surplus was appropriated by the Prime Minister himself, Jang Bahadur decided that agricultural land in the Tarai would remain in the possession of the government and not be allocated anew as *jagir*. He now set out to codify the Tarai's revenue regulations, compile systematic cadastral records and remodel the land tax collection system. The land tax on what little government land had been left in the Tarai in the past had been collected by *chaudharis*, persons born and raised in the district who had five year contracts from the government to collect taxes from five or six villages. Jang Bahadur wanted to replace the *chaudharis* with salaried revenue collectors from Kathmandu, but because of their susceptibility to the *awal* fever the task had to be assigned to local inhabitants. And this, in turn, created a serious problem: there was nothing to stop local revenue collectors from collecting the taxes then absconding into neighbouring British territory.

The solution, it seemed, lay in improving relations with the British to the point where they would be agreeable to handing the absconders back; and the best way to improve relations, in the estimation of the Prime Minister, was to offer the British military assistance at the next possible opportunity.

In May 1848, with trouble brewing between the British and the Sikhs, Jang Bahadur offered them the services of 3,000 troops. The Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, declined the offer, believing that it had not been made out of any commitment to the British cause but out of a need to keep the Nepalese army gainfully employed and thus away from political mischief. In October 1848, with the British and the Sikhs at war, Jang Bahadur offered the services of 6,000 troops. The offer was again declined.
In December 1848, the Prime Minister, the King and all the senior civil officials of the Kingdom, set out for the Tarai on what was to be a combined hunting trip and inspection tour of the area whose administration Jang Bahadur was in the process of radically reforming. Much to the alarm of the British, whose military resources were stretched to the limit by the Second Sikh War, the party was accompanied by 7,000 troops, 300 cavalry and 52 field guns. Within three weeks, however, their progress was halted by an outbreak of malaria that claimed almost 400 lives and the expedition was forced to return to Kathmandu.

Jang Bahadur now sought to remedy the problem of the absconding revenue collectors through legal channels. For some years there had been an agreement between Kathmandu and Calcutta covering the extradition of persons guilty of serious crimes such as murder, dacoity and thugi. As offences of this nature were rare in Nepal, the arrangement was relatively more advantageous to the British. Under the terms of the agreement, border magistrates in British India reported cases to the British Resident in Kathmandu, who then requested the darbar to instruct the concerned subba in the Tarai to surrender the fugitive. As a gesture of cooperation, Jang Bahadur allowed British magistrates to approach Nepalese officials in the Tarai directly, but the gesture was not reciprocated, for when the Nepalese sought to have the extradition agreement extended to cattle thieves and persons who misappropriated public moneys, the British refused on the ill-informed grounds that the Nepalese legal system was harsh and prescribed brutal punishments for even minor offences.
Frustrated in his attempts to stop the haemorrhaging of government revenue, Jang Bahadur decided to go over the head of the Governor-General in Calcutta and make direct contact with the ultimate British authority in London. King Surendra was prevailed upon to put forward the proposal of sending a Nepalese embassy to England, to be headed by the Prime Minister. The declared object of the delegation was “to see and bring back intelligence respecting the greatness and prosperity of the country and its capital, the perfection to which social conditions have been raised and the extent to which Art and Science have been made available to the comforts of life.” The real objectives of the delegation, however, were to make a show of goodwill towards Britain, whose power in India was unassailable now that she had annexed the Punjab, to enhance Jang Bahadur’s standing in Kathmandu by being personally received at Court by the British Queen, to establish a direct line of communication with London that bypassed the Governor-General in Calcutta, and to settle the revenue embezzlement problem at the highest levels of the British Government.

Jang Bahadur’s Visit to Europe

Leaving the administration of Nepal in the hands of his trusted brothers—Bam Bahadur as acting Prime Minister, Badri Narsingh as Commander-in-Chief, Krishna Bahadur as head of the Civil Department and Ranaudip Singh as Governor of the Eastern and Western provinces—Jang Bahadur and the Nepalese delegation set out from Kathmandu on 15 January 1850 and reached Calcutta seven weeks later, having stopped for a fortnight’s hunting in the Tarai. By oriental standards it was a small delegation, consisting as it did of 16 officials, a physician, an artist, four cooks and 22 servants. Its principal members, apart from the Prime Minister himself, were Jang Bahadur’s two youngest brothers, Jagat Shumsher and Dhir Shumsher, Senior Captain Ran Mehar Adhikari and the kaji Karbir Khatri.

Dhir Shumsher resembled Jang Bahadur in energy and fearlessness though he lacked his brother’s vision. He was an accomplished swordsman and a soldier of skill and determination. Above all he was modest and without personal ambition. Throughout his life he was a devoted supporter of the Prime Minister. He was to make a most favourable impression on his British hosts, who described him as thoroughly English in manner and disposition. He must also have been a man of considerable personal charm and tact, for under his ever jovial exterior he was, in fact, anti-British to the core. Ran Mehar Adhikari was a childhood friend and lifelong confidant of Jang Bahadur who had taken a leading role in the events surrounding the Prime Minister’s rise to power.
Dhir Shumsher Rana.
Karbir Khatri was a veteran of numerous diplomatic missions for the Nepalese Government. He had journeyed to Peking on several occasions, and in November 1840 he had been arrested by the British in Benaras while carrying secret letters to Lahore proposing an anti-British alliance with the Sikhs. This irascible old man had apparently been included in the delegation because he was suspected of having embezzled the royal treasury and Jang Bahadur wished to keep him under surveillance. Although he was shrewd and intelligent, he was also a religious bigot who was thoroughly disgusted at the prospect of travelling to the land of the beef-eaters. As he was already out of favour with the Prime Minister he made no attempt while in England to hide his true feelings from the British.

Calcutta received them brilliantly with 19-gun salutes, civic receptions and grand balls. On 7 April 1850 the party boarded a P&O steamer for the six-week voyage to England. There, the first native potentate to arrive from the distant and mysterious East captured the imagination of London’s high society. Jang Bahadur was the guest of honour at numerous receptions and dinners. He visited the opera, the theatre, the horse races at Epsom and the boat races on the Thames. He toured all the places of historic interest in the capital and was received by Queen Victoria in private audience on several occasions. British newspapers carried breathless descriptions of the party’s exotic customs and dress, faithfully reporting their busy round of engagements and even publishing verses of satirical doggerel in their honour.

While this mutual display of goodwill and his reception at Court fulfilled two of the objectives of Jang Bahadur’s visit, the other two goals eluded him. On 29 June 1850, the Prime Minister met with the Court of Directors of the East India Company and discussed the reciprocal surrender of criminals and political offenders. To Jang Bahadur’s extreme frustration the talks were inconclusive, the Directors insisting that they could not decide any political matters concerning India without first obtaining the opinion of the Government of India. Jang Bahadur should have anticipated that the Directors would use such a tactic to avoid a definitive response: in 1836, Bhim Sen Thapa had been told that he should present his political requests to the Resident in Kathmandu and not directly to the Governor-General in India. Jang Bahadur did not press the point but asked instead for a reply to the complimentary letter he had delivered from King Surendra to Queen Victoria so that he could leave for home as soon as possible. The delegation’s liaison officer, Captain Orfeur Cavenagh, feared that if Jang Bahadur left London at that juncture, having experienced only its social life and adulation, he would take away an inadequate impression of British power and an exaggerated one of his own importance. He therefore persuaded the party not to terminate its mission immediately but to undertake a tour of England and Scotland. And so, for three weeks, the
Jang Bahadur (1846-1856)

Jagat Shumsher. 1851.
Nepalese were shown the military and industrial might of Britain. They visited arsenals and ordnance factories, reviewed a naval squadron off Plymouth, inspected cotton mills, iron foundaries and farms, and even went down a coal mine.

The Nepalese delegation left England on 21 August 1850. It spent six weeks in France then took ship for India, arriving back in Calcutta on 19 December. From Calcutta, the party travelled along the Grand Trunk Road to Benaras where they stayed almost three weeks, during which time Jang Bahadur married the daughter of the ex-Raja of Coorg. The delegation reached Kathmandu on 6 February 1851. Jang Bahadur had been away for just over one year.

Despite the fact that he did not achieve all of his objectives, Jang Bahadur could, in the final analysis, count his visit to Europe as a huge success. Although he had failed to establish a direct line of communication with London that bypassed the Governor-General in Calcutta, British officials in India now began to treat him with a new found respect, the like of which had not been accorded to any earlier Prime Minister of Nepal. Although he did not resolve the problem of the absconding revenue collectors while he was in London, negotiations on extradition matters were resumed after his return home and resulted in a treaty in 1855. The Court of Directors did not allow revenue embezzlement to be included within its scope, but this omission was finally rectified in a supplementary treaty in 1866. Jang Bahadur was the first potentate to risk losing his caste by crossing the ocean—the kalo pani, the “black water” so dreaded by Hindus—to find out the real nature and strength of the European power that had ended the independent political existence of most of the States of the Indian subcontinent. As a result, while persisting with Nepal’s traditional isolation and the exclusion of foreigners, friendship with the British power became the cornerstone of his foreign policy; a foreign policy that was to be rigidly and conscientiously followed by his successors for a century to come. The visit also had an enduring influence on policy initiatives and decisions on internal issues of critical importance to the state. The regime became milder after Jang Bahadur’s return home and the treatment of political opponents became more lenient. There was a general easing of the severity of judicial penalties and a Law Council, the Ain Khana, was appointed to reform and codify the laws of the Kingdom.

The Badri Narsingh Plot

Jang Bahadur’s biographers record that, barely a week after his return from England, he faced another conspiracy against his life. Towards midnight on 16 February 1851, Bam Bahadur, the man whom he had entrusted with the administration of the country during his prolonged absence, called at the Prime Minister’s residence at Thapathali. The two
Badri Narsingh Rana, who allegedly planned to assassinate his brother, Jang Bahadur, after his return from Europe in 1851.
brothers sat for some time in silence by the fire when, quite without warning, Bam Bahadur burst into tears and proceeded to reveal the details of a plot in which he was unwillingly implicated: Jang Bahadur was to be assassinated the next day. Their brother, Badri Narsingh, the man whom Jang Bahadur had entrusted with the command of the armies during his absence, had hired an assassin to shoot him while he was on his way to Basantpur on the outskirts of Kathmandu. As soon as Jang Bahadur had been despatched, Prince Upendra would murder his brother, King Surendra, and seize the throne. The new monarch would then appoint Bam Bahadur as Prime Minister and Badri Narsingh as Commander-in-Chief. The originator of the plot was their cousin, Jai Bahadur Konwar, who had borne a grudge against the Prime Minister ever since he had been reprimanded for accepting a bribe from a landholder. Kaji Karbir Khatri, who had accompanied Jang Bahadur on his visit to Europe, was also implicated. His role was to put it about that Jang Bahadur had lost his caste by eating with non-Hindus during his travels. It was hoped that this ritual pollution would so shock the deeply religious Nepalese people that they would not be unduly distressed when the Prime Minister met an abbreviated end. Following the coup d’etat, Jai Bahadur Konwar and Karbir Khatri were to be appointed to the most senior positions in the country’s administration after those of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief.

Bam Bahadur assured his brother that he had taken no part in planning the conspiracy: he had merely been told by the ringleaders two days beforehand of the part they had in mind for him. He assured Jang Bahadur that he had no wish to play the role that had been assigned to him, but that he had delayed revealing the plot because it had presented him with a terrible dilemma: he could only save the life of his older brother by dooming the younger to death.

Jang Bahadur accepted his brother’s assurances of innocence. Then, escorted by his household guards, he went immediately to the Kot and called the garrison there to arms. His brother, Jagat Shumsher, was sent to arrest Jai Bahadur Konwar; his trusted friend Ran Mehar Adhikari was despatched to arrest Badri Narsingh; and another brother, Ranaudip Singh, was ordered to arrest Karbir Khatri and Prince Upendra. Each of them was accompanied by 100 soldiers. To forestall any armed resistance, Dhir Shumsher roused the city guard and mustered a body of the Prime Minister’s own regiment. Within two hours the conspirators were standing in chains before a hastily convened court. The prisoners denied all knowledge of a plot so the court was adjourned until the following day when the accused again protested their innocence. But a search of Badri Narsingh’s house had brought to light a document under his seal that incriminated them all. Confronted with this evidence, Badri Narsingh confessed.
Having settled the question of their guilt, Jang Bahadur assembled the Council of State to pass sentence on them. King Surendra and ex-King Rajendra attended but took no part in the deliberations; they merely agreed that whatever punishment was meted out should be inflicted upon Prince Upendra as well. The Council decided that the conspirators should all be beheaded, but Jang Bahadur refused to endorse a death sentence. Then the Council decided that they should all be blinded with hot irons, but Jang Bahadur refused to countenance mutilation. It was suggested next that they be taken down to the Tarai and left in iron cages to die of malaria, but again the Prime Minister refused to agree. Instead, he proposed that the British Government be asked to confine the prisoners in the fortress of Allahabad for 30 years. The Council of Nobles agreed, as did the Governor-General, and the prisoners left Kathmandu under a heavily armed escort on 24 June 1851.

Jang Bahadur's biographers have been content to let the whole episode rest uncritically at this point, but if the details and the evidence surrounding the plot are subjected to careful scrutiny, an intriguing possibility emerges: there was no conspiracy; the whole affair was a fabrication.

Firstly, the only source of information about the conspiracy was Jang Bahadur himself, who described the details to the British Resident, Captain Ramsey. And Ramsey's view that the Prime Minister was a man who always made the most economical use of the truth is well documented. In 1854 he wrote “Jang has little, if any, regard for the truth. I have never met a native sirdar of rank so apparently devoid of it. He seems to think that departure from it is not only excusable but it is a sign of superior acuteness and intelligence.” In 1856 he wrote “Jang is most untruthful. In fact, there is no believing a word in what he says.” Then, in 1858, he wrote “Our records team with allusions to Jang Bahadur's falsehoods. Political lies, he declares, are necessary.”

Secondly, the story contains several glaring ambiguities. No witnesses were ever produced to give evidence against the conspirators—even Bam Bahadur was not asked to confront them when they refused to confess. Prince Upendra was not questioned and no evidence was produced to implicate him. The assassin who was to have shot Jang Bahadur only a few hours after the plot was revealed was never traced. The contents of the incriminating document found in Badri Narsingh's house were never revealed and the document itself has not survived.

Thirdly, the story begs several questions. Why would Prince Upendra plot to murder King Surendra when contemporary observation showed a close attachment between the two brothers? If Jai Bahadur Konwar had been guilty of taking bribes, why, on the eve of his departure for England, did Jang Bahadur appoint him Inspector General of Land Revenue, a post that offered tremendous opportunities for soliciting bribes? Why would
Kaji Karbir Khatri spread the story that Jang Bahadur had lost caste when it was universally known that the Prime Minister had been purified after his return from England by the Brahmins at Benaras in accordance with religious rites acceptable to orthodox Hindus in Nepal? And why did Jang Bahadur, a man not noted for his compassion, refuse to endorse the death sentence for the prisoners and propose instead that they be incarcerated in British India?

The truth may well be that the conspiracy was fabricated in order to remove Badri Narsingh, who had come to pose an unacceptable threat to the Prime Minister. He was enormously popular with the army and he was bitterly and outspokenly opposed to what he and many of the nobles saw as Jang Bahadur’s policy of subservience to the British. In fact, Jang Bahadur had, for this very reason, received a noticeably cool reception upon his return from Europe, and he may well have feared that Badri Narsingh might become a focus of political discontent. The conspiracy provided a device for removing him from Nepal for as long as it took to purge his supporters from the officer corps and for the long term benefits of Jang Bahadur’s foreign policy to become apparent to the nobles. Prince Upendra was implicated in the conspiracy because Jang Bahadur could not resist an opportunity to lower the prestige of the royal family. Jai Bahadur Konwar and Kaji Karbir Khatri were simply pawns in the power game. No sooner had the prisoners arrived in Allahabad than Jang Bahadur reduced their sentences from thirty years to five, and when Jai Bahadur Konwar
died of cholera in prison in September 1853 he ordered the release of the others and their return to Kathmandu. They had been away for less than three years.

The Legal System Reviewed and Codified

Following the most far-reaching review of the law ever undertaken, a comprehensive Legal Code, the Muluki Ain, was promulgated in January 1854. It was arguably Jang Bahadur’s greatest and most lasting accomplishment.

In their earliest days, as in most traditional oriental monarchies, the hill principalities of Nepal were governed by the personal commands of their kings but, gradually, the customs of the community and the principles enshrined in the Hindu šāstras came to influence the rulers in laying down laws for their communities. In Gorkha, King Ram Shah (1606-1633) promulgated a legal code of about 40 articles, though the text has not survived, and after the conquests of King Prithvi Narayan Shah these laws were applied throughout the newly acquired territories. Gorkhali law, however, was far from being an instrument of efficient and modern administration, for large and important parts of it remained at a fairly elementary stage of development, most of it was in the form of customary law and very little of it had been committed to writing. The task of codifying the law was taken up by Jang Bahadur as part of his programme for modernising the administration.

Within a month of his return from England in 1851, Jang Bahadur appointed a Law Council, the Ain Kausal, to reform and codify the law. The 230-member Council included all the senior Ranas, the dharmadharma adhikaar, rajgurus, the chautariyas and most of the civil and military officers of the Kingdom. The Ain Kausal deliberated for almost three years. Finally, on 6 January 1854, the Legal Code, the Muluki Ain, was promulgated under the Red Seal of King Surendra, the Red Seal of Crown Prince Trailokya and the Yellow Seal of ex-King Rajendra.

The new Legal Code was based upon “the šāstras, moral principles and the experience of the law”,—sources that correspond to the three sources of justice mentioned in the Manu Smriti, the most authoritative legal treatises of ancient Hinduism: the scriptures, reasoning and local customs.

As the preamble to the Muluki Ain notes, one of its objectives was to impose uniformity on the administration of justice, according to caste:

Prior to this, officers in various courts and offices of this country, while deciding cases, awarded different punishments to different persons for the same offences. There was no uniformity in that respect. Henceforth, the punishment awarded to all people, high and low, must be uniform and in accordance with the crime and the caste of the person.

The Muluki Ain, which runs to about 1,400 pages, was a comprehensive attempt to regulate all aspects of social, religious and commercial life. The
legislators left nothing to the discretion of those who were to implement it. Its scope extended from major social issues such as murder, crimes against the state and the violation of caste laws, to minor personal offences such as indecent exposure and spitting on other people. It regulated, for example, religious endowments and charitable trusts, land tenure and land measurement, the rights of landowners and the duties of cultivators, the sale and exchange of property, the division of inheritances, the conduct of government officials, the purchase and sale of slaves, the welfare of widows and orphans, the duty of the state towards destitute and invalid citizens, the practice of suti and civil and criminal procedure and punishment. It prescribed rules for social behaviour, marriage regulations and a code of punishment based on caste. Considered in its entirety, the Legal Code was both a comprehensive manual of the law and a faithful mirror of contemporary Nepalese life.

All officials were instructed to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Muluki Ain and those who contravened it, either deliberately or in ignorance, were liable to be fined or dismissed and imprisoned. Provision was made for regular amendments and additions to be drawn up by a panel of bharadars and then to be approved by the Prime Minister and promulgated by the King. Corrections or modifications to the text of the Muluki Ain could only be made by the head of the Ain Khana, the Law Office. Anyone who made unauthorised alterations to the Legal Code was liable to eight years imprisonment.
As well as introducing fear of punishment amongst court officials for any variation from the procedures laid down in the Legal Code, Jang Bahadur also introduced fear of punishment amongst complainants. The *Muluki Ain* was based on the premise that it was everyone’s responsibility to maintain law and order. If someone saw an offence being committed but did not come forward to report it, he would be punished. Persons who brought a violation of the law to the notice of the court were rewarded if their allegations were correct but punished if their claims could not be proved. For example, if a citizen complained that a plot of government land was being occupied illegally and if, upon investigation, the complaint was proved to be correct then the land would be conferred by the Prime Minister upon the complainant and his descendents so long as they continued to pay government taxes. But if the complaint proved to be incorrect then the complainant was fined an amount of money equal to the value of one year’s produce of that land. Many sections of the *Muluki Ain* provide for the punishment of complainants who fail to prove the truth of their allegations. An unproved complaint of intent to murder, for example, was punished by two years imprisonment while an unproved charge of theft was fined by an amount equal to the value of goods that had allegedly been stolen.

The Legal Code reduced the savagery and severity of punishments, and sentences of death and mutilation were henceforth awarded less frequently. Treason, rebellion, desertion in time of war, homicide and cow killing remained capital offences, but the punishments for manslaughter and the maiming of a cow were reduced to life imprisonment. Trial by
ordeal, a custom which so offended British officials in India, probably because they misunderstood the nature of it as practised in Nepal, was also abolished.

It was a general principle of the *Muluki Ain* that loss of life was to be paid for by loss of life—"an eye for an eye"—the only exceptions being that Brahmans and women were never put to death. In accordance with religious tradition, the Legal Code specified that no Brahmin could be awarded the death penalty, regardless of his crime. Instead, he had his head shaven, all sorts of unclean things were forced into his mouth to contaminate his caste, and then he was taken to the frontier and expelled from the Kingdom. Women, too, were never executed, though they could be imprisoned, branded, deprived of caste, mutilated, condemned to slavery or banished. In crimes of murder, the person who ordered the murder, the person who held the victim and the person who actually carried out the murder were all considered to be equally guilty. Serious injury was held to be murder if the injured person died within 22 days, otherwise the severity of the punishment depended upon the severity of the injury. Blinding a person in one eye, for example, was punishable with six years imprisonment, while a person blinding another in both eyes was branded and his entire property was confiscated and given to the injured party. If someone rendered a person incapable of working, he was punished with 10 years imprisonment, reducible to two years if the victim recovered.

In the order of severity of the punishments prescribed, murder was followed by robbery and theft, the penalties for which increased with each
On 15 March 1854 the leading civic officials, military officers, priests and merchants of the capital assembled on the Tundikhel for the unveiling of a statue of Jang Bahadur Rana that had been erected in his honour by public subscription.

repetition of the offence: a fine equal to the value of the goods for a first offence: a fine equal to twice the value of the goods for a second offence; six years imprisonment for a third offence; nine years imprisonment for a fourth offence, and so on. Theft of military equipment and agricultural implements was punished far more severely. A finder of lost articles was protected from prosecution in the event that the loser came forward to claim them, provided that he had informed the court of his find. He would simply have to return the goods. But if he kept the goods without informing the courts and the loser came forward to claim them, then he would have to pay the court a penalty equal to 20 per cent of their value, in addition to returning them. The loser paid 10 per cent of the value of the goods to the court.

Offences relating to caste were punishable according to the castes of the offender and the offended. The Muluki Ain devoted a considerable amount of its attention to offences against caste, and about one-third of the Legal Code was devoted to the complex rules pertaining to diet, marriages and sexual relationships.

The Legal Code of 1854 imposed a complete ban on gambling, but this was later eased when it was found to be unenforceable. Gaming was allowed under certain restrictive conditions during major religious festivals: bets could be made only with ready cash, for example, and gambling with movable property such as jewellery, household utensils or animals was punishable with fines. To curb the worst excesses of gambling, it was
forbidden for anyone to extend a cash loan during those periods when gambling was permitted.

There was no categorical prohibition in the Muluki Ain against *suti* as the practice was not considered to be morally offensive. Certain women were, however, forbidden to commit self-immolation: those who had a second husband, those who were pregnant, those who had a daughter of less than five years of age or a son of less than 16, and wives who were themselves younger than 16. Jang Bahadur could have outlawed a social evil of long standing by totally prohibiting *suti* but he was not inclined either by education or temperament to initiate social reform. Fear of social opposition made him similarly disinclined to tackle the issue of child marriage. The legal minimum age at which females could be married off, remained at five.

Ranaudip Singh. 1851.
One interesting feature of the new Legal Code was that a prison term could be commuted to a fine, the general rate of conversion being Rs 5 for every month of sentence.

There was no division of jurisdiction between different law courts throughout the Kingdom. Any court could hear civil and criminal matters, torts, contracts and cases concerning transfer of property. There were no court fees, as such, though the winner of a case had to pay the court a levy equal to 20 per cent of the amount of his settlement. This levy was known as jitouri. Similarly, the loser paid a levy, known as harouri, equal to 10 per cent of the winner’s settlement. As a portion of these levies was used to pay the salaries of the court officials, and as a plaintiff had a choice as to the court before which he would place his case, it was clearly in the interest of court officials to establish a reputation for honesty and integrity.

A unique feature of the new Legal Code in a country where communication was so difficult, was a statute of limitations designed to ensure the quick disposal of cases. Once a suit had been filed, the defendant was given 35 days, plus travelling time, in which to present his case. Travelling times from various parts of the Kingdom were calculated and prescribed in the Muluki Ain, the maximum being 110 days for inhabitants of the far west of the country whose cases were being heard in Kathmandu. If the defendant did not turn up within the time limit there was a presumption that he had lost his case and the court was authorised to find in favour of the plaintiff. If the plaintiff failed to appear the accused would be presumed innocent and the plaintiff would then be punished as a false complainant.

Another factor that contributed to the quick settlement of cases was the absence of lawyers and the simplicity of pleadings. Most of the pleadings were made through sworn verbal statements by the plaintiff and the defendant or their relatives and friends. The sole qualification for the appointment of a person as an investigating officer, a bichari, was that he should know how to read. No legal expertise was required since the Legal Code was an exhaustive enumeration of what might be termed a plain man’s solution to the varied social problems of daily life in accordance with time-honoured custom.

A characteristic feature of Nepalese law from ancient times was that political offences, such as an attempt to overthrow a King or Prime Minister, were excluded from the jurisdiction of common law. Consistent with this, no reference to such crimes was included in the Muluki Ain. Punishment for political crimes, formerly dictated by the whims of the monarch, were determined throughout the Rana period exclusively by the Prime Minister, after or without trial. Depending on the status of the offender and the exigencies of power politics, the usual punishment was confiscation of property followed by death or exile.
While the Muluki Ain of 1854 codified the law, such reforms as it contained were introduced strictly within the context of the legal system that had prevailed since the time of King Prithvi Narayan Shah. There was no quantum leap towards European liberalism brought about by Jang Bahadur’s exposure to English law or the Code Napoleon, such as the British Resident and the British authorities in India sought to portray. The new Legal Code made no major changes either to substantive law or to the rules of evidence and procedure because Jang Bahadur was not in a position to introduce reforms that were alien to the traditional Nepalese legal system. The lack of adequate means of communication, the lack of qualifications on the part of the bicharis, and the rigid caste system that the Legal Code itself sought to reinforce were all factors that would have precluded any sweeping changes. Moreover, Jang Bahadur did not dare introduce any changes to custom and tradition that might have encouraged social unrest for fear that this might be exploited by his political opponents. Rather, he was careful to cultivate the goodwill of the conservative sections of society by affixing his seal to prevailing social mores.

The compilation of the Legal Code by a large body of persons, neither including nor appointed by the King, was a radical departure from the Nepalese tradition of the King as law-giver. Jang Bahadur had not only usurped the royal prerogatives of making appointments and conferring jagirs, he had also deprived the monarch of his position as the source of all law. The King’s personal source of legal power and authority had been abolished and an impersonal body of rules for the administration of his Kingdom had taken its place.

Although the Muluki Ain of 1854 was modified from time to time, it continued as the Legal Code of Nepal until 1962. The present Nepalese Legal Code, which came into force in 1963, retains many of the provisions of its predecessor.

Enhancing the Status of the Konwar Family

In May 1854, Jang Bahadur’s carefully calculated plan to raise the social status of his family was crowned with success. His eldest son, Jagat Jang, married the eldest daughter of King Surendra and his Senior Queen. Jang Bahadur’s opening strategy, some six years earlier, had been to commission an apocryphal genealogy of the Konwar family that showed it to have descended from the House of Rana, the 14th century rulers of Chittor, whose proud struggle and heroic defence against the Muslim invader was the stuff of legend in Rajasthan. In truth, until the rise of Jang Bahadur, the Konwar family had belonged to the less influential section of the Gorkhali élite which had distinguished itself in the middle echelons of the administration and the army rather than in mainstream politics. It had no claim to a caste status superior to that of the other families of the traditional
Gorkha nobility. But on 5 May 1848, Jang Bahadur received a \textit{lal mohur}, a royal edict bearing the Red Seal of the King, which officially recognised his family’s claim to have descended from the Ranas of Chittor and which entitled him and his brothers to henceforth bear the family name of Rana. Their caste status was greatly enhanced by this more distinguished title and they now found themselves in a position to contract marriages with Indian Rajput families that would normally have disdained any association with the Konwars. The royal edict, however, expressly forbade the Ranas from marrying into the royal family or into any Rajput family in the hills or the Tarai that had a matrimonial connection with the royal family. Despite this prohibition, Jang Bahadur’s next step was to marry into a family of the King’s collaterals. In 1853 he took as his wife Hiranyagarbha Kumari Devi, sister of Fateh Jang Shah, the late Prime Minister who had perished in the Kot Massacre, and of the man who had so relentlessly sought his death, the chautariya Guru Prasad Shah. And now, on 8 May 1854, his eight-year-old son was to marry the King’s six-year-old daughter. For the first time in its history, the royal house of Nepal entered into matrimonial relations with its subjects.

Jagat Jang was carried in procession from the Prime Minister’s residence at Thapathali to the Hanuman Dhoka Palace. The buildings along the way were illuminated with lanterns and oil lamps, and huge crowds lined the route to marvel at the fireworks display or catch a glimpse of the wedding party. The procession was led by several regiments of soldiers and a military band, followed by the nobles and high dignitaries of the Kingdom. The bridegroom, blazing with jewels, was seated in a State palanquin. A
ritual vessel of gold containing the holy water to be used in the marriage rites preceded him. In accordance with tradition, the privilege of carrying this sacred vessel was granted to the oldest female servant in the house of the bridegroom's father. Groups of dancing girls and more regiments of soldiers brought up the rear of the procession. At the Tundikhel the wedding party was met by the bride's father, King Surendra, and escorted to the Hanuman Dhoka Palace where the marriage ceremony was performed. The next evening the newly-weds were conveyed in procession to their house in Thapathali. The bridegroom was seated on an elephant in a golden howdah and the bride in a golden palanquin studded with precious stones. They were followed by over one hundred female attendants waving fans of peacock feathers. Jang Bahadur was also mounted on an elephant, followed by another 70 elephants carrying his relatives and official guests. All the troops in the capital were drawn up in parade on the Tundikhel, and as the procession passed by they discharged repeated volleys of musket fire while the artillery fired a 15-gun salute. The wedding ceremony and the public celebrations were funded by a dowry tax that was traditionally levied on the occasion of the marriage of a king's eldest daughter. On this occasion the dowry tax netted Rs. 671,775 or £138,800 in current terms.

War with Tibet
The Second Nepal-Tibet War of 1792, that had seen Nepal worsted by a Chinese army and obliged to send a tribute mission to Peking every fifth year, had been followed by six decades of peace between the two countries.
It was, however, an uneasy peace—more the outcome of economic and political turmoil inside Nepal than of any desire of the darbar for cordial relations with its northern neighbour. With the rise of a new strongman in the person of Jang Bahadur, Nepal decided to settle her economic grievances with Lhasa and reassert her political dominance up to the Himalayan watershed.

By 1854, serious differences between Nepal and Tibet had emerged on three issues: a border dispute, the violation of Nepalese trading rights in Lhasa, and the ill-treatment of the Nepalese tribute mission to Peking.

Some ten years earlier, the Tibetan government had purchased from Nepal the grazing rights over several ranges of hills south of the frontier post of Khasa, but it was not long before it started to build villages in the area and collect rent from the occupants. Nepal reacted by sending her own revenue collectors into the new villages and warning the Tibetans that if they did not withdraw their officials, the area would be forcibly reoccupied.

On 22 May 1854 the quinquennial Nepalese mission to Peking returned to Kathmandu with harrowing tales of ill-treatment and obstruction by the Tibetans as they passed through their territory. The normal courtesies of food and transport had been withheld and most members of the delegation had perished en route. The survivors had taken almost two years to complete the round trip.

But the issue which brought relations between the two countries to crisis point was the persistent violation of Nepalese trading rights in Lhasa. Nepalese merchants were frequently assaulted, their shops were boycotted and, finally, the resident representative of the Nepalese Government in Lhasa, the vakil, was expelled without warning or explanation.

Taken together, these problem-areas paved the way for a war from which Nepal sought two advantages. Firstly, she hoped to seize the districts of Kuti and Kerong that she had ceded during the Second Nepal-Tibet War. This would enhance her security by eliminating two Tibetan salients on the southern slopes of the Himalayas and pushing the frontiers back up to the watershed. Secondly, she wanted extra-territorial rights for her merchants in Tibet. Political conditions in the region favoured war at this time. Britain was distracted by the Crimean conflict, China was totally preoccupied with the Taiping rebellion, and the political situation inside Tibet was unstable due to the minority of the Dalai Lama.

Nepal was put on a war footing. The production of weapons and munitions was given top priority and thousands of tents, knapsacks and winter uniforms were manufactured. Yaks, sheep, ponies and buffaloes were requisitioned. The export of grain from the Tarai to British India was prohibited and the government bought up all the food it could locate. Every citizen, from king to commoner, was compelled to donate food to the war effort, and this was followed by an order obliging every householder to
transport 32 seers of grain, about 26 kg, to one of the supply depots along the northern frontier. Those who could not afford to hire coolies had to transport the grain themselves. Almost a quarter of a million men were mobilised, leaving only 9,000 soldiers for the defence of the Kathmandu Valley and the Tarai. Doctors, surgeons, carpenters and blacksmiths were conscripted. Government expenditure on war preparations so drained the treasury that after the land revenue for 1854 had been collected, a rebate of 25 per cent was offered to those who paid their taxes for 1855 in advance.

By the spring of 1855 preparations for war were complete and Jang Bahadur served the Tibetans an ultimatum. He would commence hostilities unless they acceded to his three demands: the payment of ten million rupees (over £20 million in today’s terms) as compensation for the losses suffered by Nepalese merchants, the restoration of the Kuti and Kerong districts, and the cession of the district of Taklakot in western Tibet. When no response was forthcoming by March 1855 the Nepalese attacked. One force moved into the Kuti district under the command of Dhir Shumsher and Khadga Bahadur, while another moved through the Mustang region under General Krishna Dhoj.

The Prime Minister himself commanded the principal line of offence through the Kerong region. The Nepalese captured the Kuti, Kerong and Jhunga districts in a swift summer campaign that brought the Tibetans to the negotiating table. The Tibetans, however, saw to it that the talks dragged on until winter set in and the passes back down into Nepal—the Nepalese lines of communication—were snowbound. Then they took the offensive. Sixty thousand Tibetan troops captured Kuti and a further five thousand besieged Jhunga, cutting the garrison off from all supplies and communications. In response, the Nepalese fielded another 14,000 conscripts. Fighting with kukris, lances and bows and arrows because it was too cold to load and fire their muskets, Dhir Shumsher’s forces recaptured Kuti. In appalling winter conditions in the rarefied air of the 4000-metres high desert plateau of Tibet, a Nepalese column relieved Jhunga and Krishna Dhoj’s forces recaptured Taklakot district.

By January 1856 both sides were desperate to end the hostilities. The Tibetans were faced with a serious revolt in Kham Province in the east of the country and Jang Bahadur was faced with an increasingly hostile peasantry. The peasants had not only been obliged to supply food and conscripts for the war effort, but they had also been compelled to provide porters, the demand for which had exceeded 400,000. As a consequence, agricultural production and distribution had been severely disrupted and there had been a sharp increase in the price of food and other basic commodities.

A peace treaty was signed on 24 March 1856, under the terms of which the Tibetans agreed to make an annual payment to Nepal of Rs. 10,000 and
to refrain from imposing customs duties on Nepalese goods. The Nepalese were allowed to establish trade marts in Lhasa and the rights of the Nepalese subjects were defined. In return, the Nepalese withdrew from the occupied districts of Kuti, Kerong and Jhunga.

On balance, it was indeed a Pyrrhic victory for Nepal. She secured extra-territorial rights for her merchants in Tibet and the right to trade in all kinds of merchandise free from customs duty, but she did not enhance her security by annexing the Kuti and Kerong districts up to the watershed, and the Rs. 10,000 exacted as annual tribute hardly offset the Rs. 3 million (£6,200,00 in current terms) expended on the war effort. At the huge victory parade held in Kathmandu on 20 April 1856, the mood was one of relief rather than satisfaction.

* * *

On 1 August 1856, pleading exhaustion from the demands of office, Jang Bahadur suddenly and unexpectedly resigned the prime ministership.
4

Bam Bahadur
(1856–1857)
4. Bam Bahadur (1856-1857)

Bam Bahadur, in poor health despite his relative youth, assumed the prime ministership on 1 August 1856.

It was, in fact, a convenient time for Jang Bahadur to pass the burdens of office to his brother. He had won the laurels of a victorious war against Tibet and had earned the goodwill of the officer corps with extensive promotions and promises of better pay. Now he left Bam Bahadur the thankless task of demobilising the troops and finding the resources to meet the deficit caused by the war.

The Maharajaship of Kaski and Lamjung

But far from relinquishing authority and retiring to private life, Jang Bahadur now manoeuvred himself into a position of even greater political power. On 6 August 1856, only five days after Jang Bahadur had resigned, King Surendra conferred upon him the sovereignty of the two provinces of Kaski and Lamjung and the title of Maharaja. The title and the property were made hereditary. This grant brought about such a fundamental and permanent change in the relative power of the King and Jang Bahadur that the text of the lal mohur bears quoting in full.

"I am pleased with you for the following reasons:
1. You secured to me the throne of Nepal by killing those persons who were helping the Junior Queen of Rajendra Bikram Shah (who had earlier given her the sovereign powers) in her designs of putting her own son on the throne, in deprivation of my rights;
2. You promoted friendship with the Queen of England by your visit to that country;
3. You won the war with Tibet and made her pay a huge sum of money every year;
4. You treated my father, ex-King Rajendra Bikram Shah, with respect and kindness in spite of his conspiracies against your life;
5. You exempted from death sentence and, instead, kept with respect in detention for five (sic) years my younger brother, Prince Upendra Bikram, who was an accomplice in a conspiracy against your life;
6. During your prime ministership you have satisfied the nobility, the soldiery and the peasantry of Nepal, given them justice and promoted peace and prosperity;
7. You have increased the military force of Nepal, observed economy and added to the state exchequer. You have performed these acts of welfare. I promised to abandon the throne if you resigned the ministership but I failed to fulfil my promise even though you resigned the ministership. Without consulting the Queen and the nobles, I conferred the prime ministership on your younger brother after your resignation, at your request. Keeping you without a post while I continue to sit on the throne is against the promise that I undertook. To keep so able a Minister without a post would be, in the eyes of the world, foolish on my part. For this reason: You are hereby conferred the title of Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung. Being the Maharaja of these places, you are authorised to prevent me from trying to coerce the nobility, the peasantry or the soldiery, or from disturbing the friendly relations with the Queen of England and the Emperor of China. At the time of your preventing me from doing so, if I offer any forcible resistance, the nobility and the army will assist you. You will advise the Prime Minister, Bam Bahadur, if he defaults in matters of military, civil and administrative appointments and dismissals, and the promotion of friendship with the Emperors of England and China. If he refuses to abide by your advice and resorts to any force, my chiefs, nobles and the army are hereby asked to act on your orders. You will keep the people of your estates happy. While performing justice, you are granted the power to give death sentence. You are also granted the power, for the period of your lifetime, to kill anyone in my Kingdom who tries to disturb the peace of your estates. All this will be enjoyed by you up to offspring upon offspring. In the Roll of Succession to the prime ministership fixed by me for your brothers, the prime ministership after Dhir Shumsher Konwar Ranaji is bestowed upon your son Jagat Jang Konwar Ranaji."

In summary, Jang Bahadur was granted the power of life and death, the power to appoint and dismiss all civil and military officials, the power to
declare war, conclude peace and sign treaties, and the power to make and
repeal civil, criminal and military laws. These powers could be exercised
throughout Nepal and the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung could even
cocerce the King, the Maharajadhiraj, should the latter mismanage the
affairs of state. By this *lal mohur* King Surendra transferred complete *de jure*
sovereignty over a part of Nepal and partial *de jure* sovereignty over the
whole of Nepal to Jang Bahadur.

As Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, Jang Bahadur now occupied the
highest and most central position in the structure of government—higher
even than the position of Prime Minister from which he had resigned in
favour of Bam Bahadur. However, the *lal mohur* that granted him these
powers contained the seeds of future conflict within the Rana family in the
form of a distinction between the means of succession to the position of
Prime Minister and to that of Maharaja. Appointment to the position of
Prime Minister was made according to the principle of agnatic succession.
That is, the Prime Minister would be succeeded first by all his brothers or
cousins successively, from the oldest to the youngest, and then in the same
manner by all his sons or nephews. In other words, all the males of the same
generation would succeed one after another, to be followed by all the males
of the next generation. This form of succession was nowhere spelled out in
so many words, but it can be clearly inferred from the last sentence of the
*lal mohur* quoted above. By contrast, the maharajaship of Kaski and
Lamjung was to be enjoyed “up to offspring upon offspring”; that is,
according to the principle of primogeniture. This distinction was later to
cause serious and bloody divisions within the ranks of the Ranas.

**Suppressing the Influence of the Monarchy**

Having secured a legal basis for the enhancement of his own powers,
Jang Bahadur then set about completely eradicating the social and political
influence of the King. Henceforth, the King’s personal life was strictly
regulated by the Prime Minister, whose agents were placed in charge of the
royal household. His movements inside and outside the palace were
reported on and he was constantly supervised, whether attending a
ceremonial function or simply taking a stroll in the palace grounds. He was
prevented from seeing anyone outside his immediate family without the
permission of the Prime Minister. All foreign correspondence was returned
unopened to the sender and all internal communications were censored by
the Foreign Office. Only the most innocuous material was allowed to reach
the palace. The King participated in government affairs only as a figurehead,
presiding over the *darbar* on important ceremonial occasions, receiving
foreign envoys and signing important state papers, legislative enactments
and legal instruments. In order to isolate the King even further from his
people and from the affairs of state, Jang Bahadur cultivated the monarch’s
role as a spiritual head, a reincarnation of the god Vishnu. With the help of the Brahmins it became accepted that the King could not risk his sacred person outside the capital nor be absent from the palace for more than twelve hours. This very seclusion rendered the kingship more awe-inspiring to the people and resulted in the King’s being more revered by his subjects.

**Jang Bahadur’s Dilemma**

The next and critical step for Jang Bahadur was to have the British Government recognise him as a Maharaja, since the title was meaningless without external recognition. The Governor-General, however, felt that the recognition of two maharajas, of equal or almost equal status, might provoke a civil war or encourage Jang Bahadur to usurp the throne, so the British Resident was reminded that he was accredited only to the Maharajadhiraj of Nepal and instructed not to recognise any other authority. British insistence on transacting business with Nepal exclusively through King Surendra or Prime Minister Bam Bahadur annoyed Jang Bahadur immensely. He had managed to have himself appointed to the high office of Maharaja only to find that he was being studiously ignored by the British. It was an impasse that he seems not to have anticipated, and the only way out was to resume the prime ministership. But that would mean violating the very *lal mohur* that had elevated him to the position of Maharaja in the first place and that had introduced the system he himself had devised for succession to the prime ministership.

**The Rana Hierarchy**

The administration that Jang Bahadur had created, but with which he had no official connection since Prime Minister Bam Bahadur was now presiding over it, inherited from earlier times some features traceable to Mughal administration in India. These features related to the general structure of the central government, the nomenclature of the government departments and the distribution of their functions. More significantly, there were essential similarities in the nature of the two systems. Both systems owed their stability to the support of the army and under both systems state officials performed military as well as civil functions. The object of both administrations was to enhance the power of the rulers rather than to promote the interests of the ruled. As had been the case with the Mughals, the scope of the activities of Bam Bahadur’s government hardly extended beyond the maintenance of the army, the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue.

The ruling oligarchy of Nepal, consisting exclusively of leading members of the Rana family, stood between the King at the top and the lesser civil and military officials beneath. Within their closed ranks a rigid and tightly
disciplined hierarchy prevailed. Members of this oligarchy performed military and civil duties concurrently. The chief ones amongst them were entrusted with the military command of a garrison or strategic area, or with the operation of a government department. Others were given *ad hoc* assignments or were required to stay at the capital and await the Prime Minister’s instructions. Although state policy flowed from the Prime Minister personally, it was discussed and decided by senior members of the oligarchy from time to time. These senior members, in descending order, were the Commander-in-Chief, the Western or Senior Commanding General, and the Eastern, Southern and Northern Commanding Generals. Their functions are described below.

The second most powerful repository of civil and military power in the state after the Prime Minister was the Commander-in-Chief—not to be confused with the Prime Minister, whose full title included “... Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal”. As formal head of the army, the Commander-in-Chief approved the appointment and recruitment of officers and soldiers, planned military policy and assumed responsibility for the territorial integrity of the Kingdom. However his chief responsibility was actually as head of the civil administration. In this role he directly controlled and supervised several key government departments: the Home Office, the State Treasury, the Accounts and Audit Office, the Civil and Military Registry and the Law Office. Like other officials, the Commander-in-Chief was granted a jagir which, in his case, yielded Rs. 50,000 to 60,000 annually (£103,000 to £124,000 in current terms), and bodyguards and civil
servants were seconded to him at state expense. The Commander-in-Chief officiated as Prime Minister during the latter's absence.

The third most powerful position in the Kingdom was that of the Western Commanding General, the real head of the army. Because of the special nature of his responsibilities, as compared with those of the other three commanding generals, he was also called the Senior Commanding General. His was a coveted post as it exercised extraordinary control over the Nepalese army, of which the western forces constituted the major part. He was in charge of the defence of the country and of its military organisation. He made appointments and promotions, subject to the approval of the Commander-in-Chief and the Prime Minister, recommended all military awards and titles, attended parades and inspected the army. He was granted a jagir to the value of Rs. 50,000 annually. The Western (Senior) Commanding General, or jangi lat as he was called in Nepali, had no civil functions to perform.

By contrast, the Eastern, Southern and Northern Commanding Generals did have civil functions in addition to their military duties. Those who enjoyed the confidence of the Prime Minister and were regarded by him as able and influential men were placed in charge of a civil department. Each of them was granted a jagir to the value of about Rs. 40,000 annually.

Below the Commanding Generals came as succession of generals, lieutenant generals, major generals, colonels and lieutenant colonels, whose responsibilities and income depended upon such factors as age, legitimacy or illegitimacy in terms of Rana lineage and, of course, on political rivalries within the Rana family. In addition to performing military functions, these officers were placed in regular or ad hoc charge of sections of government departments by the Prime Minister. The annual value of their jagirs ranged from Rs. 1,000 for a lieutenant colonel to Rs. 25,000 for a general.

The Non-Rana Hierarchy

Below this closed Rana hierarchy were the men who actually administered the workings of government. Their functions originated in the old principality of Gorkha but their duties had altered over time to accommodate the increased size and complexity of the government machine.

The kajis (from the Arabic for "judge"), who were Ministers of the King at the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah, occupied the highest rank in the list of civil functionaries. No special duties went with this rank; they were appointed to any post such as District Governor or diplomatic representative in Calcutta or Lhasa, that befitted their status. The number of kajis was regulated by the Prime Minister but usually numbered six or seven. A kaji drew a salary of approximately Rs. 7,000 per annum and was given command of a company or regiment of soldiers.
In the early decades of the Shah conquests the sardars, like the kajis, were both military commanders and civil officers. They led military expeditions, commanded forts or were District Governors with responsibility for revenue and judicial matters. From the time of Jang Bahadur, officers of the rank of sardar were employed exclusively as civil functionaries and appointed as heads of government departments or as District Governors. A sardar's normal salary was Rs. 3,600 per annum.

Unlike the kajis and the sardars, the subbas had been civil officers from the beginning of the Shah rule. At the centre, persons of the rank of subba were attached to different offices, either as departmental heads or as assistants to kajis or sardars. Occasionally they were appointed as District Governors. Their annual salary depended upon the level of responsibility attaching to their particular position. A subba posted to a district was paid Rs. 1,600 per annum, for example, while the subba of the Kumari Chowk was paid Rs. 2,500 per annum.

The Khazanchi or Treasurer was responsible for the cash salaries paid to government servants and for disbursing funds for the construction of public works such as roads, suspension bridges and irrigation ditches, and for the maintenance of arsenals, magazines and historical and religious monuments. His annual salary was Rs. 5,000.

The Vakils were the diplomatic representatives stationed in Lhasa and Calcutta. Any high ranking official could be appointed as a vakil, irrespective of whether he was a civil or military officer. In 1844, for example, Prime Minister Bam Bahadur, then a kaji, was appointed as the Nepalese vakil in Calcutta. In addition to his diplomatic duties, the vakil in Calcutta reported
to the Nepal *darbar* on Indian economic affairs and purchased goods, including war material, ordered by the government in Kathmandu. The *vakil* in Lhasa was required to forward the Rs. 10,000 tribute that Tibet paid annually to Nepal under the terms of the peace treaty of 1856, hear complaints and settle disputes involving Nepalese citizens, and operate a Nepalese government trading house in Lhasa. As there was no Tibetan representative in Kathmandu and as communication with Tibet was more difficult than with India, the *vakil* in Lhasa had more authority and greater discretion than his counterpart in Calcutta. The *vakils* received a salary of Rs. 5,000 per annum.
The **Mir Munsi** (from the Arabic *amir munshi* meaning "chief secretary") was in charge of the **Munsi Khana**, the Foreign Office. He had a number of **munsis** under him, while others of that grade were attached to the **vakil's** office in Calcutta and to district revenue offices and law courts. The main qualifications needed to serve as a **munsi** in the Foreign Office was a sound knowledge of Persian, Chinese, Tibetan or English. Language training was arranged by bringing foreign teachers to Kathmandu or by sending the officers to Tibet or India. It was the duty of the **Mir Munsi** to draft letters and despatches to foreign governments, to issue passports to Nepalese citizens travelling in India and to liaise between the British Resident and the Nepal **darbar**. The **Mir Munsi**'s annual salary was Rs. 3,400.

The **Kapardar** was the Comptroller of the Royal Household. It was his duty to look after the jewels and wardrobe of the King and the palace kitchens. He also supervised the day to day work of the palace servants and distributed their rations and wages. The **Kapardar**'s annual salary was Rs. 2,500.

The **Taksari**, the Mint Master, was entrusted with the supervision of the Government mint. It was also his responsibility to collect customs duty on goods imported from Tibet and to hear complaints involving customs
duties and weights and measures. The person appointed to this post was usually an official of the rank of subba or a senior munsi.

The dadas were ADCs to the Crown Prince and the other royal princes. Jang Bahadur had been a dada to Crown Prince Surendra in 1841.

The ditthas were mainly civil functionaries employed as senior judicial officers and as administrators in civil and military establishments. The Ain Khana, the Law Office, was headed by a dittha, as was the Sadar Dafdar Khana, the Civil Lands Office. A few were entrusted with supervising the manufacture of arms and ammunition in the foundries located within the Kathmandu Valley. The salary of a dittha ranged from Rs. 500 to 600 per annum.

The khardars were originally secretaries who prepared all government despatches. During the Rana period they were entrusted with writing official letters and drafting administrative regulations. They were attached to every major office and department, including military establishments and regiments. A khardar attached to the Kumari Chowk was paid Rs. 560 per annum, though the average annual salary was Rs. 200-460.

The government employed two astrologers, or jyotisis, who were consulted before any major decision, from drafting laws to declaring war, was taken. They were paid about Rs. 200 a year.

The vaidyas were the government physicians who attended to the Shah and Rana families. They also manufactured medicine in the Vaidya Khana, the Medical Laboratory, which was located near the Tundikhel. Most regular army regiments also had their own vaidyas.

Below these senior and middle-level non-Rana officials was a host of junior support staff: accountants, clerks, office assistants, watchmen and sweepers.

The Apparatus of Government

The administration functioned through government departments known by the Mughal terms adda or khana, the most important of which were located at the residences of the Prime Minister and other senior Ranas. The major departments in operation during the prime ministership of Bam Bahadur are described below.

The Muluki Adda, the Home Office, was under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief and had vast jurisdiction over the internal affairs of the Kingdom. It recommended to the Prime Minister rules and regulations to govern the conduct of government servants and laws to be promulgated for the people. It also implemented those laws. The Home Office received petitions and appeals from the people and laid them before the Prime Minister, issued instructions to district officials and received reports from them concerning law and order and revenue collection in their areas. It supervised and controlled the collection of revenue. The Muluki Adda,
which had been established in Jang Bahadur’s time, was headed by an official of the rank of subba.

The Muluki Khana, the State Treasury, had been created by Jang Bahadur and placed under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief, whose duty it was to check on the regularity and accuracy of its accounts and records. It was under the day to day management of the khazanchi. The Treasury worked closely with the Kausi Tosa Khana, the Office of Public Expenditure, which existed before the Ranas came to power and which was headed by an official of the rank of subba. The Office of Public Expenditure was responsible for paying the cash salaries of state employees and for financing public works such as the construction and maintenance of suspension bridges, irrigation works, roads, arsenals, magazines, temples and monuments. Robes of honour, known as khillat, that were conferred on important state functionaries were kept in the care of this office.

The Kumari Chowk, the Accounts and Audit Office, audited the accounts of the other government departments, both in Kathmandu and out in the provinces. All government offices were required to submit annual administrative reports along with their accounting records within 35 days of the close of each year. The Kumari Chowk, which originated in the time of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, was under the charge of the Commander-in-Chief and its executive head was an officer of the rank of colonel.

The Commander-in-Chief was also in charge of the Kitab Khana, the Civil and Military Registry. As the name suggests, the function of this department was to maintain a register in which was recorded the name, caste and emoluments of every civil and military employee of the State, from the King and his family down to the humblest sweeper. No employee could draw his salary unless his name appeared in the register and a certificate had been issued to that effect. This procedure was intended to avoid duplication or irregularity in the payment of employees and to ensure propriety in government administration. The Kitab Khana had been established by Jang Bahadur in 1848. Its executive head normally held the rank of subba or khardar.

The Ain Kausal, or Law Council, and the Ain Khana, or Law Office were responsible for formulating, amending and repealing laws. The Law Council had been created in 1851 to reform and codify Nepalese law. When the new Legal Code was promulgated in 1854, the Law Office was established. The Law Office drafted legislation, usually at the initiative of the Prime Minister, and passed it to the Commander-in-Chief who discussed it with the members of the Law Council, which was now a standing body of legal experts drawn from the most important officers of state. After a measure was passed by the Law Council it was submitted to the Prime Minister for approval and authenticated by his seal. The Prime Minister could send legislation back to the Law Council and suggest amendments
until such time as he was satisfied. Both the Law Council and the Law Office were under the charge of the Commander-in-Chief, and the latter had a judicial officer of the rank of dittha as its executive head.

The Jangi Adda, the Defence Office, was under the direction of the jangi lat, the Western (Senior) Commanding General. The Defence Office, which Jang Bahadur created following his return from England, functioned as the army headquarters. It framed rules and regulations for the conduct of the army, recruited officers and troops and assigned them to particular duties and locations, and organised the production of weapons, munitions and military supplies. Its executive head was usually an officer of the rank of subba.

The Foreign Office, the Munsi Khana, was controlled by the Prime Minister. Its functions included correspondence with foreign countries, mainly British India, Tibet and China, the maintenance of related records and the issue of passports. Established in the time of Bhim Sen Thapa, the Munsi Khana had an officer of the rank of kaji as its executive head.

The Sadar Dafdar Khana, the Civil Lands Office, was responsible for land management and land revenue administration throughout the Kingdom. The Civil Lands Office kept records of all birta and jagir land grants to private individuals and state functionaries, and of all unallocated land available for future grants. It also issued tirjas, certificates entitling a jagirdar to collect the income from his jagir, according to the pajani lists maintained by the Kitab Khana. The Civil Lands Office was in the executive charge of a dittha.

The Darsanbhet Tahsil was responsible for the collection of a special type of levy called darsan bhet that civil functionaries and military personnel were compelled to pay to their superiors at the time they were first appointed and each time that their appointment was reconfirmed at the annual pajani. Private individuals who received honours or titles were also obliged to pay a darsan bhet levy.

The Chaprasi Adda, or Post office, operated the hulak, the postal system that was used to transport government mail and goods across the mountains from Kathmandu to the most distant parts of the Kingdom. The main hulak routes ran west along a well-travelled hill trail from Kathmandu to the frontier with Kumaon and east from the capital to the borders of Sikkim. Feeder routes branching north and south formed a network that linked together all the district headquarters of the country. The system relied upon the only available means of transport—human porters working in highly organised and coordinated relay teams. Each route was divided into sectors that corresponded to a day's march and whose length thus varied according to the terrain. Twenty families were assigned to each sector and it was their compulsory, unpaid labour, under the direction of a supervisor who maintained a roster, that was used to move documents and freight.
back and forth along that sector to relay points at the beginning of the next sectors. Unlike most forms of jhara labour that were always carefully programmed to avoid disrupting critical agricultural activities such as planting and harvesting, the hulak service operated around the clock every day of the year. As a result, letters and despatches travelled at remarkable speed. To ensure that the government’s communications network operated reliably and efficiently, the hulak porters were granted land for the maintenance of their families and exemption from a range of agricultural taxes.

Other departments included the Saraf Khana, opened by Jang Bahadur for dealing in foreign exchange; the Bajar Adda, which had been established before the advent of the Ranas as a Customs Office; the Jafati-ko Adda, which managed property confiscated from anti-Rana and criminal elements; and the Sera Fera-ko Adda, which managed the private lands of the King and other members of the royal family.

The People of Nepal

Who were the people of Nepal, who now found themselves under the rule of the Rana family?

Nepal has always been a mosaic of diverse ethnic groups whose distribution corresponds to the country’s well defined geographical regions. Socially and politically the two dominant groups in Nepal are the priestly caste and the warrior/ruler caste: the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas—or Chetris as they are known in Nepal. They are scattered all along the middle belt of Nepal, forming the local elite wherever they settle. The Brahmins have always been the best educated group in Nepal and have provided religious and intellectual leadership to the country while the Chetris have provided its rulers and military leaders. The most important Chetri subdivision is the Thakuri branch to which the royal house, the Shah family, belongs. The caste of the Rana family is also Chetri. The Brahmins and the Chetris originally migrated into the Himalayan region in the 12th century A.D. to escape the Muslim invasions of their traditional homelands in Rajasthan, although some did arrive earlier. Together they constitute 80 per cent of the population of the western hill districts. They are also scattered unevenly throughout the eastern hills but, like most highlanders, they are not at all attracted to the Tarai as a place to settle. The mother tongue of both the Brahmins and the Chetris is Nepali. In the hills the average Brahmin or Chetri lives in a sturdy, two-storey stone or mud brick house roofed with thatch, in villages that are loosely scattered across mountain slopes or along river valleys. The external walls of their houses are usually whitewashed or ochre coloured and the earth floors are always cleaned with a fresh screed of cowdung and mud. The main occupations of the Brahmins and Chetris are farming and government service, though they have traditionally
joined the army and are renowned as being amongst the best fighters in the world. The Brahmins and Chetris together constituted the largest ethnic group in Nepal.

The Gurungs are a hardy, cheerful people who live along the southern slopes of the Annapurna Himalayas in central Nepal. Their traditional home stretches from Gorkha to Kaski and Lamjung. They played an important military role in the expansion of the Gorkha state and it is probably because of their superb fighting qualities that Jang Bahadur chose the areas of Kaski and Lamjung for his maharajaship. The Gurungs form one of the main feeder groups inducted into the Royal Nepalese Army and the Indian and British Gurkha regiments. The Gurungs who live at the higher altitudes observe Tibetan religious customs and have lama priests, while those who live at the lower altitudes have adopted Hindu religious customs and practices. They cultivate rice, wheat, maize, millet and potatoes and depend heavily on sheep breeding for their livelihood. Every Gurung family has a dozen or so sheep which are grouped together to form large flocks and placed in the care of herdsmen who take them to the high alpine pastures from April to September. At the beginning of October the flocks return to the villages where every family slaughters its best ram and prepares a huge feast for the festival of Dasain. As soon as the celebrations are over, the flocks are taken down into the warmer valleys where they stay until February or March. The Gurungs live in round or oval houses of irregular stones cemented with mud and roofed with thatch or slate and
clustered into villages of 150 to 200 households. The role that the Gurungs played in the creation of modern Nepal is out of all proportion to their numbers which, even today, do not exceed 250,000.

Scattered throughout the same districts as are inhabited by the Gurungs, but living by and large at much lower altitudes, are the Magars. Along with their Gurung neighbours, they too were closely associated with the military expansion of the Gorkhali state and they constitute the bulk of those recruited into the Gurkha regiments. They are farmers by occupation, cultivating rice on their irrigated terraces and in the river valleys, and maize, millet, wheat and vegetables in the dry fields around their mountain hamlets. Like all hill farmers they use bulls or bullocks for ploughing. The animals are hitched in pairs to a double yoke to which a wooden plough with an iron tip is attached on a long shaft. Their other farm tools consist of a small hoe and a sickle for harvesting. Except for small variations in style or design, these are the standard farming methods and tools used throughout the hill regions. Many Magars are skilled in masonry, carpentry, building, stonecutting and quarrying and have tended to migrate in search of employment in these skills. Today the Magars constitute about 2.5 per cent of the population of Nepal and number about 450,000.

The eastern hill regions are populated by the Kirantis, a Mongoloid people famed for their skill in warfare. Their feats of bravery have been recorded in the ancient annals of Nepal and even in the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. Because of their striking resemblance to some of the hill tribes of south China and northern Laos and Burma, some anthropologists believe that their ancestors may have come from that area. They have similar physical features, they speak a Tibeto-Burman language and they have common social customs including communal land ownership. There is, however, a rich Kiranti mythology that they are an Indo-Aryan people who originally migrated from the plains along with other groups of the same stock. The Kiranti are hill farmers who live up to altitudes of 1,500 metres, where their single storeyed stone houses, roofed with thatch or slate, stand in the centre of the fields that they work. They cultivate maize, millet, wheat and mustard on dry terraces and some rice on small irrigated plots. They also grow fruits, such as oranges and bananas, and vegetables such as beans, potatoes and pulses. They keep buffaloes and cows for milk and raise goats, sheep, pigs and chickens for meat. They eat rice only on special occasions, the staple diet for their two daily meals being a cooked paste of maize, wheat or millet flour. They grow enough grain to meet their daily needs and use the excess to make spirits and beer, which they enjoy in great quantities. Both the men and their womenfolk smoke cigarettes prepared from locally grown tobacco wrapped in the fine inner silk of maize. The Kiranti make up about 3.5 per cent of the population of Nepal, which puts their numbers at about 600,000.
Because of their Hindu traditions, the economic and social life of the Tarai people has much in common with that of the Brahmins and Chetris of the hill areas. But at the same time this Hindu tradition means that, in their habits and customs, the Tarai people resemble most closely the Indians across the frontier. The hill races have never been attracted to the hot, malarial Tarai and the area has largely been settled over the years by land hungry Indians migrating from the overcrowded Gangetic plain. The middle and western Tarai, for example, was largely settled in this manner between the 1890s and the 1930s. It was only after the increase in population in the hills had placed unsustainable pressure on cultivable land there that the government banned the sale of Tarai land to foreigners. The language of the Tarai changes from east to west depending upon the languages spoken in neighbouring Indian territory: Bengali in the east, Maithili over the border from Bihar and Hindi and Urdu in the west. The Tarai people account for one-third of the population of Nepal.

Agriculture is the main occupation in the Tarai, except in such towns as Biratnagar, Birgunj and Nepalgunj which have been partially industrialised. The socioeconomic structure of the Tarai is organised on the basis of Hindu occupational castes, so that those of higher caste are more affluent and the lowest castes are invariably completely impoverished. At the top of this hierarchical community are the land-owning and money-lending Brahmins, followed by scores of other occupational groups including, in descending order, clerks and accountants, traders and shopkeepers and sellers of milk and ghee. Then come barbers, who also have a very important role to play during many of the religious ceremonies and weddings in the houses of high-caste people. They distribute wedding invitations, for example, wash the feet of the chief guests and collect special wood for the sacrificial fire. The barber also carries the groom on his back from his house to the mandap, a specially constructed wedding pavilion. The barbers are followed in caste order by gardeners, sellers of betel leaves and spices, sweet makers, fishermen and vegetable growers. Then come carpenters and blacksmiths, who rank equally, followed by oil pressers and washermen. Below them is a range of menial occupational groups: the people who dispose of carcasses, those who take care of the cremation grounds and the itinerant agricultural day labourers.

Caste occupations may be practised only by caste members. People are born into their caste and it is considered unacceptable for orthodox Hindus to give up their caste occupations for some other kind of work, unless it is agriculture. Together, the members of these dozens of occupational groups form a socially and economically interdependent community. The Brahmin needs the washerman to do his family’s laundry, or the sweetmaker to make the sweets on the occasion of a religious festival. The sweetmaker, in turn, needs the services of the Brahmins for religious events, and of the
money lender to finance a dowry. The relationships are inherited from generation to generation and although it is not impossible to cross caste boundaries it is infinitely difficult and complicated.

The northern border area is home to another distinctive ethnic group, the Sherpas. Closely related to the Tibetans in language, culture and religion, the Sherpas live in settlements up to 5,000 metres. Their houses are usually two storeyed and built of stone with a slate roof. On the ground floor the firewood, livestock, potatoes and grain are kept. The living room upstairs is simply furnished with beds, a table and benches and a fire pit. The side and back walls have shelves and cupboards for storage. A simple corner latrine and rubbish dump opens over the stables below. Wealthy homes have a small colourfully painted prayer chapel at one end with religious paintings and gold and bronze Buddhist images. The Sherpas engage in field agriculture, growing maize, wheat, barley, millet and potatoes. Where the soil is too poor for cultivation they raise yaks or engage in cross border trade with Tibet for their wool and butter. The womenfolk make mats from the wool and sell them in the lower regions or exchange them for grain. The butter is used to brew the traditional salted Tibetan tea which is drunk in great quantities. The Sherpas have never been a large group and even today they probably number only about 120,000.

In the high hills that ring the Kathmandu Valley live the Tamangs, a Tibeto-Burman-speaking Buddhist community that originated in Tibet. They are quite numerous, constituting some 5 per cent of the country’s population. The name Tamang is Tibetan for horsetrader, an occupation for which these people were famous in the past. The Tamangs prefer the higher, drier elevations up to 2,500 metres for growing their staple crops of maize, millet, wheat, barley and potatoes. Their agricultural land is owned communally, but each individual household keeps cows and buffaloes and chickens. Tamang villages are compact and the streets are usually paved with stones. The houses are well constructed of cut stone with wooden shingle roofs. Most are two storeyed, the upper storey being used for the storage of grain and the ground floor as kitchen, eating area and sleeping quarters. There is usually a balcony on the first floor and a verandah beneath it that is used as a general living area. Tamangs are very skilled at a number of crafts. The women make sheep’s wool jackets, bamboo baskets and banana leaf umbrellas. The men work as carpenters, masons and builders, while their lamas are master wood carvers who also produce fine religious scroll paintings. Many Tamangs hire out their labour as porters, domestic servants and grooms in Kathmandu and other towns and villages.

The Kathmandu Valley itself is home to the Newars, the artists and craftsmen of Nepal. The Newars are also shrewd traders and merchants and, since the unification of the Kingdom, they are to be found in every market town in the country. Their mother tongue is Newari, which belongs
to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages, and they constitute about 4 per cent of the population, numbering today some 680,000 people. There are both Buddhists and Hindus in the complex interwoven pattern of Newar society, with the result that many of the temples and shrines in the Kathmandu Valley are both Hindu and Buddhist places of worship, and all major religious festivals are celebrated by adherents of both creeds with equal enthusiasm. The Newars, who are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, were ruled for centuries by the Mallas until they were conquered by a Chetri family from Gorkha, the Shahs, in the 18th century. It was the Mallas who laid the foundation of the Hindu socio-religious order in Nepal, modified though it was by prevailing local tradition.

The Kathmandu Valley lies at an altitude of 1,400 metres. It is roughly oval in shape and about 800 square kilometres in area. It can be crossed easily on foot in a day’s walk. The Valley is extremely fertile with rich alluvial soil that enables the Newar farmers to obtain very high yields from their intensively cultivated and irrigated fields. Three harvests a year are not uncommon. In winter the Newars grow barley, wheat and mustard; in the springtime radishes, potatoes and garlic; in the monsoon season rice and some maize. Irrigation techniques are highly developed and the streams that course down the mountain flanks are captured at different levels and forked out into lateral channels to water every square metre of the terraced hillsides. The vegetation is semi-tropical: sugar cane, pineapple and bananas grow well in this climate.
The Valley floor is relatively flat—mercifully flat to someone who has just trekked in from the hills—and its colours change from season to season: during the rains the paddy fields and terraces are many shades of vivid green. In winter much of the land is brown, broken by green patches of bamboo thickets and yellow patches where the wheat grows. In the spring the Valley is carpeted by yellow mustard blossom. Pale green returns in early summer with the growth of the rice seedlings. Scattered throughout the Valley, up the sides of the surrounding hills and along the saddles that join them, are village clusters of stone and mud brick houses. Their roofs are thatched or tiled, the ground floor walls ochre-coloured and the upper walls white. To the north, on a clear day, the eternal snows of the high Himalayas run in an unbroken arc along the horizon. Such clear days continue from March to November when the sky is not heavy with clouds, as it is during the monsoon, or thick with a haze of dust blown from the far deserts of Rajasthan, as it is in the hot enervating season before the rains come. The Valley is a beautiful land, if a hard one, and it is easy to understand the affection with which the Newars refer to it as “hamro Nepal”—our Nepal.

Regardless of their location, be they in the hill areas, the mountain regions or the Tarai, the peasants of Nepal have always followed and still follow a rhythm of life dictated by the agricultural seasons and interspersed with countless religious festivals. Their lunar year is divided into 12 months which are, in turn, divided into two fortnights: the light fortnight leading up to the full moon and the dark fortnight of the half month of the waning moon.

The New Year begins with colourful religious ceremonies about the middle of April, shortly before the dry rice is sown in those fields that are not irrigated or will not be flooded by the monsoon. On the day of the full moon in late April or early May the people of Nepal, regardless of their creed, celebrate the birth of Lord Buddha, who was born in the present-day village of Lumbini in the Tarai. May is also the month in which the winter wheat is harvested and the wet rice planted in its place. At about the same time the maize, millet and barley is sown. In June the annual potato crop is dug up. July is a particularly critical month and a period of intense activity as the wet rice is transplanted to coincide with the start of the monsoon rains. Towards the end of August the dry rice is harvested and the maize and millet begin to ripen. It will be ready to reap in October, just in time for the most important religious festival of the year, Dasain. Like the western season of Christmas, Dasain is the most auspicious and joyous time of the year, celebrated by all castes and creeds throughout the country during the bright lunar fortnight leading up to the full moon of early October. Families are reunited, blessings and gifts are exchanged, there are ancient processions and traditional pageants to be enjoyed—all in honour of the goddess Durga.
THE PEOPLE OF NEPAL

Newari woman and child, Patan.

Gurung woman.

Chetri woman and baby. Tansen, western Nepal.

Sherpa woman from the Tibetan border region.
and in celebration of the inevitable triumph of Good over Evil. Every house is ceremonially cleansed with cowdung and painted and spruced up. The bazaars are filled with shoppers buying presents, temple offerings and foodstuffs for days of family feasting.

The seventh day of Dasain is known as Fulpati, meaning sacred flowers and leaves. This is the day on which a huge, solid silver ritual vessel of the royal family, filled with a bouquet of tall flowers, banana stalks, holy leaves and sugar cane and tied with a red cloth, is carried from the ancestral darbar at Gorkha, three days march across the mountains to the west of Kathmandu, and installed in the Hanuman Dhoka Palace. Crowds throng the Tundikhel awaiting the arrival of the fulpati which is carried by Brahmin priests of the royal household on a decorated palanquin under an embroidered umbrella. A parade then moves through the massed populace along the narrow streets of the old town towards the Hanuman Dhoka Palace, followed by a great procession of officials and marching bands. When the fulpati is installed in the old royal palace amidst solemn prayers and ceremony, the King and the royal family arrive to worship this representation of their ancestral family goddess.

The evening of the eighth day of Dasain marks the beginning of the ritual animal sacrifices to Durga, at once the great protectress who controls the mystery of life and fertility in her terrible power, and the great destroyer who wears a necklace of skulls and stands on the mangled bodies of her victims, her long tongue dripping blood. Throughout the Kingdom, buffaloes, goats and chickens are decapitated with a single swift blow of a kukri and the blood splashed over Durga’s statue as a token of propitiation. The most spectacular of these sacrifices takes place in the courtyard of the Kot, scene of another bloodletting in 1846 that altered the course of Nepalese history. On the morning of the ninth day of Dasain a procession of buffaloes is tethered before a display of regimental colours. A sacred Tantric phrase is whispered in each animal’s ear. It is offered food and sprinkled with holy water. When it shakes its head or flicks its ear then the prayer has taken effect and the spirit of the deity has entered the animal and given its consent to the sacrifice. With a single stroke of a kukri it is decapitated—a feat demanding no ordinary strength and skill. In similar fashion throughout the length and breadth of Nepal, sacrifices are made for the protection and effectiveness of agricultural implements, the workman’s tools, the hunter’s weapons, the doctor’s instruments and the student’s books.

The thirteenth day of the waning moon, some twenty days after the conclusion of Dasain, marks the start of the festival of Tihar, a celebration devoted to Laxmi, the goddess of wealth. For five nights every home and temple and public building in Nepal is decorated with rows of traditional Nepalese lamps consisting of a twisted cotton wick in a small clay bowl of
mustard oil. The lamps are lit so that Laxmi, who circles the earth on an owl, can inspect the dwellings of her devotees. If she is pleased with what she sees, she will protect the money box and grain stores of the family within and grant them prosperity for the coming year. The first day of Tihar is for honouring crows, the messengers of the god of death. The second is devoted to dogs and the third to the sacred cow. The fifth and most important day of Tihar is the occasion on which sisters honour and bless their brothers. So important is this ritual that if a man has no sisters a close female relative or friend is selected to bestow this blessing. When the King receives the homage and blessings of his sisters, a 31 gun salute from the royal palace reverberates throughout the Valley.

November is the time for harvesting the wet rice, the most important crop of monsoon Asia, and in the empty fields from which it has been gathered the winter wheat is sown. In January the potato crop is planted. Then follows a relatively slack period, during which the peasants can take a rest from toiling in the fields. Now they can turn their attention to repairing their implements, re-thatching the roofs of their houses, weaving or basket making, travelling to a nearby market town to sell or barter some of their produce or attending to the myriad other tasks that fall to a farming community to perform.

The ancient Hindu festival of Holi begins in late February or early March. A huge ceremonial pole, made of bamboo and topped with three umbrella-like tiers that are fringed with colourful strips of cloth, is erected in every town and village square. For a week people approach the pole with prayers and incantations to place small lighted wicks, flowers and red powder at its base. Holi is a celebration of various events in the life of that most beloved of Hindu gods, Lord Krishna. It is a boisterous celebration during which people bombard each other with sacred red powder or douse passers-by in the streets with red liquid, and at times the religious significance of this springtime festival is almost lost in the outburst of youthful exhuberance that accompanies it. With the ending of Holi the year has almost come full circle.

In addition to the major religious festivals that are celebrated throughout the Kingdom to honour the principal gods of the Hindu pantheon, the Nepalese calendar is filled with scores of local festivals to honour local deities. For the peasant lives in a world that is populated by countless gods, goddesses, spirits and demons—the principal supports of a society that can count on few technical aids in its relentless struggle for survival. At these local festivals the deity is honoured, worshipped, appeased or beseeched for some blessing with offerings of flowers, holy water, rice, coloured powders and pastes, coins or paper money, and fruit and vegetables. Oil lamps are lit, incense is burned and prayers are chanted. At many of these festivals the statue of the deity is decorated and carried about in procession,
complete with a cacophony of bands. This may be done to honour it or to present it to other gods and goddesses, to give it an enjoyable outing, to take it for its annual bathing ceremony, or simply so that it can watch some festival or ceremony with the celebrating populace. The list of these local festivals, and indeed the list of local divinities, has always been a moveable feast whose composition can change for any number of reasons. An earthquake, for example, or a landslide or flood could alter the pecking order within a local pantheon. An abundant harvest, a seemingly miraculous cure or the economic success of a local worshipper could provoke the sudden flowering of a local cult and enhance the prestige of a particular deity. Conversely, failures tend to occasion divine drop-outs. A god must work assiduously to maintain a stable and respectable place in the Nepalese pantheon. He must have his power recognised and acknowledged throughout a particular district and establish and maintain a relationship with a broad segment of the population over many generations.

The Arts of Nepal

The artistic creativity of Nepal was concentrated within the Kathmandu Valley, where two indigenous architectural styles developed over the centuries: the Buddhist stupa and the Hindu pagoda. A stupa is a large, solid hemispherical mound of masonry crowned by a four sided tower. On each side of the tower is painted a huge pair of eyes—the eyes of the all-seeing Adi Buddha, the primeval mind out of whose consciousness the world was formed. The eyes of God. Stupas vary in dimension from structures the size of a house to massive, hemispherical mounds hundreds of metres in circumference. The bases of the larger stupas are usually adorned with rows of niches to house prayer wheels and paintings or figures of the Buddha. In the course of time, the tower on top of the stupa became the focal point of decoration. It was built higher and topped with a cone of 13 concentric brass rings of decreasing sizes, representing the 13 heavens of the Buddhist universe. The apex was crowned by a metal umbrella, the symbol of kingship.

As stone is scarce in the Valley, its use in building was gradually replaced by timber. The hemisphere disappeared as the builders sought the closest shape it was possible to obtain in wood—a stepped pyramid of square plinths. As the tower now became more functional it was built with a door on each side opening into a small room containing a figure of a deity. The 13 concentric rings developed into eaves spaced slightly apart. There were no longer always 13 of these roofs, though there is always an uneven number of them. At this stage of development the “pagoda” has emerged in its elementary form. In time, the timber plinths were replaced by others of hand-made bricks while the eaves were enlarged and highly ornamented. The spaces between the eaves developed into blind storeys which the
The pagoda style of building originated in the Kathmandu Valley and reached its apogee with the construction of the Nyatpola Pagoda in Bhaktapur in 1702.

architects decorated, mainly with woodcarvings. Most architectural historians agree that the pagoda style of building originated in the Kathmandu Valley and spread from there to India, China and Japan. The oldest of the Japanese pagodas outdates any in the Kathmandu Valley, for the Valley’s oldest structures have long since been destroyed by fire, earthquake or the hand of man. India’s pagodas fell before the onslaught of the Muslim iconoclasts and no examples remain today.

From the beginning of the Rana period a new style of religious architecture came into vogue in Nepal. Temples were built in the shape of a cube with a pillared porch on the entrance side, and the whole was raised on a high plinth which lent a certain dignity to the structure. A small bulbous dome was placed on the roof of the porch while a large hemispherical one rested on a high circular drum above the main square hall. This style may have been adapted from the domes of Mughal India’s Islamic architecture or it may have been inspired by the traditional Buddhist stupa.

Unlike Christian churches, Nepalese temples and shrines are not isolated in a formal manner from the everyday life of the people. They are to be found in busy city streets as well as beside quite rural paths, in the centre of market places as well as behind the high walls of private gardens. Schools may be held within the precincts of a temple or a monastery. Trade and barter may be transacted on their plinths. People hang their laundry to dry beneath their eaves or spread their grain to dry in their sunny
courtyards. They rest and chat there, tether their livestock to the temple pillars, hang their corn up to dry on the rafters and, above all, pay their devotions in all humility at the shrine itself. For a temple is an integral part of everyday public social life as well as the dwelling-place of a god.

Nepalese art is essentially religious art, ordained and consecrated to the service of the Hindu creed. To this end it is also supremely symbolic—there is no ornament without meaning, no element in its composition that is not emblematic of the religion it serves. Art was used by the priesthood to hold the attention of the illiterate many, to put before those who could not read a visible and tangible object which illustrated a legend or emphasised a dogma. To do this it had to be powerfully dramatic—it had to depict to the masses Good and Evil in their most graphic and forceful interpretations. As a result, Nepalese art either elevates believers by its celestial conceptions or terrorises them into docility by its representations of hell. As far as the people themselves are concerned, it is an art which inspires awe and veneration and which is worshipped rather than admired. As was the case with the art of Christian Europe up to the Middle Ages, traditional Nepalese art is unashamedly stereotyped as it attempts to draw the attention of worshippers away from the distracting diversity of the everyday world and assist them to concentrate their thoughts, through stereotyped ritual and images, upon the divine.

Metal statuary and sculpture in Nepal exhibits a close relationship with the traditional plastic arts of India. In fact, it can safely be classified as a
highly stylised school of Indian sculpture. This is no doubt due to the Indian origin of Buddhism and Hinduism, the two forces that shaped the ideological and behavioural world of the Nepalese.

Like the art of sculpture, painting in Nepal is almost exclusively religious in content. It derived from an eastern Indian tradition of manuscript painting and, once the form and style was adopted, it remained unchanged down to the present day, apart from the influence at some stages of Tibetan and Rajasthani schools. Paintings were executed in two forms: miniatures which were used to illustrate religious texts, and scroll paintings. The subjects of the scroll paintings, which were intended to assist meditation, were either divine figures accompanied by their attendants or symbols drawn in geometric patterns of concentric squares and circles to represent the Hindu or Buddhist cosmos.

The glory of Nepalese art, however, is its woodcarving. In both secular and religious buildings, intricate patterns and designs are carved onto the timbers of door frames, door leaves, windows, cornices, brackets, lintels, struts, pillars, pilasters and architraves. In addition to floral and geometric forms of all conceivable varieties, the repertory of this most exquisite art is enriched with human and animal forms from life and legend and the exploits of gods and heroes. In contrast with the West, Nepalese art is very public. The finest creations were placed permanently in the street or set in the temple wall or erected in the town square for all passers-by to see. Buddhist scroll paintings are hung on temple walls on the occasion of
Buddha’s birthday and Hindu statues are taken in procession through the streets at particular dates in the year.

**Bam Bahadur’s Performance as Prime Minister**

Bam Bahadur made no lasting mark on the prime ministership, though in all fairness it should be remembered that he was never his own man. He could not take any decision of importance without reference to his older brother, the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, whose instrument of appointment gave him a mandate to advise the Prime Minister. Jang
Bahadur, in turn, seems to have had little regard for his brother's administrative abilities. The letters he wrote to Bam Bahadur while he was travelling in Europe back in 1850 provide ample evidence of that—as well as revealing a great deal about the author himself:

"Ram Ale killed a man with two shots but when this came before the council you reckoned it only a misdemeanour, fined him 2,000 rupees and then reappointed him. A fine act! If you follow the advice of those counsellors of yours then deserving people who give noteworthy service will find themselves in irons! . . . . What will the people say? What will God say? . . . . Your actions do not please me, your older brother, nor your two other brothers who are with me. How can they please the common people? Ram Ale's killing a man is not a "misdemeanour". You heard me order the execution of Bhairab Singh Kharka for just such an offence. Remove Ale's badges of rank and put him in irons. Murder should not be readily forgiven. If you pardon this man, what would you do if your own brother or son committed murder? Give him a reward? Cancel his jagir. I will decide his case after my return."

"You have written that Her Majesty the Queen has fallen ill. What does it matter if you have completed hundreds of tasks or if you have struck gold? If anything happens to Her Majesty then I was wrong to come away leaving you as Minister . . . . You need not write to me about [other] happenings in Nepal, but write daily with news about Her Majesty's health. You should not include other trifles. You do not know the meaning of politics". Everyone else has mentioned her condition openly in their letters whilst yours contained nothing on the subject. If anything happens to the Queen and I find you allowed it to happen—if anything happens to her while you are acting as Minister, I will hold you to blame . . . . Understand this, then employ vaidhyas from anywhere in the world . . . . Use the resources of the Treasury, put the army officers onto the task, and make the Queen well!"

"A man who aims to make a name for himself must renounce greed and adopt compassion . . . . He should do whatever makes the majority happy, overcoming his anger and love of wealth. He should try to form a council of good persons of high status but should not be concerned with his own status. He should give the people the impression that he regards everyone's problems as his own. Since lying is sometimes necessary in politics, if you are able to keep the people happy by deluding them, it is easy to be a Minister. If not, the task is very difficult. Acts which displease the people will soon produce a dangerous situation".

"I have learned from someone else's letter that troops going into Mahottari district to collect the revenue shot and killed a peasant . . . . If the soldiers . . . . did so on the orders of Subba Girja Datta Mishra then confiscate his property. If he did not issue any order and the troops acted on their own initiative, then submit a report to the King and have the men responsible hanged on the spot where the murder took place . . . . God put us where we are so that we could protect the common people".

"You write that you have carried out the pajani of the army. If you have dismissed men with an eye to making savings on salaries, you will earn the same bad reputation as Badri Narsingh has already done. If you have made dismissals for faults committed, then you have strengthened your position . . . . You should dismiss anyone, general or private, who does not wear a uniform, fails to perform drill or guard duty, evades work, speaks deceptively or who cheats and murders . . . . even if the man is your own brother . . . . As for men whom I myself have appointed in the army, whatever their rank, you are to confirm the appointments . . . . If you enlist under-age, infirm or cowardly soldiers their salaries will be deducted from yours".
“Carrying out the civil pajani is not like carrying out the military one. It should be done very carefully . . . . . If the peasants see that you are confirming the arrangements your elder brother made, your task will be easy. If a man has not rendered his accounts he should be dismissed, be he a district governor or a private. Whether he is the King’s man, my man or your man, and even if he possesses thirty-two virtues and can carry out seventeen functions, he should still be dismissed . . . . . Have nothing to do with men who cheat and lie and embezzle government funds. Carry on the administration with true and honest men.”

Relations between Bam Bahadur and his other brothers were also far from cordial for they could not forget the role he had played in Badri Narsingh’s exile to the confinement of a British fortress at Allahabad in June 1851, following the alleged plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur upon his return from Europe. The Prime Minister was seen only infrequently at a darbar or at the residences of his brothers.

Prime Minister Bam Bahadur, racked for years by consumption, died on 25 May 1857 after less than ten months in office.
5

Jang Bahadur
(1857–1877)
The vacancy in the office of the Prime Minister brought about by the death of Bam Bahadur on 25 May 1857 presented Jang Bahadur with a serious dilemma. On the one hand the law of succession to the prime ministership, which he himself had devised and which had received royal approval, ordained that the office should be filled by the oldest surviving Rana brother, Krishna Bahadur. On the other hand, the title of Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung had proved to be a hollow one as far as his all-important relationship with the British was concerned, for they had refused to acknowledge that it carried any authority and had scrupulously avoided any dealings with him on official matters since he resigned the prime ministership. The only way that he could regain his former status relative to the British was by resuming his former position of Prime Minister. But in order to do that, he would have to violate the system of agnatic succession that he himself had devised.

Jang Bahadur hesitated. Krishna Bahadur became Acting Prime Minister pending a formal appointment to the position by the King. It was given out that the position would not be filled on a permanent basis until the end of the period of official mourning for the late Bam Bahadur.

Then came a snub by the British that brought Jang Bahadur closer to a decision to resume the prime ministership. When the news of the Indian Mutiny reached Kathmandu Acting Prime Minister Krishna Bahadur came forward to offer military help to the British. Not to be outdone, much less ignored, Jang Bahadur offered to recruit, train and lead 50,000 troops to fight the rebels. The Governor-General thus had two offers of military assistance to consider: one from the Acting Prime Minister, a high ranking state official, and the other from the strongman of Nepal, a person with no official position in the government hierarchy. He accepted the former and declined the latter.

Anxious to secure the blessing of the Governor-General on any proposal to resume the prime ministership, Jang Bahadur now sought to visit Calcutta
to discuss "Nepalese affairs". But Lord Canning, knowing what the main topic for discussion would be and not wishing to become involved in the internal affairs of an independent state, would not agree to the meeting.

On 26 June 1857 the situation unexpectedly altered to Jang Bahadur's advantage. With security deteriorating rapidly in the British provinces adjacent to the Nepalese frontier, the Governor-General formally requested military assistance from the Nepal darbar. Realising that in their distracted and suddenly desperate circumstances the British would not be too fussy about who stepped into the late Bam Bahadur's shoes, Jang Bahadur made up his mind to resume the prime ministership. On 28 June 1857, King Surendra issued a lal mohur confirming him in that position for life. Four days later, Nepal's agreement to the Governor-General's request was officially transmitted to the British Resident by the man whom the British had studiously ignored for the previous ten months—Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana.

Strengthening the Shah/Rana Matrimonial Alliance

Even as Jang Bahadur was awaiting the most opportune moment to regain the prime ministership, there occurred an event that added yet more to his prestige, if not also to his power. On 25 June 1857, his six-year-old daughter, Tara Kumari, married the nine-year-old Crown Prince, Trailokyab Bikram Shah.

About sunset the bridegroom left the Hanuman Dhoka Palace in procession for the house of the bride at Thapathali. He travelled in a gilt palanquin amidst a crowd of dancing girls, preceded by the kalsa, the ritual gold vessel containing the holy water to be used in the marriage rites, and followed by a long cavalcade of elephants. The lead animal carried the bridegroom's father and grandfather, King Surendra and the deposed ex-King Rajendra, while the second elephant carried Acting Prime Minister Krishna Bahadur Rana. Several regiments of soldiers, their bands playing, led the procession through the streets of the old city, across the vast Tundikhel parade ground and along the highroad to Jang Bahadur's palatial residence at Thapathali on the banks of the Bagmati River. The route was thronged with spectators and lined with troops. In fact, all the troops in the capital, some 13,000, either took part in the procession or stood in review on the Tundikhel along with 100 pieces of artillery. When the wedding procession arrived at Thapathali it was met by Jang Bahadur. As he was in retirement he had taken no official part in the public proceedings of this dynastic marriage. The bridegroom and his party then joined the bride who was waiting in the private apartments of the Thapathali palace and the religious ceremonies of the wedding took place. These were presided over by the rajguru, Vijaya Raj Pande—none other than the conspirator who had been sent to lure Jang Bahadur to his death at the Bandarkhel Palace in
October 1846. The following day, when a bridegroom customarily brings his bride to his father’s house, another grand procession travelled from Thapathali back to the Hanuman Dhoka darbar. On the occasion of this wedding the King was very liberal with his largesse; every servant employed in the royal palace received a present and khillats and jewellery were presented to every officer in the army.

Although Jang Bahadur himself could not occupy the throne—and there were many contemporary observers, including the British Resident and the Governor-General of India, who were convinced that he had his sights set on the gadi—he could now be sure that his direct descendants would.

Nepal and the Indian Mutiny

By the end of July 1857 three thousand Nepalese soldiers had been despatched to fight the rebels and on 10 December 1857 Jang Bahadur himself left Kathmandu at the head of 9,000 more. His farewell speech on that occasion, clearly intended to impress the British, bears quoting:

“I have three motives for acting as I am now doing. First, to show that Gurkhas possess fidelity and will shed their blood in defence of those who treat them with honour and repose confidence in them. Second, I know the power of the British government and were I to take part against it, although I might have temporary success, my country would afterwards be ruined and the Gorkha dynasty annihilated. Third, I know that upon the success of British arms and the re-establishment of British power in India, its government will be stronger than ever and that I and my brothers and my country will all then benefit from our alliance.”
The first motive that Jang Bahadur professed was somewhat curious as he was not a feudatory chief but the Prime Minister of an independent country who was under no obligation to display fidelity to the British. The second motive was misleading since it implied that Nepal was obliged to make a choice between supporting the British or supporting the rebels. It ignored another possible option—that of remaining neutral. Nepal’s support of the British was an act of deliberate policy and not of helplessness or compulsion. Jang Bahadur’s third motive was doubtless correct, as might be inferred from the order in which he listed the beneficiaries: first came “I”, then “my brothers” and lastly “my country”. Another reason for offering military assistance to the British was to seek employment for the troops who had been discharged after the Nepal-Tibet war.

Over a period of one hundred days Jang Bahadur’s forces engaged the rebels in several major actions and finally assisted British troops in the recapture of Lucknow. Towards the end of March 1858 they started to head home, taking with them 4,000 bullock carts laden with plunder. Two months later, as a reward for services rendered, the British government restored to Nepal a 300-kilometre portion of the Tarai, known thereafter as the Naya Muluk or new territories, that had been seized in the war of 1814-16 then conferred upon the Nawab of Oudh as repayment of a loan of one million pounds sterling which that hapless ruler had made to the East India Company.
Power and Patronage: the Prime Ministership in Action

Jang Bahadur’s resumption of the prime ministership upon the death of his younger brother, Bam Bahadur, elevated him to a position of absolute control over every aspect of state activity. Jang Bahadur Rana—Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung—now enjoyed full sovereignty over part of Nepal and partial sovereignty over the whole of Nepal. King Surendra Bikram Shah may have been the country’s de jure monarch, but Jang Bahadur Rana was its de facto ruler. He was the head of the state and of its society in every sense of the term. The entire machinery of government was answerable to him as head of the country’s administration and nothing of consequence in the Kingdom could be done without his approval. To ensure that this degree of control remained in the Rana family a system of agnatic succession to the prime ministership had been devised. This ensured that the government would not devolve upon a minor, and hence the chances that real power would revert to the monarchy were minimised.

As chief executive, the Prime Minister had a power of patronage that extended to every civil and military office in the land and he exercised it through two instruments: the Roll of Succession in the case of senior members of the Rana family, and the time honoured institute of pajari in the case of everyone else.

The Roll of Succession, based on the principle of agnatic succession, laid down in hierarchical order the names of lawful claimants to the highest offices of the state from the prime ministership downwards. As noted earlier, these offices were the positions of Commander-in-Chief, the Western (Senior) Commanding General, the Eastern Commanding General, the Southern Commanding General and the Northern Commanding General, followed by the other generals, lieutenant generals, major generals, colonels and lieutenant colonels. The names of the lawful claimants to these high offices were drawn from the Prime Minister’s brothers, descending through age, then from his sons and nephews, again descending through age. Upon the death of the Prime Minister, each officer was promoted to the next highest rank, so that the Commander-in-Chief became the Prime Minister, the Western (Senior) Commanding General became the Commander-in-Chief, and so forth. Those on the Roll, and they numbered between 25 and 30, were there because of their priority of birth in a particular generation. But, in addition, they had to be acceptable to the Prime Minister. A vacancy could occur in any position on the Roll by expulsion as well as by the death or disability of the incumbent. When such an expulsion occurred, the juniors on the Roll were automatically promoted to higher positions. Over and above the Prime Minister’s power to expel persons no longer acceptable to him was his power to add people of his choice. For example, Jang Bahadur, the man who devised the system of agnatic succession,
introduced his grandson, Juddha Pratap Jang, on to the Roll in priority to his nephews. Although the original Roll was drawn up by Prime Minister Jang Bahadur, and while it became the convention for successive Prime Ministers to draw up their own, they were always issued in the name of the King.

The second important means by which the Prime Minister exercised his powers of patronage was the pajani, an instrument of control that had been used by the Shah kings since the founding of the dynasty. King Surendra specifically transferred the power of pajani to Jang Bahadur in the lal mohur of 28 June 1857 that appointed him as Prime Minister for a second term. Thus the office of Prime Minister was, by definition, exempted from this annual screening at which all holders of public office were either confirmed in their positions for another year or promoted or transferred or dismissed. It was not uncommon for officers to be dismissed if they were associated with persons who were out of favour with the Prime Minister, or if they did not regularly attend one of the Prime Minister's darbars at which he granted audience to and received petitions from persons of all ranks. If an officer missed these darbars for a few days he was likely to lose the Prime Minister's favour and hence his job. Of course, the Prime Minister did not have to wait

Prime Minister Jang Bahadur on a hunting expedition in 1871. Standing (left to right) are his brother Jagat Shumsher, his son Babar Jang and two nephews.
for the annual pajani to appoint or dismiss people. He could do that at any time, with or without stated reasons.

The power of promulgating laws, traditionally vested in the King, was also ceded to Jang Bahadur in the lal mohur of 28 June 1857, along with the power to dispense justice. The Prime Minister was not only the final authority to put his stamp of approval on all laws passed by the Ain Kausal, the Law Council, but he almost invariably initiated the legislative proposals as well. Always a law unto himself, he dispensed justice regardless of what was laid down in the Legal Code and independently of the established judicial structure of the country. He was, in fact, the highest court in the land, exercising both original and appellate jurisdiction. He regularly held a kind of court at which the common people could present bintipatras, petitions or complaints against government departments or appeals against the decisions of lower courts. Cases were decided on the spot with the assistance of judicial officers such as the dharma adhikar, ditthas or bicharis.

The totalitarian nature of the Prime Minister’s office gave Jang Bahadur full control over the state’s finances. In fact, throughout the period of Rana rule, no distinction was made between public funds and the Prime Minister’s privy purse, and it has been estimated that the Prime Minister took as much as 25-30 per cent of the former to supply the latter. There was no system for compiling a consolidated budget that reconciled receipts against expenditure. Funds were released from the Kausi Tosa Khana, the Office of Public Expenditure, on an ad hoc basis, but only after the need for them had been discussed by the Prime Minister, the Commander-in-Chief and the heads of departments. Not a single rupee left the Office of Public Expenditure without the specific authorisation of the Prime Minister.

Jang Bahadur’s personal interests and the interests of the state were now held to be coextensive. He could do anything to satisfy his personal or political wishes and to maintain himself in power. He was a despot to be feared and obeyed but never to be rivalled. He controlled the very life and honour of his country and its people.

Internal Stability

Nepal now began to enjoy a period of internal stability such as she had not experienced for over 25 years. This welcome respite from political turmoil was reflected in the entries in Jang Bahadur’s diary for the year 1860.

22 May. The Prime Minister granted an audience to two Chinese scientists who had come to Nepal to study its flora and fauna.

23 May. Jang Bahadur sent some Himalayan birds of gaudy plumage that he had shot in the mountains to the court artists with orders to paint their figures in water-colours.

24 May. A 21-gun salute was fired to mark the birthday of the Queen-
Hiranyakarbah Kumari, Jang Bahadur's principal wife. She was the sister of the chautariya Fateh Jang Shah who died in the Kot Massacre. She was the mother of Lalit Kumari who married Crown Prince Trailokya. Hence she was the grandmother of King Prithvi Bir.

Siddhi Gajendra Laxmi, whom Jang Bahadur abducted from her first husband. She was the mother of Ranabir Jang and Khadga Kumari.

The Putli Maharani, the palace servant who informed Jang Bahadur of a plot to assassinate him. She was the mother of Babar Jang, "Putli" means "doll" or "butterfly".

The Mina Maharani, mother of Dambar Jang.

Him Kumari, the mother of Nar Jang and Bir Jang.

Given the current state of historical research, it is not possible to draw up a complete genealogical tree of Jang Bahadur's family. He may have had wives whose names were not recorded because they did not bear him children. From the evidence presently available we know that Jang Bahadur had at least 17 wives and possibly as many as 25.
Empress Victoria. The Maharaja had himself weighed against a quantity of grain that was then distributed as an act of charity to poor Brahmins.

25 May. In the morning Jang Bahadur and his brothers drove around the Tundikhel parade ground. On returning to Thapathali they amused themselves by watching a buffalo fight. The Prime Minister spent the afternoon working on Foreign Office papers relating to Tibetan affairs.

26 May. The Maharaja and his brothers picnicked by Lake Tandah and spent the afternoon fishing.

On 27 May, owing to an outbreak of cholera, orders were issued for the closing of all offices in the capital until the end of June. No outsiders were allowed to enter the grounds of the Thapathali palace and the Prime Minister's servants were not permitted to go into the bazaars. After a month of self-imposed quarantine Jang Bahadur and his family moved to the hills that ring the Kathmandu Valley in order to escape infection. Back in the capital, cholera was claiming about 100 lives per day. By the middle of July the epidemic had run its course and the Prime Minister spent the following fortnight attending to the annual pajani, after which life resumed a more measured pace.

2 Aug. Fourteen thousand troops with 236 horses and 62 field guns were assembled on the Tundikhel. At one o'clock the Maharaja
left Thapathali for the parade ground where he was received by the Commander-in-Chief and his staff and joined by two high ranking Chinese officials who were visiting from Lhasa. A procession was formed, headed by an escort of bodyguards and comprising three state coaches. The troops presented arms, the field guns fired a salute and the regimental bands played as the Prime Minister and his party drove along in review. Jang Bahadur then mounted the reviewing stand and took the salute as the troops marched past.

3 Aug. The Maharaja bought a diamond necklace and a pair of amulets from a Delhi jeweller for Rs. 140,000 (£290,000 in today’s terms).

4 Aug. In the evening Jang Bahadur attended a race of all the principal racing ponies in his stable.

5 Aug. At night there was a banquet in the gardens of the Prime Minister's official residence at Thapathali, at which his brothers and cousins and all the principal civil and military officers in the capital were present.

6 Aug. The day was devoted to the hearing of appeal cases and other judicial work. In the evening the Prime Minister witnessed a wild boar fight.
7 Aug. Fifteen privates were promoted to the rank of havildar. In the evening the Maharaja inspected some public buildings that were in the course of construction.

From 8 to 31 August the Maharaja held court at Godavari, hearing appeals in the mornings and hawking and gardening in the afternoons. The first three weeks of September were spent at Charia, a forested tract of country that he wanted to stock as a game reserve where he could hunt and shoot in his old age. Upon his return to Thapathali, Jang Bahadur was laid up with fever for almost a fortnight.

6 Oct. Specimens of 35 snakes that had been collected from different mountain regions were presented to the Maharaja. They were sent first to the court artists to be recorded in water-colours and then to the Vaidya Khana, the Medical Laboratory, for use in preparing medicinal oil.

7 Oct. Accompanied by his brothers and the principal members of his staff, the Prime Minister rode to Bhaktapur where he reviewed the city garrison.

8 Oct. Jang Bahadur ordered copies to be procured of 39 rare Sanskrit manuscripts that had been borrowed over the years by European visitors to the Pustak Khota, the Government Archives, and never returned.

9 Oct. Six white deer that had been trapped by shikaris were presented to the Maharaja. He ordered them to be released in a forest on the edge of the Kathmandu Valley so that they could breed there.

For the following three weeks the Prime Minister spent his mornings working on the State papers of the Home Office. In the afternoons he heard appeal cases and in the evenings he practised rifle shooting or went riding.

Life at the Prime Minister's Thapathali residence, or darbar as it came to be termed, began to assume the air of a royal court. Built on a hill above the banks of the Bagmati River, Thapathali consisted of a series of connected buildings, four or five storeys in height, in the form of hollow squares. Their ornate, stucco facades were designed in the grand Italianate style that had so impressed Jang Bahadur during his travels in Europe and France. The large, rococo public rooms were filled with the heavy ornate furniture that typified the full, ripe, dripping sunset of late Victorian taste, and contained the most eclectic assortment of European and Oriental bric-a-brac. The walls of the main Audience Hall, the Bhui Baithak, and the Circular Hall, the Gole Baithak, were hung with huge Belgian mirrors and full length portraits of Jang Bahadur, his brothers and Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The
floors were of Italian marble and the whole was illuminated with massive crystal chandeliers imported from England. The private apartments were equally luxuriously furnished. Thapathali was the home of the Prime Minister, his sons and their numerous families.

Once the Ranas had joined hands with the royal family by grand matrimonial alliances, there was a marked change in the manners and customs of their households. The Nepali they spoke came to be interspersed with Persian and Urdu words. They enjoyed Hindi and Urdu classical
singing and dance performances organised by resident music masters who had come to Kathmandu from the courts of the Indian maharajas after the Mutiny of 1857. Their brass and copper plates and eating utensils were replaced by silver ones. Dhir Shumsher had difficulty keeping up with this public display of wealth as he had 17 sons, but when the eldest son, Bir, married into the royal family the princess’ dowry fortuitously included a solid silver cooking pot that weighed almost 30 kilogrammes and Dhir Shumsher had this melted down and made into enough silver plates for the whole family.

Despite the opulence of his lifestyle, Jang Bahadur observed the social practices of a strictly orthodox Hindu. He took his meals in the kitchen, the floors of which had been ritually purified with cowdung and red soil. Although he engaged Muslim chefs to prepare Mughlai dishes, they were

Lalit Kumari, the daughter of Jang Bahadur who married Crown Prince Trailokya and became the mother of King Prithvi Bir. c 1875.
not allowed to actually touch the food. All the meals were prepared under their guidance by Brahmin cooks. Whenever the Prime Minister had to shake hands with foreign dignitaries he would wash his hands immediately afterwards and sprinkle Ganges water over his head to purify himself.

And so life continued routinely until the end of the year when Jang Bahadur set out for his winter hunting expedition in the Tarai. On 25 December 1860 he held a council at Thapathali and formally handed over the seals of State to his brother Krishna Bahadur, who was to officiate as Prime Minister during his absence. For the next three-and-a-half months he ranged the length and breadth of the Tarai doing what he loved most—hunting game. By the time he returned to Kathmandu on 12 April 1861 he had captured 28 elephants and shot 34 tigers, 2 leopards, 2 bears, 2 deer, 11 rhinos and a boa constrictor that measured 15 metres. The following year, on what had now become an annual winter hunting expedition, he captured 21 elephants and shot 31 tigers, 3 leopards, 4 bears, 27 deer, 1 rhino, 1 boa constrictor, 11 wild buffaloes, 10 wild boar and 1 crocodile. In the winter of 1862-63 he captured 18 elephants and shot 39 tigers, 4 leopards, 5 bears, 15 deer, 4 rhinos, 9 wild boar and 3 panthers.

**Expanding the Shah/Rana Matrimonial Alliance**

In 1860 Crown Prince Trailokya, now aged 13, married Lalit Kumari, the daughter of Jang Bahadur and Hiranyagarbha Kumari Dev. On 8 August 1875 Lalit Kumari gave birth to a son, Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah, second in line of succession to the throne of Nepal.

**Famine**

During 1863-64 the monsoons failed and plunged the subsistence farmers of Nepal into a life and death crisis. Famine ravaged the Kathmandu Valley and some of the hill districts. To combat the effects of the disaster the government prohibited the export of grain and deployed troops along the borders to prevent the smuggling of rice into India. By the winter of 1865-66 the famine had spread to the eastern Tarai and the government ordered the distribution of rations to children below 16 and "old people above 55 years of age" who had no means of supporting themselves. Seeds were supplied on loan to the cultivators. District Governors were instructed to use local revenue collections to finance these relief measures and, if there were insufficient funds in the district treasuries, to take short-term loans from local money-lenders at 5 per cent interest. In December 1866, by which time thousands had died of starvation, the government took over all trading in foodgrains in the devastated areas. The village revenue collectors were ordered to purchase all the rice produced by the cultivators, who were forbidden to sell elsewhere. A fair current price was paid. Foodgrains and seeds were then sold back to the cultivators at prices fixed
by the government. At the height of the famine, members of the royal family, the Rana family and high ranking officials launched a fund raising campaign in Kathmandu for the relief of the victims. A total of Rs. 5,611 (£11,600 in current terms) was collected.

The famine of the 1860s was not, of course, the first famine to strike Nepal. Nor was it the last. Even today, in common with the rest of monsoon Asia, the subsistence farmers of Nepal face the very real prospect of disaster every year as they wait and pray for the rains to come. Fortunately, subsistence crises and periods of shortage in Nepal have typically been on a smaller scale: local droughts or floods, earthquakes and major landslides, epidemics that destroy plough animals, winds or rain at harvest time that damage much of the grain, plagues of mice or birds that ravage the crop. Often the shortage might be confined to one or two families in the village whose land was either too high and dry or too low and wet, whose working head fell ill just when it was time to plant or harvest, whose children were too many for its small patch of land to feed. Even if the crop was good the claims on it by outsiders—the money lenders, the landowners, the state—might leave insufficient for the family to survive on.

The peasant family’s unrelenting problem was to produce enough food to feed the household, buy a few necessities such as salt and cloth and meet the irreducible claims of outsiders. A bad crop might not only mean a shortage of food; it might also mean having to sell some land or livestock.
and thus reduce the odds of achieving an adequate subsistence the following year. The amount of rice or corn that a family could produce was largely in the hands of fate, but certain technical arrangements, such as the local tradition of seed varieties, planting techniques and timing, were designed over centuries of trial and error to produce the most stable and reliable yield possible under the circumstances.

Many social arrangements served the same purpose. Patterns of reciprocity, communal land and work-sharing helped to ease the inevitable rough patches that might otherwise throw a peasant family below subsistence level. It is these survival techniques that lie behind many of the social and moral arrangements of Nepalese farming communities even today. They find their expression in the patterns of informal social control and reciprocity that structure daily contact, in a conservative village egalitarianism that holds that all should have a place—though not that all should be equal—and that all are guaranteed a niche within which they can attempt to make a minimal subsistence living. The position of the better off is legitimised only to the extent that their resources are employed in ways that assist the needs of the more impoverished villagers. They are expected to sponsor more conspicuously lavish celebrations at weddings, to show greater charity to neighbours and the poor, to build wayside shelters and shrines, to finance local religious activity, and to take on more dependents and employees than the average household. This generosity is not without its compensation, for it earns the well placed prestige and serves to attract a grateful clientele
which, in turn, validates their position in the community. Of course, there is always some tension within the village between the better off who hope to minimise their social obligations and the poor who hope to maximise their gains from communal social guarantees. But the system works through the support of most villagers and in normal times it assures the survival of the weakest.

The distinctive economic behaviour of the subsistence-oriented peasant family may be explained by the fact that their enterprise is a unit of consumption as well as a unit of production. That is, the family begins with an irreducible subsistence consumer demand, based on its size, which it must meet in order to survive. Meeting those minimal human needs in a reliable and stable way is the relentless focus of its daily activities. The cost of failure for those living at subsistence level is such that safety and reliability must always take unquestioned precedence over long-run profits. When the landlord and the state lay claim to their share of the peasants’ produce, the crucial question for the subsistence family is not how much will be taken from them but how much will be left. Many of the seeming anomalies of peasant economics—their conservative farming techniques, their unwillingness to switch to crops that they know to be more profitable—arise from the fact that their struggle is a struggle for survival, waged in the context of a permanent shortage of land, a total absence of capital and a lack of outside employment opportunities. Peasant families who, even today, have to feed themselves from small plots of land in the overpopulated hill regions work unimaginably long and hard for the smallest increments in production.

The subsistence peasant family also engages in other activities that are intended to maximise its self-sufficiency and, hopefully, provide a welcome economic margin in times of shortage. If crop yields are poor then trades such as basketmaking, pottery and weaving for local markets which occupy a family in the slack agricultural period can be intensified to make good the shortfall, even if the yields are pitifully small. Family members can hire themselves out as day labour. Vegetable gardening, the raising of chickens and goats and forest gathering are other forms of subsistence insurance that might carry a peasant family through a shortage of rice. It gives them a capacity to absorb, for a short time at least, crop failures and the claims of outsiders.

Subsistence farmers will always find themselves at the mercy of nature. In areas such as Nepal that depend upon the monsoon they are perennially vulnerable. And when the wisest technical precautions have failed, peasant families must somehow survive those years when their net yield or resources fall below basic needs. They may attempt to do this by tightening their belts further and eating only one meal a day or substituting poorer foods. But peasant belts have precious little slack and if the crisis is
an extended one this is not a viable strategy. They may turn to small crafts or casual wage labour. Though there is little scope for this in the smaller and more remote villages of Nepal, in other areas it has always been a regular and necessary part of the subsistence package. A family’s kinsmen, their friends, their village and even, though rarely, the state may help tide them over a difficult period of illness or crop failure. As a doomsday choice the family could consider migration.

Seemingly immovable peasant conservatism, then, is not the result of ignorance or inertia. Rather, it is an example of economic risk management in action. The subsistence farmer who works so close to the margins knows that if he miscalculates he will lose everything. His limited techniques and the whims of nature expose him, more than most producers, to unavoidable risks, while the relative absence of alternatives for gainful employment offer him almost nothing in the way of economic insurance. If he is ultra-cautious about endangering his livelihood, it is because his choices and decisions are, quite literally, a matter of life and death.

The Tibetan Problem

The next problem to exercise the Prime Minister was a crisis in Nepal-Tibet relations, which had been characterised by tension and acrimony since the war between the two countries had ended 15 years earlier. In March 1873 the Nepalese vakil in Lhasa and members of his entourage were assaulted by Tibetan officials at a formal state darbar. Outraged by the incident, Jang Bahadur withdrew the Nepalese envoy from Lhasa then closed the border to trade and started to prepare Nepal for war.

The strength of the regular army at this time was about 25,000 men. There were, however, a large number of soldiers who were retired each year at the annual pajani and these veterans, called dhakres, could quickly be re-enlisted if the need arose. With little difficulty, Nepal could raise a force of 60,000 men who had been trained to arms. Recruiting for the army was undertaken in all areas of the Kingdom, usually in response to written orders sent to the District Governors, rajas, the Rai and Limbu Subbas and village headmen, instructing them to raise a quota of recruits by a stipulated date. While the discipline and fighting qualities of the army were good, training and leadership were poor. When war threatened, as it did now with Tibet, the soldiers were given two or three months basic training but otherwise the Government was too parsimonious to issue shells to the artillery regiments or bullets for musket and rifle practice. After the older officers who had fought in the Tibetan campaign of 1855 were gradually pensioned off, the army came to be officered by inexperienced or disinterested hands. Members of the Rana family were appointed as officers while still children. Jang Bahadur’s eldest son, Jagat Jang, was made a Colonel at the age of seven. His second son, Jit Jang, was a Colonel.
by the time he was six years old, and his third son, Padma Jang, was a General at the age of two.

Every regiment in the Nepalese army at this time included non-combatants, both civil functionaries and specialists such as medics, carpenters, iron smiths, cobbler s, tailors, barbers and washer men. The regiments varied in size from 600 to almost 2,000 men. Historically, the army had consisted of Brahmins, Thakuris, Khas, Gurungs and Magars, but from the time of Jang Bahadur Rais and Limbus were also recruited. New recruits were interspersed throughout the regiments without regard to caste or community. A contemporary European observer noted:

"The soldiers in the Gorkha service are in general fine men. They are little trammelled by the prejudices of caste and are in many respects decidedly superior to the British sepoys men. They are subject to the most strict discipline and obey without a murmur."

In contrast to the native troops in the British Indian army, the Nepalese soldiers cared little for caste taboos in matters of diet and commensality:

"These highland soldiers, who despatch their meal in half an hour and satisfy ceremonial law by merely washing their hands and face and taking off their turbans before cooking, laugh at the pharisaical rigour of our sipahis, who must bathe from head to foot and make puja ere they begin to dress their dinner and cannot be in marching trim again in less than three hours."

The average pay of a Nepalese soldier in the 1870s was still the same as it had been in the 1770s—about Rs. 70 per annum. Out of this meagre pay a soldier had to purchase a new uniform every seven or eight years and pay salami and darsanbhet levies at the time he was recruited and each time he was reconfirmed at the annual pajani. The proceeds of the salami levy—Rs. 4 per soldier—went to the Prime Minister, while the darsanbhet levy—a further Rs. 4 per soldier—went to the King and the principal members of his family.

Most of the raw materials needed to manufacture weapons and ammunition were available in Nepal. There were numerous iron, copper and lead mines in the hills and these were extensively exploited for the production of guns, rifles, muskets and kukris. Gunpowder was produced locally: there were sulphur mines in western Nepal, coal mines and forests for extracting charcoal, and all the saltpetre that the army required was available in the Tarai. The Nepalese could not, however, make good steel and this had to be imported from India along with flints. Brass cannons, ranging in calibre from 3 to 12 pounders, were manufactured in foundries at Kathmandu and Palpa. The same establishments produced round shot, canisters and bombs. Muskets had been made in Nepal since the days of Prithvi Narayan Shah and by the 1870s a foundry at Piuthan was manufacturing excellent copies of Enfield rifles at the rate of 500 a year. The supply of weapons to the troops, however, was not uniform. Some regiments
were issued with Enfield rifles while others had to make do with old flint muskets.

Even as he put the country on a war footing, Jang Bahadur opened negotiations with the Tibetans, for he realised that it would be impossible to win any war he prosecuted because China, however reluctantly, would be obliged to support the Tibetans. In the event, his diplomatic and military bluff succeeded. The authorities in Lhasa, already embarrassed by the incident in which the Nepalese vakil had been assaulted, assured Kathmandu that the safety of its diplomatic representative would be guaranteed and his dignity respected. Mollified, Jang Bahadur agreed to send the vakil back to Lhasa and the crisis was defused.

**Jang Bahadur’s Proposed Visit to Great Britain**

On 20 November 1874, Jang Bahadur announced that he intended to pay a second visit to Europe and a month later he left Kathmandu for Bombay at the head of a party of 27 officials and 75 domestic staff. But on the evening of 3 February 1875, while he was riding in the street in Bombay just prior to boarding the ship for England, his horse took fright and bolted, throwing him heavily onto the stone pavement. As a result of the chest injuries that he sustained in this fall Jang Bahadur was obliged to cancel his visit to Europe and return to Kathmandu.

**The Visit of the Prince of Wales**

Shortly afterwards, it was announced that the Prince of Wales would
make an official visit to India. Eager to return the hospitality that he had enjoyed in England some 20 years earlier, Jang Bahadur sent Ranaudip Singh to Calcutta to extend an invitation for the heir to the British Empire to enjoy some shikar in the jungles of Nepal. The Prince accepted the invitation, crossing into the Tarai on 20 February 1876 for a fortnight of big game hunting.

Advantage was always taken of these shikars to capture wild elephants to be tamed and trained, after which they would be used as work animals or exported to India. When a herd of elephants, numbering usually between 10 and 15, was selected for capture the animals were slowly driven over a period of several days towards a nearby valley or a ring of low hills whose natural exits could be blocked by stockades. There they were left to range freely and unmolested over an area that measured about 25 to 50 square kilometres for the several weeks it took for their food supply to be exhausted. As they began to weaken, arrangements were made for their capture. Tame elephants and beaters were used to drive the herd towards the strongest of the blockades that hemmed it in. Every side path or stream that could afford an avenue of escape was manned by soldiers or villagers who would turn the herd back if it approached by shouting and firing off volleys of musketry. As soon as the wild elephants were penned into the stockaded cul de sac, a pair of tame elephants was introduced amongst them. Working with great skill and coordination their mahouts selected a wild elephant, slipped a
Commander-in-Chief Ranaudip Singh and the Prince of Wales (later the King-Emperor Edward VII) on shikar in the Tarai. March 1876.

noose around its neck and led it away to the hunting party’s main camp, roped to the pair of tame animals, one of which led the way while the other brought up the rear. Operating in pairs in this manner, the tame animals, who understood their role completely and worked in perfect union, eventually secured each of the wild elephants. It was, of course, a high risk undertaking, both to man and beast, especially if the herd included an adult male which resisted capture by attacking the tame elephants that sought to separate him from his herd. Often a marathon battle lasting several hours would ensue as the strongest and most prized of the tame fighting elephants were pitted successively or in pairs against the leader of the herd for as long as it took to wear him down and force him to surrender. Two tame males then stood on either side of the exhausted beast, pressing against his flanks to make him stand quite still while several men worked swiftly to slip a lasso around his neck. When the male elephants had been subdued, the cows and calves became docile and relatively easy to rope. Once back at the hunting camp, each captured elephant was secured by its noose to a four-metre upright post. Its two tame minders stood on either side, pressing against its flanks to keep it still while a rope was lashed around one of its front feet and secured to a stake, then around one of its back feet and secured to another post. Thus anchored front and back and prevented by its noose from throwing itself on the ground, it was left without food for three or four days to wear down its strength and its spirit. At the end of this
time feeding commenced and the beast was moved about, secured by ropes and always in the company of its two minders. Within a fortnight the animal was usually sufficiently tame to cease all resistance and to allow a mahout to ride it. Then its training began. Pressed once more between its two minders, the elephant was covered in a network of ropes, up which twenty or so men and boys clambered to sit on its back and head or hang from its trunk or tail. More stood around patting and coaxing it. Then the trainers standing on the animal began pounding it with their feet while guns were fired and a military band produced a deafening cacophony of sound. Terrified at first, but firmly restrained from moving by its two minders and encouraged by periodic rewards of cakes and sugar cane, the great beast gradually became accustomed to these new experiences. Relays of men kept up the pounding and the confusion of noise for several days and nights, never allowing the animal to sleep. As the elephant became more docile the ropes were loosened and gradually removed, the number of men on its back reduced and its food rations increased. The severity of the training was gradually eased until, about two months after its capture, the elephant would allow people to mount and dismount at will. Then it was taken out onto the roads to become accustomed to the different sights and sounds it might meet there. For the first few days it was again tethered to two minders lest it take fright at something and bolt, but within a few days it would be ready to move about without restraint. Its education was all but complete—it would kneel or rise, stop or turn on command—and it remained only to accustom the animal to carrying a howdah.

The maharaja's annual shikar did not, of course, account for all the elephants captured each year in the jungles of the Tarai. The capture and export of elephants had been a thriving government monopoly long before the advent of the Ranas. While the men who actually captured the elephants and trained them were employed by the government, the whole exercise required more manpower resources than the state could afford to finance. To obviate the problem, the majority of those involved performed their work as part of their jhara obligations. Some groups of local people were required to provide unpaid labour to build enclosures or act as beaters during the capture of the elephants, while others who lived close to the government-operated establishments at which the elephants were trained and stabled had to forage for the grass that was used to feed them. The sale and export of these elephants, estimated to number between 200 and 300 per year, was a state monopoly.

The Ram Lakhan Thapa Uprising

No sooner had the Prince of Wales departed than Jang Bahadur, the man who had survived several assassination attempts and numerous plots by the nobility, faced a most unexpected challenge to his rule—a popular
uprising. An ex-soldier from Gorkha proclaimed himself to be an incarnation of the renowned Ram Lakhan Thapa, a traditional hero of the Magar people, and announced that he had been especially commissioned by the goddess Manokamna to overthrow Jang Bahadur and rule in his place. This latter day Ram Lakhan Thapa had, in fact, escaped conviction on a previous occasion when he was arrested and sent for trial before the Maharaja for extorting money from gullible peasants by masquerading as a saint in the streets of Gorkha. The case against him had been dismissed, whereupon he not only resumed his impersonations but claimed, in addition, that he had won the forgiveness of the Maharaja because of his saintliness. With messianic persuasiveness he gathered an armed following of 1,500 men. Their plan was to ambush the Prime Minister as he crossed a mountain pass near Deorali on his way back to Kathmandu at the end of his hunting trip with
the Prince of Wales. But Jang Bahadur, hearing of the uprising, despatched several companies of troops to Gorkha and the rebels were forced to surrender after a brief skirmish. Ram Lakhan Thapa and six of his deputies were brought to Kathmandu in bamboo cages, tried for fomenting a rebellion and executed. Ram Lakhan Thapa was hanged from a tree in front of the shrine of the goddess Manokamna.

The Death of Jang Bahadur
Towards the end of 1876, Jang Bahadur set out for his annual winter hunting trip in the Tarai. On 25 February 1877, three months into the trip, he fell ill with diarrhoea. He spent that day sitting in the sun or in his tent, complaining alternately of the intense heat and the bitter cold. By evening he was in a state of fevered prostration and had lost his sight. Later he was racked by convulsions and started vomiting blood. Realising that he was near death, the Senior Maharani had him placed on a palanquin and carried to the nearby village of Parthaghat where he was laid on the banks of the sacred Bagmati River. Towards midnight, consumed by cholera, he died.

A huge tree was felled and hollowed into the shape of a boat. Jang Bahadur's body was placed in it and covered with scented oils and camphor, awaiting cremation as soon as his brother, Dhir Shumsher, and Crown Prince Trailokya could arrive from Kathmandu. Three days after the Maharaja's death, his body was cremated on the banks of the holy Bagmati while the Senior Maharani and two of the junior Maharanis climbed onto the funeral pyre and committed suti.

Jang Bahadur: An Assessment
Jang Bahadur passed into history as the man who settled the issue of a confused civil government and put an end to a long and destructive period of instability within Nepal. The stable despotism that he imposed brought peace and order to society and was a welcome relief from the political turmoil that had taken the country to the brink of anarchy. Jang Bahadur destroyed the old aristocracy, reduced the position of the King to that of a figurehead and established a stable basis for law and order in the Kingdom by concentrating power in his own hands and those of his family.

More than any other public figure of 19th century Nepal, Jang Bahadur was an innovator. To him must go the credit for building a civil and military administrative infrastructure; for creating the machinery of government needed to manage Nepal in a modern sense. Whether he was able to promote the well-being of the people at the same time is a moot point. At best he would have done so coincidentally, for the traditional political culture of Nepal barely recognised the object of government as being to benefit the masses. The apparatus of power was exercised largely for personal gain and usually resulted in exploiting the masses rather than benefiting them.
Jang Bahadur realised that in order to maintain Nepal’s independence he had to maintain the country’s isolation. But he also realised that the degree of isolation had to be measured carefully, for isolation tended to breed suspicion about Nepal’s intentions in the minds of the British. He therefore sought to assure the British, through such actions as his visit to England and his support during the Indian Mutiny, that he had no hostile intentions toward them. The British policy of not interfering in Nepalese affairs unless their own imperial interests were threatened, and the Nepalese policy of subservience towards the British suited both parties well. It particularly suited Nepal because it did not compromise her isolation—an isolation that guaranteed her independence and ensured the uninterrupted absolutism of the Ranas for over a century.
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Ranaudip Singh
(1877–1885)
The death of Jang Bahadur confronted the regime with its most serious test to date: that of managing a smooth transition of power. As soon as Dhir Shumsher learned of the Prime Minister’s demise in a letter from the Senior Maharani, he moved immediately to forestall any anti-Rana initiatives on the part of Crown Prince Trailokya. In company with Jagat Jang he coerced the Heir Apparent and his senior wife into accompanying them to the Tarai on the pretext that Jang Bahadur was lying seriously ill in his hunting camp there. Once the Crown Prince had been removed from the capital it was a simple matter to prevail upon King Surendra to confer the prime ministership on Jang Bahadur’s eldest surviving brother, Ranaudip Singh.

The moment that Ranaudip Singh assumed the prime ministership he was faced with a critical dilemma. The lal mohur of 28 June 1857 had decreed that the position of Prime Minister should pass to him as Jang Bahadur’s eldest surviving brother, but that the position of Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung should pass to Jagat Jang as Jang Bahadur’s eldest son. And as this same decree had given the Maharaja the power to instruct the Prime Minister in his duties, it had created an incompatible and unworkable division of power and authority. For the good of the State—perhaps for the very survival of the State—such a division had to be avoided. So, in a decision that was to split the Rana family for the remainder of its years in power, Ranaudip Singh decided to assume both titles himself. On 16 March 1877 a grand darbar was held at which King Surendra conferred upon him the jewelled head-dress of JangBahadur together with ceremonial shawls and a sword of state. A salute of 19 guns was fired and the new Maharaja Prime Minister proceeded on an elephant in formal procession to his official residence at Narayanhiti.

The Conspiracies Begin

Ranaudip Singh was a genial and easy going person who completely lacked the strength of character of the late Prime Minister. It soon became
apparent that his grip on power was due to the firm and decisive support of his youngest brother, Dhir Shumsher. Resolute, capable and absolutely fearless, Dhir Shumsher possessed every quality of the late Jang Bahadur that Ranaudip Singh lacked and he quickly emerged as the de facto ruler of Nepal. Nevertheless, there was still one strong challenger to the Prime Minister’s position: Jagat Jang, eldest son of Jang Bahadur and the rightful claimant to the maharajaship of Kaski and Lamjung.

Jagat Jang, dispossessed of his title though not of his father’s huge personal fortune, found a most unlikely ally in Crown Prince Trailokya—
unlikely because, although the elimination of those ahead of him on the Roll of Succession would fulfil Jagat Jang’s objective of gaining the maharajaship that had now been linked to the prime ministership, it would not fulfil Prince Trailokya’s objective of destroying the Ranas and restoring the power of the monarchy. However it would be a step in the right direction for the Crown Prince. So the two conspired to put an end to their common enemies, regardless of the likely state of their relations after they succeeded. In the event, no joint plan of action materialised because Dhir Shumsher fell seriously ill. Knowing that Dhir Shumsher was the main obstacle to the fulfilment of their plans, Jagat Jang and Prince Trailokya decided that it would be easier to make their move after his seemingly imminent death. But Dhir Shumsher recovered and it was Crown Prince Trailokya who died—suddenly and in mysterious circumstances on 30 March 1878. The official announcement cited rheumatic fever as the cause of death. Rumours circulating in the bazaar claimed he had been poisoned.

The death of Crown Prince Trailokya left two major protagonists in the conspiratorial politics that the Prime Minister was so incapable of controlling or manipulating to his own advantage: Jagat Jang, eldest son of Jang Bahadur and head of the Jang branch of the Rana family, and Dhir Shumsher, youngest brother of the late Jang Bahadur and patriarch of the Shumsher branch of the Rana family. Of Jang Bahadur’s other brothers, Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh and Krishna Bahadur had no children while Bam Bahadur’s two sons, Badri Narsingh’s three sons and Jagat Shumsher’s two sons all kept a very low political profile.

Tensions between the two protagonists came to a head when Jagat Shumsher, Commander-in-Chief and next in line to succeed to the prime ministership, died on 11 May 1879. His death opened the way for a crucial redistribution of power. According to the Roll of Succession, Dhir Shumsher would automatically vacate his position of Western (Senior) Commanding General and assume that of Commander-in-Chief. In doing so he would relinquish his direct control over the army and become the country’s chief civil administrator. Jagat Jang would become Western (Senior) Commanding General in his place. As commander of the largest segment of the army he would have effective control of the country’s military forces and as head of the Defence Department he would propose all appointments and promotions within the officer corps. It was a reallocation of duties that Dhir Shumsher bitterly opposed. As he saw it, having Jagat Jang as Western (Senior) Commanding General would pose an unacceptable threat to the Shumsher family. So seriously did he take this threat that he was even prepared to remain as Western (Senior) Commanding General, second in line for the prime ministership, and allow Jagat Jang to move past him to the position of Commander-in-Chief, first in line. Jagat Jang was willing to accept this arrangement provided that Dhir Shumsher agreed in writing to abandon
Jagat Jang, eldest son of Jang Bahadur, whose claim to his father's title of Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung led to an explosive coup d'etat in Nepal.

any claim to the prime ministership, but this he declined to do. Under pressure from his sons, who objected to his proposals on the grounds that they would give Jagat Jang the opportunity to act as Prime Minister while Ranaudip Singh was absent from Kathmandu, Dhir Shumsher withdrew his opposition to Jagat Jang's appointment and the promotions proceeded in accordance with the Roll of Succession.

In an effort to neutralise Jagat Jang's newly acquired power, Dhir Shumsher, now the chief civil administrator of Nepal, appointed his sons and supporters to every important post in the administration. To meet this challenge Jagat Jang forged an alliance with Prince Narendra, the younger brother of the late Crown Prince Trailokya. Their objective was to gain the throne for Prince Narendra upon the death of his father, King Surendra, on
the grounds that he was of purer blood than Crown Prince Prithvi Bir, whose mother was a Rana. In return, Prince Narendra would appoint Jagat Jang to the prime ministership. And so when King Surendra did fall terminally ill, Ranaudip Singh and Dhir Shumsher made desperate efforts to conceal the gravity of his condition for as long as possible and twenty regiments of soldiers were massed in the capital in case of trouble. In the event, no disturbances occurred when King Surendra died on 17 May 1881 and his five-year-old grandson, Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah, the only son of the late Prince Trailokya, was declared King on the same day. In fact, the only
objection to the accession of the new monarch came from ex-King Rajendra who heatedly advanced his own claims to the throne, maintaining that Jang Bahadur had acted unconstitutionally in deposing him 34 years before. A running argument ensued between the Prime Minister and the Royal Palace but the matter was resolved when that quarrelsome ancient passed away on 10 July 1881.

Jagat Jang's duties as Western (Senior) Commanding General were now arranged so as to keep him away from the capital as much as possible and at arm's length from public affairs. He had lost a useful ally with the death of Crown Prince Trailokya, while Prince Narendra was of no further use to him now that Prithvi Bir had been crowned King. His brothers showed little enthusiasm for his cause for they knew that if ever he did regain the maharajaship of Kaski and Lamjung, he would bequeath it to his eldest son. As a result, political tensions in Nepal eased and Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh was able to devote himself to affairs of state.

**Relations with the British: Gurkha Recruitment**

During the period of Ranaudip Singh's prime ministership, the British adopted a more accommodating attitude towards the Nepal darbar, the main impulse behind this new policy being their increasing need for Gurkha recruits to strengthen the Indian army and face the growing Russian menace. Gurkhas had first been recruited into the Indian army during the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16, though these recruits were, in fact, men of the recently incorporated territories of Kumaon and Garhwal who had surrendered to the British. Their superb fighting qualities impressed the British and over the years the demand for the hillmen steadily increased. By the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny in 1857 there were five Gurkha regiments in the Indian army. There was no class of native recruit upon whose courage and fidelity the British could so confidently rely. The Gurkhas were brave, hardy and free from many of the caste prejudices that impaired the military effectiveness of other races on the subcontinent. (The term "Gurkha" is, of course, a generic misnomer that the British applied to all the subjects of the King of Gorkha, regardless of their tribal origin.)

But recruitment was no easy task for the British. There was no regular arrangement with the Nepalese Government for the supply of men and recruiting agents had to operate across the border in secret, though a few recruits could be obtained at fairs in the border towns and Gurkhas of the Indian Army who went home on leave managed to smuggle out some men. British service was popular with the Nepalese because it was well paid and it offered active duty unavailable in the Nepalese army. But the Nepalese government disliked these clandestine recruiting procedures and took every opportunity to frustrate what it regarded as a devious scheme to weaken Nepal. Although Jang Bahadur had professed the fullest cooperation
with the British and had occasionally, and under pressure, supplied recruits—who were, however, mostly physically unfit—he resisted British pressure for regular and systematic recruiting facilities. The existing system produced enough recruits to fill the vacancies caused by retirement and death but could not cope with the sudden and massive increase in demand brought about by events such as the Second Afghan War of 1878-1880.

Ranaudip Singh’s appointment as Prime Minister prompted the British to renew their efforts to solve the recruitment problem. For six months the British Resident tried to persuade the Nepalese Government to drop its restrictions against the entry of its citizens into British service. He stressed the economic benefits to Nepal: while in service the men would remit money to their families at home and their pensions would sustain them in their old age. He pointed out the security benefits: their training in modern weapons would improve the regular army whose soldiers they could instruct after they retired. The issue was vital and urgent, the Resident insisted, and was the test of Ranaudip Singh’s professed loyalty to the British. In reply the Prime Minister recited the familiar excuses: he could not force his people to take service in a foreign country without imperilling his regime; military service in Nepal was steadily losing its erstwhile popularity and it was difficult to keep the Nepalese army up to full strength, let alone supply mercenaries for a foreign power. Finally, as a special concession, the Prime Minister agreed to an enlistment drive to be conducted through the darbar. After lengthy and extremely expensive efforts, the Resident gathered 559 volunteers, of whom 393 had to be rejected as medically unfit. The message from the darbar was quite clear.

Even as the enlistment drive was in progress, a census was taken of the military tribes of the country: house to house enquiries were made and the names of all adult males were recorded. The village headmen were instructed to prevent men leaving the country without the express permission of the darbar. People were warned against enlisting in the Indian army on pain of severe punishment and confiscation of property. Those who had earlier left the country illegally were ordered to return home to avoid their families being punished, and those who were home on leave were ordered to stay. Some who attempted to defy the government’s orders were executed and the death penalty was introduced for agents found recruiting inside Nepal.

The 1882 Bomb Conspiracy

On 6 January 1882 over 150 military officers and civilians were arrested on charges of conspiring to overthrow the government. Dhir Shumsher had discovered a well organised and widely supported plot designed to bring about the violent overthrow of Rana rule in Nepal.
According to the official version of events that the Nepal government provided to the Viceroy in Calcutta, the conspirators originally intended to assassinate the Prime Minister and as many leading officials as could be targeted on the occasion of the Basant Panchami festival in February 1881, when Ranaudip Singh and his senior staff assembled at the Hanuman Dhoka Palace. Frustrated in this attempt, they decided to strike during the Indra Jatra festival of September 1881, which would also bring together the leading civil and military personnel of the Kingdom at the Royal Palace. But again their plans were frustrated. Finally, the conspirators decided to strike on the morning of Friday 6 January 1882. Ranaudip Singh was hunting in
the Tarai at the time and Acting Prime Minister Dhir Shumsher was to chair a council meeting attended by all members of the Rana family holding the rank of colonel and above, and by the remainder of the leading civil officials and military officers. The conspirators planned to wipe them out by throwing hand grenades into the packed council tent. This time the conspirators failed because one of their member, ironically a grandson of Gagan Singh Bhandari, betrayed them to Dhir Shumsher.

The conspirators included leading members and followers of the Thapa, Pande and Basnaiat families—the old aristocracy that had been removed from political power by Jang Bahadur. They had calculated that the collapse of Rana rule could be accomplished by eliminating Dhir Shumsher and as many of his sons as possible. The absence of the Prime Minister from the capital in fact suited their plans. They were sure that with the removal of his eminence grise, Ranaudip Singh would resign from public office and the need to murder him would not arise. They were equally
confident that Jagat Jang, who was in India at the time, would not venture back to Nepal after the new regime had been installed and recognised by the British. The conspirators did not intend harming the royal family as it was quite in their best interests, as it had been in the best interests of the Ranas, to have a minor on the throne.

Dhir Shumsher's response upon learning of the conspiracy was immediate and thorough. The frontiers were closed, blockades were set up on the mountain trails, a curfew was imposed and troops were deployed throughout the Kathmandu Valley to hunt the conspirators down. Almost every family of note had one or more members implicated in the plot. Dhir Shumsher himself, in company with Bam Bikram, elder son of the late Prime Minister Bam Bahadur, arrested 16 leading conspirators as they were holding a meeting. His own eldest son, Bir Shumsher, who had accompanied Ranaudip Singh on his hunting trip, was secretly informed of events in Kathmandu and ordered to arrest several members of the official party for their involvement with the plot. Retribution was swift. "Most of the conspirators whilst in confinement have been subjected to rigorous treatment such as flogging and exposure in chains to the night air in the open with little or no clothing," the British Resident reported to Calcutta, "and some, I fear, have been tortured". Ranaudip Singh reached Kathmandu on 15 January and in the days that followed 23 of the conspirators were beheaded. The British Resident judged the mood of the ruling élite well when he reported

Dhir Shumsher in the courtyard of the Thapathali Darbar. A staunch supporter of Jang Bahadur during his rise to power and thereafter of the institutionalised rule of the Rana family, Dhir Shumsher was the de facto ruler of Nepal during the prime ministership of his weak and ineffectual brother, Ranaudip Singh.
“I do not believe that any power on earth could have saved their lives. It was evidently the [Prime] Minister’s impression that if he spared them, it was a mere question of time when they would again compass his life.” Five Brahmin plotters were branded and sentenced to life imprisonment. Their property was confiscated. The relatives of the condemned had their property seized and they were banished to various remote hill districts.

With characteristic shrewdness Dhir Shumsher used the conspiracy to engineer the removal of three political opponents of long standing—Jagat Jang, Prince Narendra and Bam Bikram Rana—even though there was no evidence to implicate any of them in the plot. Jagat Jang, who was on a pilgrimage in India when the conspiracy was uncovered in Kathmandu, was declared to be the coup leader. He was summoned home to face the charges—a summons that he was, in fact, prepared to obey if the government would guarantee his safe conduct. But the government not only refused to guarantee his safety, it added the extra charge of disobeying a military command when he decided not to return. Jagat Jang was dismissed from his post as Western (Senior) Commanding General and removed from the Roll of Succession. Nepal was declared closed to him forever.

Dhir Shumsher was well aware that Prince Narendra had conspired with Jagat Jang to claim the throne upon the death of King Surendra. Although that had not eventuated, he still constituted a threat to the established political order. To remove that threat he was charged with conspiracy against the infant King Prithvi Bir. Bam Bikram, elder son of the late Prime Minister Bam Bahadur, was also closely associated with the party of Jagat Jang and his removal could only enhance the security of the Shumsher family. However, Dhir Shumsher had to tread carefully in the matter of punishment. The Jang brothers were extremely popular with the rank and file of the army and savage retribution against them or their close associates might well have provoked a military revolt. In addition, Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari and Ranaudip Singh, who knew that the accused were innocent of the charges, were opposed to severe punishment. The Council of Nobles was summoned to sit in judgement on the pair, their decision being that the British should be asked to accept them as state prisoners for five years. The Viceroy agreed and Prince Narendra and Bam Bikram were marched off to imprisonment at Ootacamund in southern India.

Jang Bahadur’s third son, Padma Jang, was also implicated in the conspiracy. He was struck off the Roll of Succession and arrested and imprisoned for his alleged participation in the plot. But no evidence was ever produced against him and his fall from grace appears to have been another instance of political opportunism on the part of Dhir Shumsher. In this case, however, he had less success than he did with Prince Narendra and Bam Bikram. Padma Jang’s half-sister, Junior Queen Mother Lalit
Maharaja Ranaudip Singh and his principal wife Hari Priya Devi. c 1880.

Kumari, objected vigorously to the decision of the Bharadari Sabha to send him to India as a state prisoner as well, and he was incarcerated in Kathmandu instead. Lalit Kumari's persistent representations resulted in his being released after four months and reinstated on the Roll of Succession.

The conspiracy—the first concerted effort to unseat the Ranas—had failed and the severity with which it was put down served to discourage any further attempt by the old aristocracy to regain political power. Shaken by the incident, Ranaudip Singh formed a special military unit, the Bijuli Garad, to act as his bodyguard. It was stationed inside his residence and answerable only to him. The Royal Palace and the residence of the Prime Minister were placed under heavy guard, army discipline was tightened and special militia units were established in the Kathmandu Valley to suppress minor disturbances and control civil unrest. Militia units in the
hill districts and the Tarai were charged with maintaining law and order and from them was drawn a core of loyal government supporters to form the basis of an intelligence network: a team of state spies.

With the dangers of the coup d'état behind him, Ranaudip Singh was free to turn his attention to the administration of the Kingdom.

Trade and Commerce

The chief characteristic of trade and commerce in Rana Nepal was the manner in which external trade assumed much greater importance than internal trade. The reason for this is to be found quite simply in the geography of the country. The shape of Nepal is that of an elongated rectangle on an east-west axis—the same axis upon which the country is divided into four parallel bands of differing altitudes. Along the Kingdom's southern border is the Tarai, itself an extension of the vast north Indian plain that lies about 200 metres above sea level. Rising abruptly to 2,000 metres behind the Tarai are the Siwalik Hills, backed in turn by the Mahabharat Range at an average height of 3,000 metres. To the north stands the main Himalayan range which forms the frontier with Tibet. High up in the thin air and usually shrouded in cloud, over 250 peaks soar to a height of more than 6,000 metres. These east-west ranges are pierced in several places by rivers that rise in the high Himalayan valleys and cut their way southwards to traverse the Tarai and eventually join the Ganges. As a result of this geography, the Tarai region had easier access to the vast markets of the Indian plains than to the hill regions of the interior, while the northern hill regions had easier access to Tibet than to India or even to other parts of Nepal.

While geography was the major determinant of trade patterns it was not the only one. Internal trade was also inhibited by a lack of any means of communication other than foot trails across the mountains and by a lack of markets for the products of one region in another. The subsistence villages of the hill districts of eastern and western Nepal simply had nothing to sell each other. By contrast, border trade with Tibet had been a major element in the economy of the hills for centuries. The hill regions, for example, produced large quantities of foodgrains but practically no village in the area had any source of salt. The Tibetans, on the other hand, could not grow enough food on their alpine deserts but had numerous salt lakes. As a result, several trade marts in eastern and western Nepal adjacent to the high passes through the Himalayas thrived on the exchange of these and other commodities. Strings of porters moved up to these market towns from the south, carrying rice, spices, silk and cotton cloth and copper and brass utensils, there to rendezvous with yak caravans coming down from Tibet laden with salt, musk, borax, woollen cloth, medicinal herbs, gold dust and carpets.
Nepal's commerce with India traditionally accounted for the major portion of its external trade. It was conducted at numerous markets in scores of towns and villages along the Kingdom's open southern border, for the frontier was nothing more than a line on a map to the local people—a political statement that none of them understood or cared about. Their commercial activities, which were in the hands of countless petty traders, were part and parcel of the traditional natural economy of the area. Nepalese merchants exported timber, rice, fruit, vegetables, oil seeds, cattle, cardamoms, wax, forest birds, copper and brass utensils, paper, medicinal herbs, tobacco and falcons, which were particularly prized throughout the sub-continent. In exchange they imported salt, kerosene, tea, coarse sugar, sheep, goats and buffaloes.

From the 1850s onwards, opium emerged as a new export item, probably in response to the demands of the China market following the Opium War of 1840-42. In an attempt to corner the profits of this lucrative trade, the government imposed a monopoly on exports. But this proved unworkable and was abandoned after a few years. Thereafter, Nepalese farmers were encouraged to sell their produce directly to government depots in British India. Opium production, which was far more profitable than rice production, peaked in 1883 when the output of the farmers of the eastern Tarai reached 31 tonnes.

Towards the end of the 19th century the Indian railway system was extended up to the Nepalese frontier at several points, and this greatly assisted the development of such entrepot centres as Butwal and Nepalgunj and boosted the export trade considerably. Between 1880 and 1900, exports increased by 64 per cent to Rs. 25 million (£56 million in current terms), while imports doubled to Rs. 16 million (£36 million).

The Kathmandu Valley in the central hill region was for several centuries a centre of entrepot trade between northern India and central Tibet, and the comparative wealth and power of the three pre-unification Valley kingdoms was due primarily to their position in a highly developed trans-Himalayan trade system. This trade was mostly in the hands of Newari merchants who had established trading houses in Tibet and had been granted exemption from customs duties since the mid-seventeenth century. Muslim traders from Kashmir, still to be found in large numbers in Kathmandu today, were also actively engaged in this entrepot trade. It was essentially a trade in luxury goods: pearls, coral, amber, silks, spices, English glassware and cutlery, indigo and opium moved up through the high Himalayan passes into Tibet in exchange for gold dust, musk, silks and Chinese teas. From Kathmandu, the Kuti and Kerong Passes lie at a distance of 140 kilometres, which was usually covered in an eight-day trek. After negotiating these difficult and arduous passes at an altitude of 4,000 metres, the yak caravans then started on a 17-day march across the barren,
Kanchi Maharani or junior wife of Maharaja Ranaudip Singh. She avoided politics completely and confined herself to domestic activities in the Prime Minister's palace.

windswept plateau to Shigatze, the second city of Tibet. From there, Lhasa lies at a distance of 280 kilometres and could be reached in about twelve days.

Kathmandu's monopoly of this highly lucrative trans-Himalayan trade was dealt a crippling blow in the 1880s when a railway was constructed from Calcutta, the capital of British India, due north to Darjeeling, the hill station that the raja of Sikkim had been coerced into presenting to the East India Company "on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of [the East India Company's] government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages." From a point near Darjeeling,
a trade route led through Sikkim and up into the Chumbi Valley, a salient of Tibetan territory that thrust southwards towards Bengal. At the relatively low altitude of 3,200 metres the Chumbi Valley was a natural gateway into Tibet. Goods could now travel directly from Calcutta Port to Lhasa by a comparatively easy route in about 20 days, less than half the time required for the difficult and more expensive Calcutta-Kathmandu-Lhasa journey. In one fell swoop the government of Nepal lost an important source of commercial revenue that it had been exploiting for over two centuries.

The government raised the bulk of its revenue from trade through commercial taxation, but two other traditional devices for generating revenue are worthy of note: compulsory procurement and monopoly trade. Compulsory procurement was, in fact, only incidentally a revenue raising mechanism, for its primary purpose was to ensure that the requirements of the state’s civil and military establishments were met. The government had first claim on all the iron produced in the Kingdom, for example, and it compulsorily procured all that it needed for its munitions factories. The rice needed to feed state-owned elephants was acquired from designated villages in the Kathmandu Valley and the Tarai, while the sacrificial buffaloes required for state religious ceremonies, some 200 per year, were procured from about 140 villages around the Kathmandu Valley. As the government paid less than market rates for these commodities, the entire system of compulsory procurement not only ensured that the state fulfilled its needs, it constituted a form of indirect taxation as well.

Under the system of monopoly trade the state assumed the exclusive right to purchase and resell all available supplies of a commodity, thereby leaving no scope for private trade. The most important monopoly commodity was copper, which the government needed for minting coins and casting cannon. Once these needs had been met the balance of the country’s copper production was sold through a system of state trading. Similarly, all the paper produced between the Marsyangdi River in the west and the Dudhkosi River in the east was compulsorily acquired by the state. Once the needs of government offices had been met the balance was sold as a state monopoly. Wax was another commodity that the state compulsorily purchased, in this case to cast cannon and supply candles for the royal palaces and Rana households. Again, the surplus was traded as a state monopoly. The state also held a monopoly on trading in cardamom, elephants, liquor, tobacco and, at one stage, opium and sugar cane in the Tarai.

There is evidence that for a period during the 1860s Jang Bahadur established government monopolies over such basic commodities as cooking oil, dried fish, salt and firewood, and farmed them out to favoured merchants who remitted a share of their huge profits to the Rana family, much to the financial distress of the common people.
Monopoly trading by the state was, however, a hopelessly inefficient affair, and this can be attributed mainly to personnel problems of the government's own making. Chief amongst these was the degree of personal accountability demanded of government employees and the centralisation of financial authority. Administrative procedures laid heavy emphasis on individual responsibility and held civil servants personally liable for any shortfall in revenue collection, unless they could prove that such were due to circumstances beyond their control. Errors of judgement were rarely condoned if they resulted in any loss to the government and were punished with a fine and an adverse note in the service record, if the employee was fortunate, or with recovery of such losses from the employee's personal property. Not unexpectedly, initiative and risk-taking were virtually unknown amongst public employees.

Also mitigating against any degree of efficiency was the centralisation of the decision-making process. The system of local administration, particularly revenue administration, and the operation of state monopolies were completely devoid of any mechanism for delegating authority. Every issue, no matter how petty, required the personal decision of the Prime Minister and every disbursement, no matter how small, required personal sanction. Such approvals might take weeks or even months to obtain. As a result, state trading remained in a chronic state of mismanagement.
The Return of Confiscated Land to the Brahmins

Throughout Nepalese history, military conquest, political upheavals and changes in the balance of power among rival political factions have led to the large-scale confiscation of the lands of the losers and their redistribution amongst the victors. However, the requisitioning of all birta lands owned by Brahmins that the administrator of the Kingdom, ex-King Ran Bahadur Shah, ordered in 1805 was unique. To an extent, he was revenging himself upon the Brahmins whose prayers that the life of Queen Kantamati Devi be spared had failed, but in the main the confiscation measures were adopted because of the need to prepare financially for what he regarded as an inevitable war with the East India Company.

These same motives induced him to take the unusual step of confiscating huge areas of guthi land—land that had been endowed over the years to temples and monasteries for the performance of religious functions and philanthropic work. The step was unusual because, traditionally, the Shah kings had not interfered in the social and religious life of their conquered territories. Immediately after a principality was conquered or annexed, existing guthi land was confirmed by the local military commander pending formal approval from Kathmandu. Such formal confirmation usually followed as a matter of course, for it was in the interests of the state and its new ruling élite to safeguard religious institutions so as to ensure social and political stability. Furthermore, the royal family owed spiritual allegiance

Dhir Shumsher and his 17 sons. c. 1880.
to the same deities and temples as the defeated rajas. The confiscations of 1805 were undertaken out of financial necessity. Interestingly enough, the opportunity was not taken to reform the land tenure or taxation systems.

Shortly after he assumed the prime ministership of Nepal in September 1846, Jang Bahadur decided to restore the confiscated birta and guthi lands in order to win support for his newly established authority. Playing on the religious susceptibilities of the people by posing as a staunch defender of religious tradition and institutions, he announced:

"Foolish Kings and evil minded Ministers who damage temples, rest houses, roadside shelters, bridges, water-spouts, tanks, roads, wells, gardens, etc. constructed by others, or who confiscate guthis endowed by others, block their way to heaven and pave their way to hell. Incapable of tolerating the religious merit acquired by good people, they act against the public interest. Such people will sink in sin."

Then followed a promise that the appropriated lands would be restored:

"The birta and guthi lands confiscated in 1805 have been assigned to the Army. If now they are taken away from the Army and restored to the original owners, the Army will cease to exist. If the Army does not exist, our enemies will be powerful and the religion of the Hindus may not be safe. Arrangements should therefore be made in such a way that the confiscated birta and guthi holdings are restored, while also maintaining the Army, so as to safeguard the religion of the Hindus."

As it was impractical to return the confiscated holdings to the original owners because they had changed hands several times in the intervening four decades, they were given new lands acquired from the families and kinsmen of the nobles who had perished in the Kot Massacre or who had subsequently fled or been expelled from Nepal. Orders were issued that wastelands in the hill districts and the Tarai should also be given as compensation for appropriated land and that the beneficiaries should be provided with government funds to bring these lands under cultivation.

Despite Jang Bahadur’s ringing declaration, the restoration programme was carried out only perfunctorily and it petered out altogether with the gradual consolidation of his political authority. In fact, it may only ever have been intended as a gesture, for in 1882 Ranaudip Singh complained that the proposed beneficiaries had not been able to claim the lands allotted to them. He revived the issue and fixed a period of three years for completing the restoration programme. In view of the difficulties of ascertaining the precise amounts and exact locations of land confiscated in 1805, inspectors were sent to some districts to assess claims. Care was taken to ensure that the revenue of the new land was equal to that of the appropriated holdings. In some cases compensation was paid in cash. Eventually, by slow degrees, the work accomplished by ex-King Ran Bahadur Shah in 1805 was undone in its entirety.
Problems with Tibet

In the month of April each year a huge religious festival was held at the Jokhang Temple on the outskirts of Lhasa. In 1883, more than 20,000 monks gathered from all over Tibet to take part in the climax of the festival: a grand procession around the country’s holiest shrine. At the height of the celebrations an argument broke out between a Nepalese trader and several Tibetan women whom he accused of stealing jewellery from his shop. The argument developed into a scuffle, then the scuffle developed into a fight between some monks and several of the Nepalese traders. Finally, widespread rioting erupted. Hundreds of monks surged through the Nepalese quarter of Lhasa, looting and burning. By morning, with the Tibetan authorities completely unable to control the monks, all 84 Nepalese shops had been plundered or destroyed.

Outraged by the incident, Kathmandu demanded that the merchants be paid compensation amounting to Rs. 1.5 million and that the rioters be punished. The Tibetans prevaricated, unable to afford the payment demanded of them and lacking the political will to punish the monks. The Nepalese persisted, convinced that if the matter were allowed to drop the Tibetans would be emboldened to cease making the annual reparation payments due under the treaty of 1856 that had ended the Third Nepal-Tibet War.

The Prime Minister summoned the Bharadari Sabha and instructed it to prepare a report of the gains and losses to Nepal if she were to go to war over the issue. In its report, the Council of Nobles unanimously recommended military action if the Tibetans refused to compensate the
Newari merchants. The country was put on a war footing. Four million rupees were allocated from the Treasury for military preparations and General Dhir Shumsher was given supreme power to organise the war effort.

The army was to be divided into four Corps: the first was to invade Tibet, the second was to defend the frontier areas near Jhunga and Kuti, the third was to be held in reserve and the fourth was to remain in-country to maintain law and order. The invasion force was to consist of two divisions, each of eight battalions, to be led by Ranabir Jang Rana and Bir Shumsher Rana. It would total 45,000 men, 700 horses and 2,000 mules. Instead of using the traditional invasion routes up through the Kuti and Kerong Passes then marching eastwards across the Tibetan plateau towards Lhasa, the army would march to eastern Nepal near the frontier with Sikkim then
move up through the Wallanchung Pass into Tibet. This would have the advantage of greatly reducing the distance to be traversed across hostile territory after crossing the Nepal frontier. The Commander-in-Chief in person would lead the army to Lhasa.

A special office was created under Dhoj Narsingh Rana to supply food to the army. District Governors were instructed to requisition rice from the local farmers against a promise of payment with interest in a year's time. Food depots were to be set up at 15-kilometre intervals along the main routes to the frontier. The export of foodgrains to India was banned. In addition, every citizen from the King to the humblest farm labourer had to contribute a quantity of rice to meet the needs of the troops. The Prime Minister himself contributed 30 muris—just over two tonnes—while the Commander-in-Chief and the Commanding Generals each donated half that amount. Peasants and labourers were expected to contribute three pathis—just over 10 kg. Funds were allocated for the repair and construction of roads and bridges leading towards the Wallanchung Pass and the defences of the forts at Jhunga and Kuti were upgraded. Officials were despatched to the Punjab to purchase mules to transport material, while the Vakil's office in Calcutta worked overtime procuring weapons and medical supplies. The rajguru and the priests performed religious ceremonies and propitiatory rites to save the country from war and to make her victorious if hostilities could not be avoided.

Avoiding hostilities was, in fact, the earnest wish of both parties. The Nepalese realised that the cost of prosecuting a war would far exceed any compensation that could be extracted, while the Tibetans realised that they would have to enlist Chinese help if they were to have any hope of winning and that this would inevitably result in an unwelcome increase in Chinese influence in Tibet. And so, in January 1884, under the watchful eye of Chinese observers, Nepalese and Tibetan negotiating teams met to discuss a settlement, finally agreeing that Nepal would be paid one million rupees (£3 million in current terms) as compensation and reparation over a period of seven years. However, under pressure from the Chinese who were anxious to clear up the matter as quickly as possible, Tibet made an immediate settlement in full. It paid Rs. 600,000 from its own resources plus Rs. 400,000 it was forced to take as a loan from the Chinese Treasury.

Nepal also paid dearly for an incident that had such a trivial beginning. As the dispute dragged on, the Newari merchants lost business to Kashmiri and Ladakhi traders and Nepal lost her commercial supremacy in Tibet for ever. Later, in 1888, a new trade route was opened from Darjeeling across Sikkim and into Tibet, terminating Nepal's centuries old monopoly on trans-Himalayan trade and permanently reducing the importance of Kathmandu as a commercial entrepot.
A House Divided

The entire complexion of Nepalese politics altered dramatically on 14 October 1884 when Dhir Shumsher, the political arbiter of Nepal and the de facto ruler of the Kingdom, died. His passing not only altered the balance of power amongst the rival groups that surrounded the Prime Minister, but left him dangerously exposed. Ranaudip Singh’s elation at being freed from the domination of his powerful brother was quickly dissipated by the realisation of how precarious his situation had become and he even expressed a wish to resign the prime ministership. After Dhir Shumsher there was no one left for him to trust. When he went on a hunting trip to western Nepal in December 1884 he took every high ranking Rana official including the Commander-in-Chief with him to prevent any plotting back in Kathmandu. And in August 1885 all army officers above the rank of lieutenant were required to swear an oath of personal allegiance to the Prime Minister.

The death of Dhir Shumsher presented Jagat Jang with the chance to plead his innocence of any involvement in the bomb conspiracy of 1882 and held out the opportunity of being reinstated on the Roll of Succession. He decided to return to Kathmandu and put his case before the Prime Minister. There were, however, certain risks involved: he did not know the Prime Minister’s thinking on the issue, he feared the reaction of the Shumsher brothers and he was unsure to what extent, if any, he could count on the support of his own brothers. So before he left India he wrote to Hari Priya Devi, Ranaudip Singh’s senior wife, asking her to intercede with the Prime Minister on his behalf. Jagat Jang’s decision to return to Kathmandu caused great consternation in the Nepal darbar. The Shumsher family bitterly opposed his return and the Jung brothers, though sympathetic towards their eldest sibling, supported the Shumshers. As they already held senior positions in the establishment they had nothing to gain from Jagat Jang’s return and quite a lot to lose if the political climate deteriorated as a result. Unable to make up his mind, the Prime Minister referred the matter to a committee of nine leading Rana officials for consideration. The committee unanimously opposed Jagat Jang’s return. They recommended that his activities be monitored for the next year-and-a-half and that the matter be reconsidered at the end of that time. Ranaudip Singh accepted the committee’s decision and orders were issued to arrest Jagat Jung if he crossed into Nepal and to kill him if he resisted arrest. Convinced that he would be restored to favour if only he could put his case personally to the Prime Minister, Jagat Jang crossed the frontier into Nepal, alone and unarmed, on 6 April 1885. He was promptly arrested and sent to Kathmandu in chains.

Jagat Jang returned to a country that, in political terms, was deeply divided. On one side were the Jang brothers, Senior Queen Mother Tara
Kumari, her sister Khadga Kumari and the Prime Minister's senior wife, Hari Priya Devi. Ranged against them were the Shumsher brothers, Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari and her sister Dip Kumari. In the middle was the increasingly helpless Ranaudip Singh. The strongest player in the power game was Hari Priya Devi, a formidable lady who not only had a free hand in supervising the administration of the country and organising the annual pajani but who was able to countermand the direct orders of the Prime Minister. She was conceited and highly susceptible to flattery and she nagged her husband mercilessly. She even demanded a coronet like his.
as public recognition of her active role in conducting the affairs of state. At her direction Ranaudip Singh dropped all the charges against Jagat Jang but political tensions were running so high that he stopped short of appointing him to any formal post in the administration. At about the same time, Bam Bikram Rana and Prince Narendra were released from prison in Ootacamund and allowed to return to Kathmandu.

To complicate matters, Jit Jang Rana, Commander-in-Chief and next in line for the prime ministership, resigned. He left for India, ostensibly for medical treatment but in reality to protest against the manner in which the Prime Minister had transferred some of his responsibilities to the Shumsher brothers and left him with considerably less authority than previous Commanders-in-Chief. He settled in India and never returned to Nepal. The appointment of a new Commander-in-Chief proved to be an insuperable problem for the Prime Minister. Despite the fact that Jit Jang Rana had abandoned the post, his name continued to appear on official documents as the occupant of that position, although Ranabir Jang Rana officiated on his behalf.

Tensions now approached crisis point as the party of Jagat Jang manoeuvred to have him reinstated as Commander-in-Chief and the Shumsher brothers, convinced that such an appointment would spell their destruction, sought to frustrate their plans.

**Relations with the British: Honours and Titles**

To strengthen his position during this anxious time Ranaudip Singh reassessed his relations with the British. When he visited Benaras on a pilgrimage in 1883 he had been accorded a 15-gun salute. What he wanted now was a G.C.B. and a 19-gun salute to show his detractors in the darbar that, in the eyes of the Viceroy, he was no less important than Jang Bahadur had been. A supply of rifles for the army and the facility to freely import sulphur and lead to manufacture ammunition would also be welcome, while some small grant of territory would serve to enhance his popularity and prestige throughout the Kingdom. In return, he was prepared to relax the restrictions on recruiting Nepalese for the British army. Ranaudip Singh went fishing and the British nibbled at the bait.

During the negotiations that followed, the Prime Minister agreed to allow unrestricted enlistment in the four new Gurkha regiments being raised for the Indian army. For their part, the British agreed to give the Nepalese government one rifle for each man recruited, up to a total of 5,600 weapons, and to allow Nepal to import the material it needed for manufacturing ammunition. Ranaudip Singh’s wish to be awarded the G.C.B. was to receive favourable consideration provided he fulfilled his commitments regarding the supply of recruits. His request for an addition of territory, however, was passed over in deliberate silence.
Coup d’état

The Shumsher brothers, led by Bir Shumsher, took stock of their situation. Clearly, if Jagat Jang were to be reinstated as Commander-in-Chief the complete annihilation of the Shumshers would almost certainly follow. And Jagat Jang’s reinstatement was now highly likely, given that he had the support of Hari Priya Devi who was influential enough to direct the Prime Minister. They offered a huge bribe to Kaji Laxmi Bhakta Upadhyaya, a trusted aide to the Prime Minister, to persuade Ranaudip Singh to deport Jagat Jang to Palpa for three years on probation. The whole matter was arranged with such secrecy that Jagat Jang’s party knew nothing of it until the order was signed. Once it became known, however, Hari Priya Devi and Senior Queen Mother Tara Kumari moved quickly to have the order rescinded. At the same time these two formidable ladies sought to impose some much needed unity in Jagat Jang’s camp. Jagat Jang was made to promise his less than enthusiastic brothers and half-brothers that he would treat them well, while Padma Jang Rana, Ranabir Jang Rana and the late Badri Narsingh’s two sons, Kedar Narsingh and Dhoj Narsingh, were made to sign a document accepting Jagat Jang as Ranaudip Singh’s successor.

The Prime Minister was now in a complete quandry, teetering on the minimum threshold of political control. He could not challenge the authority of his senior wife, but at the same time he knew that if Jagat Jang came back to power he would not leave one Shumsher brother alive. To buy time he asked Dhoj Narsingh Rana to prepare a memorandum outlining the consequences of reinstating Jagat Jang on the Roll of Succession. The

The Narayanhiti Royal Palace.
memorandum was duly prepared and submitted to Senior Queen Mother Tara Kumari. The date was 21 November 1885. The contents of the report have never emerged but the fact that the Shumsher brothers staged a coup d'état the very next night would strongly suggest that it favoured the reinstatement of Jagat Jang.

Some months earlier the Nepalese had accepted a British invitation to participate in a series of military exercises at Delhi. Bir Shumsher was selected to command 3,000 picked troops and, to ensure that the calibre of the Nepalese soldiers would be shown to the best effect, he was permitted to choose which regiments he would lead and to replace any officers not to his liking. The Shumsher brothers decided to carry out their coup d'état with the assistance of these four regiments, now officered by their loyal supporters. However, it was a security policy of long standing that, unless they were under the exclusive command of the Prime Minister, troops in such large numbers were not issued with arms and ammunition while they were in the Kathmandu Valley. As the troops were of no use to him unarmed, Bir Shumsher approached the officiating Commander-in-Chief, Ranabir Jang Rana, for permission to issue them with weapons in Kathmandu. Ranabir Jang Rana refused, whereupon Bir Shumsher took the matter to Ranaudip Singh. The unsuspecting Prime Minister, acting on the trusted advice of Kaji Laxmi Bhakta Upadhyaya, agreed to arm the soldiers while they were still in the capital.

The Shumsher brothers assembled at their residence on the evening of 22 November 1885, the date set by their family astrologer as being the most auspicious for carrying out a coup d'état. Six of them set out for the Narayanhiti Palace, the official residence of the Prime Minister, arriving at about 9 p.m. The eldest, Bir Shumsher, remained on the ground floor with his father-in-law, Prince Upendra, who had been summoned so as to convey the impression that the royal family approved of the conspiracy. Chandra Shumsher remained at the door of the Prime Minister's apartment while the four other brothers, Khadga, Dambar, Rana and Bhim, entered on the pretext of delivering an urgent message from the British Resident. Ranaudip Singh was lying on a couch having his feet massaged while the newspapers were being read to him. He barely had time to look up at the intruders before they opened fire, one after the other, with weapons they had concealed inside their military greatcoats, and shot him dead.

Within hours, and thanks to the assistance of Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari, Bir Shumsher received a lal mohur from the infant King Prithvi Bir appointing him Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung and Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal.
7

Bir Shumsher
(1885–1901)
The night of 22 November 1885 was a night of confusion and terror for the family and supporters of the late Prime Minister. After murdering their uncle, Khadga Shumsher and his four brothers made their way to the royal living quarters inside the Prime Minister’s residence where King Prithvi Bir had been installed some time before. They escorted the 10-year-old monarch, along with his mother, the Junior Queen Lalit Kumari, and her sister, Dip Kumari, to the main gates of the palace where Bir Shumsher was waiting for them with his father-in-law, Prince Upendra. They immediately bundled the King and the ladies of the royal household into a waiting horse-drawn carriage and set out for Prince Upendra’s residence, now guarded by the four regiments of soldiers that had been selected to participate in the British military exercises in India and placed under Bir’s command. Once there, the young King signed a lal mohur appointing Bir Shumsher Rana as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

Meanwhile, across the other side of Kathmandu, armed soldiers burst into Jagat Jang’s residence, roused him from his bed and shot him dead. Harka Jang, one of Jang Bahadur’s illegitimate sons, was somehow alerted to the danger threatening the Jang Ranas and was able to make his way to Thapathali and raise the alarm before troops loyal to Bir Shumsher had time to seal the area off. Thanks to his prompt warning, Padma Jang, Ranabir Jang, Kedar Narsingh and Dhoj Narsingh were able to flee to the safety of the British Residency, as were the King’s uncle, Prince Narendra, Senior Queen Mother Tara Kumari and the late Ranaudip Singh’s senior wife, Hari Priya Devi. Jagat Jang’s 24-year-old son, Juddha Pratap, was not so fortunate. Half way to the British Residency he decided to return to Thapathali to retrieve his jewels and gold coins. By the time he was ready to leave his residence again the building had been surrounded by troops who shot him dead as he attempted to elude them and escape across the neighbouring fields. Harka
Jang himself headed into the eastern hills and managed to reach the safety of Darjeeling after several weeks.

The new government took immediate measures to prevent any disturbances as a result of the coup d'état. Kathmandu was placed under martial law, shops remained closed, the streets were empty and the fields surrounding the city were deserted. Letters were despatched to district officials advising them that Ranaudip Singh had died a natural death and that the Jang Ranas and the Narsingh Ranas had conspired against the lives of King Prithvi Bir and Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari. Instructions were issued that the traitors were to be arrested on sight. The supporters of the old regime were dismissed from office and their posts filled by associates of the Shumsher brothers. The Roll of Succession was revised to exclude the families of any of Jang Bahadur's brothers except that of Dhir Shumsher, and the senior positions in the administration were given to Bir's brothers in descending order of age: Khadga Shumsher became Commander-in-Chief; Rana Shumsher, the family drunk who had been the first to fire at his uncle Ranaudip Singh but missed, was appointed Western (Senior) Commanding General; Dev Shumsher became Eastern Commanding General; Chandra Shumsher was named Southern
Kedar Narsingh Rana, eldest son of Badri Narsingh Rana and Northern Commanding General under Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh. He was expelled to India following the coup d'etat that brought Bir Shumsher to power.

Commanding General and Bhim Shumsher was appointed Northern Commanding General. Power had moved from the families of Jang Bahadur and his six brothers to the seventeen sons of Dhir Shumsher. The inevitable political crisis that had its origins in Jang Bahadur’s attempts to satisfy both his brothers and his sons in his Roll of Succession, had worked itself through to its logical conclusion.

Along series of negotiations followed between the Nepal darbar and the refugees in the British Residency. Khadga Shumsher assured them that they would not be harmed if they chose to remain in Nepal, provided that
they promised in writing to abstain from any further political activity. Not unexpectedly, the refugees refused to accept any assurances given by the Shumsher family. Instead, they accepted an offer of safe passage to exile in India under the protection of the British Resident. Only Padma Jang was allowed to take his moveable property with him, thanks to the intervention of his half-sister, Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari.

The coup d'État not only made the Shumsher brothers the political masters of Nepal, it also netted them the immense wealth of the Jang family. Before the coup they had been so poor that all 17 of them had been obliged to share their father’s house. Now their days as the impoverished branch of the Rana family were at an end. Bir Shumsher appropriated the entire property of the late Ranaudip Singh, which was inventoried as follows and valued at about seven million pounds in today’s terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold, silver and coins:</td>
<td>Rs 3,606,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelled head-dress</td>
<td>Rs 250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald necklace</td>
<td>Rs 72,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair of diamond bangles</td>
<td>Rs 22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearl necklace with diamond pendants</td>
<td>Rs 21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby, diamond and sapphire rings</td>
<td>Rs 15,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous jewellery</td>
<td>Rs 192,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver dinner service for 170</td>
<td>Rs 200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword with handle set with diamonds</td>
<td>Rs 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guns, rifles, howdahs and equipage for shikar</td>
<td>Rs 200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 elephants</td>
<td>Rs 367,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Arab stallions</td>
<td>Rs 25,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 thoroughbred horses</td>
<td>Rs 41,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 English hounds</td>
<td>Rs 5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Australian cows</td>
<td>Rs 6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 buffaloes</td>
<td>Rs 1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,000 sheep</td>
<td>Rs 24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates and plantations</td>
<td>Rs 1,920,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Khadga Shumsher took the properties of Jit Jang, Dambar Jang and the luckless Juddha Pratap, while the rest of the Shumsher brothers were allocated the various residences recently vacated by the other Jang brothers.

Bir Shumsher now had position, power and wealth, but he lacked legitimacy. That would come only when the British recognised his government, but, as the Viceroy made clear in a letter to King Prithvi Bir, the British were not at all pleased at the violent rearrangement of authority in Nepal:

"Your Highness is very young, and cannot be held personally responsible for this crime. Moreover, the British Government has always abstained and desires still to abstain, if possible, from interference in the internal affairs of Nepal. . . . But
I protest in the name of her Majesty the Queen against a deed such as that which has now brought discredit upon your State, and I warn your Highness that unless your Minister and those about him so conduct themselves hereafter as to regain the respect of the British Government, which they have forfeited, it will be impossible for me, or those who come after me, to regard the Nepalese Durbar with the feelings of friendship and good-will by which all succeeding Viceroy's of India have hitherto been influenced. I earnestly trust that Your Highness and your advisers will lay my words to heart and that for the future the Government of your State may be conducted in accordance with the dictates of civilisation and humanity. If, on the contrary, this warning is disregarded, your Highness must not hold me responsible for any consequences which may ensue."

However the Viceroy refrained from exploiting the initial difficulties of the new regime, despite pressure from several quarters to withhold recognition until some material concessions had been wrung from the darbar. The British Commander-in-Chief in India wanted the Nepalese to allow a recruiting depot to be established in Kathmandu in return for recognition. The Political Department wanted freedom of movement inside the Kingdom for the Resident as the price of recognition. Everyone wanted British merchants to be allowed to trade freely inside the country. But Lord Dufferin resisted these pressures and confined himself to reprimanding Bir Shumsher for killing a valued ally of the British and warning him to rule peacefully and humanely. The views of Colonel Wylie, the astute and level-headed British Resident, prevailed:

"My view is that there is little to choose between the "ins" and the "outs" and that, though the value of Jung Bahadur's services to us was great, it is possible to exaggerate it. When all is said we cannot forget that Jung Bahadur was steeped in blood. And no one in Nepal doubts that if Juggut Jung had come to power there would have been a terrible reckoning with his enemies. The present Minister and his family are as bad as they can be; but they have already rendered us service, and it is conceivable that they might be able to do as much for us as Jung Bahadur did..... Unless we mean to change our whole policy towards Nepal, and to abandon strict neutrality for active interference, it seems to me that it does not matter to us which set of cut-throats has the upper-hand."

Two months after Bir Shumsher came to power the British recognised his government.

The Jang Ranas in Exile

No sooner had the political refugees arrived in India than Jit Jang, the self-exiled Commander-in-Chief and now, as the eldest surviving son of Jang Bahadur, head of the Jang Ranas, began to plan his opposition to the new regime. He approached the government of British India for support for his cause but the Viceroy refused categorically to interfere in the internal affairs of Nepal. He pointed out that such interference would be contrary to the Anglo-Nepal Treaty of 1801 and that, in any event, the British Government had at no time guaranteed the continuation of Jang Bahadur's dynasty. Jit Jang's attempts to subvert various district officials inside Nepal were equally fruitless. To a man, those whom he approached reported
every detail to the new government along with expressions of their loyalty to the new regime.

Frustrated in his attempts to gain the support of any officials—British or Nepalese—against Bir Shumsher, Jit Jang decided to harass the new government by launching guerilla attacks on the eastern Tarai districts adjoining British Indian territory. But when his chief organiser and recruiter was arrested by British officials at the request of the Governor of Ilam, armed opposition quickly fizzled out.

Padma Jang, who had been able to take most of his fortune into exile with him, displayed no interest in Jit Jang’s activities and spent the remainder of his days living quietly in Allahabad, where he died in 1907. Nor did Jit Jang receive any support from Senior Queen Mother Tara Kumari. As the eldest daughter of Jang Bahadur and a ranking member of the royal family she could have become the focus of the exiles’ opposition to the new government, but she chose not to assume this role. Instead, she refrained from any public act or statement against the new regime in the apparent hope that, with the Viceroy’s intercession, she might obtain a pension from the Nepal darbar. Bir Shumsher was prepared to pay her an allowance of Rs. 50 per month, but she refused to accept it. The new Prime
Minister later invited her to return to Nepal and settle there, but she refused that offer as well and spent the rest of her life in India.

Meanwhile, Dhoj Narsingh Rana, the second son of Badri Narsingh Rana who had, in fact, been adopted by Ranaudip Singh, was preoccupied with obtaining the restitution of the late Prime Minister's property. Not unexpectedly, his claims were simply ignored. Kedar Narsingh was equally unsuccessful in his efforts to obtain the return of his paternal estate.

Juddha Pratap, son of Jagat Jang Rana. Father and son both died in the coup d'etat of 22 November 1885 that brought Bir Shumsher to power.
And so, Jit Jang's attempts to unseat Bir Shumsher came to naught. Unlike the Shumsher brothers, whose unity of purpose finally won them absolute power in Nepal, the Jang Ranas could not unite even in their common adversity. But resistance to the new regime did not cease entirely. The leadership simply passed to another and more enterprising of Jang Bahadur's sons, Ranabir Jang.

The Conspiracies Begin

Like most despots who come to power by violent means, Bir Shumsher never dared to trust those around him. On 2 April 1886, two army officers were executed and 24 imprisoned for allegedly conspiring against the new government. Two months later, twenty government officials were
imprisoned on the same charge. Ever fearful for his own safety, Bir Shumsher reorganised and strengthened the Bijuli Garad, the personal bodyguard that had, ironically, been established by Ranaudip Singh to protect himself from assassination. A detachment was stationed in the compound of the Prime Minister’s residence on 24-hour alert—ready to rush to his aid should they sense any danger to his person. No one wearing an overcoat was allowed to enter the compound and no one could approach the Prime Minister without the prior approval of the Hazuria General, the newly created position of aide de camp to the Prime Minister. The first appointee to this post was Bir’s eldest half-brother, Dambar, who had taken a leading part in the assassination of Ranaudip Singh. He had been offered a place on the Roll of Succession but, for reasons known only to himself, he had declined. He was rewarded instead with the rank of General, a grant of Rs. 100,000 and the post of Hazuria General.

The person whom Bir Shumsher trusted least was his own brother Khadga, a man of colourful and extroverted character who was inclined to over-rate both his own capacity and the value of the services he had rendered to the new regime. Bir Shumsher’s fears were well founded because Khadga Shumsher was, in fact, plotting his overthrow in league with Jang Bahadur’s daughter, Dip Kumari, the wife of Prince Dhirendra but also, it was widely rumoured, the mistress of Khadga Shumsher. Khadga planned to invite the Prime Minister to his house to attend a religious ceremony for one of his children. There he would be arrested and deposed and his place taken by Khadga himself. But the Prime Minister had been forewarned of the plot through his intelligence network. Instead of arriving at Khadga Shumsher’s house with a small retinue of bodyguards, he turned up with a company of armed troops and arrested his brother. Khadga was taken back to Bir Shumsher’s house from where he was banished to Palpa. His name was struck off the Roll of Succession. Dip Kumari was banished to a remote hill district. The date was 13 March 1887. The involvement of Bir’s other brothers in the conspiracy can only be guessed at, though it is hardly likely that Khadga would have proceeded without at least the tacit consent of Dev, Chandra and Bhim.

After sacking Khadga Shumsher, the Prime Minister appointed the next senior of his brothers, Rana Shumsher, to the post of Commander-in-Chief. Within three months of his appointment, however, he had drunk himself to death and was replaced by Dev Shumsher.

Bir Shumsher had survived the first serious challenge to his rule but he was soon to be confronted with an equally grave threat as his exiled cousin, Ranabir Jang, prepared to mount an armed invasion of Nepal.

Ranabir Jang

Of all Jang Bahadur’s sons, Ranabir Jang probably had the best
Ranabir Jang, son of Jang Bahadur Rana. After his expulsion from Nepal in the wake of Bir Shumsher’s coup d’etat he led a series of well armed but poorly organised raids across the border from India in an unsuccessful attempt to topple the new regime.

understanding of the political situation in Nepal. He had held a series of official posts, both military and civil, including that of vakil in Calcutta, and had, without his father’s permission, made a visit to England. He was an able military officer and a capable administrator which was why, despite his being illegitimate, his father had placed him on the Roll of Succession.

Ranabir Jang wanted to commence his armed struggle to overthrow the Shumshers just as soon as he reached the safety of Indian territory from the
refuge of the British Residency in Kathmandu. His plan was to smuggle a force of armed men back into the capital and have them assassinate the Prime Minister and the principal officers of state when they assembled at the Hanuman Dhoka Palace to celebrate the Basanta Panchami festival. However, he was persuaded that this approach was too risky and he decided instead to launch a series of guerilla raids on the border areas. By February 1887 he had recruited and armed 1,700 men and was poised to launch his first attack when the British arrested him. He was released with a warning that, if he again used British territory as a base of military operations against the government of Nepal, he would again become liable to restraint.

Khadga Shumsher's failed coup attempt and his subsequent banishment to Palpa in March 1887 encouraged Ranabir Jang to make a further attempt to overthrow Bir Shumsher. He had the support of several influential Nepalese who had been purged from senior official positions following the coup d'état against Ranaudip Singh, and he believed that a large section of the army that still owed its allegiance to their recently dismissed Commander-in-Chief would at least remain neutral if he were to attack the new regime.

Ranabir Jang divided his forces into three units and attacked Ilam and Dhankuta in the east and Palpa in the west. In all three places the rebels were able to loot some government stores of money and rifles, but the military
DHIR SHUMSHER'S SEVENTEEN SONS

Dhir Shumsher was a staunch supporter of Jang Bahadur during his rise to power and thereafter of the institutionalised rule of the Rana family. He ruthlessly put down any conspiracies against the regime, including those perpetrated by his close relatives. He risked his life to keep his ineffectual older brother, Ranaudip Singh, in power so the order of succession would be maintained. Ironically, it was his own sons who violated that order of succession with a bloody coup d'état. As a result, four of Dhir Shumsher's sons became Prime Ministers of Nepal while the sons of Jang Bahadur were completely excluded from public office.

Bir
Khadga
Rana
Dev
Chandra
units, that they had expected to desert and join them, remained loyal. The rebels were dispelled with little effort. Undaunted, Ranabir Jang regrouped his forces for another attack. By December 1887 he had 3,000 well-armed men, 250 elephants and 9 machine guns. He launched his forces across the frontier at several points, looting government offices, capturing military posts, freeing prisoners and arresting local officials. The government responded quickly, despatching several regiments which crushed the rebels in a series of encounters around Butwal. Fifty-four of the insurgents were captured and brought to Kathmandu. After a summary trial, five of them were executed and the rest were imprisoned. Ranabir Jang escaped back into India.

With the defeat at Butwal, the armed resistance of the Jang family to the usurpation of power by the Shumshers collapsed. Ranabir Jang himself made one last attempt to avenge the fate of the Jang Ranas by plotting to assassinate Bir Shumsher during his visit to India in 1893, but the plot was betrayed by one of his own followers and thus came to naught.

**Relations with the British**

Ranaudip Singh’s brutal murder and the seizure of power by the Shumsher branch of the Rana family did not materially affect Kathmandu’s relations with Calcutta. Most importantly from the British point of view, recruitment of Gurkha mercenaries was not disrupted. In fact, within a year of coming to power, Bir Shumsher supplied sufficient recruits to enable the British to raise three new battalions and bring the old ones up to full strength, and shortly afterwards a fourth new battalion was raised. But still the British were not completely satisfied. They wanted only men from the best fighting tribes, the Magars and the Gurungs, but the darbar could not agree. In view of possible hostilities with Tibet these men were needed for the Nepalese army. The British also proposed that the recruits come with their families—a proposal that the darbar quite rightly disliked for it would have encouraged large-scale migration to India and denied Nepal the economic and military benefits that the mercenaries had been bringing her.

The problems with recruitment reflected the problems in the political relationship generally—problems that were exacerbated by the unconcealed hostility of the British Resident, Charles Girdlestone, towards the Shumsher Ranas. Bir Shumsher strongly resented the Resident’s sympathy for the Jang Ranas, whose subversive activities along the frontier were, he feared, covertly supported by the British. In an effort to improve relations, Bir Shumsher paid an official visit to the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, in Calcutta in February 1888. He promised the Viceroy that recruits would be regularly supplied, while the Viceroy promised him that the British Government would not interfere in the internal affairs of Nepal and that the Jang Ranas in India would be kept under a stricter surveillance.
It was a meeting at which each man won the confidence of the other and it set the tone for the relationship that was to continue during the prime ministership of Bir Shumsher and the later vice-royalties of Lord Lansdowne and Lord Elgin. The eventual result of the meeting was that Nepal's military resources became an essential adjunct of India's own military power. Recruiting operations were systematised, recruiting depots were established at several points along the Indo-Nepalese frontier, and men of long experience with the Gurkhas were appointed as recruiting officers. The recruits themselves were, in the words of the British Commander-in-Chief in India, Lord Roberts of Kandahar, "men of excellent stamp". The recruitment of high caste Nepalese, however, was not permitted. The prestige units of Nepal's own army were drawn exclusively from upper caste recruits on the rather questionable logic that this would improve the quality of the Kingdom's fighting forces.

In March 1892 Lord Roberts paid a visit to Kathmandu at the invitation of the Prime Minister. It was the first visit to the Nepalese capital by any senior British official, apart from the Resident. Roberts was met by a guard of honour at the border and escorted on the long and arduous journey on horseback across the difficult mountain terrain to the capital. In Kathmandu an impressive ceremonial parade of 18,000 troops was assembled on the
Tundikhel to march past in his honour. The Nepalese Commander-in-Chief, Dev Shumsher, spared no expense to make the march past a success. Money was lavished on outfitting and equipping the troops and on the dress uniforms, plumed helmets and high boots of the officers. The visitors were duly impressed. Lord Roberts concluded that the British should do all in their power “to keep on friendly terms with the state from which we get by far the best and most trustworthy of all our Asiatic soldiers”. To stimulate recruiting he was even prepared to send British officers to train Nepalese troops in Kathmandu and to give Nepalese officers honorary commissions in the British Gurkha regiments.

On a personal level, Lord Roberts was impressed by Bir Shumsher’s intelligence, civility and quiet and easy manners, and noted in his reports how efficient and benevolent in character he considered the Rana regime to be. In fact, Bir Shumsher and Lord Roberts established such a good rapport that the Prime Minister introduced the British general to his wife. He was the first European to be so complimented and the Viceroy described the gesture as a “significant event”.

In February 1893 Bir Shumsher again visited Calcutta, this time as the State guest of the new Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne. The visit resulted in a promise that Nepal would be able to procure arms and ammunition from India and Britain in reasonable quantities and without having to pay duty, provided that none of the weapons were passed to Tibet—a proviso which, in view of Nepal’s tense relations with that country, seemed hardly necessary. But when the Nepalese put in a shopping order for 8,000 Martini-
Henry rifles, a quarter of a million rounds of ammunition and a complete set of plant and equipment for the manufacture of field guns, rifles and ammunition, the British found themselves in an awkward position. If they filled the order, then the Nepalese army would have been better equipped than some sections of the British Indian army. It took all the negotiating skills of the British Resident to persuade Bir Shumsher to settle for 8,000 rifles and six 7-pounder field guns.

Bir Shumsher presented the British with a further dilemma in 1896 when he expressed a wish to visit England as an ambassador of King Prithvi Bir; that is, in the same capacity as Jang Bahadur had visited Europe. The Viceroy, Lord Elgin, supported the proposed visit, fearing that a refusal would damage the now excellent relations between the two countries, but the India Office insisted that Nepal was in the same category as the semi-sovereign protected states of India and that a Nepalese delegation could not claim the rank or status given to a delegation from an independent nation. Recognition of Nepal’s independent status, it insisted, would result in foreign contact with the darbar and, before long, foreign intrigue. But Bir Shumsher was adamant: he would rather abandon the visit than accept a lower status for his country and a lower personal status that would expose him to an unfavourable comparison by his political enemies with Jang Bahadur. Lord Elgin lobbied hard in support of Bir Shumsher. If the British government acceded to his request, he argued, there would be a firmer
conviction in the darbar regarding British power and hence the Rana regime would be strengthened and, along with it, British influence in Nepal. On the other hand, he warned, if the visit did not proceed, it would eventually tell against the advancement and gradual opening up of Nepal in the interests of Britain. The political relationship with Nepal, the Viceroy concluded, was too valuable to be sacrificed on the altar of protocol. The Viceroy’s arguments finally won the day but, in the event, the visit did not take place as Bir Shumsher claimed that he was too preoccupied with Tibetan affairs to be able to leave Kathmandu.

Bir Shumsher: A Profile

Bir Shumsher, the eldest son of Dhir Shumsher, was born on the most inauspicious day of the zodiac. As orthodox Hindus, his family believed that a child born on such a day would bring misfortune upon them—a belief that was confirmed in their minds when Bir’s mother died in childbirth. To save themselves from further misfortune, they, as most orthodox parents would have done, gave the baby into the care of relatives and would not allow the child to return home before the age of twelve. And so it was that Bir Shumsher grew up in the house of his uncle, Jang Bahadur. He was treated as one of Jang Bahadur’s own children and grew particularly close to his cousins Babar Jang, Dip Kumari and Khadga Kumari. Perhaps this estrangement from his natural family explains why Bir Shumsher grew up to be a reserved and reticent person, almost an introvert.

He did his schooling at Doveton College in Calcutta, where he was later to serve as vakil. He understood English well and could speak it passably
He also had a good command of Urdu and Persian. His experience in various important public offices, always under the watchful eye of his uncle, marked him as a man of common sense whose handling of situations and solving of problems, though never brilliant, were always solidly practical and, in most instances, correct.

Bir Shumsher began his working day with an appearance on the balcony of his residence, the Lal Darbar, where he received a salute from a military band that played the Prime Minister’s anthem. Then, heralded in typical Mughal fashion by two red-turbaned mace bearers, he would hold a public audience at which he dispensed justice to the common people. No one, under any circumstances, could be barred from attendance at this open court and every citizen of the realm had the right to petition the Prime Minister. Straightforward disputes were settled on the spot. More complex cases were referred to the formal court that was convened in the main hall of the Maharaja’s residence later in the afternoon. Though it was not compulsory for officials to attend this afternoon court, everyone of importance made a point of being there, for it was well known that attendance was a criterion for promotion or favour and that the Maharaja’s informers took careful note of who was present and who was absent. Even the most humble government employee made it a point to appear before the Maharaja after his office hours.

The Prime Minister’s lifestyle was a mixture of Nepalese and English. He began every day with the ritual ablutions that all orthodox Hindus perform, followed by prayer and meditation in his private chapel. Whenever
Nepal under the Ranas

possible he made a daily visit to the cow sheds to feed his favourite animals. He was very fond of cows and imported several new breeds from India and England. In common with most Nepalese he took his lunch at about 10 o'clock. His meals were prepared exclusively by Brahmin cooks and sampled by a taster to lessen the risk of his falling victim to an assassin. Then they were served on a solid, 24 carat gold setting: a large platter weighing 4.22 kg, six serving dishes totalling 1.69 kg, three bowls weighing a total of 1.4 kg, a 696 gm water jug and a gold spoon weighing 138 gm. As a strict Hindu, Bir Shumsher had the floor of his dining room pasted with cow dung, whose germicidal properties are believed to purify a place of eating. He washed his hands with Ganges water whenever they had been polluted by touching people of the scheduled castes or shaking hands with foreigners. But at the same time he enjoyed smoking tobacco from a gold hookah, wearing jackets from the best British tailors, sporting a French army forage cap and listening to military brass bands. The main hall of the Prime Minister's residence was filled with English furniture, Venetian glassware and German clocks. The floors were of Italian marble covered with Persian carpets. The rooms were lit with gas lamps and Belgian crystal chandeliers and the gardens were illuminated with electric carbon lights powered by generators driven by a steam engine. Bir Shumsher was a devoted patron of classical Indian music and dance. He maintained permanent groups of musicians and troupes of dancers in the Lal Darbar and in January 1900 he even convened a grand music conference at a place called Baghari in the Tarai that was attended by leading musicians and singers from all over India.

Seven of Dhir Shumsher's sons. Left to right: Dev, Purna, Jit, Khadga, Fateh, Chandra and Dambar. c 1880.
Mining

Mining was an important source of revenue in 19th century Nepal, providing some 7 per cent of the country's total income in the 1850s. The chief metals produced were copper, iron and lead. Copper and iron were mined in sufficient quantities to meet domestic demand and even to support a small export industry. Lead was also mined in sizeable quantities but the output was barely enough to meet the needs of the government munitions factories. Some quantities of gold, cinnabar, saltpetre and sulphur were also produced.

The mining industry was largely confined to the hill districts, where small mineral deposits are found almost everywhere. However, because of the geological structure of the Himalayan region, large mineral deposits are rare. The areas around Baglung and Gulmi in the western hills were rich in copper, as was the Majhkirat area in the east of the country. The best iron mines were to be found in the Kavrepanchok district, east of Kathmandu, while the richest lead deposits were in neighbouring Sindhupalchok district. Towards the end of the 19th century copper and lead were also produced in the inner Tarai region, though on a much smaller scale than in the hills.

Copper and iron were used for the manufacture of household utensils, agricultural tools and munitions. The country's total lead production went straight to the munitions factories. Munitions production had started in Nepal on a systematic basis soon after the Second Nepal-Tibet War of 1791-92 when a factory was established in Kathmandu. Another munitions factory, established at Piuthan in the central west early in the 19th century, produced fine copies of the British Enfield rifle. The scale of production of these and other smaller workshops may be gauged by the fact that Nepal was able to put over 100,000 men under arms on the eve of the Third Nepal-Tibet War in 1855. It was strict government policy that, in order to keep the Kingdom self-sufficient in arms production, the munitions factories had first claim on the output of the country's mines.

In general, mining was a small-scale localised enterprise. Deposits were discovered by accident, worked by primitive methods and abandoned when good surface access was exhausted. The technology to extract ore at deep levels was totally lacking. At best, the miners could dig a gallery downwards at an angle of 45 degrees, but as soon as it filled with water they would have to abandon it.

Mines were traditionally the property of the state and, unlike agricultural lands and forests, were never granted to individuals. Mineral production was closely controlled and regulated by the government. The ore was extracted by low caste communities known as agri, who worked on allotments of state-owned mining lands. They retained half the
metal they produced and handed the other half over to the government in the form of rent.

Part of the copper that the government collected as metal rent was minted into coins of low denomination, an activity that produced revenue *per se*. Until the late 19th century, these coins circulated not only throughout Nepal but also in the adjoining areas of northern India, where they were not entirely displaced by the Indian rupee until the close of the century. After the needs of the munitions factories had been met, the government sold the rest of its stock of copper and iron, on which it had a trading monopoly, to meet the domestic and agricultural needs of the people.

The government, however, lacked the administrative machinery to collect the metal rent, transport it to the munitions factories or the mints, and manage a monopoly trade. So it appointed two mining managers, one in the eastern hill region and one in the western hill districts. It was the task of the mining managers to collect the government's share of mineral production, act as an agent for the purchase of the metal that the *agri* households retained as their share, manage the government's monopoly of trade in copper, and operate the regional mints. They also collected agrarian taxes from the mining villages and administered justice, appropriating the fines and penalties levied in the course of their judicial activities. In consideration of their rights and privileges, the mining managers paid a stipulated sum of money to the government.

This system suffered from a number of serious shortcomings. The majority of mining managers were speculators who lacked any managerial or technical skills at all. Moreover, their term of appointment was usually short, between three and five years, so their primary objective was to maximise their profits as quickly as possible. Long term planning or capital investment did not enter their consciousness. Nevertheless, the Kingdom managed to meet the growing demands of its mints and munitions factories, sustain a thriving metal goods industry in several parts of the hill region and raise revenue for the government.

Life for the *agri* communities was harsh and dangerous and their lot was made even more difficult by the extortion and duress applied by the mining managers or by the agents they appointed at the local level to maximise their collections of metal rent. One example will suffice, told in the words of the headman of a small village in the western hills.

"The area where these mines are located and also where we live is situated in a Himalayan region, hence no work can be done in the mines during winter. From July, too, no work is possible because of the rains. Accordingly, we can work in the mines only during the four months from March to June. However, in some years no ore is located, so that we can hardly produce 10 dharis of copper after working for four months. This year, [the mining manager's agent] visited this area and compelled us to accept an undertaking to supply 55 dharis of copper every year in spite of our protestations. Because we were not able to produce that quantity of copper, our oxen and household utensils were seized."
The price that the mining managers paid when purchasing the *agri* community's share of the ore was also a cause for complaint for it was always consistently below current market prices. As a result, in western Nepal, large quantities of copper were smuggled to Pokhara where prices were higher. Smuggling was difficult during the monsoon period where the rivers were flooded because the ferrymen were under strict instructions not to transport anyone carrying contraband metal, but in the winter time the rivers could be easily forded, though the smugglers had to keep a careful watch for military patrols posted to suppress their nefarious trade. Nevertheless smuggling flourished, as is evidenced by a complaint from a district official in 1873 that he had run out of fetters with which to confine all the offenders he had caught.

The government added to the woes of the miners as well. During the 1890's Prime Minister Bir Shumsher forced the *agris* who operated some copper mines in the western hill districts to work for three months every year on a compulsory basis or to pay a heavy fine for every day of absence. The regulations even prescribed that defaulters could be put in chains and forced to work. And when the mines were exhausted the government, with characteristic disregard for the impact of their decision upon the livelihood of the mining communities, simply commuted the metal rents into cash rents.

**Nepalese Complementary Missions to China**

Twice during the prime ministership of Bir Shumsher, in September 1886 and again in August 1894, Nepal sent a complementary mission to Peking. These missions had their origin in the treaty that Nepal signed with
China in September 1792 to end the Second Nepal-Tibet War (1791-1792). Under the terms of this treaty, Nepal was to send a diplomatic mission to the Son of Heaven every five years.

The mission, which always consisted of 27 persons, was obliged to follow a fixed route through the Himalayan passes to Lhasa, where it would stop for one and a half months, then across the vast tracts of eastern Tibet to Chengdu and up through the Chinese heartlands to Peking. The distance covered was roughly 5,000 kilometres. The mission usually started out in the first weeks of June when the melting snows made the high passes
through the Himalayas easier to negotiate. No deviation from the prescribed route was permitted and no unscheduled stops were allowed. If a member of the delegation fell ill he would be put into a palanquin, and if no such conveyance was available, he would be tied to his saddle and compelled to continue on horseback. The party was accompanied for the length of its journey by a Chinese or Tibetan escort which was responsible for the safety and security of the delegation. All the expenses of the mission were paid by the Chinese exchequer. The return journey took anywhere between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and 2 years, though the mission of 1886 was away for almost five years and that of 1894 for $6\frac{1}{2}$ years.
The mission stayed in Peking for 45 days, during which time the delegation leaders were granted five or six audiences with the Emperor. The presents which they had brought were presented to the Son of Heaven, and gifts such as bales of silks and satins, porcelain, ivory and jade were received in return.

The Nepalese were none too scrupulous about despatching a delegation at precisely five year intervals. They did so more or less regularly until 1842, then there was a gap of ten years until the next mission in 1852, followed by a break of fourteen years until another mission set out in 1866. This embassy was held up for almost a year on the Sino-Tibetan frontier because of a Muslim rebellion in the area and then had to spend another year in southwest China awaiting orders from the Emperor, who finally refused to receive it as it was nine years late. The extreme discourtesy meted out by Chinese officials in Chengdu and the deaths of several members of the delegation in eastern Tibet led Jang Bahadur to seriously consider sending no further missions at all, but the lure of huge commercial profits was too strong to resist, for the missions had long ceased to have any political significance and had assumed the character of lucrative trading ventures. Senior officials vied for selection to lead the missions for they enjoyed an exemption from all customs duties on both the outward and return journeys, and the profits to be made on the goods that they carried, especially opium, were staggering.

Although the quinquennial missions to China were the outcome of Nepal’s humiliation and defeat in the Second Nepal-Tibet War of 1791-92, they were never accepted by the Nepalese as signifying or acknowledging a feudatory status. They were always regarded as goodwill delegations—gestures of friendship and respect; the premiums on an insurance policy that protected them against the evil designs of the British in India. For the Chinese, the goodwill missions were an artificial contrivance for bestowing an importance upon the imperial throne that its armies could never have won for it. By the close of the 19th century it was only the prospect of profitable commercial transactions that induced the distant frontier states to send complementary missions in token of amity and deference to a powerful neighbour, otherwise the custom would have ceased and it would have been impossible for the Chinese to have enforced it afresh. In fact, only one more mission was despatched from Kathmandu, in 1906. This was the last quinquennial mission to the Imperial Court, for China had entered upon a prolonged period of internal turmoil that would eventually see the Empire swept away and replaced by a Republic.

The Sijapati Episode

Although there was no further serious opposition to Bir Shumsher’s rule after Khadga Shumsher’s plot had been foiled and Ranabir Jang’s
A Nepalese Tribute Mission in Pekin.—The reception in the Chinese capital of the decennial tribute mission from Nepal to the Emperor of China is described in the latest papers from the Far East. The mission consisted of 32 members, with a following of over 20 Nepalese traders, who seem to have taken their wares to Peking for sale. The whole arrived about the middle of September, bearing presents of elephants' tusks, gold dust, woollens and brocaded cloths, as well as a letter from the King of the Gurkhas, as the ruler of Nepal is officially styled in China. There were two envoys, one of whom died in Peking, and was cremated with Gurkha rites. Special officials from the Mongolian Superintendency took the visitors about to the sights of the capital. The return presents from the Emperor were placed in the Southern Lake Palace outside the west gate of Peking, and the occasion of the visit to this palace to receive them was one of great ceremony. The surviving envoy was conveyed there in a green sedan-chair, and the other Nepalese on horseback or in mule carts, the start being made from the Tribute Envoys' Hall, where the whole party were lodged at the expense of the Chinese Government from the moment of their arrival. The trading members were kept outside the sacred precincts, while the official members were conveyed to the great hall of the palace, where they prostrated themselves before the eunuch commissioned to read the Imperial edict authorising the Nepalese to return to their own land. The presents consisted of a thousand taels of silver (about £180), four complete suits of fur, robes of wadded cotton and gauze for each member of the mission, besides silk pongees and gauze, Peking curios and the like, according to the ranks of the recipients. These presents were ultimately conveyed to the residence of the mission in special carts, and the members were taken to another part of the Palace, about a quarter of a mile from the place where the Emperor was supposed to be seated—for he was quite invisible—and there they went through the regulation three prostrations and nine kowtows in recognition of the Imperial bounty. In fact, only the chief envoy ever saw the Emperor, and this was on his arrival, when he presented the letter from his own Sovereign avowing allegiance to China. When the ceremony of giving presents was over, the mission was informed that it could begin its return journey as soon as the necessary conveyances for so large a party could be prepared by the Mongolian Superintendency. The journey from Kathmandu to Peking occupied six months.

The Times, 25 December 1896.

armed incursions crushed, the chronicle of intrigue would not be complete without mentioning the Sijapati episode.

The Sijapatis were a family who had served the Ranas faithfully and effectively since the rise to power of Jang Bahadur. Towards the end of July 1888, Police Captain Bikram Bahadur Sijapati was promoted to the rank of Police Colonel, assigned 1,000 men and ordered to proceed down to the Tarai to assist with some matters of district administration there. But on 3 August 1888 the Prime Minister suddenly dismissed him and eight other members of his family—all Colonels or Captains—accusing them of
disobedience for having delayed their departure. Bikram Bahadur Sijapati and six others were banished to remote hill districts and the remaining two were deported to Benaras.

Upon investigation, the British Resident was told of a conspiracy against the Prime Minister involving his brothers Dev, Chandra, Bhim and Fateh, and leading members of the Sijapati family. The conspirators planned to invite Bir Shumsher to a religious ceremony at Dev Shumsher’s house on 3 August 1888, at which the four brothers would get the Prime Minister drunk and assassinate him. The 1,000 armed men under the command of Police Colonel Sijapati would be used to neutralise the Prime Minister’s bodyguard and to support the conspirators in the immediate aftermath of the coup d’état. In the best conspiratorial tradition, a paper had been drawn up and signed and oaths had been taken to ensure the binding together of the participants. Their plot, however, was betrayed at the eleventh hour. Shaken by this sudden turn of events, Dev and Chandra immediately decided to cooperate with the Prime Minister to suppress the conspiracy. They handed over the incriminating document, but not before they had tampered with the evidence by snipping their own names off the bottom of the paper and leaving only those of Bhim, Fateh and the Sijapatis. On the basis of this paper the Sijapatis were rounded up and deported and their houses, lands and property confiscated.

As with the alleged conspiracy by Badri Narsingh against his brother, Jang Bahadur, in February 1851, the Sijapati episode begs more questions than it answers. Was there really a conspiracy against the Prime Minister and, if so, were his brothers involved or was it organised solely by the senior members of the Sijapati family? What were the motives of the alleged conspirators? It is highly unlikely that the plot was orchestrated solely by the Sijapati family, for the removal of Bir Shumsher could not have been in any way beneficial to them. They were already comfortably ensconced in the non-Rana hierarchy and numbered themselves amongst the members of the senior establishment who enjoyed wealth, position and authority. Bikram Bahadur Sijapati’s father was described by the British Resident as the Prime Minister’s right hand man. To challenge the source of their protection and patronage could only result in the disgrace and ruination of the family. It is equally unlikely that Bir Shumsher’s brothers were involved in the conspiracy for he would definitely have moved against them eventually, and there is no record of any discord amongst the Shumsher brothers in the 13 years of Bir Shumsher’s prime ministership that remained following Khadga Shumsher’s expulsion in March 1887.

The official version of events was that the Sijapatis had been punished for not following orders. On the day that they were arrested, Western (Senior) Commanding General Chandra Shumsher told the Resident that “the disobedient sardars had been banished without any trouble and that
there would be no bloodshed,” although the next day, without any apparent sense of contradiction, he added that the trouble had been instigated by Ranabir Jang in yet another attempt to destabilise the government.

Perhaps the truth will never be known, for the only record of events is to be found in the reports of the British Resident and he himself later came to doubt the conspiracy theory that had been put to him. No official Nepalese record of a conspiracy has ever come to light.

Palace Politics

In 1888, hoping to emulate Jang Bahadur, whose daughter had married a crown prince and produced a son who became a king, Bir Shumsher gave two of his daughters in marriage to the 13-year-old King Prithvi Bir. But his hopes were not to be realised, for it was to be one of the King’s other two wives, both Rajput princesses, who produced a son and heir.

The two daughters whom Bir Shumsher married to the King were born of his favourite concubine, a Newar girl named Khanjan, who had initially come to his house as his first wife’s maid. His first wife’s father, Prince Upendra, had warned his daughter against taking a servant of such charm and beauty with her, but his warning was ignored. After Bir Shumsher started having an affair with Khanjan, his first wife attempted in despair to
blind her by pouring acid on her eyes while she was asleep. Fortunately Khanjan’s eyes were not damaged, though her face was scarred for life. This act of jealousy cost its perpetrator dearly, for Bir Shumsher would have nothing to do with his first wife after that. Khanjan, however, was formally recognised as a wife of equal status and her sons were included in the Roll of Succession.

With the assistance of the King’s mother, Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari, and the servants in the royal palace, Bir Shumsher saw to it that the young King spent most of his time with his eldest and favourite daughter, Queen Kirti Divyeshwari, and was discouraged from keeping company with his three other queens. But Bir’s favourite daughter remained childless and no male heir was born during his lifetime. It was not until five years after Bir Shumsher’s death that Prithvi Bir’s second queen from India, Laxmi Divyeshwari, gave birth to Crown Prince Tribhuvan.

In common with the three Rana Prime Ministers who preceded him and the six who were to follow, Bir Shumsher put the King under strict and close surveillance and completely isolated him from public contact. Ranaudip Singh had brought the infant King Prithvi Bir from the historic old Hanuman Dhoka Palace and installed him in his residence at Narayanhit. Bir Shumsher now converted the Narayanhit Darbar into a permanent royal palace and had it completely renovated. His own residence
was only a stone’s throw away in the same well-guarded compound.

Bir Shumsher’s policy of isolation and close surveillance of the King ran into difficulties in 1893, the year in which King Prithvi Bir attained his majority. Prithvi Bir was particularly close to four of his half brothers, known popularly as sahebjus, who lived in the Hanuman Dhoka Palace but had unrestricted access to the Narayanhiti Darbar. They visited the King almost every evening and often they were entertained to dinner, for there were barely any other people in whose company the King could relax. But as the sahebjus were also free to mix with the populace at large, Bir Shumsher feared that they would serve as a conduit by which public grievances might reach the King. And because the King had now come of age, he would be harder to control. Unwilling to permit even the slightest political gesture on the part of the King, the Prime Minister decided that his association with his half brothers should be terminated. He chose to make an issue of a dinner party at the palace, charging that the sahebjus were encouraging the young King to drink and debauchery. Their state-funded allowances for accommodation, food, clothing, servants and entertainment were cut and they themselves were banished to remote hill districts.

The King was furious, and to assert his authority he promoted one of the sahebjus to the post of colonel, but Bir Shumsher refused to recognise the royal order. Prithvi Bir then tested his strength against that of the Prime Minister by packing up all his possessions and, accompanied by his wives and slaves, moving back to the Hanuman Dhoka Palace. But he was supported by none, not even by his mother, Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari, who tried to convince him that he was only a nominal head of state and had no right to act against the wishes of the Prime Minister. The standoff continued for about a month, at the end of which time the King returned to the Narayanhiti Palace.

With the makings of a constitutional crisis behind him, Bir Shumsher was able to turn his attention to the administration of the Kingdom and, in particular, the reorganisation of district administration.

District Administration

For administrative purposes, Jang Bahadur had divided Nepal into Districts, each headed by a District Governor who was responsible for law and order, revenue administration, the administration of justice, the construction and upkeep of military barracks and forts, the training of soldiers placed under his command, the supervision of village headmen and, in the case of the District Governors in the western hills, the supervision of the local rajas. District Governors were usually civil officials of the rank of kaji or sardar, or military officers of the rank of colonel.

The Districts were, in turn, grouped together under the supervision of four supra-Governors—senior members of the Rana family of proven
managerial capacity who enjoyed the trust of the Prime Minister. The Tarai Districts were grouped together under the supervision of the Chief Governor of the Tarai, while the hill Districts were divided into three groups called gaundas, each being headed by a Gaunda Governor. The headquarters of the Eastern Gaunda was at Dhankuta in eastern Nepal, that of the Central Gaunda was at Palpa in the central hills, and that of the Western Gaunda was at Silgardi in Doti District in the far west of the country. The Chief Governor of the Tarai and the Central Gaunda Governor exercised more or less equal power and were the most senior of the four supra-Governors. In 1864, for example, these two positions were held by the Prime Minister’s next surviving brothers, Ranaudip Singh in the Tarai and Badri Narsingh in Palpa. The Eastern and Western Gaunda Governors had less authority in revenue matters, and the Western Gaunda Governor actually took instructions from the Central Gaunda Governor as well as from Kathmandu.

The primary duty of the Chief Governor of the Tarai was to maintain law and order in the Districts under his supervision, especially in those areas adjoining British India. He had to ensure that nobody did anything that would create a dispute between Kathmandu and Calcutta. He had the pajani powers needed to appoint the functionaries who ran the District administrations—promoting the deserving ones and demoting or dismissing those who failed in their duty. He was required to supervise the maintenance
and repair of government offices and military stores with funds authorised by the Office of Public Expenditure in Kathmandu. The Chief Governor of the Tarai could decide civil disputes with the assistance of *ditthas* and *bicharis* and in accordance with the *Muluki Ain*. He could also hear complaints by the peasants, the *ryots*, against revenue collectors or village headmen. In order to bring more land under cultivation, and hence increase government revenues, the Chief Governor was required to establish new villages by allocating waste land to landless people. He saw to it that both new and established cultivators received fair access to irrigation facilities. If the crops were damaged by flood, storm or drought he had the power to grant a remission of land revenue, though the actual degree of damage was always assessed by officials sent from Kathmandu. The Chief Governor received monthly statements of income and expenditure from the local revenue collectors, along with their collections. He forwarded the funds to the *Muluki Khana* as soon as the collections reached Rs. 10,000 and sent the accounting records to the *Kumari Chowk*. He also ensured that philanthropic and religious institutions were properly managed and that the land which they enjoyed tax-free was used for its intended purpose and not sold or mortgaged. As the Chief Governor did not live in the Tarai throughout the year, the District Governors and their subordinates enjoyed considerable revenue and judicial authority in implementing government policy and routinely administering their Districts.

The three *Gaunda* Governors supervised the administrative activities of the Governors of the hill Districts and the vassal *rajas*. Like the Chief Governor of the Tarai, the *Gaunda* Governors were responsible for preserving law and order, especially in those Districts bordering British India, Tibet and Sikkim. They saw to it that all public roads crossing the frontier were guarded and that all unauthorised trails were closed. They issued passports to Nepalese citizens visiting India for legitimate purposes, such as trade or pilgrimage, and saw to it that no foreigners entered Nepal without authorisation. They could intercept and censor all letters coming across the border. To help stem the dacoity, robbery and cattle theft that occurred frequently in the border towns and villages, the senior *Gaunda* Governor, of Palpa the Governor was authorised to deal directly with British Indian magistrates in the border districts of British India. The three *Gaunda* Governors exercised limited powers of *pajani*, recruiting for the civil administration and for the regiments under their command—confirming, promoting and dismissing as warranted. They could convene courts of original and appellate jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases and they could hear complaints against government officials and village headmen. The revenue functions of the senior *Gaunda* Governor were similar to those of the Chief Governor of the Tarai, but the Eastern and Western *Gaunda* Governors exercised only limited revenue authority.
Under the supervision of the Gaunda Governors, the District Governors in the hills were responsible for law and order, revenue administration, the construction and upkeep of military barracks and forts, the training of soldiers placed under their command, the administration of justice and the supervision of village headmen and local rajas.

Throughout their territorial expansion to the west, the Shah rulers had followed a policy of preserving the traditional rights and privileges of those rajas who submitted to their over lordship. These vassal chiefs were empowered to maintain law and order within their rajya lands, to recruit personnel to run the day-to-day administration of their domains, usually in accordance with the traditional customs and mores of their principalities, and to administer justice. The rajas convened their own courts of justice and decided cases in accordance with the Muluki Ain, though their decisions could be appealed to the District Governor or the Gaunda Governor. They kept 90 per cent of judicial fines collected, passing the remaining 10 per cent to the central government, and they collected land revenue and forwarded it to the District Governors. They themselves held royal charters exempting their lands from tax. As a mark of submission to the King, the rajas were required to attend a darbar in Kathmandu on important state occasions such as a coronation or a royal wedding. By and large, the rajas did not have a good record of administration and the Gaunda Governors and District
Governors had to keep a watchful eye on them to ensure that they did not so mistreat or exploit the *ryots* that they were driven to forcible resistance.

In the east of the country, King Prithvi Narayan Shah had followed a policy of conciliation towards the Rai and Limbu tribes who submitted to Gorkhali rule by confirming their traditional forms of land management and communal ownership. Their headmen were given responsibility for maintaining law and order, patrolling the border areas, trying minor civil and criminal matters in accordance with the *Muluki Ain*, allotting communal land to the peasants and collecting land revenue. The Rai *Subbas* and Limbu *Subbas*, as they were known, came under the supervision of the *Gaunda* Governor at Dhankuta.

In some of the hill Districts where troops were stationed, the local administration received assistance from the soldiery in maintaining law and order. In those hill Districts that had no permanent military establishments or outposts, law and order was left almost entirely to the *amals*, the village council. By contrast, the law enforcement machinery in the Tarai was better developed and more efficient. There, the Chief Governor was provided with one or two companies of troops, while one or two supplementary regiments were posted to strategically important Districts in the inner Tarai and additional soldiers were recruited specifically to perform police duties.

In 1895, Bir Shumsher carried out a major reorganisation of district administration. The hills, or *pahad*, were divided into 23 *tehsils*. The chief administrative officer of a *tehsil* was the Governor or *Bada Hakim*. The Tarai was divided into 12 *zillas*, which were grouped into four circles centred on Hanumannagar, Birganj, Taulihawa and Nepalganj. Each circle was headed by a *Bada Hakim*. A *goswara*, or head office of the district government, was established in each *tehsil* and *zilla* to deal with all the executive and judicial functions of district administration.

The *Bada Hakim*, a senior and trusted official appointed personally by the Prime Minister, controlled the entire district administration with the assistance of a small staff, usually numbering about ten persons. Together, they sought to fulfil the only two objectives of government under the Ranas: the collection of revenue and the maintenance of law and order. This they did through the Revenue Office (*Mal Adda*) and the Judicial Court (*Amini*). The Revenue Office, as the name suggests, supervised the collection of land revenue and other taxes and levies, which were then held in a local treasury before being transferred periodically under armed guard to the capital. The Revenue Office compiled a fortnightly report that was sent to Kathmandu with the comments and endorsement of the *Bada Hakim*. The Governor was responsible for monitoring the work of the *Mal Adda* officials and he had the power to fine, suspend or dismiss Revenue Office staff and revenue collectors who were negligent in their duties or found to be corrupt.
The Governor's other main responsibility was to maintain law and order. He was required to make at least one yearly tour of his District to inspect its general condition and to check the activities of government officials. In the absence of a regular police force, each District had a small contingent of soldiers to maintain law and order, guard the local treasury, protect the Bada Hakim and his senior officials and assist with the collection of revenue.

The Bada Hakim was also the chief legal officer of the District. He could decide cases, directly or instruct the Judicial Court to hear them. In the latter case, he acted as an appellate court against the decision of the Amini, though his decision could, in turn, be appealed to higher courts in Kathmandu. Petitions, which the people were free to send to the Prime Minister, were first placed before the Governor, who was often able to resolve minor matters to the satisfaction of the petitioners, thus obviating the need to pass their claims to Kathmandu.

* * *
One of Bir Shumsher’s last official acts was to pay a formal call on the new Viceroy, Lord Curzon, shortly after he assumed office in 1899. Curzon was the quintessential imperialist, whose aggressive frontier policy sought to detach Nepal completely from any association with China and have her accept a role of complete subordination towards India. Much to the irritation of the darbar, Curzon regarded Bir Shumsher’s visit as a complimentary mission to himself and not, as previous visits had been regarded, as one by an Ambassador of the King of Nepal to the Viceroy of the Empress of India. It was probably for this reason that Bir Shumsher did not accept Curzon’s proposal that he visit Kathmandu, and agreed only with considerable reluctance to invite him for a shikar in the Tarai in April 1901, explaining that he would not be there in person to meet him for reasons of health.

Bir’s plea of ill health was, in fact, genuine. He died a few months later from an aneurism at the age of 49. The date was 5 March 1901.
Dev Shumsher
(1901)
On Tuesday 5 March 1901 Kathmandu awoke to the sound of military bugles summoning the troops and civil servants to the vast Tundikhel parade ground to hear the official announcement of the death of Prime Minister Bir Shumsher and the appointment in his place of Commander-in-Chief Dev Shumsher. Earlier that morning Dev Shumsher had gone to the Lal Darbar, the residence of his late brother, and laid his body in state in the main courtyard. Then, accompanied by the Bijuli Garad, the Prime Minister’s personal bodyguard, he drove in a carriage to his own residence at Thapathali, taking with him the three accoutrements of supreme executive authority in Nepal: the distinctive plumed crown of the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, the sword of state and the lal mohur by which King Surendra had granted the hereditary prime ministership of Nepal to the Rana family in 1856. From the Thapathali Darbar, Dev Shumsher drove to the Narayanhiti royal palace where he performed the peculiarly Mughal ritual of nazzar—the presentation of gold coins to the King as a symbol of his submission—whereupon King Prithvi Bir appointed him as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

The new Prime Minister then drove in procession to the Tundikhel to receive the salute of the officers and men of the army and the ovation of the assembled civil officials. The crowds of curious onlookers who until yesterday had been crying “Sri teen Bir ki jai”—long live Bir!—now dutifully shouted “Sri teen Dev ki jai”. The troops fired a feu de joie and the massed brass bands played military marches. That evening the Thapathali darbar was a blaze of lights as Dev Shumsher and his supporters celebrated the transition of power. But beneath the surface, in the heavily conspiratorial atmosphere that permeated the Rana Court, the jockeying for positions, the shifting of patron/client relationships and the realignment of pressure groups had begun.
The Benevolent Autocrat

Dev Shumsher was 39 years of age when he became Maharaja and Prime Minister. His childless uncle, Krishna Bahadur, had adopted him as a godson and had left him a modest fortune upon his death. Thus he did not suffer the initial hardships of life that the other 16 impoverished sons of Dhir Shumsher had endured. Perhaps this explains his indolent, somewhat hedonistic nature. He was a well educated man and spoke English fluently. From his English tutor he had learned how public administration functioned in Britain and he had been singularly impressed with its parliamentary system of government. The late Prime Minister had always trusted Dev more than he had his other brothers and, in return, Dev had given 13 years of loyal and supportive service as Commander-in-Chief. During this time he had consistently attempted to improve the lot of the common people and he had sponsored several development projects, including one to build rest houses and install drinking water taps along a well-trodden pilgrim route in the Tarai.

Now that he enjoyed supreme political authority in Nepal he could give free reign to his benevolent tendencies and his liberal political views. As soon as he assumed office, he turned his attention to the problem of slavery.
Slavery

Agrarian indebtedness was a chronic and universal problem in 19th century Nepal. Subsistence farming at a low level of productivity, the characteristic feature of Nepalese agriculture, compelled the peasant to borrow from the village money lender when his crops failed or when death or illness in his family hindered normal cultivation. Even before the political unification of the Kingdom, successive rulers of Gorkha were aware of the adverse affect of agrarian indebtedness on agricultural production and had sought to control interest rates and reduce the amount of loans. They prescribed a maximum rate of interest of 10 per cent per annum on cash loans and 25 per cent per annum on loans in kind such as foodgrains or cloth, subject to a maximum repayment of twice the amount of the loan. These regulations, however, had little practical effect and the problem was as intractable at the beginning of the 20th century as it had been at the beginning of the 19th century, or indeed the 18th century, for the regulation of interest rates tackled only the symptoms of rural indebtedness and not the causes. There is no evidence that the government made any effort to improve the condition of the peasantry by reducing their dependence on money lenders.

If the peasant was lucky and had a good harvest then he repaid the moneylender or the landlord in kind. If not, then the repayments accumulated, frequently to the point where the transaction culminated in the purchase of the debtor by the lender. That is, the peasant became the lender's slave. Alternatively, the peasant could work for the moneylender
or landlord to whom he was indebted without wages in lieu of interest. That is, he became a bondsman. The prices at which poor people could be sold as slaves in the mid-19th century reflect the economic condition of the peasants in the hills and the low capitalised value of their labour. In Jumla, an impoverished mountainous region in west-central Nepal, a slave could be purchased for Rs. 20. As the official price of rice in Jumla at that time was 7 pathis per rupee, then a slave was worth 140 pathis or 500 kg of rice.

For the person who extended the loan—be he the landholder or the village moneylender—slaves and bondsmen were a source of cheap labour that could be used in various ways. In wealthy households in the Kathmandu Valley, slaves were generally employed in domestic work, wood cutting, grass cutting and similar labour. In the hills, wealthy landlords often deputed their bondsmen to fulfil their obligations to transport mail and government supplies. During the Third Nepal-Tibet War of 1855-56, one money lender who had been conscripted even fulfilled his military obligation by sending his bondsman in this place.

To increase the supply of labour on their estates, landholding slave owners frequently saw to it that their female slaves produced children as often as possible. If the father of a child by a female slave was a free man, other than the owner, he could emancipate the child by paying a stipulated sum to the slave’s master. In many cases female slaves were given as

Prime Minister Dev Shumsher at his investiture as Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung. March 1901. On his right is Commander-in-Chief Chandra Shumsher.
concubines to men who were in too straitened circumstances ever to be in a position to emancipate any offspring that resulted, thus ensuring that the children remained the property of the slave-owner, who was free to dispose of them as he pleased. If a child was fathered by the slave-owner himself, then it was automatically born free.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that it provided free labour, the institution of slavery was often uneconomical for the slave-owner. While a creditor was under no obligation to provide a bondsman with the means of subsistence, the slave-owner was obliged to feed, clothe and house a slave. It was probably because of the high cost of maintaining slaves compared with their low productivity that slave owners in the western hill region often set up their slaves on small allotments, thus ensuring themselves a cheap supply of labour while minimising the cost of its maintenance.

In view of the adverse impact of agrarian indebtedness and the consequent enslavement or bondage of the peasant on agricultural production and the stability of the rural population, successive Rana Prime Ministers initiated a series of measures aimed at ameliorating the condition of slaves and bondsmen. The Legal Code of 1854, for example, forbade the enslavement of defaulting debtors and other freemen. The right of freemen to sell themselves and of parents to sell their children into slavery was also abolished. Thus, indebtedness ceased to be a cause of slavery. Henceforth, people could only be enslaved for incest and certain offences against caste rules, although the common practice of punishing higher castes for criminal offences by selling them into slavery continued to be recognised. The Legal Code also prescribed the value of slaves for the purposes of settling claims. Although these prices were not applicable to the actual sale and purchase of slaves, they probably represented minimum market rates for such transactions:

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<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>under 3</td>
<td>Rs 20</td>
<td>Rs 25</td>
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<td>3 – 6</td>
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<td>6 – 12</td>
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Slaves traditionally enjoyed the right to own and even to inherit personal property and the Legal Code sought to protect that right by prescribing that such property could not be confiscated even when slaves committed offences ordinarily punishable by the confiscation of property. The Muluki Ain of 1854 also contained a number of provisions aimed at making bondage less oppressive: bondage was permitted only with official
sanction; the bondage of children under the age of 16 was prohibited; and relatives of a dead bondsmen were no longer under an obligation to assume his debts.

These, however, were only palliative measures aimed at alleviating the oppressiveness of slavery and bondage. There was no attempt to abolish these institutions per se and, in fact, the Legal Code of 1854 actually increased the authority of owners over their slaves. Disobedient slaves could, with official approval, be physically punished or kept in confinement in irons or shackles, though no such approval was necessary in the case of runaway slaves. Persons who helped slaves to escape were liable to compensate the owners, and the property of runaway slaves accrued to their owners. Despite these sanctions, the treatment of slaves, as the ancient statutes required, was generally humane and the cruelty which typified
slavery in so many countries was largely absent in Nepal. It was by no means unknown for slaves who had served a family long and faithfully to take an active interest in its welfare, in some cases even assuming entire control of the family’s affairs during the minority of an heir. There were households in which, during the absence of the master on business, the slaves could be trusted to ensure that no dislocation to the daily routine of the family and its business or estate occurred.

Dev Shumsher issued a proclamation liberating all the female slaves in his two hereditary fiefs of Kaski and Lamjung and in the Kathmandu Valley. But he had not reckoned on the inherent difficulties of interfering with ancient tradition. The scheme pleased no one and the uproar that it caused and the resistance of the slave owners forced him to abandon his plans. Some slave owners, perhaps because of their official position, were compelled to make some show of obeying the Prime Minister’s directive but the number of persons freed in the entire Kathmandu Valley did not exceed one hundred.

**Searching for the Popular Will**

Concurrently, Dev Shumsher was launching other liberal initiatives aimed at giving the masses a voice in the affairs of government. He invited a British constitutional expert to come to Kathmandu to advise him on the introduction of representative government. As a first step he convened a popular assembly in the Bhui Baithak, the huge reception hall at his residence in Thapathali, that was attended by army officers, senior civil
servants and representatives of the religious, landowning and trading communities, as well as peasants and townspeople. He inaugurated the assembly from a marble seat on a dais, telling the gathering that they were free to discuss any topic except the Crown, succession to the prime ministership and the Hindu religion. He particularly invited suggestions for improving the administration so as to encourage trade and industry, and for improving the judicial processes so as to speed up the redress of popular grievances. For the first and only time during Rana rule, the people were allowed to express their political and economic views. The assembly, though hesitant and none too trusting, debated for almost six hours and came up with several suggestions, including that of promoting cottage industries.

The Prime Minister also installed suggestion boxes at various points around Kathmandu and invited the people to suggest how the administration might be improved. Anonymity was assured. But this was a concept so alien to the population at large that the response was negligible, and nobody involved in the conspiratorial politics and Byzantine intrigues that surrounded the Rana Court believed for a moment that the suggestions could remain anonymous. However, not all Dev Shumsher's initiatives failed. He founded Nepal's first newspaper, the weekly *Gorkhapatra* that has since grown to be the country's leading daily, and the beginnings of public education in Nepal can be credited to him.

**Education**

Daniel Wright, a British Residency surgeon in the 1870s, summed up the state of education in Nepal succinctly: "The subject of schools and colleges in Nepal" he wrote "may be treated as briefly as that of snakes in Ireland. There are none." It was an observation that was to retain its accuracy for a depressing length of time.

The Prime Minister and some Rana families who could afford it employed European or Bengali tutors to teach their children English. Other interested parents gave their children a rudimentary education themselves or employed family priests to do so. There were no education facilities for the peasants or the townspeople. This state of affairs continued until Bir Shumsher opened the country's first public school, the Darbar High School, in 1894. The medium of instruction was English and teachers were contracted from England and British India. By the time of Dev Shumsher's prime ministership, enrolments had reached 17. Dev Shumsher proclaimed a scheme for universal primary education and 57 Nepali language elementary schools were established throughout the country. But the traditionalists viewed this experiment in liberalism with the same alarm that the
medieval Christian church displayed towards the appearance of scientists in its midst, and few of these schools survived Dev Shumsher’s term of office.

The Conspiracies Begin

Dev Shumsher was excessively fond of pomp and ceremony. He spent lavishly on his own investiture and its accompanying sindur jatra, the triumphal procession that is held upon assuming high office, and then, for no apparent reason other than to indulge his own whims, he held a second sindur jatra in Patan and a third in Bhaktapur. On each occasion he rode in an open howdah on a richly caparisoned elephant that moved at a stately pace at the head of a long procession of military regiments with their brass bands, government servants of all ranks, and groups of dancers and musicians. The Maharaja himself was dressed in a splendid white ceremonial robe with a priceless emerald necklace and the distinctive Rana crown with its bird of paradise plumes and encrustations of pearls and precious stones. The processional routes through the main thoroughfares of the three Valley towns

Prime Minister Dev Shumsher’s formal procession through the streets of Kathmandu following his investiture as Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, March 1901.
were thronged with people enjoying the public holidays that the Maharaja declared so that the masses could celebrate his assumption of office.

Then, tiring of these public pageants, he turned his attention to hunting and the amusements of Court, abandoning the capital and devoting himself to a life of sport at Nagarkot.

Although he was a man of kindly and useful tendencies, Dev Shumsher was wholly inadequate to the position he had been called upon to occupy. He lacked the capacity to think through the implications of his reforms and he was, in any case, unable to sustain the effort needed to translate them into enduring measures of public policy. His brothers, particularly the Commander-in-Chief, Chandra Shumsher, regarded his schemes as dangerous, ill-considered and premature. To no avail, they warned the Prime Minister that his liberal reforms would precipitate public unrest and dissatisfaction with the regime. Chandra Shumsher, however, did more than simply plead with his brother. No sooner had Dev Shumsher assumed the prime ministership than the Commander-in-Chief, a conspirator par excellence, began to plot his overthrow. In careful

King Prithvi Bir (standing) with three of Maharaja Bir Shumsher's sons. From left to right: Gehendra, Rudra and Dharma. c 1895.
and calculating fashion he won over the key individuals whose support was crucial to the success of his plan.

He first won over the Prime Minister’s aide de camp, their brother the Hazuria General Fateh Shumsher. Fateh Shumsher had warned the Prime Minister that Chandra’s activities warranted close surveillance. Shortly afterwards Fateh Shumsher was horrified to learn that the Prime Minister had off-handedly repeated his warning to Chandra Shumsher himself. The Prime Minister’s failure to keep a confidence lost him the trust and support of his closest executive assistant who shifted his allegiance to Chandra Shumsher. Once on the side of the Commander-in-Chief, Fateh Shumsher, who was a close personal friend of the royal family, set out to convince King Prithvi Bir of the wisdom of removing the Prime Minister from office.

Chandra next subverted the late Bir Shumsher’s eldest and most gifted son, General Gehendra Shumsher. Dev and Gehendra were close companions who drank regularly together and enjoyed the performances and the favours of the dancing girls at the royal palace. When a serious misunderstanding developed between the two over a particular dancing girl, Chandra Shumsher, himself an abstemious and rather ascetic man, moved swiftly to exploit the rift and to win Gehendra Shumsher over.

Finally, he used his politically active and supportive sister, who was married to the officer in charge of the Bijuli Garad, to win her husband to the cause and to ensure that the Prime Minister’s personal
bodyguard would not oppose the removal of the man whom they were supposed to protect.

With consummate skill, Chandra Shumsher not only lined up internal support for his proposal to remove Dev from office, but sought the tacit approval of the British authorities as well. He wrote to a retired British Resident, Colonel Wylie, explaining his plans and his motives and assuring him that Dev's removal would involve no loss of life and that everything would be done in such a way that nobody would be shocked or annoyed. Colonel Wylie passed this letter on to the authorities in Calcutta, with the result that when the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, did accept the late Bir Shumsher's invitation to go hunting in the Tarai in April 1901, he was well briefed on Nepalese domestic politics. There can be no doubt that while Chandra Shumsher was hosting the vice-regal visit, he sounded Curzon out on his proposal to remove Dev from office.

Dev Shumsher was well aware that his eldest brother was plotting against him but, in his surpassing naïveté, he believed that his liberal political views would be appreciated by the masses and that, once he had won their confidence, none of his brothers would dare to move against him. Convinced that his position was secure, he turned his attention to a scheme that was, for once, to be of enduring value—a reform of the law courts.

The Law Courts

From the available evidence it appears that pre-Rana Nepal had only rudimentary machinery for the administration of justice. There were very few law courts outside Kathmandu and most cases had to be brought before one of the four principle seats of justice at the capital: the Ita Chapali, the Koti Ling, the Taksar and the Dhansar Courts, collectively known as the Char Adalat—the four courts—which were grouped around the western front of the Basantpur Palace complex. The Ita Chapali, which the Shah kings inherited from the conquered Malla rulers of Kathmandu, was a court of original and appellate jurisdiction and appears to have been the most important of the Char Adalat. It heard the gravest of penal cases and was the only court empowered to sentence a criminal to death. If any other court in the Kingdom wished to inflict capital punishment, it had to have its sentence confirmed by the Ita Chapali. In such an event, the Ita Chapali required a written confession of guilt from the criminal. After due consideration, it issued a warrant to the district court where the case originated, authorising it to carry out the sentence. The three remaining courts had both original and appellate jurisdiction and tried civil and criminal cases of a lesser nature, such as land and property disputes, petty theft, minor fraud and disorderly conduct. People were free to bring their cases before whichever of the Char Adalat they preferred.
Each Adalat was headed by a dittha, a person of high public repute who had a thorough understanding of nyaya, or justice, even though he may not have studied nyaya shastra or jurisprudence. Each dittha was assisted by two bicharis who were empowered to decide minor cases. Appeals against the decisions of the Char Adalat could be made to the Bharadari Sabha, the State Council, presided over by the mukhtiyar or Chief Minister and assisted by the royal preceptor, the dharma adhikar.

The “vice royalties” of Palpa and Doti had their own judicial establishments but, beyond that, there were only eight bicharis to

King Prithvi Bir and his fourth queen, Durga Divyeshwari, daughter of Prime Minister Bir Shumsher.
administer justice in the western hills and four in the eastern hills. The Tarai was divided into eight Divisions, each headed by a *subba*, while Patan and Bhaktapur each had its own court. The verdicts of all these courts could be appealed to the *Char Adalat* in Kathmandu and thence to the State Council.

The establishment of the Rana regime saw major changes to the structure of the law courts. At the pinnacle of the judicial hierarchy under the Ranas stood the Prime Minister, arbiter of the nation's justice. Below him was the *Ain Kausal*, the supreme judicial body of the Kingdom that framed new laws and amended existing ones. It was not a regular court of justice, though it assumed that function when it met to hear complaints and decide cases. Sitting with the Prime Minister at its head, it was the highest court of law in the Kingdom, possessing both original and appellate jurisdiction. Lower courts were established at 20 district towns in the hills and the Tarai was divided for judicial purposes into eight *goswaras*. Patan and Bhaktapur had their own courts and the *Char Adalat* in Kathmandu continued to function as before.

Bir Shumsher reorganised the hierarchical structure of the courts into five levels and fixed the limits of their jurisdiction. At the bottom level, 21 lower courts were established at administrative centres in the hills and the Tarai as well as at Patan and Bhaktapur. Above these lower courts, at the fourth level of the judicial system, were the three courts of appeal at Palpa, headquarters of the Central *Gaunda*, at Dhankuta, headquarters of the Eastern *Gaunda*, and at Silgardi, headquarters of the Western *Gaunda*. At the third level, the four *Adalats* in Kathmandu continued to function as before, hearing appeals from the lower courts or functioning as courts of first instance. But now appeals from them were taken to a newly created judicial office, the *Adalat Goswara*. At the highest level, above the *Adalat Goswara*, justice was dispensed by the Commander-in-Chief in consultation with the *Muluki Adda*, the Home Office, and a panel of *bharadars*.

Dev Shumsher took upon himself the full power of giving final judgement against the *Adalat Goswara*, now renamed the *Appeal Adda*. Henceforth, the decisions of the Central *Gaunda* Court at Palpa and the Eastern *Gaunda* Court at Dhankuta could be appealed directly to the *Appeal Adda*. At the same time, the six lower courts in the Tarai were replaced by four *Goswara* Courts whose verdicts could also be appealed directly to the *Appeal Adda*.

Before the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16, the most influential judicial official in the Kingdom was the royal preceptor, the *dharma adhikar*. As the principal advisor on religious matters to the monarch of a Hindu state that was governed according to the tenets of the Hindu religion, the *dharma*
Dev Shumsher (1901) made decisions that touched almost every aspect of the lives of almost every Nepalese subject. He was the chief interpreter of the sacred scriptures, the shastras, on the basis of which he advised the other judicial functionaries on the appropriate punishment for particular offences. In the course of the post-war administrative reorganisation, many of the dharma adhikar's judicial powers were transferred to the Char Adalat and the district level courts. Then, in 1854, Jang Bahadur promulgated a Legal Code that provided explicit instructions covering most legal scenarios, thus further diminishing the role of the dharma adhikar. In fact, the greatest achievement
of the Legal Code was to remove one of the weakest points in the legal system of Nepal—the need for the dharma adhikar to consult the shastras whenever cases involving caste were at issue—and replace it with codified rules, objective interpretations and standardised judicial procedures and penalties.

One of Jang Bahadur’s further innovations was to create the post of jaj—a title and function drawn from the English “judge”—who became the highest judicial functionary of the regular courts and whose duties included supervising the ditthas who headed the Ita Chapali, the Koti Ling and the district courts. Below the ditthas in the legal hierarchy came the bicharis. In the Ita Chapali and the Koti Ling, the bicharis acted as assistants to the ditthas, whereas in the Taksan and Dhansar Courts they were themselves in charge. There was also one bichari attached to each court above the village level. Down at the village level itself, justice was dispensed by the amali. Though primarily concerned with revenue collection, the amali was also entrusted with police and judicial duties. He was, in fact, a local magistrate and judge, empowered to try minor cases not punishable by mutilation or confiscation of property. In his capacity as revenue collector he also had the power to try cases relating to land and revenue disputes.

Apart from the ditthas and the bicharis, whose titles and functions date back to the beginning of Shah rule, judicial officials did not need
any formal qualifications. They had only to be literate. However, the *ditthas* and *bicharis*, as noted earlier, had to be men of unquestioned respectability, well educated and practically acquainted with the law and justice.

**The Fall**

The date of Dev Shumsher’s removal from office was set for 27 June 1901. On that day the Prime Minister was scheduled to present the prizes at the Darbar School’s annual prize giving day, and the conspirators had asked him to come to the Seto Darbar after the ceremony to adjudicate a dispute concerning the division of the building amongst Bir Shumsher’s sons. There he was to be arrested and made to resign.

En route to the Darbar School the Prime Minister halted in his landau at the Tundikhel to review a parade of troops led by the Western (Senior) Commanding General, Bhim Shumsher. Dev Shumsher took the salute and Bhim Shumsher gave temporary command of the parade to Juddha Shumsher so that he could accompany the Prime Minister. After the prize giving ceremony the official party, escorted by a unit of the *Bijuli Garad*, proceeded to the Seto Darbar where they were met by Chandra Shumsher and Gehendra Shumsher and taken to the disputed part of the house. The Hazuria General, Fateh Shumsher, ordered the Prime Minister’s personal bodyguard to remain in the courtyard on the grounds that a family dispute should not be aired in front of outsiders. Only the commanding officer, Chandra Shumsher’s brother-in-law, was allowed to accompany them. As soon as the group had assembled indoors, Chandra Shumsher gave a pre-arranged signal and the Prime Minister was overpowered and his hands tied behind his back with his own cummerband. In the same instant, the commander of his personal bodyguard was disarmed at sword point. Stunned, the Prime Minister demanded to know what was happening, only to be told by his Commander-in-Chief that, by order of the King, he had been relieved of office. Leaving Dev Shumsher under heavy guard, Chandra Shumsher crossed to a nearby room where King Prithvi Bir had been waiting and emerged with him onto the balcony overlooking the courtyard where the men of the *Bijuli Garad* were assembled under the temporary command of an ensign. Pointing his rifle at the ensign, Chandra Shumsher shouted that the King had dismissed Dev Shumsher and that everyone should obey his, Chandra’s, orders. The ensign hesitated, confused by the fact that his commanding officer had not emerged. Seconds ticked by as the men began to murmur among themselves, clearly unsettled at this sudden turn of events. Sensing that they were losing control of the situation, the Hazuria General stepped forward and ordered the ensign to obey the instructions of the new
Prime Minister. But still the ensign hesitated, his indecision fuelled by the restiveness of the men behind him. Finally, King Prithvi Bir called for order and reluctantly confirmed Chandra’s appointment. At that, the ensign replied that the Bijuli Garad would obey the orders of anyone to whom His Majesty had granted authority, and he called the guards to present arms. The moment of crisis had passed. The coup d’état had succeeded.

Chandra despatched Fateh Shumsher to Dev’s residence to collect the Teen Chand, the distinctive head-dress of the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, and then, accompanied by the King, he left in a carriage for the Tundikhel, heavily guarded by the Bijuli Garad. Once there, he placed the Teen Chand on his head and appeared before the assembled troops to take the salute as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

That same evening, Dev Shumsher was put in a closely guarded palanquin and despatched on a seven-day march into internal exile at Dhankuta in the eastern Tarai from where he was later allowed to escape into British India. He spent the rest of his days in comfortable retirement on a pension granted him by his successor at the beautiful hill station of Mussoorie in the foothills of the Indian Himalayas north
of Delhi. His house over looked the Doon Valley with its silver ribbons of the Ganges and the Jumna on one side and, on the other, the white giants of the eternal snows. Apart from one dancing girl at the royal palace, no one mourned the departure of the man who had been Prime Minister for only 114 days. The dancing girl, named Gul Bafa, was hopelessly in love with Dev Shumsher. She wept bitterly and hurled abuse at Chandra himself when he visited the palace. She refused all food and drink and finally went into a swoon before dying of grief after 17 days.
9

Chandra Shumsher
(1901–1929)
9. Chandra Shumsher (1901-1929)

The appointment of Chandra Shumsher to Nepal's highest executive office marked the beginning of the longest period of rule by a Rana Prime Minister. More interestingly, Chandra Shumsher's term of office marked the point at which the Rana regime came closest to meeting its own ideals. The monarchy was quiescent and posed no threat to the political status quo. The population, now two generations removed from the traumatic events of 1856, accepted the legitimacy of the regime unquestioningly. The external security of this tiny Himalayan Kingdom was assured: on the one hand, relations with the British were excellent; on the other, China was entering upon the death throes of empire and posed no threat to its neighbours. There was no internal threat to the regime either. A legal and administrative system—rudimentary but suited well enough to the needs of the country—was in place and responsive to development and improvement. The regime was free to meet its sole objective—to keep the country secure and the people minimally but sufficiently contented so as to enable the Rana family to maximise the revenues of the Kingdom and appropriate them for its exclusive use.

Born on 8 July 1863, the fifth son of Dhir Shumsher Rana, Chandra Shumsher was the best prepared of men to assume the office of Prime Minister. Educated by palace tutors, he later studied at Calcutta University where, in 1883, the Vice Chancellor referred in his annual speech to “a young student who holds a high military command in the army of Nepal and has shown on this occasion that he can handle the pen not less efficiently than the sword.” But he was forced to abandon his studies and return to Kathmandu when his father was dying in 1884. When Bir Shumsher was appointed Prime Minister in 1885, Chandra Shumsher became Western (Senior) Commanding General, winning the army to his side by means of a thorough reorganisation, an infusion of professionalism and the introduction of better conditions. In 1888 the Prime Minister appointed him to look after his personal and household affairs and increasingly associated
him with key sectors of the administration including, at one stage, responsibility for the Foreign Office. In 1892 Chandra Shumsher accompanied the Prime Minister on his official visit to the Viceroy in Calcutta, where, because of his older brother’s poor health, he deputed for him at most of the official talks. As Percival Landon, Chandra Shumsher’s official biographer, said of the administration of Nepal at that time: “The hand was the hand of Bir but the voice was the voice of Chandra.”

The man who now assumed absolute control of his country was a benevolent autocrat who would brook no opposition to his rule but to whom, at the same time, the poorest among his people could bring their complaints. No detail of state business was too small for his attention and little escaped his notice. He was ascetic by nature, having been a heavy smoker until the age of 45 when he gave up the habit overnight. His dress and lifestyle were simple, his manners those of a Rajput aristocrat. Lord Morley, when Secretary of State for India, described him as “certainly much more than an ordinary man”. He had only one wife, unlike other members of the Nepalese aristocracy and in marked contrast to his uncle Jang Bahadur, who had 17 wives that we know of and doubtless more whose names have been lost to history. He was totally devoted to his Maharani, whom he had married at the age of 15, and when she was dying it took all her powers of persuasion to extract a promise that he would marry a young bride she had brought from Benaras to replace her.

The procession celebrating Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher’s investiture as Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung passes the old royal palace. June 1901.
The Maharaja rose every morning between six and seven and, after prayers, began to prepare the work of the day with his secretaries. First came the early morning interviews with senior government officials, then an audience for petitioners whose bintipatras had been vetted as worthy of his attention. At about ten o’clock he took a ritual bath then went to a room set aside for his spiritual observances. Here he made his daily symbolic offering to the Brahmins of five rupees and eight annas—the nominal price of a cow—and a cup of bell metal containing about 100 grams of ghee, or clarified butter. After his main meal of the day he spent three hours in conference with his senior colleagues—the Commander-in-Chief, the Western (Senior) Commanding General and the heads of the more important government departments—all of whom called in fixed rotation. At four o’clock he convened a formal court on the lawns of his residence if the weather was fine, or indoors if the weather was inclement. In the presence of the appellants and the respondents, judicial officials presented the Prime Minister with the facts of an appeal, along with the deliberations of the lower courts that had dealt with the case. With the advice of the senior officials at his side, the Prime Minister, acting as the highest avenue of appeal in the land, handed down his decisions. For relaxation he would retreat to his library, where the comments pencilled in the margins of his books give some clues to the mind of the man who now controlled the destiny of Nepal. One example bears citing: In his book Sketches of Nepal, Dr. Oldfield, a British Residency surgeon in the 1870s and a close friend of Jang Bahadur, described how, while a guest of the Prime Minister on a shooting expedition, he had remarked to his host that he had not had breakfast that morning. Jang Bahadur sent a messenger to his residence at Thapathali and a hot breakfast of stewed fowl, pork cutlets, pheasant, eggs, bread and fruit was prepared and despatched to meet the returning party. In recording this incident, the author noted that, after enjoying his breakfast, he distributed cheroots, a native cigarette “of which the Nepalese are very fond, especially when they do not have to pay for them”. Many are the comments that could have been made about such an anecdote. Chandra Shumsher simply noted dryly in the margin: “Did Oldfield pay for the breakfast?”

**Relations with the British**

Chandra Shumsher pursued an energetic foreign policy that he outlined in a letter he sent to the Viceroy shortly after his appointment:

“...I shall take this opportunity of assuring your Excellency’s Government that I shall always deem it a sacred duty and valued privilege, not only to cultivate and continue unimpaired the friendly relations subsisting between the governments of India and Nepal, but to strengthen and improve them, so that we may realise all those expectations which the association with such a power like that of England naturally raises in our mind. I am fully conscious that our interests can best be served by the continuance of friendly relations between India and Nepal.”
The expectations to which he referred—the foreign policy objectives that he pursued so single-mindedly—were an unequivocal statement by the British as to the independent status of Nepal and the facility to import arms without restrictions. His entire relationship with the British would be directed towards achieving these goals.

Chandra Shumsher came to office at a time when British relations with Lhasa were becoming increasingly strained and eventually reached the point where an Indian army invaded Tibet in 1904 and imposed a treaty upon the Dalai Lama. It was a situation that placed Nepal in a delicate position, for the Nepal-Tibet Treaty of 1856 required her to come to the aid of Tibet if it were attacked from any quarter. Chandra Shumsher, however, chose not to honour this treaty obligation. Instead, at the height of the crisis he travelled to Calcutta for an interview with Lord Curzon at which he made it clear that he regarded Nepal’s interests in the Tibetan affair as being entirely bound up with those of the British, for both governments feared the very real possibility that, in order to rid themselves of Chinese suzerainty, the Tibetans might accept protection from Imperial Russia. The Nepalese particularly feared this possibility because they knew that if the Russians established themselves in Tibet, the British could well feel compelled to extend their direct control up to the Himalayan watershed, absorbing the Kingdom of Nepal in the process. While giving moral support to the British stand, and some material support to its expeditionary force, Chandra Shumsher also acted as a mediator, finally bringing the Tibetans to the negotiating table. It was his first assay in international diplomacy and,
despite the constraints placed on him by Lord Curzon, who had no intention of allowing any cooperation with Nepal to be on the basis of an equal partnership, he acquitted himself well. By preventing the Russians from gaining influence in Tibet and by minimising Chinese influence there, he strengthened the hand of his British allies and enhanced the security of Nepal.

Encouraged by his diplomatic success, the Prime Minister invited the Commander-in-Chief of India, Lord Kitchener, to visit Kathmandu. During the visit, which took place in the autumn of 1906, Lord Kitchener honoured the Prime Minister by conferring on him the rank of General in the British army and appointing him Honorary Colonel of the 4th Gorkha Rifles. Chandra Shumsher could not, however, see his way clear to inviting the Viceroy to visit Kathmandu, despite the fact that Lord Curzon, who was well aware of the Prime Minister's reluctance, pressed hard for an invitation. Chandra Shumsher made the usual excuses: such a poor country as Nepal could not welcome the representative of the King-Emperor in appropriate style and comfort; the more conservative bharadars, already opposed to Nepal's attachment to the British, would not countenance such a visit. The latter explanation was certainly true, for Lord Kitchener's visit had been misinterpreted by some bharadars and the result had been an abortive conspiracy against the Prime Minister. But there was a further, unstated reason for opposing the visit. Chandra Shumsher dared not risk a meeting between the King of Nepal and the Viceroy of India for fear that the British would attempt to weaken the Ranas by inciting the King to challenge his subjugation to them. He had read of the old Roman maxim of empire: divide and rule. And he knew that Britain had applied this principle with devastating effect on all the native societies of her vast Empire. Chandra Shumsher did assure Lord Curzon, however, that the very day he ceased to be the Viceroy he would be welcome to visit Kathmandu and would be received with the same ceremony and honour that could be accorded him had he still been the King-Emperor's representative. Curzon did not avail himself of the invitation.

With a sound foreign policy in place and relations with the British on an excellent footing, Chandra Shumsher paid an official visit to England in 1908. He was the first Rana Prime Minister to do so since Jang Bahadur visited in 1850. Bir Shumsher had been invited during the latter part of his rule but plans had fallen through because of British prevarication over his status. He had insisted on being received as the Ambassador of the King of Nepal. Chandra Shumsher's visit went ahead because he accepted the fact that he would not be received as the ambassador of an independent country, though he would be given a salute of 19 guns, two more than India's premier prince, His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad.
Chandra Shumsher had hoped to discuss the international status of Nepal and the unrestricted importation of arms with British officials in London, but again the Government of India imposed the same constraints as it had on Jang Bahadur. The visit could only proceed on the basis of its being a goodwill visit to pay respects to His Majesty the King Emperor. Political matters and affairs of state were not to be raised. The Prime Minister could not even obtain permission to negotiate the purchase of 31 machine guns to increase his arsenal of modern weapons. The visit proceeded on this basis and was a great success. The Prime Minister had several audiences with the King and meetings with Prime Minister Asquith.
and the Secretary of State for India. He toured industrial areas, inspected military and naval establishments and observed military manoeuvres. Finally, he visited Oxford University to receive an honorary Doctorate of Civil Law from the hands of the Chancellor, Lord Curzon.

Upon his return to Kathmandu on 27 August 1908 he was given an imposing public welcome at which his brother, Bhim Shumsher, Commander-in-Chief and acting Prime Minister, praised his achievements at home and abroad. Chandra Shumsher’s visit to England, revealing to him as it did the military and industrial might of the most powerful nation on earth, convinced him of the wisdom of his having associated his country so closely with the British Empire. Equally importantly, two other members

Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher’s five oldest sons at the unveiling of a statue of their mother who died in February 1905. Left to right: Mohan, Baber, Keshar, Singha and Krishna.
of the official party who were to succeed him to the prime ministership shared the same conviction: his nephew Padma Shumsher and his eldest son Mohan Shumsher. The journey had also been a public relations success: by raising the consciousness of the British public about Nepal he had advanced his master strategy for obtaining from them an unequivocal declaration of the independent status of Nepal.

The A.B.C. of Rana Family Politics

Late in his rule Chandra Shumsher restructured the Roll of Succession in a manner so radical as to create and institutionalise considerable family dissent and eventually imperil the regime itself.

The Roll of Succession had never been sacrosanct. Some changes had been made for security considerations, such as the deletion of the Jang Ranas following the assassination of Ranaudip Singh in 1885 and the exclusion of Khadga Shumsher following his attempted coup against Bir Shumsher in 1887. Other changes had been made because some Prime Ministers, anxious to reinforce the solidarity of their branch of the family, had amended the Roll to include their sons by low-caste wives. As a result, by Chandra Shumsher’s time it had become accepted practice for each succeeding Prime Minister to alter the Roll to serve his own political ends. This normally involved promoting his own sons and brothers up the Roll by demoting or excluding members of the other branches of the family. It was essentially an exercise in political survival for under the Rana system, as under the family-based political system that had preceded it, no Prime Minister could hope to remain in office unless all key military and civil posts were held by members of his immediate branch of the family.

To restore the Roll of Succession to its original function as an instrument that would ensure an orderly succession to the prime ministership, Chandra Shumsher divided all the members of the Rana family into three classes—A, B and C—based on caste laws relating to commensality.

The ‘A’ class Ranas were the children of wives who were of equal caste with their Rana husbands; that is, of wives who could share food or eat with their husbands. ‘B’ class Ranas were the children of wives who were of a caste that had every right of association with the husband’s caste other than that of eating together. ‘C’ class Ranas were the illegitimate children of lower caste mothers.

‘A’ class Ranas automatically became Lieutenant-Colonels or Major-Generals and the highest levels of government and military service were open to them. By contrast, ‘B’ and ‘C’ class Ranas could only aspire to the rank of Colonel and were thus debarred from succession to the prime ministership, an office that could only be attained by advancement through the top echelons of the military hierarchy.
The intent of this restructuring was to re-establish an orderly procedure for placement and advancement on the Roll, and to preserve the privileges of the highest caste members of the family while still formally attaching the lower caste members to the hierarchy.

But Chandra Shumsher also had another motive for restructuring the Roll of Succession. He hoped to have Maharaja Bir’s three sons by his lower caste wives—General Rudra Shumsher, General Tej Shumsher and General Pratap Shumsher—removed from the Roll so as to clear the way for the promotion of his own older sons, but he was unable to make his decree retrospective. By 1928, one year before his death, he had decided not to alter the Roll himself in the hope that his half brother and the second in line of succession, Juddha Shumsher, would do it in order to move his own sons higher in the order of precedence. Chandra Shumsher’s sons would automatically benefit from such a move as most of them were higher on the Roll than Juddha’s sons. Chandra Shumsher also feared that after his death his nominated successor, Bhim Shumsher, would include some of his illegitimate sons on the Roll.

At the stroke of a pen, Chandra Shumsher alienated a large proportion of the Rana family. Though most of those who had been disenfranchised would never have had a chance of being included in the Roll of Succession, the distinctions introduced into the family caused bitter resentment amongst many who felt themselves stigmatised in some way. This resentment was later to find its expression in open support for the anti-Rana elements that brought the regime to its knees in 1951.
King George V's Hunting Trip in the Tarai

In December 1911 the King Emperor George V visited India for a coronation darbar in Delhi, the ancient seat of the Mughal Emperors of Hindustan. With full pomp and pageantry and the revival of a hundred Oriental ceremonies and symbols that could with propriety be used only in the presence of the Emperor, his assumption of the imperial title was celebrated. The darbar was also a public celebration of the British raj itself—it marked the high noon of empire in a blaze of power and spectacle. Earlier in the year Chandra Shumsher had renewed an invitation to a shikar in the Tarai that had been extended to the King Emperor in 1906 while he was still Prince of Wales, but that had been cancelled because of an outbreak of cholera in the hunting camp. At one stage it was feared that this second attempt to organise a hunt would also have to be cancelled because of the failing health of King Prithvi Bir. The King finally passed away on 11 December 1911, but not before he had urged that the shikar, which he regarded as an event of national importance, proceed as planned. After weighing the dictates of protocol against the dying wish of the King, the British monarch accepted the invitation.

An army of beaters was employed for weeks before the event to drive into a selected area all the big game that inhabited the warm damp jungles of the western Tarai. Elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, leopards, bears, wild boar and deer were all herded through the thick, tangled vegetation, the swamps and the 6-metre-high expanses of elephant grass until they were
confined in an area about 50 or 60 kilometres in length and 16 in width. There they were allowed to grow accustomed to their new surroundings while they awaited the start of the shikar.

On 18 December 1911, for the first time since the days of Ashoka, an Emperor of India visited Nepal. King George’s shooting camp was set up at Kasra on the Rapti River, about eight kilometres from the Indian frontier to which it was connected by a custom built road. It was furnished with all the comforts of civilization, including electricity and hot and cold water. Barbed wire entanglements surrounded the camp to protect the occupants from the beasts of prey that had been concentrated in the immediate vicinity for their sports. The Prime Minister’s camp was situated a little lower down the Rapti. In addition to the official Nepalese party, it accommodated ten thousand attendants, 600 elephants and their 2,000 handlers.

After the arrival of the Maharaja’s guests, some forty points were selected within the area chosen for the shikar, and kills, usually goats, were tied up so as to establish the number and location of tigers and leopards. They were then hunted in uniquely Nepalese style. The tiger that was reported overnight from a kill was encircled by an enormous ring of elephants and held until dawn and the arrival of the guns. At times, as many as 250 elephants were employed for one circle. As the tiger approached, the ring was contracted until the great cat’s escape was cut off. Upon the arrival of the visitors, ten or twelve specially trained elephants were introduced into the circle, which, in some cases, was as much as 200 metres in diameter. These proceeded to form a line and march into the patch of jungle in which
the tiger was hidden, snapping the smaller trees and treading out the undergrowth. The cornered animal attempted with amazing skill to conceal itself but eventually it was flushed out and forced to run the gauntlet of the waiting rifles as it made its futile dash for freedom. Sometimes a tiger would charge a ring of elephants and create a momentary panic, in the course of which it managed to escape. Sometimes it would spring upon an elephant’s head and force it back out of the ring, but rarely did it make its escape in this manner. Nevertheless, tigers were known to maul beaters or hunters during a shikar. During Jang Bahadur’s winter shoot of 1870, for example, a tiger sprang onto the Prime Minister’s elephant, tore off the mahout’s leg then sprang down to the ground and ran into a nearby thicket. Jang Bahadur fired into the bushes, at which the tiger leapt onto his elephant again and clawed the howdah off its back. Jang Bahadur was thrown to the ground and his left thigh badly bruised by one of the hind legs of his terrified mount.

Five of the ten days that the imperial party spent in Nepal were fully occupied in hunting from early dawn until sunset. They bagged 37 tigers, 18 rhinoceroses and 4 bears, of which the King personally shot 21 tigers, 10 rhinoceroses and 2 bears. On Christmas Eve the King Emperor invested Chandra Shumsher with the insignia of a Grand Commandership of the Royal Victorian Order and, more practically, presented him with 2,000 Lee-Metford rifles and five million rounds of ammunition. On 29 December, after inspecting four Nepalese regiments and meeting two Gurkha veterans who had fought in the Indian Mutiny to defend the Empire of his grandmother’s day, he was escorted to the Indian frontier and farewelled by the Maharaja.

![After a hard day’s shikar in the Tarai.](image)
Crown Prince Mahendra—centre with his two younger brothers, Prince Himalaya (left) and Prince Basundhara (right). 1925.

The Machinery of Government

Chandra Shumsher’s predecessors had been obliged to devote most of their energies to holding and consolidating their power. They were able to devote only scant attention to improving the general condition of the country. But fifteen years of internal order and stability following the coup d'état of 1885 enabled the government to consider the pressing reforms that needed to be undertaken. Eleven months after his accession to power, in May 1902, the Prime Minister appointed a series of commissions of enquiry into the administration of government. This was the genesis of far reaching social, economic and administrative change that would consolidate and institutionalise the power of the regime to an extent that its founder, Jang Bahadur, could only have dreamed of. Not the least important of these changes occurred in the machinery of government.
Chandra Shumsher reorganised some government departments, merged others, abolished several and created some new ones. The civil administration that emerged from these reforms was to remain basically unchanged for the remainder of the regime's years in power. It consisted of 13 major departments and about 60 additional offices functioning through traditional administrative processes to cater to the needs of a conservative and traditional society.

The Khadga Nishana Adda or Prime Minister's Office, was established in 1917 as the apex of the administrative apparatus. It issued directives to other government departments, co-ordinated their various activities and exercised a general supervision over them. Its directives were issued under a seal—the Khadga Nishana, that bore a sword and the abbreviated signature of the Prime Minister—and were counter-signed by the head of the civil administration, the Commander-in-Chief.

The Bintipatra Niksari Adda was the highest court of civil and criminal appeal in the Kingdom. It was the Prime Minister's highest judicial office, directed by him and independent of the judicial hierarchy of the country. It had original and appellate jurisdiction and its decisions were final. It was also the highest office to receive bintipatras, complaints from the people and grievances from junior officials about injustices done to them by any state employee. The Bintipatra Niksari Adda vetted these petitions and then referred them to the appropriate departments or offices for comment, after which the petitions were finally considered by the Prime Minister.

Two other major departments remained under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister: the Munsi Khana or Foreign Office, which dated from the time of Bhim Sen Thapa, and the Gharkaj Adda, or Public Works Office, established by Bir Shumsher. Despite its name, the Public Works Office handled only design, construction, maintenance and repair work relating to the Prime Minister's residence, the royal palace, the State Guest House and the residences of the senior members of the Rana family. It was headed by the Hazuria General and had a huge workforce of overseers, carpenters, masons, tilers, painters, plumbers, skilled workers and unskilled labourers. It could, if need be, draw on prison labour to assist with its construction projects.

Below the four departments that the Prime Minister directed personally were eight other departments under the supervision of the head of the civil administration, the Commander-in-Chief.

Arguably the most important department in the Rana administrative system and always directly under the control of the Commander-in-Chief was the Muluki Adda, the Home Office, that Chandra Shumsher had reorganised and renamed the Muluki Bandobast Adda. The reformed Home Office consisted of seven sections. The Ain Sawal Phant—the old Ain Kausal—continued to function as a Law Council, formulating, amending,
repealing and codifying civil law and administrative regulations. The Purji Phant authorised the various projects and activities of government departments on the basis of the approval—purji—of the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief. The Report Niksari Phant received reports from the districts about such matters as law and order, revenue, the situation in the frontier areas, the movement of foreigners and administration in general. The revenue administration of the hill districts and the Kathmandu Valley was handled by the Nepal Pahad Bandobast Phant, while that of the Tarai was handled by the Madhes Bandobast Phant. The two remaining sections of the Home Office were the Rakam Bandobast Phant, which dealt with government contracts, and the Kath Mahal Niksari Phant, which handled the management and administration of forests and the sale of timber and forest products. In summary, the Home Office enjoyed a vast
jurisdiction and wielded considerable power over the general administration of the country and the formulation and implementation of all non-military domestic policy.

The Hazari Goswara or Government Personnel Office had been set up by Bir Shumsher to record the attendance and the leave entitlements of all government employees. One of the more corrupt government departments, it actually continued to function after the demise of the Rana regime in 1951. It was manned by a handful of clerks who went around the various government offices and noted who was present and who was absent. If an official was out of his office when they called, he could be marked as absent and lose a day’s pay. However, once his attendance had been noted, his subsequent absence would probably not. Under such a system, senior officers felt no responsibility for ensuring the attendance or output of their employees.

A new position, that of Director General, was created to supervise the introduction and implementation of education in Nepal. The Director General formulated policy and prepared plans to improve and expand English, Nepali, Sanskrit and technical education.

An increasingly diverse and complex bureaucracy called for a tighter and more professional system of checks and balances than the old Kumari Chowk, the Accounts and Audit Office, could provide. The solution was to establish a specialist audit office, the Shrestha Office. Established in 1917, the Audit Office compiled regulations for the handling and accounting of public money, audited public accounts, investigated financial irregularities in government offices and investigated and fined defalcating revenue officials and corrupt civil servants.

Jang Bahadur’s Kitab Khana, the Civil and Military Registry, was reorganised and renamed the Commandari Kitab Khana. Henceforth, each newly appointed government official had to attend a formal interview with the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief, after which his particulars were entered in the register of civil employees. The Muluki Khana or Treasury and the Kausi Tosakhana or Office of Public Expenditure remained essentially unchanged.

The last major department, the Jangi Adda, the Defence Office created by Jang Bahadur upon his return from England in 1851, was reorganised and renamed the Jangi Bandobast Adda.

In addition to the 13 major departments, a plethora of minor offices was established to deal with the more specialised government services. The Municipal Goswara was set up as a limited experiment in local government in the Bhotahiti area of Kathmandu. The Goswara Tahvil or Central Records Office was set up in 1924 in the old Basantpur Palace complex and still functions today. The Jail Khana, as the name suggests, administered the central prison including the mustering of prisoners for work on public
Sir Chandra Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, GCB, GCSI, Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung and Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal.
construction projects. The Taksal Adda emerged from a reorganisation of the old Taksar, the government Mint. The Tirja Adda issued tirjas, documents authorising a civil servant or soldier to collect his share of the harvest from the tenants on his jagir lands. The Prime Minister's private income from the revenues of his estates of Kaski and Lamjung was collected by the Nagadi Adda. The Kadel Chowk manufactured gold and silver ornaments, ritual vessels and implements and household utensils for the royal family, the Rana family and senior non-Rana officials. The Bijuli Goswara was established in 1911 to supply electricity to the Prime Minister's residence and later to other palaces and public buildings in Kathmandu.

The eight offices described above were placed under the direct supervision of the head of the civil administration, the Commander-in-Chief. The remainder were in the charge of lesser ranking Generals and Colonels. The Narayanhit Goswara administered the royal palace. The Hulak Goswara or Central Registry served as a clearing house for all government documents passing between government offices or between Kathmandu and the various district headquarters. The Pani Goswara, set up by Bir Shumsher, was responsible for the supply of piped water to Kathmandu and other Valley towns. The Pipa Goswara, under the direct control of the Hazuria General, maintained an army of coolies on its payroll for use as porters or beaters at a shikar. The Ticket Adda printed postage stamps, state papers and court documents. The Government Dairy, the Goth Goswara, kept a herd of about 2,000 cows to supply milk and ghee to the royal palace and the Prime Minister's residence. The Telephone Adda was set up in 1915 when a basic telephone network was installed to link up the major government offices and the palaces of the senior Rana officials. The Tejarath Adda, established in 1916, handled government loans advanced to civil servants and military officers. The Census Goswara was established in 1919 for “keeping a record of men, women, cattle, places and land, etc.”

To house the various departments of government under his direct supervision, as well as for his commodious and dignified personal residence, Chandra Shumsher built a palace with 1,400 rooms, the Singha Darbar. To improve the performance of the civil service he introduced cash salaries and abolished the system of granting jagirs, and to emphasise the authority of the Prime Minister over the whole national edifice, he abolished the practice whereby all his brothers had personal flags. Henceforth there would only be two flags: one for the Prime Minister and one for the King.

Chandra Shumsher gave final shape to the pattern of public administration in Rana Nepal. It continued to function according to his design until the demise of the regime, an instrument carrying out the personal wishes of the Prime Minister and serving his exclusive interests, unaccountable either to the King or to the people.
Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah, King of Nepal. 1881-1911.
Nepal and the First World War

On 3 August 1914, the day before the outbreak of hostilities, the Prime Minister went personally to the British Residency to hand over a letter to be transmitted to the Viceroy. "In the event of a continental war" he had written "the whole military resources of Nepal are at His Majesty’s disposal. We shall be proud if we can be of any service, however little that may be .... we have spoken of our friendship on many occasions. Should time allow, we hope to speak in deeds." And speak in deeds they did. Throughout the war, Nepal made a contribution out of all proportion to its size and resources, and, in absolute terms, greater than many of Britain's own dominions and territories of comparable size.

At first the war went badly for Britain. The expeditionary force sent to France at the outbreak of hostilities was so small and its initial casualties were so heavy that the British very soon came to rely upon the Indian army for reinforcements in Europe. Within a few months the war had spread to the Middle East and by the end of 1914 the regular British army had been largely destroyed. In the light of these disastrous developments Nepal's offer of troops, both for general service within India and to fight on the front, was very welcome. In March 1915, 7500 men were sent to India under General Baber Shumsher, the Prime Minister's second son, who was appointed Inspector General of the contingent and attached to army headquarters in India. The Gurkhas were deployed in the North West Frontier Province under the Prime Minister's nephew, General Padma Shumsher, and in the United Provinces under another nephew, General Tej Shumsher. A second contingent of 4,000 troops was sent to India in December 1915, followed by a further 4,000 a year later. When added to the 26,000 Gurkhas already serving in the regular Indian army at the outbreak of the war, to the steady supply of men trained and sent to replace heavy losses at the front, and to the Gurkhas serving with various paramilitary units in India, the total number of men who actually left the country for military purposes exceeded two hundred thousand from a total population of five million. But Nepal's support and assistance did not end there. In September 1914 the Government of Nepal contributed Rs. 300,000 (£435,000 in current terms) to the war fund, and to this the Prime Minister added a personal contribution of Rs. 225,000. In January 1916 a further Rs. 300,000 was donated and in January 1917 an additional Rs. 300,000. In 1918, to mark the silver wedding anniversary of the Emperor and Empress of India, another donation of Rs. 200,000 was made to the war effort. Eighteen thousand one hundred and forty four kilos of cardamoms, 38,420 kilos of tea and sufficient timber for 200,000 broad gauge railway sleepers were also donated, while 71 mechanics from the arms factories and workshops of Nepal were sent to work in India. In June 1915 Chandra Shumsher donated 31 machine guns, a number equal to the Imperial Salute in India but also,
Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher (white trousers) at a parade to mark the departure of Nepalese troops for the First World War. On his right is Commander-in-Chief Bhim Shumsher and on his left Western (Senior) Commanding General Juddha Shumsher and General Mohan Shumsher. 1915.

Maharaja Chandra Shumsher bidding farewell to the first contingent of Nepalese troops on their way to the First World War. March 1915.
Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher at a parade to mark the departure of Nepalese troops for the First World War. 1915.

many would have recalled, precisely the number of machine guns that the Prime Minister had attempted without success to purchase during his visit to Britain.

Nepal’s contribution to the imperial war effort was not without its opponents. Indian revolutionaries in exile worked hard to turn Nepal into a centre of anti-British intrigue and one of them, Kala Singh, a wanted man in India, actually travelled to Kathmandu incognito to persuade the Nepalese Government to abandon the British cause and support the emerging Indian nationalist movement instead. As the only independent Hindu state in the world, he argued, Nepal had a moral obligation to support the Hindu independence movement in India. Chandra Shumsher was promised territorial rewards and the premiership of an independent Indian Republic to be set up after the British raj had been overthrown. But not only did Kala Singh’s entreaties fall on deaf ears, he was arrested by the British while returning from Kathmandu disguised as a cloth merchant, tried and later hanged.

When the Government of Nepal decided to send troops to the European and Middle Eastern fronts, it was faced with a major religious problem, for Hindu doctrine decreed that any Hindu who crossed the ocean—the dreaded kalo pani or black water—lost his caste. For an orthodox Hindu, loss of caste is a religious, social and economic disaster. His allotted place in society is closed to him, he is cut off from his family and friends, he is unable to work. Hinduism, that socio-religious scheme of things that controls and directs his every waking moment, rejects him completely. His world literally collapses. When Jang Bahadur returned from England in 1851 and Chandra Shumsher in 1908, each member of the party had to
undergo an elaborate, extensive and costly religious purification ritual called *pani patia* in order to be re-admitted to his caste. The issue of losing caste had been a serious problem for Gurkha troops since a contingent of them that had been to Peking during the Boxer Rebellion became outcastes because the Brahmins subsequently refused to grant them *pani patia*. Despite appeals from the Prime Minister, the priests refused to re-admit to caste soldiers who had lost their caste by serving overseas. But when the issue arose again in the crisis context of the outbreak of the First World War, Chandra Shumsher reached a compromise with the supreme religious authorities of the Kingdom, the *raj gurus*. It was arranged that *pani patia* would be granted to soldiers who went abroad on active duty and that it would not have to be obtained through lengthy and expensive religious ceremonies. Re-admission to caste would automatically be granted to all soldiers who had crossed the *kalo pani* on the orders or with the consent of the Government of Nepal, provided that they fulfilled two conditions: no man was to stay abroad beyond the absolutely necessary time, and each man was required to produce a certificate signed by a British officer that he had observed the regulations of his caste during his time of service abroad.

The issue of *pani patia* was not finally laid to rest until after the Second World War when, in view of the increasing numbers of orthodox Indian Hindus travelling to Europe, the priests of Nepal ceased to create difficulties. There were two sides to the issue, however. For as long as it was required, *pani patia* was also a political weapon that the ruling class in Nepal could use to retain a hold on the Gurkha troops.
News of the final allied victory reached Kathmandu on 14 November 1918, bringing a sense of relief to the entire population of the Kingdom. A week later Nepal declared a public holiday and celebrated the victory with illuminations and fireworks, a parade of troops, religious ceremonies of thanksgiving and the distribution of food and clothes to the poor.

But the political benefit to Nepal of having supported the British imperial war effort—the vast store of credit that she would shortly seek to redeem in the form of an unequivocal acknowledgement by Britain of her independent status—was threatened by a social phenomenon that the war had created: large-scale Nepalese migration to India. Of the more than 11,000 Gurkhas who were discharged from the regular Indian army at the end of the war, for example, less than 4,000 returned home. The rest, along with their families who joined them from Nepal, remained in India hoping for a better economic future than the remote and impoverished mountains of Nepal could offer. Tens of thousands of other Gurkhas on military and para-military duties within India also stayed. And their families joined them from the hills. The scale of migration was such that agricultural production in the hill districts was disrupted, as was the transportation of goods which, in a country that totally lacked roads and vehicular traffic, moved on the backs of porters. As a result, there were food shortages in some hill areas and the government was obliged to move grain up from the Tarai at enormous cost. The State army was also affected as the martial tribes preferred service in the Indian army with its better pay scales and amenities and the opportunity for active service that was completely lacking in the army of Nepal. To stem the outflow of people, the Prime Minister increased the pay scales of the Nepalese Army and forbade residents of the Kathmandu Valley and the hill districts to its immediate east and west from enlisting in the Indian army. He imposed a total ban on employment in the Indian military police and any non-combat Indian army units. Underlying this policy, of course, was the clear realisation that unrestricted migration would lessen British dependence upon the Government of Nepal for recruits and that, as a consequence, the Ranas would lose their main claim to British favours.

District Administration

Chandra Shumsher’s attention to reforming the machinery of government did not stop at reorganising its central administration. He took an equal interest in the improvement of district administration. The district boundaries were altered to produce 20 hill districts and 12 Tarai districts. Postal offices were opened in the Tarai and the hills. Customs control and forest management were tightened and improved. Ayurvedic dispensaries appeared in a few district headquarters. One of the more important improvements was the introduction of a regular police force in the Tarai,
starting with Birgunj district in 1914. In the hills, law and order continued to be maintained at village level and was based almost exclusively on social and religious sanctions. A police presence was simply not needed and, in fact, during the whole of the Rana period there was no police force in the hill districts.

Basic structural changes were made as well. Chandra Shumsher laid the foundations of a new revenue system in the Tarai by abolishing the *amalis*, the village level revenue collectors who also exercised judicial powers, and replacing them with *mal subbas* who headed the district revenue offices—the *mal addas*—and operated under the direct supervision of the district Governors. The actual task of revenue collection in the Tarai remained in the hands of officials called *jimadars*. They were always local men and the position was hereditary. The *jimadar* received a commission of 25 paise for every rupee collected and deposited in the district treasury. Any arrears in tax collection could be deducted from his salary. He or his assistant visited every village every month, checking the land records and the assessments and collecting taxes. He could not leave his area without the permission of the *bada hakim* and he could be dismissed if he did not report to the revenue office once a month. To lessen the risk of fraud, the *jimadar* and his assistant could not be members of the same family. The *jimadar*’s duties extended beyond tax collection. He was required to assist with the collection of customs and forest dues, supervise bad characters in his village, distribute mail and generally support the maintenance of law and order. Although he earned very little, the variety of his duties and
ROYAL WEDDING IN NEPAL

MAHARAJA AND HIS BRIDES
(FROM A NEPALESE CORRESPONDENT)

KHATMANDU

The marriage of his Majesty the Maharaja Dhiraja of Nepal was celebrated with suitable pomp and splendour.

Following the ancient custom of the house, his Majesty was married to two Maharaniis, both being daughters of an ancient pure Rajput family of India. The festivities extended over a number of days: A week before the wedding the brides-elect, resplendent in costly attire, garlanded the noble bridegroom and every one was gay "against the Brydale day, which was not long." The Saipata, or paper giving the auspicious hour of marriage, accompanied by a print of the Royal hands in scented vermilion and turmeric, to signify his high approval of it was sent from the bridegroom's palace to the Singha Durbar, the residence of Maharaja Sir Chandra Shum Shere Jung Bahadur Rana, where the brides were. The procession accompanying it was gazed at in eager admiration by many thousands of people who thronged the sides of the road from one end to the other.

ELEPHANTS AND MUSIC

On the wedding day the streets, well watered and decorated with triumphal arches covered with evergreen, and with gay pennons and streamers, were lined with troops. The procession, which was a "sight for the gods to see," began to move on the stroke of noon. It was headed by a detachment of troops with the national flags and others consecrated to the presiding deities of the country. Then followed several learned Pandits on elephants, and unmelodious but auspicious music consisting of toon, bheri, nrisingha, &c., lustily sounded with puffs from lungs which vied with a smith's bellows. Heralded thus came giant figures in paper and cloth, representing nearly all living creatures, man, bird, and beast. Then came a long train of men representing the country dancers and musicians, who had come from all parts of the valley joyfully to take part in the marriage of their King.

Then troops and more troops, interspersed here and there with the Royal and military bands, and with elephants and horses all richly decked, some carrying the merchant princes of the country, others high officials, others again the feudatory chiefs hailing from all parts of the kingdom. A
Chandra Shumsher (1901-1929)

squadron of cavalry capered along a little ahead of the "kalas," the sacred vessel, covered in cloth of silver and gold and profusely adorned with flowers and garlands, under a huge beautiful umbrella, attended by maidens fair in a stream of carriages, some carrying the paraphernalia of Royalty and some singing melodious hymns.

THE BRIDEGROOM

Then bosomed high in a gold and silver howdah, mounted on a big tusker marching to the merry jingle of the numerous silver bells with which it was festooned, came the youthful King, bright as the new-born day, the cynosure of neighbouring eyes—and there were myriads of them looking from every possible point of vantage, not excepting the broad slanting roofs of the several public buildings which stood by the side of the road. The sea of heads and their hum, which represented the noise of breaking billows, was indeed no less a striking feature amidst the "pomp and feast and revelry" attendant on the occasion.

Within a short distance of the bridegroom's elephant came the one carrying Maharaja Sir Chandra Shum Shere Jung Bahadur Rana, accompanied by Colonel O'Connor, the British Representative at the Court of Nepal. Some more elephants with their rich trappings carried the Commander-in-Chief of Nepal and the generals, all in full dress uniform, with their elegant headdresses, from the top of which gracefully curved back the many-coloured bird of paradise feathers. The Gurus and Prohists, clad in clothes of gold brocade, preceded more troops and officers on horseback and other civil officials, the procession closing with the Saldurjung Regiment, the one which accompanied Prithvi Narain Shah in his conquest of Nepal. The head of the procession reached Singha Durbar long before the tail left the King's Palace. Gratuities and khillats were largely distributed, which made the gay occasion gayer still. A Royal salute was fired when his Majesty got on his elephant, again when he got down from it, and still again when he was carried to the place where the "Homa" ceremony was performed.

Next day the return procession was about the same as that of the preceding day, except that the bridegroom, with the two Queens seated one on each side of him, drove in an elegant carriage tastefully decorated with flowers and drawn by nine beplumed and beautifully caparisoned horses.

The Times, 22 April, 1919.
responsibilities gave him considerable power and prestige and the post was much sought after.

In the hill districts, the mal adda was headed by a mal hakim. In effect, the mal hakim was a revenue farmer who had a contractual obligation to deliver a stipulated amount of revenue to the district treasury. If his collections fell short of the stipulated target, the balance could be made up by deductions from his salary. Such a penalty was actually enforced against some revenue officials in Accham and Doti districts in 1908. If he collected the stipulated amount of land revenue then the mal hakim was in line for a promotion or an increase in salary. The actual task of revenue collection in the hill districts was placed in the hands of officials called talukdars. They were usually local men—they knew the people and the people knew them. The position was hereditary but could be lost for not adhering to the revenue regulations, for failing in the proper collection of tax, for defalcation or because the people of the area were dissatisfied with him. A talukar could, of course, resign his post, but not during the period between the Sri Panchami festival and Dasain, when revenue collection activities reached an annual peak.

To ensure that district administration functioned effectively, if not efficiently as well, Chandra Shumsher reorganised the daudaha inspection system. A daudaha was an ad hoc judicial commission and inspection team sent from Kathmandu to an outlying district to inspect all government activity in the area, audit its financial affairs, review and improve its administrative systems and the performance of its personnel, dispose of pending court cases and hear grievances against officials. Each daudaha was appointed by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the Home
Office and was headed by a member of the Rana family, usually of the rank of General. A daudaha stayed for around a month in the district to be inspected, issuing clearance certificates as each administrative office was audited, punishing errant officials and hearing court cases. Upon its return to Kathmandu the inspection team submitted its report and recommendations to the Muluki Bandobast Adda. As the Tarai districts yielded more revenue to the state than the hill districts, they tended to be inspected more regularly. In a country almost totally lacking in communications, the daudaha system provided the central government with the means to exert its authority and control over its district officials, most of whom had no regular contact with the central government, and to make its power and presence felt amongst the peasantry.

The Kathmandu Valley was administered directly by the Hazuria General through an administrative and judicial office, the Sadar Jangi Kotwali. Unfortunately there is almost no information available about the organisation and powers of this office. The civil administration of Patan and Bhaktapur operated separately under the direction of two Brigadier Generals. Responsibility for law and order in the three cities of the Valley rested with the Sadar Police Goswara, headed by a Director General of Police. This office also issued curfew passes to those who had good reason to be abroad during the midnight to 4 a.m. curfew. The curfew, the start and finish of which was announced every night and morning by the firing of a cannon, was not the only mechanism by which the movement of people in the Kathmandu Valley was controlled. Anyone leaving the Valley needed a permit issued by the Sadar Jangi Kotwali under the seal of the Hazuria General. At least one gazetted government official had to certify the identity of the applicant and another had to stand surety for his good behaviour. People living in the hill districts and the Tarai—be they farmers or merchants or pilgrims—had to obtain a permit from the office of the District Governor if they wished to travel to Kathmandu. Check points operated on all roads leading into the Valley and all travellers entering and leaving were subjected to a thorough body search and baggage examination. The clerks and guards seldom failed to extract some money from travellers before allowing them to resume their journey. The main check point at Chisapani Gadi was particularly notorious for the rapaciousness of its staff and experienced travellers avoided it if at all possible.

The Prince of Wales' Hunting Trip in the Tarai

At Chandra Shumsher’s invitation, Edward, Prince of Wales, heir to the imperial throne of India, hunted in the Tarai in December 1921. As had been the case with his father’s hunting trip in 1911 and his grandfather’s in 1876, this shikar was treated as an event of national importance and the entire apparatus of government was geared to making it a success. The
Prime Minister's sons, General Baber Shumsher and General Keshar Shumsher, were placed in charge of all the arrangements and the hunting camp was provided with every comfort and convenience. A total of 428

Maharaja Chandra Shumsher with the Prince of Wales, later the King-Emperor Edward VIII, on shikar in the Tarai. December 1921.

The Prince of Wales, later the King-Emperor Edward VIII, and Maharaja Chandra Shumsher inspecting a guard of honour in the Tarai. December 1921.
BIRTH OF HEIR IN NEPAL

NATIVE REJOICING

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)

KATMANDU, NEPAL, INDIA, JUNE 16

The week just passed has been one of much rejoicing here. It was heralded by the birth of a prince-royal, the heir-apparent to the throne of Nepal. It was known for some days that the great event might be expected any day, and as preparatory to it orders were issued to all the civil and military departments in Katmandu that the army and civil employees be warned to assemble at appointed places as soon as they heard three consecutive rounds of gun-fire on any day. When the three booms were heard, at about 8 o'clock in the morning of June 11, people began to flock to the maidan (square or parade ground) and the King's Palace. The terraced lawn in front of the building was lined with troops, and bands were posted in the bandstand occupying the centre.

Following the time-honoured custom such an assembly is always ordered some time before the birth, so that, should a prince happen to be born, the ceremonies appertaining thereto may not be delayed. The main thoroughfares wore a busy look with motor-cars, carriages, and Sowars [native cavalry]; and crowds of pedestrians. Everyone was looking expectant about the interesting event, and all were speculating about the sex of the coming child. The suspense was not of long duration. The first intimation to the public came through the roar of the feu-de-joie fired by the troops which were drawn up at the palace, and this was taken up lustily by the troops stationed in the maidan amidst the booming of cannons proclaiming the joyful news.

The high officers were called in to present Nazars [ceremonial dues] to the happy parents, and the newborn prince. Lieutenant-Colonel R.L. Kennion, C.I.E., who under the new style of designation is now the British Envoy at the Court of Nepal, also called to offer congratulations. Many prisoners were released, and alms were distributed liberally to the poor, the priests, Pandits, and Brahmins generally coming in, of course, for their usual share of handsome presents. All public offices were closed for three days in honour of the event.

On the afternoon of June 16, the sixth day after the birth, the "Chattri" [umbrella] ceremony took place with suitable pomp and splendour. The Palace and grounds were gaily decorated with flags and buntings, paper decorations, and Chinese lanterns. From 4 o'clock that day streams of carriages and cars were seen to be moving towards the Palace, carrying guests and those ordered to be present on the occasion. Many of them received "shawls" from the King betokening his Majesty's favour usually bestowed on such occasions. Music and other entertainments were provided, and as the day closed in, the myriads of lamps outlining the graceful contour of the building were lit, offering a grand spectacle not only to the guests, but to the people as well, who had flocked all around the Palace to have a look at it.

The evening ended with a fine pyrotechnic display. The assembly then dispersed, all highly pleased and wishing for the long and happy life of the new-born prince. People generally look upon the event as a special favour of God, and are big with hope it will usher in a year of plenty in the land.

The Times, 28 June 1920.
The Prince of Wales, later the King-Emperor Edward VIII, with his first bag. Prince Edward is standing between the legs of the tiger. December 1921.

elephants was assembled for the hunt, including animals from the government's herd, others requisitioned from private owners and the remainder hired from India. Thousands of beaters were employed to round up the game. The official British party consisted of 49 Europeans, including a junior lieutenant, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and 243 Indians. They hunted for a week, from 14 to 21 December, and bagged 18 tigers, 2 bears, 2 leopards and 8 rhinoceroses.

The killing of a rhinoceros was a significant event in Nepal at that time. The huge beasts could be hunted and killed only with the specific permission of the government and their horns and blood were particularly sought after. As soon as a rhinoceros had been felled, the beaters would rush at the carcase. Everything a man could detach or tear from his clothing was immediately soaked in its blood, for a few drops smeared on the head of a dying man will ensure a happy reincarnation. As in many parts of the world, the horn was credited with a variety of magical properties. Drinking cups made of horn, for example, were supposed to betray the presence of poison. Scrapings were thought to be very effective as an aphrodisiac and were frequently used to cast evil spells upon one's enemies.

At the close of the shikar the Prince of Wales was presented with a collection of animals for the London Zoo. The collection, which had been assembled by General Keshar Shumsher, included tigers, rhinoceroses, elephants, bears, rare mountain deer, snow leopards, yaks and several species of rare birds.
The Nepalese Gift to the Prince of Wales.—The animals and birds presented to the Prince of Wales by the Government of Nepal were embarked on board the steamship Tactician at Calcutta on May 4, en route for their permanent abode in the Zoological Gardens. The collection comprises two nilgai, two swamp deer, three sambar, two ogal, three white barking deer, two musk deer, three bhurrel, two thar, two leopards, two tiger cubs, one tiger, two bears, one rhinoceros calf, one elephant calf, one Tibetan mastiff, one of four-horned antelope, three spotted deer, two hog deer, four weasels, five antelopes, six pheasants, and many other birds, also snakes. The collection, together with some animals sent by the Calcutta Zoological Gardens in exchange for varieties in Regent’s Park, is in charge of Mr. Arthur Thompson, assistant superintendent of the London Zoological Gardens, who went out to Calcutta specially for the purpose.

The Anglo-Nepal Treaty of Friendship. 1923

Ever since Chandra Shumsher had come to power, the fundamental aim of his foreign policy had been to negotiate a treaty that would replace the 1815 Treaty of Segauli and unequivocally recognise the independence of Nepal. Such an arrangement had, in fact, been sought by all Prime Ministers of Nepal since Jang Bahadur, the man whom everyone regarded as the model head of government: he had developed good relations with the British but had kept them at arm’s length, he had rendered valuable services to Britain but never without a price, and he had been treated as the de facto ruler of an independent state. But an unequivocal British acknowledgement of Nepal’s independent status had eluded even him. In view of his unconditional support for the British during the First World War, Chandra Shumsher came under considerable pressure from the darbar to succeed where all his predecessors had failed.

The British had always avoided any clear definition of Nepal’s status, though it is evident that the Treaty of Segauli did place certain limitations on its sovereignty. Article 6, for example, obliged Nepal to submit any disputes with Sikkim to British arbitration and to abide by its decision, while Article 7 obliged the King not to employ in state service “any British subject nor the subject of any European and American States without the consent of the British Government”. Again, by an engagement of 1839, the King undertook not to have any intercourse with the Indian feudatory States “beyond the Ganges”. On the other hand, since the Treaty of Segauli had been signed, Nepal had, quite independently of the British government, fought two wars with Tibet, concluded treaties with Tibet and China, maintained a diplomatic agent (vakil) in Lhasa, sent complementary missions to Peking and received an annual tribute from Tibet. However, it was also true that the British had secured effective, albeit indirect influence over Nepal’s external relations and that the darbar had to reckon with British reaction when formulating its policy towards Tibet and China.
Although Britain had not interfered directly in those disputes with Tibet during the 19th century, considerations of British disapproval had served as an effective constraint on Nepal's military ambitions in that country. Consequently, although Nepal had no treaty formally subordinating her foreign relations to the British, a de facto subordination did exist and the Rana family had to adjust its foreign interests to accord with those of the British Government. The result was that, whatever the theoretical status of Nepal might have been, the realpolitik was determined by the attitude of the British. And, as became increasingly apparent after the death of Jang Bahadur, this attitude was one of treating, though never openly declaring Nepal as a frontier protectorate. It was an attitude succinctly summarised by Sir William Lee Warner, a senior official of the Government of India and a leading expert on the British Government's constitutional relationship with the native states of the sub-continent:

"I have never regarded Nepal as "independent" except in certain attributes of sovereignty. Its internal sovereignty is more complete than that of any other protected state of India. But it has no real international life. The argument based upon the wars and treaties with Tibet does not invalidate the statement just made. For it is certain that the Government of India tolerated the exercise of independence on these occasions and therefore gave a tacit assent to the action of Nepal. The argument based upon a profession of allegiance to China is weakened by the fact that Ava, Bhutan and other kingdoms professed such allegiance, but it was a profession of a fiction and not a fact. The fact is that Nepal habitually defers to the British will, and relies upon British protection. It is, therefore, in my opinion, a glorified member of the protectorate."
Chandra Shumsher Rana, the Prime Minister who ruled Nepal for 28 years. His tenure of office was marked by the consolidation of the regime, numerous administrative and social reforms and the enhanced security of the Kingdom.

There were two main reasons why the British would not concede that Nepal was a fully independent state. Firstly, it might encourage Nepal to establish diplomatic relations with other foreign powers, thereby weakening Britain’s influence in that strategically located country, and secondly, such an admission would strengthen the Nepalese claim that it had a right to the unrestricted acquisition of arms and the machinery needed to produce arms.
King Tribhuvan at his coronation. Seated on his right is Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher. 20 February 1913.

Chandra Shumsher Rana, Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, at the coronation of King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah. 20 February 1913.
At the outset of Chandra Shumsher’s rule, then, the two issues in Anglo-Nepalese relations requiring resolution were the independent status of Nepal and her right to freely procure arms. By the end of the First World War the British could no longer avoid facing up to Nepal’s demands. Not only were they indebted to Nepal for her assistance during the war, but they needed her assistance again to cope with the rapidly deteriorating security situation on the sub-continent. Internally, the Third Afghan War which broke out in May 1919 had sparked off serious disturbances in the neighbouring tribal territories resulting in a loss of control over almost the whole of Waziristan. Externally, the unstable situation in Tibet and increasing Japanese influence further north in Mongolia had the British worried, for Nepal, along with many other Asian countries, had a high regard for Japan’s military prowess following its resounding victory over Russia in 1904-05—a victory that laid to rest forever the myth of European invincibility in Asia—and it was to Japan that Nepal had been sending her young men for training. Chandra Shumsher pressed his claims, exploiting both the war weariness of the British and their post-war problems in India until, finally, negotiations were opened on a new treaty that would be a
comprehensive settlement of all that Nepal expected of Britain and all that
Britain required of Nepal. The result was the Anglo-Nepalese Treaty of
Friendship of 1923.

The first Article provided for lasting friendship between the British
government and Nepal and for mutual recognition of “each other’s
independence, both internal and external”. This is the usual language by
which one independent state recognises another and it clearly concedes the
abandonment of any claim by Britain of suzerainty or a protectorate over
Nepal, with the normal consequence of diplomatic relations. The second
Article confirmed all previous treaties and agreements made since the
Treaty of Segauli except insofar as they were altered by the present treaty.
The third stated that there would be mutual consultations in the event that
either party was in dispute with a common neighbouring state. The fourth
contained assurances that neither state would allow a third party to use its
territory against the other. The fifth Article permitted Nepal to freely
import any quantity of arms and ammunition and the machinery for their
production “required or desired for the strength and welfare of Nepal”
from or through British India.

The Treaty was signed in Kathmandu on 21 December 1923 by Chandra
Shumsher, now styled “His Highness” by the British on the grounds that
he was the Maharaja of the estates of Kaski and Lamjung, and the British
representative, now styled an “envoy” to distinguish him from the British
Residents in the Indian Princely States. To strengthen his hand in the
darbar—which the British now referred to as “the Government of Nepal”—
Chandra Shumsher made the event an occasion for national celebration.
Food and clothing were distributed to the poor, public buildings were
decorated and illuminated, a general remission of three months was
granted to prisoners other than those serving life sentences and a two-day
public holiday was declared. To further emphasise Nepal’s independent
status the Treaty was not ratified by the Viceroy, as was the usual practice,
but by the King Emperor himself, George V.

The Abolition of Slavery

Chandra Shumsher’s greatest achievement, along with obtaining a
declaration of treaty status from the British acknowledging Nepal’s
independence, was the abolition of slavery. Jang Bahadur had reformed the
institution of slavery but had not been politically powerful enough to
challenge the religious establishment and actually abolish the practice. Dev
Shumsher had made a courageous initial attempt to do so but his efforts had
proved futile. With characteristic drive and determination, Chandra
Shumsher succeeded where his predecessors had failed. He planned a
structured series of moves whereby he could progressively achieve the
total abolition of slavery, but in a manner calculated to accustom the people
by gradual change and hence minimise opposition from ultra-conservatives in Nepalese society.

His first step was to ensure that the reforms of Jang Bahadur prohibiting the enslavement of any person who was not born to that condition, were rigidly enforced. Then he prohibited the sale of any slaves without their relatives' being given first option to buy. And he decreed that, for a payment ranging from Rs. 25 to Rs. 120, any slave had the right to buy his own freedom if his master decided to sell him. Instructions were issued to free all slaves owned by the Government and henceforth, when a criminal was punished by the confiscation of his property, his slaves would at once be liberated. An enactment was promulgated inviting any slave to become a free settler on land granted by the Government in the Chitwan district of the Tarai. No slave owner had the right to prevent his slave accepting the Government's offer. Any runaway slave who had fled to India and remained a fugitive for ten years could return to Nepal a free man.

Finally, on 28 November 1924, Chandra Shumsher launched an impassioned appeal to the people of Nepal for the eradication of slavery. It was an eloquent and emotional speech in which he outlined the economic rationale of abolishing slavery, the moral imperatives to do so and the social benefits that would result. A timetable for the liberation of all slaves in the Kingdom was then set. Firstly, on and from a certain date that would be fixed after general public consultation, the legal status of slavery would lapse. Slave owners would be compensated at current market rates. Ex-slaves would be apprenticed to their former owners for a period of seven years, during which time they would continue to be fed and clothed and housed in return for their labour.

This last clause was introduced in the hope that the ex-slaves would, by continuing to perform as free men the same duties that they had previously carried out as slaves, gradually accustom themselves to their new social and economic order and would eventually settle down as hired labourers in the localities where they had been living. Slave owners were encouraged to substitute wages for the food, clothing and lodging they had formerly provided so that the ex-slaves could learn to cope with a cash economy and the economic responsibility of maintaining old, infirm or very young dependents.

The institution of slavery had prevailed only in the hills. It had never been viable in the Tarai because the slaves could so easily escape into neighbouring British India. And even in the hills it did not operate on a large scale. In a total population of 5.6 million, the number of slaves in 1924 amounted to 51,419. The fiscal burden to the state of liberating the slaves, however, was immense. The Government paid out Rs. 3,670,000 in compensation to 15,719 slave owners. That figure was equal to £4,333,000
in current terms and represented about 15 per cent of the Kingdom's annual revenue.

The Dawn of Political Consciousness

For all its geographic and political isolation, Nepal could not seal itself off completely from the influence of Indian nationalism that was beginning to grow in breadth and intensity throughout the sub-continent. Gradually but inevitably, the people of Nepal were exposed to its aims and philosophy. It was not only Gurkha soldiers returning from years of service in India or abroad who introduced unwelcome political and social ideas into their remote mountain Kingdom. Indian religious reformers sought to interfere with the very Hindu faith upon which the edifice of Nepalese society rested. While the socio-political ideas of returning Gurkha soldiers were, for the most part, utterly irrelevant to the subsistence hill farmers of Nepal, the religious messages of the Hindu reformists struck a responsive chord amongst people at all social and economic levels.

One of the most influential of the Hindu reform movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the Arya Samaj. The founder of the movement, Swami Dayananda, denounced religious evils such as child marriage and forced widowhood, excoriated the corrupt priesthood and advocated a reform of orthodox Hindu rites and practices. Although primarily religious in nature, the movement considered its role to include social reform as well. One of the movement's disciples, Madhav Raj Joshi, started preaching his reformist ideas in Kathmandu and Pokhara in 1893. When this elicited no reaction from Prime Minister Bir Shumsher, Madhav Raj Joshi set up an Arya Samaj centre in Kathmandu. There, he soon raised the ire of the raj gurus and the priestly establishment, mostly members of the Pande family, by advocating the lifting of all restrictions against foreign travel. This was anathema to the Brahmins who had waxed fat on the proceeds from the pani patia, the rituals whereby a Hindu who has lost caste by crossing the ocean—the kalo pani—is re-admitted to caste. Those who served as priests in the royal palace and leading Rana households were particularly hostile towards the egalitarian and anti-clerical spirit of the movement, for they had long since given up the privations of scholarly discipline or ascetic devotions and they now enjoyed a very comfortable lifestyle. Chandra Shumsher's apparent disinterest in these matters created the impression that he was not opposed to religious reform, and this increased the distress of the Brahmins.

Then in 1905, apparently at Madhav Raj Joshi's own suggestion, a scholarly debate was held in the presence of the Maharaja on the interpretation of Hindu scriptures. The reformist defended himself well against the best theologians that the conservatives could muster, but the debate ended in violence. Madhav Raj Joshi was badly beaten up on
the grounds that he had blasphemed against the patron deities of Nepal in the course of the debate. He was paraded through the streets of Kathmandu in disgrace and thrown into prison for two years. His Nepalese followers were harrassed for their beliefs and his Indian followers were expelled from Nepal. Upon his release, Madhav Raj Joshi moved to Darjeeling and resumed his reformist activities there. In Nepal, the persecution of the Arya Samaj continued.

Educated Nepalese were under constant surveillance, too fearful to engage in overt political activity. Nothing that was written—and probably very little that was said—escaped the attention of the Prime Minister. Getting hold of political information was extremely difficult: radios were unknown amongst the people at large and the entry of Indian newspapers was strictly controlled. Involving oneself in politics was also extremely dangerous. The prosecution of Subba Krishna Lal Adhikari, an officer in the government legal service, is a case in point and exemplifies how politically
repressive a nervous regime can be. In a preface to a textbook on the
cultivation of maize, he had remarked that, while pampered and lazy dogs
of foreign breeds were highly prized in Nepal, the only animals that could
effectively protect people against thieves were native dogs. Unfortunately
for the hapless ex-Subba, the authorities interpreted this statement as a
criticism of their pro-British attitude. He was brought before the Prime
Minister in chains, publicly whipped and sentenced to nine years in prison
where he expired before his term did.

While the religious reformers inside Nepal encountered formidable
difficulties, the political reformers operating from the safety of British India
fared little better. One concrete result of the exposure of the Gurkhas to
external political and social influences during the First World War was
the founding of the All-India Gorkha League at Dehra Dun in 1921.
Apolitical for its first six years, it was transformed into a dynamic political
organisation after the election of Thakur Chandan Singh as its president in
1926. Thakur Chandan Singh was a former Indian Congress Party activist
who had a good service record in the Indian Army during the First

Khadga Shumsher, the renegade of the Rana family who assassinated one Prime Minister
and attempted to overthrow another two.
World War, after which he had worked as an aide to the Maharaja of Bikaner. He had also married a daughter of that renegade of the Rana family, Khadga Shumsher. The Gorkha League advocated religious and political reform in Nepal through its mouthpiece, the weekly *Gorkha Samsar*, of which Thakur Chandan Singh was the editor. In 1927 a new branch of the League was opened in Assam where there was a large Gurkha population. The president of the League that year was Bahadur Shumsher Rana, son of the deposed Prime Minister, Dev Shumsher. Within four years, however, the League began to adopt a highly conciliatory attitude towards the Rana regime after some of its leaders had been bought off by Chandra Shumsher.

The reform movement had other shooting stars as well. In Calcutta in 1928 a Nepalese university student named Khadga Bahadur Bista was convicted of a murderous assault on a Marwari trader for purchasing a Nepalese girl for immoral purposes. Sentenced to eight years imprisonment with hard labour, he became an overnight celebrity amongst Nepalese living in Bengal and Assam. His sentence was remitted on appeal and he was released in March 1929. He then mounted what turned out to be quite an effective anti-British propaganda campaign amongst Gurkha soldiers in the Indian army, exhorting them not to suppress their Indian brethren as the paid bullies of an occupying power. Well connected in the highest echelons of the Indian Congress Party, he was arrested in 1930 while raiding
a government salt depot along with other Congress volunteers. After serving his prison term he dropped from public view and faded into history.

No more enduring were the efforts of Dev Prasad Sapkota, an official of the Nepalese Foreign Office who was dismissed by the Prime Minister for opposing Nepal’s support for British military adventurism in Tibet in 1904. He had argued, and correctly so, that Nepal’s action was a clear violation of its treaty obligations to Tibet. Dev Prasad Sapkota moved to Benaras, the holy city that had been a sanctuary for Nepalese political exiles—both royal and common—since ex-King Ran Bahadur had resided there in 1800. In 1921 he founded a weekly Nepali language periodical, the Gorkhali, that called for democratic rights for the people of Nepal. When it began to attract a considerable following of educated and politically aware Nepalese-in-exile, the British authorities closed it down, much to the satisfaction of Chandra Shumsher.

Not all the threats against Chandra Shumsher’s rule were external. They were not confined to the social and religious reformist ideas emanating from India or the democratic ideas that originated in Europe. The Prime Minister faced internal threats as well. In 1903, King Prithvi Bir, then 28 years of age, took what was probably intended to be the first step towards reasserting the traditional authority of the monarchy by forming a small group of supporters from amongst the families that had enjoyed political power before the advent of the Ranas. But one of their number betrayed the group to the Prime Minister who lost no time in despatching the remainder
Nepal under the Ranas

into internal exile. King Prithvi Bir's death in 1911 at the age of 36 and the accession of the five-year-old King Tribhuvan removed any possibility of political opposition from the monarchy.

Shortly afterwards, Chandra Shumsher came to suspect the loyalty of his brother, Khadga Shumsher, who for some years had been Governor of Palpa and whose absence from the centre of Nepalese life had probably led him to misread the strength of the new Prime Minister. Orders were issued for the Sabuj Corps, the crack regiment under Khadga Shumsher's command, to proceed to the Tarai to take part in military manoeuvres and thence to Kathmandu to strengthen the garrison there during Chandra Shumsher's pending visit to Calcutta. It was Khadga Shumsher's precipitate flight into India when he received these orders that set the seal of confession on his disloyalty, whereupon the plot against the Prime Minister collapsed. Chandra Shumsher treated his brother honourably and paid him a generous pension that allowed him to live out his days in comfortable retirement in India.
The Modernisation of Nepal
The internal order of the Kingdom under the firm and able hand of Chandra Shumsher enabled the government to attempt a steady improvement in the condition of the country and Nepal began to benefit from the introduction of modern technology over a wide range of applications. An all-weather road was constructed from the Indian border to Bimphedi at the start of the mountain trail that wound up and over two very steep and difficult passes and down to Thankot, one of the check points at the edge of the Kathmandu Valley. In 1924, a 20-kilometre ropeway capable of moving eight tonnes of cargo per hour was constructed across the Siwalik Range from Bhimphedi to Kathmandu. The ropeway still operates today. In 1927, a metre gauge railway was opened from Raxaul on the Indian frontier to Amlekhgunj near the start of the aerial ropeway. Henceforth all the material benefits of the West could be imported into the mountain fastness of the Nepalese capital while unwanted foreigners could continue to be excluded. The mountain ramparts that guarded Nepal's isolation remained unbreached.

The three cities of the Kathmandu Valley were supplied with clean drinking water and with electricity generated at a small hydroelectric station that was opened at Pharping in 1911. A telephone line was laid from Kathmandu down to Birgunj to connect with the Indian communications network. Huge circular granaries were constructed at strategic points throughout the Kingdom to store surplus grain in years of plenty against the threat of famine if the monsoon rains failed. Several rivers were spanned by substantial steel girder bridges, greatly upgrading the principal foot trails that offered the only means of travel throughout the Kingdom.

Paralleling the modernisation process were several far reaching social reforms of which the most important, the abolition of slavery, has already been mentioned. Suti, the practice by widows of immolating themselves on their husband's funeral pyre, was also outlawed. The practice had never been as widespread in Nepal as it had in India and it had always been voluntary. However, as with many deep seated religious practices, it had defied extermination. Jang Bahadur had forbidden suti by women who were pregnant, those who had a daughter of less than five or a son of less than 16, or who were themselves younger than 16. Bir Shumsher had insisted that the consent of the Prime Minister himself be obtained before any widow was permitted to immolate herself. Chandra Shumsher successfully legislated against it. As from 28 June 1920, suti became illegal in Nepal.

Other social reforms followed. The problem of public drunkeness was tackled by reducing the number of liquor shops and banning the sale of liquor at any fair or festival held at a temple or holy place. Gambling in public was forbidden except during certain religious festivals—and then
only because explicit permission was to be found in the shastras.

At the same time, a gradual change appeared in the tone of the administration. Until Chandra Shumsher's time new appointees to public office quickly used their positions for the wholesale rewarding of their supporters and the discomforture of their opponents. With an eye to the annual pajani, they sought to maximise what could be extracted from their positions in the shortest possible time. Their actions were rarely questioned and were never publicly accountable. But gradually, under the prime ministership of Chandra Shumsher, a different pattern began to emerge. Industry and capacity began to be rewarded and the number of major personnel changes at the annual pajani began to diminish. Senior officials came to realise that their services might be regarded as permanent unless, by their own misconduct or idleness or incapacity, they compelled the Prime Minister to exercise his right of dismissal. Of course, by today's standards of public accountability the system was notoriously arbitrary and corrupt. There were no objective standards by which to measure and reward performance. Advancement depended upon a complex web of patron-client relationships. Nepotism was rampant. Nevertheless, the first steps towards a permanent, professional civil service had been taken.

* * *

Chandra Shumsher—the reformer, the innovator—died on 25 November 1929, a few days after he caught cold at a garden party he had hosted to farewell the outgoing British Envoy. He left behind a country that was very different from the one that the founder of the regime had known. The spacious, turbulent days of Jang Bahadur and Ranaudip Singh were gone. The long peace that followed the final, bloody showdown between the Jang Ranas and the Shumsher Ranas in 1885 had allowed the regime to consolidate and mature. Chandra Shumsher was a respected elder statesman in the political context of the subcontinent, while at home he was a reformer whose improvements in the fields of public health, education and communications would have been the envy of any of the Indian princely states and even of many districts of British India. Ever careful not to alienate the religious establishment, he was nevertheless able to achieve an impressive degree of social engineering—the abolition of slavery and suti and the expansion of education being the most far-reaching. But the grand patriarch was no political liberal. The political inertia of the poor, ignorant and backward peasantry was total, and Chandra Shumsher arranged the affairs of the nation so that it stayed that way. Seditious propaganda and unwanted political ideas were rigorously excluded from Nepal while the educated and influential few—the ones to whom such heresy might appeal—were kept in a state of unrelieved intimidation.
Of all the Rana Prime Ministers of Nepal, Chandra Shumsher was the shrewdest and most astute. At home, he held the confidence of his relatives, the bharadars and the army. Abroad, he did all he could to raise the status of his country. Of course, no Rana Prime Minister could ever be described as selfless, and Chandra Shumsher was no exception. The object of all of them was to stay in power, firstly for their own benefit, secondly for the benefit of their relatives and supporters, and lastly to help their people and their country. However, if Chandra Shumser perceived his self-interests to be best served by seeking independence for Nepal, then there was a happy coincidence of his interests and those of the nation. For, of all the Prime Ministers of Nepal, he did the most to ensure the security and independence of the state.
10

Bhim Shumsher
(1929–1932)
10. Bhim Shumsher (1929-1932)

Bhim Shumsher assumed the prime ministership 166 years after Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of Kathmandu in September 1763 had created the modern Kingdom of Nepal. For exactly half that period—for the 83 years since Jang Bahadur was appointed Prime Minister in September 1846—the country had been under the *de facto* rule of the Rana family. On the eve of Bhim Shumsher's assumption of office the Rana regime had never looked more secure. It had just emerged from a long period of consolidation and development under the firm patriarchal guidance of Chandra Shumsher that had left it more externally secure than at any time since the foundation of the state and—at least for the moment—able to protect itself from popular opposition.

The man to whom the leadership of the regime now passed was only two years younger than his predecessor. Bhim Shumsher assumed the prime ministership at the age of 65. He was not an ambitious person. While he was Commander-in-Chief and next in line of succession, a position he held for 28 years, a British report noted that he was "an upright, loyal and straightforward man with plenty of ability but contented with his present position." He was a kind hearted person of religious temperament who had a conservative and domestic turn of mind. All that Bhim Shumsher asked of life was that he might be allowed to follow quietly in his brother's footsteps and avoid trouble during the few years that might remain to him.

But in order to ensure the domestic tranquility he yearned for, he was obliged to revert to type and launch a purge of unsympathetic elements within the establishment. Several very senior non-Rana officials who had been close to Chandra Shumsher but less than fully attentive to his deputy were removed from office. Bhim Shumsher does not seem to have considered the fact that such men might have served the new Prime Minister just as faithfully as they had the last. Instead, they were dismissed and their properties confiscated. In accordance with the Roll of Succession, Juddha Shumsher became Commander-in-Chief and Dharma Shumsher was named
Western (Senior) Commanding General. But then, to the great distress of
the rest of the Rana family, Bhim Shumsher added several of his 'C' class
sons and grandsons to the Roll, four of whom he promoted to the rank of
Major General. Two sons, Major General Hiranya Shumsher and Colonel
Ram Shumsher, were promoted to the rank of full General. The former was
appointed Hazuria General and the latter Chief of Police.

Rana Palaces

Bhim Shumsher followed the practice of all his predecessors and built
several palaces for himself and the members of his extended family. His
principle residence, Tangal Darbar, was constructed in 1896 in the grand
Italianate manner so beloved of the Ranas since Jang Bahadur's visit to
Europe.

There are some forty Rana palaces in Kathmandu, all of a similar neo-
Classic design. Constructed of brick and stucco with Corinthian columns
and handsome entrance porticos, they were usually four or five storeys
high and built as hollow squares around a succession of courtyards. This
arrangement ensured that each family unit had a reasonable degree of
privacy and that the women could, as custom and tradition dictated, live
in semi-seclusion. Open galleries and high ceilings ensured good cross
ventilation during the oppressive heat and humidity of the monsoon,
though this made them impossible to heat in winter. The palaces were set
amidst carefully tended lawns and gardens and surrounded by high walls,
against the rear section of which the servants quarters and the stables were
built. Many of these stately homes formed the nucleus of larger estates of attached tracts of farmland.

The Ranas had a weakness for Western furnishings and all their palaces housed a jumbled assortment of ornate, overstuffed European chairs and lounge suits, huge Belgian mirrors, French tapestries and Venetian chandeliers. The floors were laid with Italian marble or covered with Wilton and Axminster carpets. Japanese screens and huge Chinese vases were also much sought after. The grand public rooms were hung with enormous portraits of illustrious forebears or the mounted heads of tigers and rhinoceroses that had been bagged on *shikar* in the Tarai. The grounds of these palaces could have been the envy of many an English stately home. They boasted well manicured lawns, streams and fountains, rose gardens, bandstands, neo-Grecian statuary and the occasional tennis court. Peacocks strutted on the lawns and some had a miniature zoo.

None, however, surpassed the Singha Darbar for size and grandeur. Built by Chandra Shumsher in 1903, it boasted over a thousand rooms on four floors grouped in hollow squares around seven courtyards. It contained a theatre and a huge galleried hall that now serves as the National Assembly, the Rashtriya Panchayat. Set in 50 hectares of lawns and gardens and approached by a huge, sweeping driveway, it was the largest palace in Asia and the nerve centre of the Rana regime. For almost half a century it served as the residence of the Prime Minister and the headquarters of the principle government Ministries. Today it serves as the Government Secretariat and still houses the Prime Minister's Office and several of the more important Ministries.

Only one or two of the great Rana places remain in private hands today. The rest have either become the headquarters of government Ministries or foreign aid projects. An exception is the Lal Darbar, built in 1890 by Maharaja Bir Shumsher on the site of the family home of the Shumsher clan and so named because of the red ochre with which its walls were plastered. The main section, an ornate structure of handsome proportions, is now a wing of the modern Yak and Yeti Hotel. Completely renovated and restored, it offers a unique glimpse of the splendour of an oriental court in a bygone age.

The Keshar Mahal was built in 1895 and later purchased by Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher as a wedding present for his son Keshar Shumsher when he married King Tribhuvan's sister, Princess Tara Rajya Laxmi Devi. Keshar Shumsher travelled widely and was an avid bibliophile. He accumulated a vast library with books on every subject, most of which he is reputed to have read. A man of wide interests and enquiring mind—a truly Renaissance man—he donated his library and three wings of his palace to the state. It now houses the Keshar Library and the Ministry of Education.
The Singha Darbar, constructed in 1903 as the official residence of the Prime Minister. It now houses the Government Secretariat.

The Keshar Mahal, built in 1885 and later purchased by Chandra Shumsher as a wedding present for his son Keshar when he married King Tribhuvan’s sister. It now houses the Ministry of Education and the Keshar Library.
Two of the more handsome Rana palaces are to be found in north Kathmandu. The Sital Niwas, built in 1923 by Chandra Shumsher's son, Krishna Shumsher, was later gifted to the government as a State Guest House. Nearby stands the vast Laxmi Niwas, built in 1925 for Mohan Shumsher and now the headquarters of a paratroop regiment. The Jawalakhel Darbar, built for Juddha Shumsher in Patan in 1888, now houses the Nepal Administrative Staff College. Hari Bhawan, which actually predates the Rana period, built in the Indo-Saracenic style in 1805 for Bhim
Sen Thapa, now houses the Ministry of Finance. Another of his palaces, the Silkhena Darbar, which he built in 1819, houses the National Museum.

A century of earth tremors, the ravages of a hundred monsoon seasons and neglect at the hands of their government tenants have left many of these Rana palaces in a sorry state—their corrugated iron roofs rusted, the stucco on their facades cracked and crumbling, their interiors vandalised by electric wiring and exposed plumbing, their grounds neglected and overgrown. In a country with limited financial resources and a vast and priceless architectural heritage to maintain, restoration work on these Rana palaces is simply not on the government's agenda. As a result, the condition of these buildings is steadily deteriorating and there is a very real risk that a small but important segment of the nation's patrimony will be lost forever.

A Beleaguered Prime Minister

The Prime Minister's son, Ram Shumsher, quickly became his father's *eminence grise*. With his brother, Hiranya Shumsher, spending most of his time in Calcutta for medical treatment, Ram Shumsher also assumed the duties of the Hazuria General. From this position of strength he purged the police force to make way for his own supporters and proceeded to fabricate intelligence reports that would feed on the suspicions and insecurity of the

Bhim Shumsher with his senior officials. Left to right: Ram Shumsher, Hiranya Shumsher, Rudra Shumsher, Juddha Shumsher, Padma Shumsher, Tej Shumsher and Dharma Shumsher. 1930.
Prime Minister. His first two victims were his own brother, the Prime Minister’s youngest son, Yajna Shumsher, a ‘C’ class member of the family with no political ambitions who was not even on the Roll of Succession, and Padma Shumsher’s oldest son, Basanta Shumsher. In June 1930 the two were implicated in an alleged plot against the Prime Minister on the highly coloured and probably fabricated evidence of Ram Shumsher. They were arrested and brought to trial at the courtyard of Bhim Shumsher’s residence, the Tangal Darbar. During the proceedings the Prime Minister completely lost his composure and might have throttled his grandson, Basanta, had not Juddha Shumsher intervened and restrained him. The two accused were fortunate to escape with a public whipping by the palace guard.

Relations between the Prime Minister and his predecessor’s widow, Bal Kumari, became very strained in April 1931 when the latter’s son, Vishnu Shumsher, fled Nepal. Young, wealthy and English-educated, Vishnu Shumsher found the conservative and austere atmosphere of the Rana court intolerable. He secreted his money out of Nepal, obtained a passport by fraudulent means and then, in violation of all caste restrictions, slipped out of the country and set sail from Bombay for the high life of Europe, mailing his resignation from the Roll of Succession back to the Prime Minister along the way. Bhim Shumsher was so upset by the whole affair that Bal Kumari thought it prudent to move to Calcutta where she became a focus of disaffection for a large number of enigmatic Ranas. Not wanting Nepal’s domestic problems on their own doorstep, the British pressured her to return to Kathmandu where, with the encouragement of Chandra Shumsher’s sons, Generals Mohan, Baber and Keshar, she continued to discomfort the Prime Minister.

In July 1931, while the Vishnu Shumsher affair was still scandalising the conservative elements of Nepalese society, a plot to overthrow the Prime Minister was discovered. The conspirators, led by a distant member of the royal family, Umesh Bikram Shah, had formed an organisation called Prachanda Gorkha—Terrible Gorkha—with the aim of overthrowing the Rana regime and restoring the power of the monarchy as a prelude to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy. But the conspirators barely had time to think of a name for their organisation, let alone collect arms and locate sources of finance, before Ram Shumsher’s secret police arrested them in a pre-dawn raid.

Their trial was held in the open, stone paved courtyard on the western side of the Tangal Darbar. The Prime Minister sat on a bench with the senior members of the Rana family standing in a row behind. King Tribhuvan was brought to sit next to him. The conspirators had already been beaten in custody and now Bhim Shumsher, momentarily forgetting his gout, set upon one of them with his swagger stick. When the accused fell to the ground under the force of the blows, the Prime Minister’s bodyguard
moved in and kicked him mercilessly. Umesh Bikram Shah was exiled to Palpa in chains, carried there in a specially constructed bamboo cage, and the others were imprisoned in Kathmandu. "They should have been given the death sentence." Bhim Shumsher was heard to remark at the end of the trial. "They escaped it only because I have abolished it on an experimental basis."

In 1930 a social worker named Tulsi Mehar was arrested for popularising the spinning wheel in Kathmandu. He had, in fact, been sent by Chandra Shumsher to Mahatma Ghandi's ashram in India for training in cottage industries in the hope that the energies of young, educated Nepalese might be diverted away from political activities and into that field. Chandra Shumsher had even established an institution, the Charkha Guthi, to popularise home-spun cloth and village handicrafts in Nepal. But Tulsi Mehar's reformist zeal alarmed Bhim Shumsher, who feared that the spinning wheel, now a potent symbol of all that the Indian nationalist movement stood for, might also result in Nepalese falling victim to what he termed "the virus of the home rule movement".

In the same year a group of about 45 young men petitioned the Prime Minister for permission to open a public library in Kathmandu. Fearing the
introduction and spread of seditious political ideas, Bhim Shumsher had them all arrested. Fortunately, one of the group was the son of an influential bharadar who was able to have the charges of political conspiracy dropped and all the petitioners released upon payment of a fine of Rs. 100 each.

The Civil Service
Nepal had no structured civil service during the whole Rana period. There were no standard job classifications or uniform pay scales and no uniform method of recruiting and dismissing staff. There was certainly no job security. The civil service was feudal, uncoordinated and totally politicised.

The recruitment of all civil servants was made by the Commander-in-Chief, the head of the civil administration, whose duty it was to ensure that all public employees were loyal to the regime and competent. Each new appointee was taken before the Prime Minister to proffer his darshan bhet, an offering whose value depended upon the importance of the post and the remuneration it carried. Besides providing an additional source of income, the darshan bhet emphasised the paramount authority of the Prime Minister. After the ceremony the new appointee proceeded to the Commandari Kitab Khana where his name and caste were recorded and arrangements to pay his salary were authorised.
Two early views of Kathmandu.
Civil servants were expected to follow instructions unquestioningly and incur the minimum possible expenditure of public moneys. Initiative and creativity were positively discouraged. The Prime Minister, who had a vested interest in keeping public expenditure to a minimum because the excess of national income over national expenditure went into his pocket, saw to it that both salaries and staff numbers were kept as low as possible. Working hours were long and leave was rarely granted. Salaries were hardly ever paid on time. The basis for promotion was seniority and proven loyalty to the Prime Minister. The merit principle was unknown. One way of expressing loyalty to one's senior was through chakari, a highly developed practice whereby civil servants paid formal obeisance to their senior officers at meetings held almost every morning or evening. Historically, the practice of chakari dated from at least the time of Bhim Sen Thapa. Those who absented themselves frequently or for long periods ran the risk of losing their job at the annual pajani. Sometimes government servants had to wait hours for their senior officers to appear. Occasionally chakari took the form of personal services to one's superior. The effect on productivity and efficiency was devastating.

The Prime Minister held a darbar on the tenth day of Dasain at which all high officers of state, both civil and military, formally presented him with a cash gift called salami. A similar gift was given to the Commander-in-Chief. The amount of the gift varied according to the rank of the official, but it was compulsory and it was collected rigorously.

The ultimate sanction against civil servants was the pajani, the annual screening of all civil employees and military officials from the highest to the lowest rank, after which they were either confirmed in their posts for another year or dismissed. However, the Prime Minister did have one other control mechanism: the sarvaswa-haran. This was a typically feudal device whereby a government servant was deprived of all of his property on the charge of his being corrupt, incompetent or disloyal to the Prime Minister. There was no appeal against sarvaswa-haran and the victims, lacking any future in Nepal, usually left for India to start a new life there. Chandra Shumsher used this device frequently to swell his private fortune.

Not surprisingly, the nett result of these practices was an insecure and impoverished civil service characterised by low morale and low productivity. Despite this, positions in the civil service were much sought after for they offered a degree of security unknown in commerce and farming. Corruption held out the prospect of financial gain, while the authority vested in their positions allowed civil servants to wield a considerable amount of power and demand respect in the local community.

Dissention in the Ranks
Maharaja Bhim Shumsher, who had fathered several 'C' class sons,
ignored Chandra Shumsher’s Roll of Succession because of its inconvenient distinctions concerning legitimacy, and drew up one of his own. With the advice of Tej Shumsher, the wealthiest and most politically active of Bir Shumsher’s sons, he added some of his own ‘C’ class sons and demoted several of his ‘A’ class nephews. In order to placate the Chandra family’s anger at the imbalance this had caused, he appointed Mohan Shumsher as Additional Commanding General. Unfortunately, this only served to upset the Bir family and the Juddha family.
Further tensions within the Rana family, brought on by the strained relations between the Prime Minister and the widow and sons of his predecessor—now in the political wilderness after 28 years of wielding power and influence—and exacerbated by the machinations of Police Chief Ram Shumsher, caused the polarisation of those on the Roll of Succession into two groups. The Reform Group—all ‘A’ class Ranas who wanted the Roll of Succession to be reformed so as to include only ‘A’ Class colleagues—consisted of the Prime Minister’s brother and designated successor, Juddha Shumsher; the late Bir Shumsher’s son, Western (Senior) Commanding
General Dharma Shumsher; his own eldest son, Padma Shumsher; three of the late Chandra Shumsher's sons—Mohan, Baber and Keshar; and Juddha Shumser's son, Bahadur Shumsher. The Anti-Reform Group—all 'C' class Ranas who stood to lose by a reform of the Roll of Succession—consisted of the Prime Minister's sons, Hiranya Shumsher and Ram Shumsher, and three of the late Bir Shumsher's sons, Rudra Shumsher, Tej Shumsher and Pratap Shumsher. The objective of the Anti-Reform Group, which enjoyed the confidence of the Prime Minister, was to have the Reform Group struck off the Roll of Succession and expelled from Nepal. The leader of the Anti-Reform Group was Tej Shumsher—wealthy, politically astute and generally popular for having headed a land reform commission that introduced measures to protect the rights of tenant cultivators in the central Tarai districts. Matters took a turn for the worse for the Reform Group in 1932 when Western (Senior) Commanding General Dharma Shumsher fell ill and had to have his leg amputated when gangrene set in. He travelled down to Calcutta for medical treatment after handing over his post to Rudra Shumsher of the Anti-Reform Group. But shortly afterwards the political scales moved back into equilibrium when the leader of the Anti-Reform Group, Tej Shumsher, suffered a stroke and was permanently confined to bed. With their leaders incapacitated, tensions between the two Groups eased considerably.

But the beleaguered Maharaja, now showing increasing signs of insecurity and senility, was still left with more than enough problems within his immediate family. His eldest son, Padma Shumsher, lived apart with his mother from whom the Prime Minister had long been estranged, and his second son, Hiranya Shumsher, had drifted away from him as well. He came to rely increasingly on his youngest wife, whom he raised to the status of Bada Maharani, and on his fourth son, the shadowy Ram Shumsher, who, in large measure, ran the administration.

The Symbols of Power

The Rana Prime Minister enjoyed all the powers of rule associated with kingship: the power of life and death, the power to declare war, conclude peace and negotiate treaties, the power to appoint and dismiss all civil and military officials, and the power to make and repeal laws. He also enjoyed many of the symbols of kingship: he went in procession on an elephant, he was protected by a ritual umbrella on state occasions and he sat on a throne. As did the King, the Prime Minister wore a jewel-encrusted crown to which was attached the plumage of a bird of paradise. Several important decorative features in the design of the crowns, however, marked their difference in rank.

Across the front of the King's crown, which was basically a cap of closely sewn pearls, hang five candis or leaf-shaped ornaments on which are
Crown Prince Mahendra at the ceremony investing him with the sacred thread worn by all higher caste Hindus. 1930.

mounted diamonds and emeralds. These five leaf-like ornaments correspond to the title of “five times illustrious lord”—Sri panch Maharajadiraj—that the King enjoys. Along the right side of the monarch’s crown, above the right ear, is a spray of brilliant rubies—the royal gem of Hindu tradition—while around the entire fringe, emeralds dangle from gold clasps. Along the back of the crown is mounted a row of flat diamonds, each about 1.6 cm square.

The Prime Minister’s crown also consisted of a cap of closely sewn pearls, but it contained only three candis in front, corresponding to the three Sris in his title. Mounted on the middle cand was an image of the bird god Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. The right cand bore an image of the sun and the left one an image of the moon. On the front of the crown there were three circular plaques, about 10 cm wide, composed of large diamonds. The right and left plaques bore a representation of the sun and moon and the centre one an image of Garuda. Emeralds, the largest of which was 4.5 cm long, were encrusted across the crown and hung from the fringe, while the whole was topped with a spray of bird of paradise feathers. The other members of the Rana family were also allowed to wear crowns, though they could only have one cand and their jewellery was less impressive.

The use of the plumage of the bird of paradise was of Mughal inspiration, as were certain other devices and emblems and much of the vocabulary of Nepal’s administration, for the Mughal Emperors represented the imperial ideal for all rulers of the region, regardless of their
religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, much of the ritual was Hindu, such as honouring officials with ceremonial shawls and garlands of *dub* grass and blessing them with an auspicious mark of vermillion and rice paste on the forehead. European symbols had a place as well: the Ranas took up the European system of honours whereby officials were initiated into orders, publicly signified by the right to wear a particular medal.

Such regalia as was reserved for the exclusive use of the King was "attached" to his royal person in the course of his coronation. The coronation itself consists of a series of highly complex rituals lasting nearly a fortnight. They include purificatory rites during which the King is anointed with earth and herbs to endow him with universal powers, ceremonial blessings with holy water and, finally, his installation on the throne and investiture with his regalia. The senior *raj guru* places the crown upon the King's head and places in his hands the sword that signifies his authority and the sceptre that represents his powers of judgement. These different regalia are not only emblems of the divine right to rule, they are attributes or extensions of the royal person himself. The ritual umbrella is a symbol of the unity and integrity of the realm, while the throne, as in all kingdoms, is a symbol of the continuity of rule by the royal house. Thus the image of the King seated upon his throne and holding these emblems is auspicious in its own right.
THE SYMBOLS OF POWER

ROYAL ARMS OF NEPAL

King's Standard

National Flag

H.H. the Maharaja's
and worthy of respect and reverence. This respect and reverence still finds its expression in contemporary Nepal where framed portraits of the King and Queen, draped with garlands of flowers, are displayed in all government buildings, hotels, schools, shops and many private homes.

The armorial bearings of the King consist of a shield symbolising the whole Kingdom from the Himalayas to the Tarai guarded by the patron deity of the realm, Lord Pashupati, who is depicted with four arms carrying emblems of worship. The lower part of the shield is encircled with the Sanskrit inscription “mother and motherland are dearer than heaven itself” and the Latin inscription Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. The shield has two supporters: on the right a new army recruit and on the left a trained soldier. The whole rests on a scroll bearing an inscription that prays that Almighty God may grant the bearer of these arms the strength to discharge the duties of office, defend the realm and perpetuate its honour for as long as the sun and moon may shine. The shield is surmounted by a small scroll, above which is a pair of crossed kukris flanked by the sun and moon. The sun and the moon are very common symbols on coins, flags and inscriptions and are intended to invoke the blessing of the gods and to make the name and reputation of the bearer as everlasting as the sun and moon themselves. Above these elements are the footprints of Lord Pashupati, the guardian deity of Gorkha, the ancestral home of the Shah dynasty. Surmounting the whole is the royal crown.

The national flag consists of two crimson triangles trimmed with blue, the upper containing a stylised crescent moon and the lower a 12 pointed sun, both in white. The King’s standard consists of a lion holding a pennant and a stylised representation of the sun and a crescent moon. The figures are white on a red background. The Prime Minister’s standard consisted of the same stylised representations of the sun and the moon—three red suns and three white moons—on a gold field trimmed with purple. The King and the Prime Minister each had his own anthem that was played when he was present on official occasions.

The insignia and regalia of both the royal house and the Rana family—the authentication of their claims to authority—were drawn from Sanskritic tradition and thus were similar in many respects to the regalia of other Himalayan rulers and of those Hindu rulers who carried on their ancestral traditions on the western and southern frontiers of the Mughal Empire.

Forestry

During the first half of this century Nepal was renowned for the extent and quality of her forests. They formed the most important part of the great Himalayan timber belt that stretched from the Indus to Sikkim. The forests of Nepal, whose climate and rainfall produced timber of unrivalled size and quality, can be classified into three broad zones: the tropical zone up
to 1,200 metres, the temperate zone from 1,200 to 3,000 metres, and the alpine zone from 3,000 metres up to the timber line at about 5,000 metres. The tropical zone was the only one of commercial importance. It began with a belt of forest stretching out into the Tarai plains and backing up to the foothills. It contained sal, the most important tree in the country, forests of sisu and khair, mixed deciduous forests and the moist savannah tracts of tall grasses, the habitat of rhinoceroses and tigers. The temperate forests consisted of oaks, maples and pines below 2,500 metres and spruce, fir, cypress and larch above that. Although of little commercial importance, the temperate forest played a crucial economic role as a source of fuel, timber and fodder for the dense population of these middle altitude regions. The alpine zone consisted mostly of rhododendrons, junipers and birch. Juniper timber was cut into planks and exported to Tibet, while the bark of the birch trees was traditionally used as a substitute for paper and supplied to the southern regions of Nepal in large quantities.

The forests of the Tarai were the government’s second major source of national revenue after foodgrains and other agricultural products. They contained several species of trees that were in great demand in India. Khair timber was admirably suited for oil presses and sugar crushes and was used for axles, ploughshares, pins, wheels, bows and spear handles. Sisu was useful for all work requiring strength and elasticity, such as furniture, boats, saddle frames and agricultural implements. But the most valuable trees of all were the sal trees, some of which were over 40 metres high and...
7 metres in girth. *Sal* is a particularly hard timber and is excellent for beams, rafters, piles, railings, gun carriages and, above all, railway sleepers. It was the most sought after of trees and it had been exported to the Indian plains for centuries.

In addition to timber, the forests of the Tarai yielded medicinal herbs, wax, *catechu*, *lac* and *sabai* grass—for all of which there was a large and growing market in India. *Catechu* (*terra japonica*) was extracted from the *khair* tree and used for medicinal purposes and as a dye. *Lac*, a resinous substance produced by an insect which is found in the twigs and branches of several varieties of trees, was used for varnishing. *Sabai* grass was traditionally used for making rope but by Bhim Shumsher’s time it was in considerable demand by Indian paper mills. The forests of the Tarai also contained pasturage, the leasing of which netted the state a substantial revenue, for the pasturage was in great demand not only by local farmers but also by cattle owners who drove their flocks over from the bare, dusty plains of neighbouring India.

The extraction and export of timber was undertaken by woodcutters who went into the forest and felled and stripped the trees, carters who brought the logs out to the nearest river, boatmen who floated them down to the nearest government timber depot, and the timber merchants. The official establishments that managed the timber export trade were known as *kathmahals*. There were two systems for marketing the timber. Under the first, the *kathmahal* employed its own labour to cut the trees and transport...
the logs to a depot where they were auctioned to the timber merchants who exported them. Under the second system, the kathamahal auctioned the right to all the timber in a designated area and the successful bidder organised and financed the whole operation from the forest to the market place. As the logging and carting of timber was a high risk business—the cattle that pulled the carts could be wiped out by an epidemic or the whole operation could be brought to a standstill for weeks on end by monsoon rains—the timber merchants preferred the first system, whereby it was the government that took all the risks. But the kathamahals mismanaged the first system so badly that the government incurred huge and continuous losses of revenue every year until Bir Shumsher abolished it in 1897. Henceforth, the state took no active role in the export of the second most important product that Nepal produced and the whole industry was contracted out to private operators. The government hoped that these new arrangements would increase its revenue, but they failed to do so. The timber merchants carted out of the forest only a tenth of the trees they actually felled. They simply left to rot any tree that exhibited the slightest defect. The forests were exploited beyond a level of sustainable regrowth and the government’s revenues suffered.

The Government of British India had its own contract with the Government of Nepal for the supply of sal timber for railway sleepers, the
demand for which was virtually insatiable. The timber was delivered in the form of logs because the Nepalese lacked adequate facilities for the mass production of sawn timber from logs and there was no domestic market for the off-cuts. It was not an arrangement that the British liked, as reference to a contract signed in 1879 between the British and the Nepalese will illustrate. The contract was for the supply of 70,000 railway sleepers at Rs. 2.25 each over a period of two years. Three years later, only 41 sleepers had been delivered. The British paid Rs. 92.25 and thereafter the supply ceased completely. The Nepalese had calculated that the amount of timber they had been obliged to cut down to make 41 sleepers would have fetched much more than Rs. 92.25 had it simply been sold to the British in the form of logs. Once they realised that the operation was unprofitable they dragged their feet until the British cancelled the contract. However, the lesson was well learned. In 1901, in order to raise the returns from timber exports, the government invested heavily in the construction of saw mills at the frontier towns of Nepalgunj and Nawalpur. It was the first time that the government of Nepal had invested capital in the processing of primary commodities for export.

In the succeeding decades the state of Nepal’s forests deteriorated rapidly. Overexploitation by an inexorably increasing population and a
lack of scientific management techniques led to de-afforestation on a massive scale. Combined with the effect of earth tremors and landslips, for the Himalayas are young mountains that are still forming, this de-afforestation led to the washing away of four billion tonnes of topsoil each year down the trans-Himalayan rivers of Nepal and into the river system of the Gangetic plain. The result was widespread annual flooding that brought destruction and misery to hundreds of millions of subsistence farmers in India and Bangladesh. It was not until the 1960s that scientists began to understand the complex and fragile relationships between the forests, the mountains and the monsoon rains of the Himalayan watershed and the flooding of the north Indian plains. Only then were they able to stop the steady march towards an ecological disaster of unprecedented proportions. Today, two decades of work by forestry experts has put 30 per cent of Nepal under forest again. Now the emphasis is on community forestry—educating the villagers to protect a crucial resource and to manage it in such a way that they can extract all the fuel, fodder and building material they need but still be left with a forest at the end of the day.

* * *

On 1 September 1932, worn out by the cares of office, Bhim Shumsher passed away at the age of 68 after a short illness.
Juddha Shumsher
(1932–1945)
Juddha Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana was born at 12.48 pm on Saturday 19 April 1875 at the Narayanhiti Palace in Kathmandu, the tenth son of Commander-in-Chief Dhir Shumsher Rana and his junior wife, Juhar Kumari Devi. On the day that he was born his uncle, Prime Minister Jang Bahadur, appointed him a colonel in the Nepalese army. He was not a strong boy and a procession of childhood illnesses was the prelude to a life of poor health. As a youth he suffered from fainting attacks, though these were eventually successfully treated with ayurvedic medicine. At the age of 19 he contracted dysentery from which he continued to suffer for the next seven years. He was no sooner cured than an attack of gout confined him to bed for nine months. Shortly afterwards he contracted rheumatism but this was eventually cured by an Austrian doctor from Calcutta who gave him electric treatment for three successive days.

His poor health was not helped by the unfortunate fact that he was accident prone. At the age of six he almost died when he was buried in a sandpit in which he and his brothers were playing on a building site. At the age of nine he was thrown from a horse and knocked unconscious for eight hours. During a tiger hunt in the Tarai with Maharaja Bir Shumsher in 1896 he had a narrow escape from death when the elephant he was riding stumbled at the feet of a cornered tiger. On the same hunt he was thrown from his elephant and sustained a bad injury to his arm when the animal stepped on a hedgehog pit.

At the age of nine, following the death of his father, Juddha Shumsher went to live in the home of his older brother, Bhirn Shumsher. At the age of ten, following the coup d'état of November 1885 that brought his eldest brother, Bir Shumsher, to power, he was promoted to the rank of General. Two years later he was married to a girl of the Shah family of Gulmi, Padma Kumari Devi. Shortly afterwards he was removed from school and his education was placed in the hands of palace tutors.

His rise through the ranks of the army was rapid. In March 1901 he was appointed Northern Commanding General under the prime ministership
Juddha Shumsher at his investiture as Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung. October 1932.

of his older brother, Dev Shumsher. Four months later, with the appointment of Chandra Shumsher as Prime Minister, he was promoted to the position of Southern Commanding General. When his older brother Fateh Shumsher died in 1907 Juddha Shumsher assumed the post of Eastern Commanding General. In 1913, following the death of his brother Jit Shumsher he moved up the Roll of Succession to third position, that of Western (Senior) Commanding General, the operational head of the armies of Nepal.

It was Juddha Shumsher who had, with conspicuous success, made all the arrangements for the most important public event in the Kingdom in 1921, the Prince of Wales' hunting trip in the Tarai. And this despite recurring bouts of colic that had replaced his rheumatism and that were to trouble him for the ensuing eight years. In 1925 he had to relinquish his duties temporarily after a dentist gave him an injection with an infected needle which almost proved fatal. Shortly afterwards he was so ill with fever and pleurisy that arrangements were made to carry him to the holy temple of Pashupatinath where devout Hindus are taken to die, their feet immersed in the waters of the sacred Bagmati River. Chandra Shumsher's death in 1929 moved him up to the second in succession. Bhim Shumsher's death three years later presented him with the prime ministership.

As soon as he assumed the office of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, Juddha Shumsher was confronted with a grave family
crisis. With a view to consolidating the position of the legitimate Ranas, the late Chandra Shumsher's sons and Bhim's eldest son, Padma, came to him with the demand that Bir Shumsher's and Bhim Shumsher's illegitimate sons be immediately removed from the Roll of Succession. The proposal was political dynamite, for amongst those who would be dropped was Rudra Shumsher, next in line of succession to the prime ministership. Shrewdly, Juddha Shumsher asked for more time in which to consider the proposition. He knew that if he refused to confirm Rudra Shumsher as his chosen successor immediately he could well have a revolt on his hands, for Rudra Shumsher had been placed in temporary command of the army following the death of Western (Senior) Commanding General Dharma Shumsher only a week prior to the demise of Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher. Juddha Shumsher and Rudra Shumsher came to an accommodation: the inclusion of illegitimate children on the Roll of Succession would cease, but the existing Roll would be respected. The family crisis was placed in abeyance.

After waiting for the 13-day period of ritual mourning for his deceased half-brother to elapse, Juddha Shumsher held his formal inauguration ceremony on 14 October 1932, starting with the state procession that by traditional custom brings a new ruler into contact with his people. The buildings along the route from the Prime Minister’s Jawalakhel residence were whitewashed and decorated with flags, bunting and masses of paper flowers and the processional route was lined with tens of thousands of spectators carrying vermillion powder, rice and flowers to scatter in the Maharaja’s path. Juddha Shumsher drove with his senior wife in a state carriage drawn by six horses to the Narayanhiti Darbar where he paid his respects to King Tribhuvan. The King in turn put a tikka on the Prime Minister’s forehead and a 19-gun salute was fired. From the royal palace, Juddha Shumsher proceeded in a state procession to the Hanuman Dhoka Darbar, the historic royal palace in the centre of the old city. The Maharaja’s elephant was followed by nine others carrying members of his family, the raj gurus in their ceremonial robes and the most senior officials of the Kingdom. Behind them marched several regiments of soldiers in rows of four followed by mounted troops, liveried valets carrying emblems of the Prime Minister’s authority, dance troupes and massed bands. As the procession passed through Asantole, the commercial district of the capital, it was joined by large numbers of merchants and traders.

The Great Earthquake of 1934

Even as the Maharaja was celebrating his inauguration, the Court astrologers were predicting that at 4 p.m. on 15 January 1934 a disaster of unprecedented magnitude would befall the people of Nepal. At that precise time, they announced, the sun, the moon and five planets would be in a
most inauspicious conjunction, prognosticating a grave natural calamity. Such a conjunction of heavenly bodies, they noted, had occurred on the eve of the decisive battle described in the great Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. The prediction of the astrologers was accurate to within two hours. At 2.13 p.m. on 15 January 1934 the most devastating natural disaster of its recorded history struck Nepal. An earthquake registering 8 on the Richter scale and with its epicentre about 170 kilometres east of Kathmandu devastated the tiny Himalayan Kingdom.

As the ground shook for a seemingly interminable length of time—for two minutes and three seconds, to be precise—8,519 people died and a
further 15,000 were badly injured. The principal government buildings in Kathmandu collapsed in heaps of rubble and countless temples and shrines were also destroyed. Over 200,000 homes were devastated. One wing of the royal palace collapsed, killing two of King Tribhuvan’s infant daughters. Bridges, roads, mountain trails, irrigation canals, telegraph lines and the Tarai railway were badly damaged. Kathmandu was cut off from the outside world.

The government’s reaction was immediate and surprisingly effective. Fortunately, most of the troops in the Valley were assembled on the Tundikhel for their afternoon parade when the earthquake struck, and they were immediately dispatched to search for survivors while Commander-in-Chief Padma Shumsher drew up plans for the restoration of essential services. The army’s entire supply of tents was used to provide shelter for the homeless and when that proved insufficient, hessian sacks, straw matting and corrugated iron sheets were requisitioned from merchants and private citizens to improvise more protection from the bitter cold of winter. A night curfew was imposed and orders were issued that looters were to be shot on sight but, in the event, the population was remarkably disciplined. Stern measures were taken to prevent profiteering and a fair price market for foodgrains and other basic commodities was set up on the Tundikhel. As the hydroelectric station at nearby Pharping had miraculously escaped damage, the city’s water supply was in partial operation again within two days. Within four days electricity had been restored to the main streets and the ropeway was bringing supplies into the Valley. When the telephone line to India was restored, reports of death and devastation started flowing in from the outlying districts. The western hills and the Tarai had experienced only mild tremors but the whole of eastern Nepal was totally devastated. To add to the misery of the survivors, massive landslides in some areas had blocked rivers and caused severe water shortages, while in other areas springs had welled up from huge fissures in the ground, flooding roads and fields.

The Prime Minister was on his annual winter shikar in the far west of Nepal when the disaster struck. He was hunting in the jungle on elephant back all day and was not even aware that there had been an earthquake. It was not until three days after the event that he received news of it and he at once started for the capital. But the devastation was such that even with the assistance of the British Indian authorities, who were working feverishly to repair the railway lines along the border, it took him a further 17 days to make his way back to Kathmandu.

Juddha Shumsher immediately ordered the distribution of free food and clothing to the destitute while bamboo was made available for the construction of shelters. Permission was granted to cut trees from government protected forests and timber was supplied from government
THE EARTHQUAKE OF JANUARY 1934

General view of Kathmandu after the earthquake.

The Hanuman Dhoka Temple complex in the centre of Kathmandu.

The Hanuman Dhoka Temple complex after the earthquake.

Sital Niwas, built in 1923 by Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher's son, Krishna Shumsher, is now the State Guest House.

The Gole Baithak, one of the main reception halls of Jang Bahadur's palace complex at Thapathali.

One of the glories of Newar art: the Golden Gate and the Palace of Fifty-five Windows of the pre-unification kings of Bhaktapur.

Sital Niwas after the earthquake.

The Gole Baithak after the earthquake.

The Golden Gate and the Palace of Fifty-five Windows after the earthquake.
EARTHQUAKE TOLL IN NEPAL VALLEY

OVER 3,000 DEAD

DAMAGE TO PALACES AND TEMPLES

KATHMANDU, Jan. 30

The number of dead in Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon is reported to be 3,000. It is believed that hundreds are still buried. The death-toll has been considerable in other parts of the Valley. The damage and loss of life in the hills and outlying districts are not so serious. The eastern districts have suffered more heavily than the western. No detailed reports are available yet of the casualties.

His Majesty's Palace has been irreparably damaged; the Singha Durbar, the official residence of the Maharaja, has been considerably damaged, but not condemned; the Hanuman Dhoka Palace has also been badly damaged, but the Durbar Hall escaped with cracks.

The Sanskrit Library has suffered badly, but most of the valuable documents have been recovered. The Museum has been damaged, but the exhibits have not been seriously affected. Most of the ancient temples have either been destroyed or badly damaged. Practically all other buildings in the Valley have been destroyed or badly damaged.

The Powder Factory, the Arsenal and the Mint have been slightly damaged and are now working. The Power House, the Ropeway and the telephone line have been practically undamaged and all three are now working. The railway line and the bridges have been damaged. The railway is now working between Simsa and Amlakganj. Normal running is expected to be resumed in about a month. The road and the bridges between Amlakganj and Bimphuri have been damaged. Several landslips are reported, but the line is now open to traffic.

WATER SUPPLY FAILS

There have been large cracks on the maidan and several roads in Kathmandu. The debris is now being rapidly cleared from the city in trucks. The water supply in the city has failed, but other supplies are adequate. The hospitals have been considerably damaged and the patients are all in tents on the maidan. The Red Cross Society is at work and the medical staff has spared no pains to attend to all the injured in the city and the adjoining villages. Most of the inhabitants of the city are living in tents provided by the Government. In other places people are building improvised shelters and are effecting repairs to damaged houses.

Admirable discipline has been maintained by the Army and the Police. Nearly all the soldiers and the police lost their homes and relatives, but remained staunch to the call of duty and performed invaluable work in clearing the debris, rescuing the injured, recovering bodies and maintaining order. Looting was immediately suppressed by armed night patrols. No fires followed the earthquake. Proper attention is being paid to sanitation and the general health among the sufferers is good.

The British Legation is slightly damaged, there being no casualties in the Legation area. No European has been injured.

His Majesty was camping outside Kathmandu when the shock occurred. His camp was badly damaged but Their Majesties were uninjured. Two of His Majesty's daughters have been killed in the palace. One grand-daughter of the Maharaja and a cousin of His Majesty with his wife and two children have been killed. Major Hasta Shumshere lost his wife and three children but was himself saved. — Associated Press.

The Statesman, 31 January 1934.
Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher addressing the nation from the Tundikhel parade ground following the devastating earthquake in January 1934.

stocks at subsidised prices. Arrangements were made to import 250,000 sheets of corrugated iron free of customs duties and ropeway charges. The Prime Minister authorised the payment of four months salary in advance to all military personnel and public servants in the Valley and the eastern hills so that they could start to rebuild their shattered lives. He allocated five million rupees for an earthquake relief fund to be administered by the senior raj guru. Interest free loans were to be distributed to earthquake victims in the Kathmandu Valley and neighbouring districts. Each household could borrow up to Rs. 1,500 (£2,250 in today’s terms) against the security of its land or houses and the loans could be repaid in a lump sum or in instalments to suit the convenience of the borrowers. Shortly afterwards, the Prime Minister authorised a further five million rupees of relief funding. Then, in September 1938, when the bulk of the loans fell due for repayment, the Maharaja convened a public assembly of civil and military officials and the population at large and announced that he was writing off all outstanding loans. Those who had already made partial repayments were refunded in full.

There had been earthquakes in Nepal before, of course, but the disaster of 1934 surpassed all others in its intensity and magnitude. The earliest recorded earthquake occurred in the year 1254AD, followed by another five years later that precipitated a terrible famine. In 1680AD a comet was seen in the sky for several nights and when it finally disappeared a devastating earthquake struck. In 1809 Nepal received 23 shocks in the
course of a single day and in 1834, during the reign of King Ran Bahadur, a major earthquake caused widespread loss of life and untold misery.

Nor was the disaster of 1934 the last of its kind, for Nepal lies on one of the world's more active geological fault lines. The Himalayas are the product of the convergence of two continental plates—the Australia Plate, which is thrusting up from the south to form the world's highest mountains, and the Eurasia Plate. The incredible geological stresses that are produced—stresses that are actually lifting the Himalayas upwards by four centimetres every year—result in a very unstable land formation. The earth's constant movement produces frequent tremors which, together with the soil erosion caused by de-afforestation and the lashing monsoon rains, precipitate numerous landslips and devastating landslides. Eventually, the massive subterranean stresses caused by the pressures of the continental plates pushing together build up to a point where they trigger a sharp jolt of the earth's crust—an earthquake.

Purge

With Juddha Shumsher's appointment to office the old rivalry between the Reform Group and the Anti-Reform Group within the Rana family re-emerged. The Prime Minister was under constant pressure from Chandra Shumsher's sons to remove the 'C' class sons of Bir Shumsher and Bhim Shumsher from the Roll of Succession. At the same time, he was under pressure from his own numerous illegitimate sons not to interfere with the Roll. The rivalry between the Reform Group and the Anti-Reform Group was unsettling the Rana family and the Prime Minister realised that he would have to decide which Group to support before the rift destabilised the regime.

The expansion of the number of eligibles in each generation, coming so close together in age as they were, meant that they were jealously tumbling over one another and that, in the ordinary course of events, none could attain office until he was well over 60 years of age. All this naturally bred frustration in most members of the family and a propensity to intrigue in the more ambitious and determined ones. The most difficult consideration in this whole affair was what to do with Rudra Shumsher, the illegitimate son of Maharaja Bir Shumsher who had been quite illegally added to the Roll of Succession when his father was Prime Minister. By natural attrition he had now risen to the position of Commander-in-Chief and next in line of succession. He was the most senior General on the active list and was much respected in the Army, but his rise to power had caused bitter resentment in the family, especially amongst Chandra Shumsher's sons.

After carefully considering the consequences of having to remove his close childhood friend and capable deputy, Rudra Shumsher Rana, the Prime Minister concluded that his political survival required that the 'C'
King Tribhuvan with Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher and a group of senior Ranas including Keshar Shumsher (extreme left), Mohan Shumsher (standing behind the Prime Minister) and Baber Shumsher (far right).

class Ranas be purged. He decided to strike before they had time to recover from the great earthquake and rebuild their palaces and homes. The purge was set to take place on Sunday 18 March 1932, five days after the death of one of Tej Shumsher Rana's sons. The date was shrewdly chosen. By 18 March the 'A' class Ranas had completed the five days of ritual mourning required of their caste, whereas the 'C' class Ranas still had to observe mourning for a further eight days.

All the Ranas on the Roll of Succession were ordered to assemble by noon in a large marquee in the grounds of the Singha Darbar. At 12.30 they were escorted inside to the main reception hall by officers of the Bijuli Garad. There, in strict order of their warrants of precedence, they sat in tense
silence on the sofas and couches ranged around the walls. After an hour General Agni Shumsher, the Prime Minister's second son, entered the reception hall and, without acknowledging the presence of anyone in the room, opened one of the glass doors leading onto the terrace. King Tribhuvan entered from the terrace and took his seat on one of the couches. The assembled Ranas stood up, saluted the King and sat down again. Silence descended once more. The King smoked two cigarettes in quick succession then left the room, followed by General Agni Shumsher. He had not spoken a word to anyone. At 3 p.m. the Maharaja himself entered from the terrace and stood in the centre of the hall, a loaded revolver in each hand. His eldest son, Bahadur Shumsher, stood at his side. He was also armed. At the same moment the small glass windows ranged along the upper walls of the hall opened to reveal women pointing pistols at the assembled Ranas.

Juddha Shumsher came straight to the point. "I gave the two parties 18 months to settle their differences and unite," he said, "but there is no sign of unity between them. I am faced with the possibility of sharing Ranaudip Singh's fate. That is why I have finally decided to remove one faction from the Roll. You yourself," he continued, looking straight at Commander-in-Chief Rudra Shumsher, "will go to Palpa. Hiranya, being of sickly disposition, will go to Dhankuta. General Pratap will go to Ilam. Ram Shumsher is out on a tour of inspection and I will find a place for him when he returns."
Rudra Shumsher was led away protesting that he had done nothing to deserve such a fate. The man who was next in the line of succession and who had driven up to the main portico of the Singha Darbar with a cavalry escort now left by a side gate guarded by a truckload of soldiers.

With one exception, those who had been struck off the Roll of Succession resigned themselves to their fate and, still drawing their same salary, accepted their new assignments quietly. The exception was General Pratap Shumsher, the late Prime Minister Bir Shumsher’s son. He left for India
where he met with Mahatma Gandhi as a prelude to stirring up popular opposition to the Rana regime. His activities caused considerable concern to the Prime Minister before he suddenly died five months later.

The role of the King in the purge is interesting. Juddha Shumsher had initially invited him to be present at the decisive meeting so that he could openly accuse the Anti-Reform Group in the royal presence of attempting to debase the royal family by proposing that Crown Prince Mahendra marry a ‘C’ class daughter and granddaughter of the late Prime Minister Bir Shumsher. But he dropped the idea after meeting with the King in private and contented himself with the impact that the King’s casual appearance at the gathering would have and the impression it would convey that the Prime Minister had obtained royal concurrence in the purge.

The removal of the Anti-Reform Group from the Roll created a wealthy and powerful group of Ranas who had no further stake in the preservation of the regime. The solidarity of the Rana family, never very strong, was shattered. A number of these disgruntled family members with large investments in Indian industry and business joined with other exiled Nepalese to topple the regime. The overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951 can be attributed in no small measure to the political purge of 1934.

Even the revised Roll of Succession did not bring an end to the political in-fighting of the Rana family. Heading the Roll was Padma Shumsher, a legitimate son of Bhim Shumsher who still had some sympathy for his disentranced half-brothers. Then came three of Chandra Shumsher’s sons—Mohan, Keshar and Baber—all of whom were better educated and more sophisticated than the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister’s eldest son, Bahadur Shumsher, ranked only sixth on the Roll, followed by another of his sons, Agni Shumsher, a man whom the British Envoy rather uncharitably described as completely lacking in personality, culture or education. Having united to exclude their ‘C’ class kin from political power, Juddha’s sons and Chandra’s sons were now divided by mutual jealousy and distrust. The Chandra family was irritated and alarmed at the unofficial but leading role that Bahadur Shumsher took in the administration. His swaggering manners and his steady acquisition of power during his father’s infirmity made him cordially detested and practically friendless in the darbar. They were upset even further when Keshar Shumsher, an exceptionally capable, well-educated and cultured man, was not reinstated as Foreign Secretary upon his return from London where he had represented King Tribhuvan at the coronation of King George VI. Instead, the position was given to Bahadur Shumsher. By the time that the regime was called upon to meet the challenge of the anti-Rana movement, the rift between the Juddha family and the Chandra family was irreparable.
BANISHMENTS IN NEPAL

TROUBLE IN RULING FAMILY

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

CALCUTTA, MARCH 23

Information has reached here of strange happenings in Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal.

A letter received from an Indian merchant which has just reached Raxaul from Nepal says that there has been dynastic trouble in the ruling family and that certain members have been arrested and made to leave the capital. According to the report, these persons are members of the Rana family, the ruling line, but not in the direct line of succession. They have been banished from the capital in consequence of the discovery of activities to alter the succession to the office of Maharajah. The present Maharajah, one of several brothers, succeeded two years ago on the death of an elder brother. In the roll of the ruling family three degrees are recognized:

1. Persons of pure descent.
2. Persons of lawful but unequal marriages—for example, the child of parents one of whom is of lower caste than the other.
3. Illegitimate members—for example, when the father only is of pure descent.

The third category is not recognized in the direct line of succession and cannot eat rice with the two others. The persons put under restraint are in the third category.

The head of the family can both put relatives by blood into the line of succession and cut them out of it. An instance of the latter occurred some years ago when a member of the family was taken out of the line for having gone to Europe without permission.

The Times. 24 March 1934. The reference in the last paragraph is to Vishnu Shumsher Rana's unauthorised visit to Europe in April 1931. He was struck off the Roll of Succession by Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher.
The Symbols of Independence

Chandra Shumsher had been, in the British view, the ideal Prime Minister of Nepal—educated enough to deal with on a personal basis, convinced of the value of the British alliance, resistant to change in the status quo and wielding unchallengeable authority in the state. In his hands, British interests in Nepal were safe. His foreign policy had been so successful that all substantial issues in Nepal’s bilateral relations with the British had been settled to the satisfaction of both parties. It remained only for Juddha Shumsher to press for the formal symbols of his country’s independence. He wanted Nepalese diplomatic representation in London and not just in Calcutta, he insisted that the British envoy be sufficiently senior to reflect the ambassadorial nature of his appointment, and he welcomed official contacts with other countries. Throughout his rule, he was highly sensitive to the question of his country’s status and always on the alert for any opportunity to restate and reinforce the distinction between Nepal and the Indian princely States.

The British were not attracted to the idea of having a Nepalese Embassy in London as it was more convenient and practical for them to conduct their relations with Nepal through the External Affairs Department of the Government of India in Delhi. They also feared that the establishment of a Nepalese diplomatic mission in London might prompt other countries to seek diplomatic relations with Kathmandu and thus take Nepal out of Britain’s exclusive sphere of influence. The British had told Chandra Shumsher that it would be a waste of money to open an Embassy in London for they would continue to deal with Nepal only through the Government of India. But Juddha Shumsher was adamant. In 1934 General Bahadur Shumsher travelled to London on behalf of King Tribhuvan to confer Nepal’s highest decoration on the King Emperor, George V, and he stayed on as Nepal’s first Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of St. James. In the same year the rank of the British Envoy in Kathmandu was raised to that of a Minister and the British Legation was raised to the status of an Embassy. The position of the Nepalese vakil in Delhi was raised to that of Consul-General. Curiously, the Treaty of Segauli that had ended the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16 had provided for just such an appointment of accredited Ministers at each other’s Courts. It had taken 118 years to implement that clause of the treaty. As a consequence of the enhanced status of Nepal’s diplomatic relations with Britain, Juddha Shumsher’s official visit to Delhi in 1935 was qualitatively different from the calls that his predecessors had made on the Viceroy’s of their day. For the first time, Indian social and religious organisations, as well as some of the leaders of the nationalist movement, approached him seeking support for their cause.
Juddha Shumsher was just as fiercely defensive of his country's honour and status when it came to the appointment of British Ministers to the Court of Nepal. In January 1944 he learned by chance—and that must have annoyed him—that the British Minister was to be replaced by an officer who was being promoted into his new position from a lower rank in the Indian Political Service. He lodged a strong protest to the Government of India by letter to the departing Minister.

"... Looking, however, into the July supplement to the Half Yearly List (2nd January 1943) of the Indian Political Service we have found to our great surprise that the selection has gone this time not even to a second class Resident but to a Political Agent [a rank lower than that of 2nd class Resident], as Lieutenant Colonel G.A. Falconer is said to be in Bhopal since 15th November 1942. Presumably it is from there that he is being posted as Minister in Nepal."

In his anger he could not resist a parting shot at the outgoing Minister:

"Forgive me when I say that circumstances compel me to remark that, for all Your Excellency's uniform and in spite of your 17 gun salute, you are shown and seen to be no better than a Resident of the 2nd Class."

Although he finally accepted Falconer's appointment, the Prime Minister made it very clear that this kind of treatment deeply offended him and that he hoped the British government would display more consideration with future appointments.

As a consequence of the clearly defined status of Nepal as an independent sovereign state, other countries began to establish formal bilateral contacts with the Government of Nepal. In May 1933 the Italian Consul-General in Calcutta travelled to Kathmandu to invest Juddha Shumsher with the Order of Saint Maurice and Saint Lazarus on behalf of King Victor Emmanuel, in recognition of the assistance given to the Royal Academy of Italy and its world renowned orientalist and explorer, Professor Giuseppi Tucci. This first visit by an official European delegation was made the occasion for a grand public ceremony. The Consul-General drove in a state landau with a cavalry escort to the formal presentation at the Jawalakhel Darbar, the official residence of the Prime Minister. Despite heavy rains, huge crowds gathered in the streets that had been decorated with flags and banners to catch a glimpse of the distinguished guest. At the investiture ceremony the Consul-General referred to the historic contributions that Roman and Hindu cultures had made to the western and eastern worlds and paid glowing tribute to the contributions that Benito Mussolini and Juddha Shumsher were currently making to the destinies of their two countries. His speech was shrewdly pitched to the Rana's own cherished view that the role of a man of destiny was to enhance the prestige and standing of his nation by drawing inspiration from its cultural roots and past achievements, as distinct from the modern concept of the primacy of an individual citizen's freedom and dignity. The next day King Tribhuvan received the Italian delegation in public audience at the Hanuman Dhoka
The policy of self-isolation that Nepal strictly followed led to an occasional point of confusion on the part of the British and French press. Note how the British press accepted the explanation by the Ranas as to why the King remained totally isolated from the administration and the body politic of his own realm: he was too holy to be seen by his subjects!

**A Secret Honour for The King**

The Maharajah of Nepal will send his eldest son—General Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana—to London this year to see the King, and to open a Nepal Legation.

He is said to be worried by the India White-paper and to be stressing the fact that he is bound by treaty not to British India but the Empire as a whole.

The Maharajah also wishes to bestow a title on the King in honour of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his reign, which falls next year.

The nature of the title which the demi-god of the Himalayas intends to confer on the Emperor of India is a secret of the Court which nestles under Mount Everest and whose monarch is too holy to be seen by his subjects.

He is the ruler of the Gurkhas who are the corps d’élite of the Indian Army. They are Hindus, and 100,000 of them fought in the war.

Nepal has a frontier with China and is within striking distance of Russia. The Soviets have tried by cajolery, threats, disturbances and corruption to shake the adherence of the Maharajah to Britain.

The new dignity to be conferred by the fighting Gurkhas on the King is Nepal’s answer to their intrigues.

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**On arrache les yeux d’un ministre pour détournements de fonds publics**

**MAIS... C’EST AU NEPAL**

Simla (Indes anglaises) (dep. part.)

—On apprend qu’un ministre du gouvernement de Nepal vient d’être condamné à avoir les yeux arrachés pour détournements de fonds publics.

Les autorités britanniques sont dans l’impossibilité d’intervenir en faveur du condamné car le Népal, ou ce châtiment est encore d’usage courant, est un royaume indépendant.

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**HONOURS Nepal’s Crown Prince**

Wearing a royal cap blazing with diamonds, emeralds, and pearls and surmounted by towering bird-of-paradise plume, General Bahadur Shum Shere Singh Bahadur Rana, the Crown Prince of Nepal has begun a fortnight’s ceremonial visit to Britain by conferring the High Nepalese order of Ojasci Rajanay on the king at Buckingham Palace.

He arrived at Victoria Station in a frock coat the first seen in these parts for some time. Under the coat was another of quilled fawn coloured

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**INDIAN DIGNITARY AT DOVER**

The Mayor (Councillor H. Morecroft) and members of the Corporation were the first to welcome General Rana Shumshere Jung Bahadur, eldest son of Maharaja Sir Juddha Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, to this country when he arrived by the “Cote d’ Argent” from Calais on Monday. This is the first official Nepalese visit to England for many years, and the General is here to present a new honour to the King and to establish, for the first time, a Nepalese Legation in this country. He was accompanied by a suite of about twenty, and his wife, who is to receive Harley Street treatment.
The Italian Consul-General in India paid an official visit to Kathmandu in May 1933. The first of its kind from a country other than Britain or China, the visit was a source of great satisfaction to the Nepalese who saw in it international recognition of their independence and sovereignty.

The Italian Consul-General in India being received in audience by King Tribhuvan. On his right is Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher. 4 May 1933.
The visit of the Italian mission, the first of its kind from a country other than Britain or China, was a source of great satisfaction to the Nepalese, who saw it as bringing to a successful conclusion their long struggle for international recognition of their independence and sovereignty.

The Italian mission was followed a year later by an official French mission in May 1934. On that occasion the French Consul-General in Calcutta invested Juddha Shumsher with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour on behalf of President Lebrun, in recognition of the assistance given to one of the most eminent orientalists of the time, Sylvain Levi.

An equally grand public ceremony was organised the following month to receive a delegation led by the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta. On 6 June 1934 the Prime Minister drove in state from his residence in Patan to the Tundikhel where the leading members of the Rana family, all the ranking civil officials and military officers of the Kingdom, the priests and representatives of the Valley's merchants and traders were assembled, along with several regiments of soldiers. The Consul-General arrived in a horse-drawn carriage with a mounted escort, a 21-gun salute was fired, a guard of honour was presented and the Maharaja was invested with the Order of Pao Ding Hsuan Chang on behalf of President Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China. The visit of a Chinese delegation, coming as it did 28 years after the last Nepalese quinquennial mission had been despatched to Peking, was a matter of considerable importance to Kathmandu for it
THE BRITISH CONNECTION

The British conquest of India in the 19th century posed a serious threat to Nepal, which expected to become another victim of European colonialism. It left her no alternative but to seek an accommodation in order to preserve her independence. The Rana regime accomplished this on terms that were mutually acceptable, though at times irritating: the British agreed to refrain from interference in Nepal's internal politics and to respect the Kingdom's self-imposed isolation; the Nepalese agreed to the recruitment of mercenaries into the imperial armies and accepted "guidance" on her foreign affairs. Relations between the two countries were conducted through a British diplomatic envoy in Kathmandu.

In May 1934, a newly appointed Envoy, Sir Clendon Daukes, presented his credentials to King Tribhuvan.

The British Envoy, Sir Clendon Daukes, arrives at Hanuman Dhoka Palace to present his credentials to King Tribhuvan.

The Prime Minister, Juddha Shumsher, awaits the arrival of the British Envoy on the steps of the old royal palace.

Sir Clendon Daukes, seated left. Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher is conversing with King Tribhuvan.

The official darbar held after the presentation of credentials. Seated left to right: Western (Senior) Commanding General Mohan Shumsher, Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher, Sir Clendon Daukes, Crown Prince Mahendra, King Tribhuvan, Commander-in-Chief Padma Shumsher.
indicated that the Republic of China had abandoned the claims to suzerainty over Nepal which the Celestial Empire had always maintained.

In 1935 a Belgian delegation invested the Prime Minister with its highest national award, the Grand Order of King Leopold, on behalf of King Leopold III, in gratitude for the sacrifices made by Gurkha troops in the Great War against Germany. Ironically, the next delegation to visit Kathmandu was a German mission which invested Juddha Shumsher with the German Red Cross on behalf of Chancellor Adolf Hitler. That was in 1937. A mere three years later, Gurkha troops were again fighting German troops on the killing fields of western Europe.

The Law Courts
Juddha Shumsher made one fundamental change to the legal system of Nepal but before considering it, it is necessary to review the reforms made to the law courts in the days of Chandra Shumsher.

To make the court system more readily accessible to the people, Chandra Shumsher authorised the bada hakims in the Tarai to hear appeals against the village level amini courts, and he established lower courts in remote areas such as Taplejunj, Dadeldhura, Humla and Darchula. The-adalats of Lhasa, Kuti and Kerung, which dealt with Nepalese living in Tibet and which had operated as autonomous units whose decisions could only be overturned by the Prime Minister, were incorporated into the general hierarchy of the law courts. The eastern district of Ilam was granted the status of a Gaunda and, along with the Doti Gaunda that was removed from the supervision of the Palpa Gaunda, assumed equal importance with the other Gaundas. Chandra Shumsher also streamlined the higher echelons of the judicial system by abolishing the Taksar and Dhansar Courts, designating the Ita Chapali as a criminal court and restricting the Koti Ling to hearing civil cases. Both courts were deprived of their appellate jurisdiction, thus reducing them to courts of first instance for the inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley.

It was Dev Shumsher who had decreed that the Prime Minister himself would be the final avenue of appeal against the highest court in the land, the Appeal Adda. Chandra Shumsher reverted to the previous practice of making the Commander-in-Chief in Council the final avenue of appeal, but towards the end of his rule he again appropriated supreme appellate authority to the office of Prime Minister, as his predecessor had done. As a consequence, the Appeal Adda and the appellate functions of the Commander-in-Chief in Council were combined to form the Sadar Bharadari, whose verdicts could be appealed to a newly created final court of appeal, the Bintipatra Niksari Adda, which was directly answerable to the Prime Minister himself. This court could also receive bintipatras—petitions or grievances—from officials or private individuals about injustices done to
them by any officer or officer. The petitions were then sent to the Commander-in-Chief who referred them to the relevant government office for action. There was a standing instruction that all bintipatras were to be disposed of within 35 days of leaving the office of the Commander-in-Chief.

Although Chandra Shumsher's reforms greatly facilitated access to the law courts by the populace at large, the most fundamental and important reform of all was initiated by Juddha Shumsher. It was he who separated the judiciary from the executive. Soon after assuming power he abolished the Bintipatra Niksari Adda as the highest court of appeal and replaced it with three bharadari courts. The Appeal Adda was revived as the First Appeal Court (Sardar Appeal Pahila) and the Second Appeal Court (Sardar Appeal Dosra) but with appellate jurisdiction over only a few lower courts. Then, in 1940, he removed the power of the bada hakims of the Tarai to act as courts of appeal from the lower courts there, and created new courts to replace their appellate jurisdiction. A High Court—the Pradhan Nyayalaya—was established as the highest court of justice in the Kingdom with the power to supervise the working of all the other courts in the land and to review the decisions of the bharadari courts.

None of these arrangements, however, impinged upon the power of the Prime Minister to hear any original or appellate case. He remained the fountainhead of justice, exercising a judicial authority that was independent
of the formal legal hierarchy and a judicial power that could overrule the provisions of the law.

In February 1946 Prime Minister Padma Shumsher abolished the bharadari courts as being an unnecessary tier in the judicial system. In the years that followed several more courts were established so that at the end of Rana rule in 1951 there were 56 district courts and 13 regional appeal courts.

The Anti-Rana Movements

Juddha Shumsher had to cope with the growing hostility of both Nepalese and Indians against the rule of the Rana family. Inside Nepal, several organisations were formed with the express aim of overthrowing the regime while in India the vernacular press became increasingly critical and one publication, the influential Bihari newspaper Janata, launched a scathing campaign against the Ranas. Juddha Shumsher tried to suppress the opposition by force but he remained essentially helpless against it.

In 1937 a group of social workers led by Shukra Raj Shastri set up an organisation called the Nepal Civil Rights Committee whose aim was to create public awareness of the need for social reform through writings and discourses on religious literature such as the sacred Hindu texts, the Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas. Shastri was the son of Madhav Raj Joshi, the social reformer who had been publicly beaten and expelled from Nepal in
1905. He was a teacher at the State High School in Kathmandu and had been
strongly influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, whom he had
met in Calcutta. The Prime Minister took a very dim view of his thinly
disguised anti-establishment preachings and in November 1938 Shastri
was arrested for giving a public discourse on the Bhagavad Gita in Indrachowk,
the bazaar area of old Kathmandu. He was imprisoned for six years.

The year before, a group of politically idealistic but frustrated young
men, the sons of landed middle and lower middle class families, had
founded an underground political organisation whose avowed aim was to
bring about the overthrow of the Rana family. The organisation was called
the Nepal People’s Congress—the Nepal Praja Parishad. By May 1940,
leaflets condemning the Ranas and blaming them for the country’s every
ill were circulating in Kathmandu. Other tracts denounced the Prime
Minister’s misappropriation of land and public funds to provide for his
large and increasingly numerous family. Ironically, the Chandra family
was at the same time engaged on its own smear campaign against the Prime
Minister, whose private life certainly lent itself to criticism. As the British
Envoy put it in a report to his government:

“There is no doubt that Sir Juddha Shumsher is a naughty old man and his way
of life has left much to be desired. The number of his illegitimate children is said
to have been legion. A conservative estimate is one hundred sons and daughters
spread all over the length and breadth of Nepal. Officially he claims 19 illegitimate
sons (daughters not mentioned). It has been and still is, as far as I am aware, his
practice to pick up any damsel that takes his wayward fancy and then to return
her, with a few rupees clutched in her hand, to her parents or her husband.
Naturally, this kind of behaviour does not earn him the respect or affection of the
masses in Nepal. Like his predecessors, he has since his accession pocketed the
whole of the surplus revenue of Nepal and he is now reputed to be an extremely
wealthy man, though his large family must cost him a pretty penny to support.
I understand he supports any illegitimate sons that may be born to him but not
many of the daughters. Although Sir Juddha is not peculiar in this respect, times
have changed since the practice of pouching as much of the public money as
possible by the reigning Prime Minister was started, and not only the people but
also the royal family are complaining. His general universal behaviour has
naturally antagonized the priesthood, or at least given them a broom with which
to beat him. This was not improved by his unfortunate shooting of a cow in the
Tarai last winter and his refusal to earn absolution by paying the enormous sum
demanded by the priests.”

The government moved against the Nepal Praja Parishad in October
1940, arresting 43 of its members including the movement’s leader, Tanka
Prasad Acharya. The government’s interrogation of the detainees brought
to light the disturbing information that allied to the Nepal Praja Parishad
there existed an organisation called the Raktapat Mandal—the Bloodshed
Group—which had carefully planned the mass assassination of the leading
members of the Rana family. Even more disturbing was the revelation that
the Bloodshed Group was under the direct command of King Tribhuvan
himself.
FAMILY WEDDINGS

Apart from marrying into the royal family of Nepal, the Ranas also sought matrimonial alliances with the princely houses of India. Weddings were always spectacular affairs, conducted with great pomp and ceremony in strict accordance with Hindu rites. On an auspicious day selected by the court astrologers, the groom set forth in a wedding procession formed by his relatives and friends. The processions of the more affluent Ranas numbered several thousand people, including massed bands and a detachment of troops. The bridegroom was received at the bride’s house with great ceremony and entreated with a sumptuous feast. Then followed the swayamvara, literally, “choosing one’s own husband”, a relic of the ancient code of Rajput chivalry when princesses would choose their husband from amongst the assembled princes. By the Rana period this had become a mere formality as all marriages were arranged, but the ceremony was considered an indispensable preliminary in every marriage. At the swayamvara the bride placed a garland of flowers around the bridegroom’s neck and sandalwood paste on his forehead. Next, the bride and groom were seated on a brocaded sofa, their feet in a large, shallow silver bowl. Using ritual vessels of silver, the parents of the girl washed the feet of both the bride and the groom. This ritual was accompanied by the recitation of Vedic chants by the Brahmin priests of the bride’s family. Then followed the most important part of the wedding ceremony: the point at which the parents of the bride made a gift of her to the groom. This always took place at precisely the time calculated by the priests as the most auspicious moment for the hands of the bride to be put into the cupped hands of the groom. In fact, all wedding ceremonies, many of which lasted for several days, were programmed around this precise moment. The bride then changed into a different set of clothes and jewellery and was led outside to a courtyard where a sacrificial fire was burning. To the chant of Vedic hymns the bride and groom spent several hours performing rituals of various descriptions and making offerings to various deities. One of the last ceremonies to be performed was the putting of vermillion powder in the part of the bride’s hair by the groom. Vermilion in a woman’s hair is a sign of marriage she is required to reapply it daily for as long as her husband lives.

The swayamvara or engagement ceremony of Keshar Shumsher Rana and his second wife, Krishna Chandra Devi. Keshar Shumsher was already married to King Prithvi Bir’s eldest daughter, Laxmi Rajya Laxmi Devi.

The wedding procession.

Maids of honour heading the wedding procession.

The mandap or wedding pavilion.

The bride and groom in their wedding clothes.

The wedding ceremony.
The Ranas knew, of course, that the King was dissatisfied with the treatment he had received at their hands but none of them, including the Prime Minister, had expected him to be a party to their assassination. especially in view of the dynastic marriages that the two families had entered into. Maharaja Juddha’s grand-daughter had been married to Crown Prince Mahendra only that spring and three of Chandra Shumsher’s sons were married to three of King Tribhuvan’s sisters. The involvement of the King in a plot to overthrow the regime presented Juddha Shumsher with a difficult set of choices. If a public enquiry established royal involvement with an avowedly revolutionary movement, then the Prime Minister could only retain his credibility by engineering the King’s removal, either by banishing him to a remote hill district or asking the Government of India to take him into custody. But the former would transform him into a potent and completely unmanageable focus of popular discontent and virtually ensure that he would eventually prevail in any clash between their political wills. The Government of India might have obliged him a century before but it was unlikely to do so in the 1940s. It would unsettle the Indian princes, the only allies that they had left against the rising tide of the Indian independence movement. Besides, the deposition of the King would prove to be extremely difficult as Crown Prince Mahendra had resolutely refused
to replace his father, insisting that if his father went then he would go too. Juddha Shumsher had no choice. Despite convincing proof to the contrary, the Prime Minister publicly cleared him of any association with the Nepal Praja Parishad.

In his rage and frustration, Juddha Shumsher turned his wrath on the imprisoned members of the Nepal People’s Congress. During the night of 24 January 1941, one of the group’s founder members, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, was hanged from a tree by the road that leads to the temple of Pashupatinath. Three nights later, two other founder members, Dasarath Chand and Ganga Lal were executed by firing squad on the western outskirts of Kathmandu. Their bullet ridden bodies were left tied to the execution stakes until the following afternoon. Shukra Raj Shastri, the founder of the Nepal Civil Rights Committee who was serving a six-year sentence for his reformist preachings, was dragged from prison and hanged as well. He had absolutely no association with the Nepal Praja Parishad. His body was left hanging with a placard announcing that such would be the fate of any man attempting to mislead the people. Tanka Prasad Acharya, being a Brahmin, could not be executed. Along with another founder member who was also a Brahmin, his head was shaved, a piglet was hung from his chest by a rope around his neck and he was marched through the streets of Kathmandu to prison. The two prisoners

Four Nepalese Martyrs. This postage stamp, issued in 1965, 14 years after the fall of the regime, commemorated the political opponents whom Juddha Shumsher executed in January 1941. Clockwise from the top: Dasrath Chand, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Ganga Lal and Shukra Raj Shastri.
and their armed escort were preceded by a man of the scavenging caste who clashed cymbals to attract the attention of householders and passers-by to a clerk of the court who, in the manner of a town crier, shouted that the two prisoners had been deprived of their caste and ritually degraded for their heinous crime. The remaining members of the Nepal People’s Congress were sentenced to prison, 14 of them to life sentences.

But the brutal repression, far from smothering anti-Rana sentiments, only inflamed them. Large crowds gathered to view the dead bodies of the executed men and many were observed surreptitiously paying their respects to them. Posters began to appear vowing to assassinate the Prime Minister. The public executions had been a serious political mistake. They lost the regime what little respect or affection it might have enjoyed amongst the population at large. Active agitation against the regime certainly died down for a time but the people became sullen and bitter against the Prime Minister. The executed men became martyrs—martyrs who have entered the hagiography that surrounds the restoration of the power of the monarchy and who are still publicly honoured today. The regime sought to contain the damage that had been done to its image abroad, where people recalled that the death penalty had been abolished in Nepal only a few years earlier. It launched a disinformation campaign.
that sought to convince its audience that the Ranas had done no more than their patriotic duty in smashing a conspiracy by the Newari community of the Kathmandu Valley to seize power, overthrow the monarchy and establish a republic.

Shaken by the involvement of the King in a plot to liquidate the Rana family, the Prime Minister began to work assiduously to mend his political fences. He started taking the King and his sons on his winter hunting trips to the Tarai. In 1941 he allowed the King's two younger sons to visit Calcutta, albeit under the watchful eye of his trusted grandson, General Nara Shumsher. After the winter hunt of 1944 he allowed King Tribhuvan to travel privately to India to visit the holy city of Puri and the more worldly cities of Calcutta, Lucknow, Agra and Delhi, accompanied by Crown Prince Mahendra and General Bahadur Shumsher. It was the first time for a century that a ruling monarch had left the Kingdom. Matrimonial ties with the Shah dynasty were further strengthened when two of Juddha Shumsher's great grand-daughters married Crown Prince Mahendra's two brothers. These dynastic marriages served the Juddha family well, even after the Rana system of hereditary Prime Ministers was abolished. Both the present King and Queen of Nepal are great-grandchildren of Juddha Shumsher and once again the King's two brothers are married to the Queen's two sisters.
No sooner had Juddha Shumsher destroyed the Nepal Praja Parishad by executing or imprisoning its members than he was faced with a political crisis that had its origin in neighbouring India. On 8 August 1942 the Indian National Congress Party called for a mass civil disobedience campaign throughout India. Within 24 hours, all leading Congress members had been arrested and the party declared illegal. Lacking firm leadership and organisation, the campaign degenerated into widespread disorder and lawlessness, most notably in those districts of Bihar and the United Provinces that bordered on Nepal. The disturbances brought road transport, railways, telephones and the telegraph service to a halt, blockading Nepal and isolating it completely from the outside world. With no radio transmitters or airfields in the country, the Government of Nepal was incommunicado. The Prime Minister was furious that the British could have so taken Nepal's friendship for granted as to have failed to take the necessary precautions to keep the Kingdom's lines of communications open:

"It is perfectly well known to the Government of India" he wrote to the British Envoy "that the policy of Nepal is one of seclusion. We don't interfere with the internal affairs of India, nor do we at all like to poke our noses into the political movements and policies followed in that country. The Governments of India and Bihar are fully aware that, with all our policy of seclusion, we require to keep at least one main line of communication—our life line, we may say—open. Indeed" he continued "in such circumstances one might be excused if he happens to wonder whether all this indifference was due to the idea that Nepal's friendship is too cheap."

Although the civil unrest in northern India was brought under control by the end of 1942, the effects of political agitation continued to be felt throughout the Tarai as Indian political fugitives sought sanctuary there from the British authorities. Matters came to a head on the night of 22 May 1943 when an armed group of about 50 Congress supporters crossed over from India and attacked the town of Hanumannagar. They burned houses, fired indiscriminately at the townspeople and raided the police post. They killed several policemen and released seven Congress detainees who had earlier fled to Nepal to escape arrest. At that, the Prime Minister ordered a crackdown against Congress fugitives and supporters in the Tarai. Hundreds were arrested. The Nepalese amongst them were sent up to Kathmandu and imprisoned. The Indians were handed over to British officials along the frontier. The message was clear: the isolation of Nepal was not negotiable. It would continue and it was to be absolute.

The Emergence of a Commercial and Industrial Infrastructure

No significant measures of administrative reform had occurred during the 33 months of Bhim Shumsher's prime ministership, though some minor changes were made. The duties on salt, cotton and pasturage were abolished, military pay was increased and improved equipment purchased for the army. Saturday was gazetted as the weekly holiday for government
employees—a practice that still prevails today—and a municipality with ten appointed members and eight elected members was set up in Kathmandu, though it failed to flourish because of a general lack of interest amongst the populace in municipal affairs. Juddha Shumsher, however, sought to inject a note of modernity into the administration. His efforts represented the first attempt at creating a commercial and industrial infrastructure supported by appropriate legislative and administrative machinery.

The Nepal Bank Limited, the Kingdom's first bank, was opened in 1937 and in 1945 the country's first currency notes were put into circulation. Company laws were passed and government agencies established to encourage cottage manufacturers and help Nepal set up new industries. The Nepal Bureau of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics was created to assist with the promotion of trade and commerce. The Nepal Trading Corporation was established to promote trade in government monopolies and the Krishi Parishad was established to promote agriculture. Foreign agricultural experts were engaged to improve watershed management and irrigation in the hills and the Tarai and to introduce improved seeds and implements. Equally importantly, they taught the peasants improved animal husbandry and farming techniques. The waters of the major rivers that crossed the Tarai were tapped by a network of irrigation channels.

The Udyog Parishad—the Industry Board—was set up in 1934 to promote industrial development and regulate the establishment of new industrial concerns. This was followed in 1939 by the creation of the Gharelu
Adda, whose charter was to promote cottage industries. To meet the shortage of imported cloth brought about by the Second World War, Juddha Shumsher encouraged the cultivation of cotton and the production of cloth by local cottage industries. In 1941, he founded the Nepal Bureau of Mines to systematically survey and exploit the country’s mineral resources. Thanks to the assistance of these organisations, a total of 21 companies and enterprises was established during his prime ministership.

An ambitious scheme was laid out to reclaim marshy lands in the Tarai by distributing them rent-free to Gurkha soldiers who had retired in India. The Prime Minister, and the British, hoped the scheme might attract that floating part of the expatriate Nepalese community which might otherwise swell the ranks of the anti-Rana elements in India. An annual contribution of Rs. 200,000 from the Government of British India to a postwar military reconstruction fund was used to open two centres in eastern and western Nepal where ex-servicemen and their families could be given training in improved methods of agriculture, animal husbandry and cottage industries.
THE FAMILY ON SHIKAR

One of Jang Bahadur’s greatest passions was hunting. It was he who set the pattern for the Rana Prime Ministers to go on a long annual shikar in the Tarai during the winter months. There they bagged tigers, rhinoceroses, wild boar, deer, crocodiles and even boa constrictors. Fortunately for the preservation of the species, tigers and rhinos could only be hunted by the King and the Prime Minister. Hunting in the Tarai was meant to be a family affair, though most of the wives photographed here look distinctly discomforted by the whole business.

Maharaja Juddha Shumsher’s family posing on a set of steps used to mount an elephant. c 1934.

Maharaja Chandra Shumsher with his second wife, Bal Kumari. c 1925.

A group of Rana colonels and lieutenant-colonels. c 1935.

Maharaja Juddha Shumsher with five of his wives and one of his daughters. c 1938.
To this the Prime Minister added a further Rs. 200,000 from his private purse.

Telephone lines were extended into the eastern Tarai districts. A Chief Conservator of Forests, a British official on secondment from the Indian Forestry Service, was appointed in 1940. A provident fund was established for soldiers and a pension scheme introduced for civil servants.

One of the more interesting instruments of government administration was the organisation responsible for road building: the Samarjang Company. It was not, as an association of ideas might suggest, a commercial enterprise but a "company" in the military sense. The Samarjang Company was raised by King Ran Bahadur (1778-1799) as a palace guard and Bhim Sen Thapa had transferred it to prison guard duties where, over time, it gained a reputation for its unswerving loyalty and its sense of duty. It was Chandra Shumsher who first ordered it to organise prison labour to construct roads, a task which it performed so well that, in 1941, Juddha Shumsher restructured the Samarjang Company as a Department of Main Roads.
Maharaja Juddha was a deeply religious man who was fond of performing *goddan*, the ritual presentation of a cow to a Brahmin priest. This photo was taken on the banks of the Mahakali River where, in 1934, he gave away 1,000 cows.

The Prime Minister’s economic reforms were accompanied by some minor social reforms. Child marriage was discouraged by raising the age of marriage to 18 for boys and 14 for girls, the one exception being Brahmin girls who could marry at the age of twelve. Juddha Shumsher gave generous support to the promotion of the Nepali language. He created a translation bureau that translated and published foreign technical and literary works in Nepali. An English-Nepali dictionary was compiled and talented authors received liberal encouragement from the Maharaja.

But none of these reforms did any more than scratch the surface of the economic problems of the state—and this for the simple reason that the Ranas never wanted extensive economic development of the country in the first place. They believed in an inverse relationship between the improved economic condition of the population and its unresisting submission to the authority of the ruling elite. But in fairness it should also be noted that appreciable economic growth was not possible in a mountainous country of subsistence farmers that had a pitifully small gross national product and an inelastic revenue structure. Increased taxation was not an option: the poor could not be squeezed any harder and the country’s wealth, in the form of secular and religious freehold land, could not be touched. Technical development assistance was unavailable and dependance upon British India for the Kingdom’s economic growth was politically unacceptable. It was the country’s fate to stagnate economically.

The Literature of Nepal

Nepalese literature is only of recent origin as the Nepali language,
Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher donating his own weight in gold to the Brahmin priests and the poor. 31 October 1944.

Maharaja Juddha Shumsher's senior wife (seated) watches as her husband performs the Hindu charity of *tula dan* by giving away his weight in gold to the priests and the poor. 31 October 1944. He tipped the scales at 74.39 kg.
though widely spoken in the central and western hills, did not become the *lingua franca* of the Kingdom until the first decades of the 19th century and was not, in fact, designated as the official language of Nepal until 1930. The first major work in the language was written by a Brahmin named Bhanu Bhakta Acharya shortly after the advent of Rana rule. Writing in simple, colloquial Nepali, he condensed the themes of the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*, into an entertaining narrative poem. Poetry, in fact, was the dominant literary genre of the 19th century, as prose remained undeveloped and confined to re-workings of Persian and Indian tales of mystery and fantasy. Nepali grammar was not standardised, the language was still competing with regional dialects and accents for dominance, and many writers continued to borrow heavily from Hindi and Urdu. The almost total absence of books published in Nepali also impeded the standardisation of the written language. Although Bhanu Bhakta Acharya went some way towards establishing the respectability of vernacular poetry, his *Ramayana* was not published until 1887, nine years after his death.

The development of Nepali literature then fell to the young writer Motiram Bhatta who, having spent most of his first 25 years in Benaras,
returned to Kathmandu and established a small publishing business. He gathered about him a circle of poets who composed and performed songs for the Rana court. Motiram Bhatta died in 1897 at the age of 31. An accomplished prose writer as well as a poet, he is now regarded as one of the founding fathers of Nepali literature.

In 1913 Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher established the Gorkha Language Publication Committee, an organisation designed to promote Nepali book publishing but also to censor the contents of all books produced in Nepal. This rigid curtailment of literary freedom drove many Nepalese writers to publish their works in Benaras and Darjeeling or to actually go into voluntary exile there. Few writers resident in Nepal dared to express the dissatisfaction with the political situation that was spreading in educated circles and amongst the lower ranking members of the Rana family. As a result, Nepali literature progressed more rapidly in India than it did in Nepal. Grammatical standards were established for the written language with the publication of a definitive grammar in 1915 and the following decades saw the emergence of many of the country’s best writers: the poet laureate Lekhnath Paudyal, the poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota and the playwright Balkrishna Sama. Their poems, novels and plays illustrate a society in transition from its age-old Hindu conservatism to an uncertain modernity. Some, like Lekhnath Paudyal, composed strictly in accordance with the ancient rules governing poetic composition in Sanskrit. They were wary of addressing contemporary social issues. Others, notably Laxmi Prasad Devkota, wrote in a metre that had hitherto been used only in Nepali folk songs and they did not hesitate to make social statements, though this had to be done through oblique references such as describing social change in terms of conflict between members of a particular family. The situation of the playwright Balkrishna Sama was particularly delicate as he was, in fact, a ‘C’ class Rana, Balkrishna Shumsher Rana, writing under a nom de plume. His plays were highly unusual for their time for they reflected contemporary life through the eyes of ordinary people, whereas dramas traditionally centred around the larger-than-life exploits of heroes and heroines from myth and legend, and they played to highly appreciative audiences at the Rana court. But not even Balkrishna Shumsher Rana was free to publish all his works and several of his plays were proscribed by the government. The activities of the Nepali Congress led Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher to ban all drama performances in Kathmandu and in 1948 Balkrishna Shumsher Rana spent some time in prison for his alleged association with the outlawed Nepal Praja Parishad. Upon his release he formally changed his name to Balkrishna Sama (sama means “equal”) as a political protest.

The tone of the poems and other writings that emanated from the small Nepalese community in Benaras became more overtly political towards the
end of Juddha Shumsher’s prime ministership. There was a shared perception amongst Nepalese writers that, for all the institutionalised support that the Ranas gave to Hindu religion and law, they were culturally unrepresentative of the motherland. Nepalese culture needed to be protected from them and nurtured. It was a short step from protecting Nepalese culture through literary expression to supporting Nepalese nationalism through political opposition. Thus, ironically, the Ranas were a catalyst for the development of the very literature which, at times, they tried so hard to control and suppress. In the end, despite their ambivalent attitude to popular culture, they did much to stimulate the most beloved works of Nepali literature.

Nepal and the Second World War

Sensing the possibility of a European war at the time of the Munich crisis of September 1938, Juddha Shumsher offered to provide a Gurkha contingent to support the allied cause. Shrewdly, he underscored the independence of Nepal and reinforced the distinction between his country and the Indian princely States by making his offer of help directly to the British Government in London. In the event, the offer was politely declined, but when war was eventually declared a renewed offer was gratefully accepted. On 4 September 1939, the very day on which Britain declared war on Germany, Juddha Shumsher offered the British Minister 8,000 combat ready troops. Others followed during the ensuing months until the total number of men who went forth from the hills of Nepal to fight for the cause of the Empire reached 160,000.

At first the Nepalese troops were used for garrison duty in India to replace Indian soldiers sent abroad to the front, but as the war dragged on and the casualties mounted the Gurkhas found themselves on active duty in all the main theatres of operations. They covered themselves in glory in the Middle East, north Africa, Burma and western Europe, fighting with a
reckless gallantry that had already been legendary for over a hundred years. The prize for their gallantry was high. Of the 182 Victoria Crosses awarded in the Second World War, ten were awarded to Gurkha soldiers. But the price of their gallantry was also high. A larger proportion of the population of Nepal was killed or wounded than of any other country involved in the war.

As a footnote to history it might also be recorded that Nepal contributed 3,000 walnut trees for the manufacture of rifle butts and 800 sal trees for railway sleepers, as well as 192 service revolvers, 144 pairs of binoculars and 95 machine guns. The Maharaja and his family personally donated Rs. 77,000 (£115,500 in current terms) to various Imperial Relief Funds and to each soldier leaving for the front Juddha Shumsher sent 50 cigarettes, a pound of tea, a pound of sugar, a pound of biscuits and a photograph of himself.

The end of the war brought home two disturbing realisations to the ruling élite of Nepal. One was that the British Labour Government that had won a landslide victory in the 1945 general elections was unwilling to hold on to India by force. The other was that it was impossible to do so anyway.

**Juddha Shumsher and the Third Stage of Man**

Hinduism teaches that the ideal life of a man is divided into four stages: a period of discipline and education; a period as an active worker and head of a household; *vanaprasthya*, or a period of retreat aimed at loosening all bonds with the material world and, finally, *sanyasa*, or the life of a hermit.
The first stage is an active period of education and hard work. Hinduism has always held knowledge and all forms of physical and mental discipline in high regard and a combination of the two—disciplined education—is considered the prime religious duty of youth. The second stage is considered to be the mainstay of the other three, for it gives unity and cohesion to the entire social structure. The ideal Hindu is supposed to lead an active married life and the ideals of selfless social duty are held to apply with particular force during this stage. But the successes of the material world, great though they might be, are not considered sufficient. A state of completeness, a fullness of being, can only be attained at the third stage of
man—by loosening one’s association with power and wealth, society and family and retreating from them and finally adopting the life of a recluse.

Juddha Shumsher, who was deeply religious by nature, had been considering resignation and retirement to a life of prayer and meditation since 1938. His family, however, was opposed to such an idea. It was inconceivable to them that the Prime Minister should step down while he was in firm political control of the country. Then the Second World War broke out and Juddha Shumsher felt that his immediate duty lay in supporting the allied cause. He talked instead of resigning as soon as the War was over and the troops had returned home. His lifestyle altered perceptibly as he began to prepare himself for the third stage of man. He gave up hunting, music and the theatre. He reduced the number of servants who waited on him. He gradually withdrew from his family by providing them with separate residences. He spent long periods in discussions with Hindu holy men. He visited temples and sanctioned endowments for religious purposes. Finally, he set the date for his demission from office: 29 November 1945.

On the morning of the appointed day the Prime Minister summoned to the Singha Darbar the ranking members of the Rana family, the priests and preceptors, the leading civil officials and military officers and senior representatives of the Valley traders and merchants. To a stunned and visibly distressed audience he announced his intention to resign. Then, in
a wide-ranging address, the Maharaja summed up the achievements—and the failures—of his thirteen years in office and outlined the reforms he thought should now be put in place. He praised his successor, Padma Shumsher, and expressed his satisfaction at being able to entrust the administration of the country to such capable hands. But he also took the opportunity to caution his nephew against indulging his liberal political tendencies. The condition of the country was not ready for experiments in parliamentary democracy, he warned. He urged Mohan Shumsher, next in line of succession after Padma Shumsher, to be loyal to the new Maharaja. Then he thanked God for having granted his wish to retire into the hills to spend his remaining years in penance and prayer. It was a lengthy speech that was read only in parts by the Maharaja himself. The remainder was read out by the senior raj guru. Though many of those present, including the Prime Minister-designate, were reduced to tears, Juddha Shumsher remained calm and dignified throughout the proceedings. His last official act was to take the crown of the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung and place it on the head of his successor, Padma Shumsher.

Immediately following his resignation, Juddha Shumsher left the Singha Darbar in an open carriage and drove to the edge of the Kathmandu Valley where the foot trail down to India begins. The city streets and country roads along which he passed were crowded with cheering, tearful
Juddha Shumsher announcing his resignation from the prime ministership and his abdication from the maharajaship of Kaski and Lamjung, 29 November 1945.

Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher placing the crown of the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung on Padma Shumsher following his abdication on 29 November 1945.
well-wishers anxious for a glimpse of the great ruler who had risen in their estimation to the level of a sage by virtue of his noble sacrifice. From Raxaul on the Indian border he travelled by train west to Nautanwa and thence northwards, back into Nepal, and up to the town of Ridi in the old principality of Gulmi, a day’s march northwest of Palpa. To the Nepalese, Ridi is as holy as Benaras. It is situated on the banks of the Kali Gandak River, which is fed by the snows melting on the sacred Mount Mukhtinath to the north. The surrounding hills are dotted with temples and shrines dedicated to the various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, and scores of people retire there to spend their last days in prayer and meditation in this sacred place. Here, in a modest, tin roofed house, in the company of his junior Maharani—his senior wife was too old and infirm to leave Kathmandu—the erstwhile absolute ruler of Nepal, the commander of armies, the fabulously wealthy Maharaja became a sanyasi, a religious recluse. After spending a little more than a year at Ridi, he moved his residence to Dehra Dun in the foothills of the Indian Himalayas.

Juddha Shumsher, the affable but quick tempered despot, was the last of the Rana Prime Ministers to wield absolute authority. He was a man who lived in the past and only vaguely perceived the future. He insisted that there were rulers and ruled and that the division between the two was clear, immutable and unbridgeable. While he acknowledged the wide compass and success of the British parliamentary system, he was adamant that a more constitutional form of government was neither possible nor desirable in Nepal. With 90 per cent of the people illiterate, a nation-wide, popular based government was an impracticable proposition. His predecessor had given the townspeople municipal councils in the Valley and he himself had encouraged light industry and development projects to improve the economic situation of the peasantry. In his view, the people should have been content with their political lot. Having arrived at this modest definition of political liberty, he proceeded to channel most of his energies into suppressing any popular demands for more. It was a futile exercise. The political crisis deepened and he was unable to deal with it. Exasperated by political agitation against his rule but powerless to eradicate it, he chose to retire rather than cling tenuously to office.

Juddha Shumsher died at Dehra Dun on 20 November 1952 at the age of 77, angry and bitter towards his two successors for having brought about the collapse of the Rana regime.
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Padma Shumsher

(1945–1948)
With the appointment of Padma Shumsher to the prime ministership, the highest executive office in the land passed from the second to the third generation of the Rana family. But from the outset Padma Shumsher’s hold on the supreme executive office was precarious. He lacked the two elements essential to retaining a firm grip on power: wealth, and a family-based power base. He had been estranged from his father, Bhim Shumsher, and thus had had no share of the wealth that he had acquired as Prime Minister. Upon his own appointment he was shocked to find the public exchequer virtually depleted. His predecessor had requisitioned such a large area of public and private land and had taken such an immense sum to provide for his 20 sons and an equal number of daughters, that Padma Shumsher inherited an empty treasury.

Because he was the only legitimate son of Bhim Shumsher and because his wealthy ‘C’ class half-brothers, whom Juddha Shumsher had removed from the Roll of Succession, were living most of the time out of Nepal, the new Prime Minister found himself without a dependable power base. He had no choice but to turn to the Chandra and Juddha branches of the family for assistance in carrying on the administration. And they, in turn, exploited the situation to their best advantage. As a gesture of goodwill towards the Juddha family, the Prime Minister reconfirmed Juddha’s eldest son, Bahadur Shumsher, in his position of Hazuria General. But their temperaments and political outlooks were totally incompatible and it was not long before Bahadur Shumsher resigned. At the same time, Bahadur’s son resigned his position as Director General of the Police. Then, as a gesture to the Chandra family, Bahadur Shumsher was replaced by Krishna Shumsher and another of Chandra’s sons, Shankar Shumsher, was appointed Director General of Police. But Krishna Shumsher was soon forced by personal circumstances to relinquish his position and shortly afterwards he also resigned his position on the Roll of Succession and left Nepal. Meanwhile, one of the most capable candidates for any of the top positions
in the administration, Keshar Shumsher, decided to keep well clear of family politics and had himself appointed as Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

Servant of the Nation

Immediately following his uncle’s departure from the Singha Darbar on 29 November 1945, Padma Shumsher appeared on an open terrace to receive the acclamation of those who had assembled to witness the dramatic resignation of his predecessor. In a voice choked with emotion the new Prime Minister declared “I regard myself as the servant of the nation.” Then, with tears rolling down his cheeks, the “weeping Maharaja”, as he was dubbed from that day forth, withdrew from public view.

A man of simple tastes and liberal views, Padma Shumsher had a reputation for applying himself whole heartedly to whatever task he had in hand. He approached his new responsibilities cautiously but with characteristic vigour. Less than a fortnight after assuming office he convened a large assembly of officials and the general public on the Tundikhel to outline the policies and objectives of his administration. He stressed the need for greater educational facilities as a first step towards the Kingdom’s development and announced that he would establish a network of primary schools throughout the country. He emphasised the importance of transport facilities for the development of industry and unveiled his plans for the expansion of the ropeway, railway and road networks in Nepal. Finally, the Maharaja announced pay increases for the junior officer corps and the
lower echelons of the civil service, along with the provision of rice for the troops at subsidised rates. As a policy statement, the Prime Minister’s speech was well-balanced and sober: it targeted the key problem areas in the economy while avoiding extravagant promises that would have little prospect of fulfilment.

Padma Shumsher’s formal inauguration, which was not held until June 1946, was a simple affair when compared with the pomp and ceremony of those of his predecessors. After his installation, he refused to move into the official residence of the Prime Minister, despite pressure from his cousins and protocol-conscious senior officials to do so. He preferred instead to remain in the relatively modest residence at Bishalnagar that had been his home for 44 years and to visit the official residence, the Singha Darbar, three times a week to attend to business.

The Prime Minister’s first year in office was not noteworthy and could not be said to have been one of material progress for Nepal. Rather, the administration just drifted along with a few minor initiatives emanating from the top. The Director General of the Industrial Development Board was sent on a fact-finding mission to the industrial centres of the United Provinces and Punjab. A conference of Tarai landowners was convened to discuss the means whereby the economic condition of the region might be improved. As the Tarai was relatively open and vulnerable to political influence from India, the government was anxious to ensure the stability of the region by securing the continued support and cooperation of the landed class. Restrictions on the royal family were eased and King Tribhuvan was allowed to travel to Calcutta for medical treatment, accompanied by his two younger sons, Prince Himalaya and Prince Basundhara, and “attended” by Southern Commanding General Bahadur Shumsher. Goodwill missions were despatched to Calcutta, Washington and Nanking to confer various orders and decorations on Viceroy Wavell, President Truman and President Chiang Kai-shek.

Education

As education had been one of the major topics in the Prime Minister’s policy speech of 10 December 1945, it may be timely to examine what progress had been made in this area since the turn of the century.

The progress of education inched forward only very slowly in the decades following Dev Shumsher’s ill-fated attempts to bring learning to the masses. Chandra Shumsher began his long rule by sending some of the sons of the aristocracy to Japan in 1902 to further their education. Although he met with opposition from the more conservative elements of society, most notably the priests, the experiment was a success. Encouraged by this, the Prime Minister proposed in 1905 that students be sent to Europe or the United States for higher education but the Bharadari Sabha vigorously
opposed the idea, fearing that an education in those countries would imbue the young men with the dangerous ideas of Western democracy. They urged instead that the government bring in teachers from India. A compromise was reached whereby Nepalese students would go to India to take advantage of the excellent facilities there for tertiary education. In 1919 the government established an English medium college in Kathmandu, the Tribhuvan-Chandra College, which, like the Darbar School, was affiliated with Calcutta University. When laying its foundation stone, Chandra Shumsher is said to have observed that he was opening the way to the demise of the Rana regime by encouraging education, though he realised that he had no choice but to move with the times. Until the end of Rana rule in 1951, Tri-Chandra College, with an enrolment of less than 200 students, was the only college in the entire country. About a dozen middle schools were opened in various parts of the Kingdom during Chandra Shumsher’s rule, along with the Shrestha Pathsala, an office to provide education to government employees that operated from the residence of one of the senior raj gurus. Intermediate science classes were introduced in 1920.

Chandra Shumsher’s successor was not so open minded. When a group of intellectuals, including the poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota, formed a committee to establish a library in Kathmandu, Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher, fearing the introduction of subversive and seditious ideas of the kind that were plaguing the British authorities in India at the time, harrassed the committee to the point of fining and imprisoning some of its members.
Later Prime Ministers, however, accepted the inevitability and appreciated the benefits of universal education, and steady, though tightly controlled, progress was made thereafter. Juddha Shumsher, who was not a well-educated man and who regarded English education as undermining the Rana regime, nevertheless encouraged the publication of Nepali language books, heavily censored though they were. In 1934 he created a Board of Education to make arrangements for conducting the School Leaving Certificate in Nepal under the sponsorship of Patna University. In the same year the first modern Sanskrit school was established and in 1942 a high school was opened at Patan.

Following the major policy statement he made 12 days after his appointment to office, Padma Shumsher announced his intention to open primary schools throughout the country. In 1946 he sent Major General Mrigendra Rana to India to study the education system there. He returned full of enthusiasm for the Gandhian method of “basic education” and this was duly launched throughout Nepal in 1947. But the educated élite rejected it, viewing its introduction as a cynical move by the regime to discourage and eventually displace the western style education system that it so feared as a threat to the political status quo. As a result, Gandhi’s principles of basic education were abandoned and a western oriented teacher training centre was established soon afterwards. At the same time the government authorised the opening of a network of approved private schools.

The Rise of Political Opposition

In January 1947 two political organisations that had been established by Nepalese political exiles living in India, the All-India Nepali National
Congress and the All-India Gorkha League, decided to merge to form a single, mass political party to be called the Nepali National Congress. Its avowed aim was to establish through non-violent means a democratic system of government in Nepal under a constitutional monarch. One of the leading proponents of this coalition was Ganesh Man Singh, a political reformist who had become a popular hero following his daring escape from Kathmandu’s high security prison where he was serving a life sentence for his involvement in the activities of the outlawed Nepal Praja Parishad. Several of the Praja Parishad’s founder members, it will be recalled, had been executed by Padma Shumsher, and Ganesh Man Singh had escaped the death penalty only because he was a Brahmin. He persuaded the new party to elect as its president in absentia Tanka Prasad Acharya, another founder member of the Nepal Praja Parishad who had also escaped the death sentence because he was a Brahmin and who was currently serving a life sentence in Kathmandu.

At this time there was a family of Brahmin landowners, the Koiralas, living near Biratnagar in the Tarai. The father was a civil servant in Kathmandu. The eldest son, Matrika Prasad Koirala, had been educated in India and in 1940 was appointed Head Assistant to the British Forestry Advisor in Nepal. As a consequence, the second son, Bishweswar Prasad Koirala, was sent to India for training and subsequently joined the Nepalese Forestry Service. The family was well-educated, financially comfortable and occupied a respectable place in the hierarchy of non-Rana functionaries. Their future seemed secure. Then disaster struck. An article appeared in an Indian newspaper attacking the Ranas and was traced to the third son who was studying at Patna University. At this, the father was arrested and, without trial, thrown into prison where he died in 1943. Matrika and Bishweswar were both dismissed and exiled to the family estate at Biratnagar. As a result of this family trauma, Bishweswar Prasad Koirala directed his energies into politics and became a driving force in the formation of the Nepali National Congress. With the party’s president, Tanka Prasad Acharya, imprisoned in Kathmandu, B.P. Koirala became its acting president.

To counteract the unfavourable press it was receiving in India and the increasing attention that Nepalese activists there were attracting, especially from the Congress Party, the Rana regime associated itself with several fundamentalists Hindu organisations that were enjoying a resurgence of popular support as Indian society began to divide on religious lines. Prominent amongst these was the Hindu Mahasabha, a religiously orthodox, narrowly communal nationalist organisation that regarded both the British raj and the Congress party as anathema. The Mahasabha, which continually praised the regime in Kathmandu for upholding the purity of Hindu values and polity, served as an effective propaganda tool for the Ranas.
Despite his association with a right wing religious movement, the Prime Minister was astute enough to hedge his political bets and cultivate good relations with its left wing secular nemesis, the Congress Party. The Viceroy’s invitation to Jawaharlal Nehru in August 1946 to form an interim government left Padma Shumsher in no doubt as to who would be in control in Delhi after the departure of the British—whenever that might be.

The Rise of Popular Unrest

In the spring of 1947 the Nepali National Congress, which had been agitating for democratic reform from the safety of British India, decided to escalate its confrontation with the Rana regime by involving itself directly in labour unrest that had broken out at the Biratnagar Jute Mill in the Nepal Tarai. The government was no longer in a position to despatch troops quickly to the disturbed area by Indian railways so it took some time for them to arrive at Biratnagar by the long and circuitous hill route. In the meantime, B.P. Koirala and his Congress colleagues had arrived at Biratnagar and were orchestrating a strike by 10,000 workers that had begun on 4 March 1947. On 23 March the 250 troops that had been sent from Kathmandu arrived at Biratnagar. Two days later B.P. Koirala and most of his Congress colleagues were arrested. Immediately following these arrests the millowners and the district authorities accepted most of the demands of the workers, but the strikers, now under the leadership of M.P. Koirala, refused to return to work until their leaders had been released. However, when the troops opened fire on a procession of mill workers, the strike quickly collapsed.
Meanwhile, an emergency session of the Nepali National Congress was convened in Calcutta and called upon the Government of Nepal to release the detainees and abandon its policy of repression. If no response was forthcoming by 13 April, it threatened, a civil disobedience campaign in the best Gandhian tradition would be launched throughout the Kingdom. When the deadline came and went without any reaction from the government, Nepal’s first mass political protest commenced. Congress volunteers were detained in Biratnagar, Birgunj, Ilam and Janakpur. Marchers and demonstrators were arrested in Kathmandu. Just as the British authorities had been unable to counter the moral force of the civil disobedience campaigns in India, so the Rana regime found itself helpless against such tactics in Nepal. The hardliners, led by Mohan Shumsher, urged that the protests be crushed. Padma Shumsher’s political instincts, however, told him that the Rana family’s days of absolute political power were numbered and that the time had come to involve the people in the government of the country.

On 16 May 1947 the Prime Minister convened a meeting of bharadars, ranking civil servants, senior military officers and even college students, to announce major reforms in the administration.

“You all know that in most countries of the world today the people are being associated with the government as far as possible. Considering that it would be greatly helpful to the welfare of the country and the people if similar arrangements were made in this country too, I am going to discuss the same.”

With an oblique reference to the repression to which his predecessors had resorted, he continued

“I am fully conscious of the fact that the administration of the country cannot be run through intimidation or terror. Although I feel that this is not the time when I should make such statements, while agitators are engaged in their nefarious activities, yet in consideration of the interests of the country I have decided to disclose to you the programme which I have in mind. With the grace of Lord Rama and Lord Pashupatinath, whom I thank very much for enabling me to speak on this occasion, my programme will be ever helpful in the happiness and prosperity of the country and its people.”

The Prime Minister then outlined his reform programme, starting with education.

“It is essential that measures be taken for propagating education among the people so that they may acquire knowledge about political matters as well as about their duties. Only when this is done will the people be able to co-operate with the government and take part in the development work of the country by properly exercising the rights available to them.”

He then went on to announce an extension of the educational network and the introduction of female education. Next, he addressed the question of constitutional reforms.

“The impression that people in our country are not enjoying any freedom is quite wrong. As much consideration is necessary before granting to the people all the
civil rights that prevail in foreign countries, we have made arrangements to invite an expert to advise us on the extent of civic rights which may be granted to the people without in any way causing harm to the country and disturbing the national peace.”

There would, however, be limits to these proposed civil rights, the Prime Minister hinted,

“Even in countries where freedom of the press exists, newspapers are fined or closed. People are arrested and detained for making speeches even in countries where freedom of speech prevails. As some people here who are aware of such freedom seem to have felt confused, an expert on this matter has been invited so that they may know their rights and limits.”

Then followed two important and basic reforms:

“We shall grant local autonomy after the establishment of elected municipalities and district boards in the Kathmandu Valley and in various districts in the country.... Arrangements shall be made to set up a separate and independent Judiciary.”

Finally, he announced the publication of an annual budget.

“Although there is a policy to the effect that the financial position of the government must not be disclosed to anybody, as otherwise neighbours will show disrespect to it, yet in the future an account of the annual income and expenditure shall be published, lest you should bear any misunderstanding as to the real income and expenditure of the country.”

The Maharaja’s reform programme and the appointment of committees to implement them, along with the release of most of the detainees, apparently satisfied the Nepali National Congress and the civil disobedience campaign was called off on 2 June 1947.
A WHO'S WHO OF NEPALESE REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

PRACHANDA GORKHA (Terrible Gorkha)
Founded: Kathmandu. 1931.
Founder: Umesh Bikram Shah.

An organisation founded by a distant collateral of the royal family to overthrow the Rana regime and restore the power of the monarchy as a prelude to the establishment of parliamentary democracy in Nepal. The organisation was discovered and destroyed by the authorities before it could implement any of its plans.

NEPAL PRAJA PARISHAD (Nepal People's Conference)
Founded: Kathmandu. 1936.
Founders: Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ganesh Man Singh, Sharma Bhakta Mathema, Dasarath Chand, Ganga Lal.

Most of the party's members were arrested and imprisoned in October 1940. Mathema, Chand and Lal were executed (January 1941) but Acharya and Singh were spared because they were Brahmins. Despite this setback the party survived and Tanka Prasad Acharya became Prime Minister of an NPP government (January 1956–July 1957).

NEPAL CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE
Founded: Kathmandu. 1937.
Founder: Shukra Raj Shastri (son of the social reformer Madhav Raj Joshi).

The aim of the organisation was to create public awareness of the need for social reform through writings and discourses on religious literature. Shastri was arrested in November 1938 for his thinly veiled anti-establishment preachings and imprisoned for 6 years. On the night of 27 January 1941 he was hanged and his body left on public display to deter others from anti-Rama activities.

ALL-INDIA NEPALI NATIONAL LEAGUE
Founders: Dev Prasad Sapkota (Chairman), Tanka Prasad Acharya (President), Bal Chandra Sharma (Vice President), P.P. Koirala, D.R. Regmi, Ganesh Man Singh.

Merged with the All-India Gorkha League in January 1947 to form the Nepali National Congress.

ALL-INDIA GORKHA LEAGUE
Founded: November 1946.

Merged with the All-India Nepali National Congress in January 1947 to form the Nepali National Congress.
NEPALI NATIONAL CONGRESS (Nepali Rastriya Kongres)


Formed by the merger of two small Nepali emigré organisations, the All-India Nepali National Congress and the All-India Gorkha League, its aim was to establish through non-violent means a democratic system of government in Nepal under a constitutional monarch. After the release of its president, B.P. Koirala, from prison in Kathmandu in August 1947, D.R. Regmi refused to relinquish his position of acting president and the party split. The Koirala faction merged with the Nepal Democratic Congress on 9 April 1950 to form the Nepali Congress.

NEPAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS (Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha)

Founded: Calcutta, August 1948
Founder: Mahendra Bikram Shah (Secretary General).

A left wing organisation with strong institutional links with the communist movement in India, its aim was the overthrow of the Rana regime, by violent means if necessary. Nevertheless, it counted amongst its members several exiled 'C' class Ranas including Hiranya Shumsher Rana and Subarna Shumsher Rana. On 9 April 1950 it merged with the Koirala faction of the Nepali National Congress to form the Nepali Congress.

NEPAL PRAJA PANCHAYAT

Founded: Kathmandu, September 1948.
Founders: Tripurbar Singh, Gopal Prasad Rimal.

The aim of the organisation was to co-operate with the Rana government in putting the 1948 constitution into effect. It voiced its demands at open air meetings and at popular demonstrations throughout the Kathmandu Valley. In October 1948, having reached the conclusion that Mohan Shumsher had no intention of introducing his predecessor's political reforms, it launched a satyagraha which was quickly crushed by the regime.

NEPALI CONGRESS

Founded: Calcutta, 9 April 1950.
Founders: M.P. Koirala, B.P. Koirala, Mahendra Bikram Shah.

Formed by a merger of the Koirala faction of the Nepali National Congress and the Nepal Democratic Congress. Launched an abortive coup against the Rana regime (September 1950). Led the uprising that coincided with King Tribhuvan's flight to India (11 November 1950) and ended with his triumphant return to Kathmandu (15 February 1951).
Nepal Broadens Her World View

The departure of the British from the Indian sub-continent on 15 August 1947 radically altered the balance of power in South Asia. It was now clear even to the most reactionary and isolationist members of the Rana hierarchy that the regime would have to accommodate itself to an Indian government that, understandably, resented the interventionist role that the Ranas had played in Indian politics since the time of Jang Bahadur. In response, the darbar reversed one of the basic operating principles of the Kingdom's foreign policy—that of political isolation—and sought to expand its diplomatic relations beyond the traditional British-Indian-Tibetan axis.

The goodwill mission that had visited Washington in October 1946 had raised the question of formal recognition and, in response, diplomatic relations were established in April 1947. The mission that had travelled to Nanking met with less success, due mainly to the Nationalists' preoccupation with the communist threat. The communists' final victory in 1949 dampened Kathmandu's enthusiasm for diplomatic relations with Peking and the matter was put in abeyance.

But, as they had always been, relations with India remained the focus of Nepalese foreign policy. The darbar was greatly relieved to discover that the attitude of the Congress government in India was not nearly as unfriendly as had been feared. The two governments concluded a "standstill agreement" under which India's status as the successor power to the British was recognised and the terms of the relationship between Nepal and India as it had existed prior to independence were retained. This meant that India accepted the Anglo-Nepal Treaty of 1923 that recognised Nepal's independence and sovereignty, and this greatly allayed Kathmandu's fears that it would be treated as one of the Indian princely States and coerced into acceding to the Indian Union. It now seemed possible to the darbar that relations with the Congress government in New Delhi could be established on essentially the same basis as those with British India, including the retention of the arrangement whereby Nepal would render military assistance to India in crisis situations, in return for which India would support the Rana regime against internal and external aggression. It was particularly encouraging to the Ranas that the Indian Government was eager to retain the system under which Nepalese were recruited into the Indian army. However critical the Congress party may have been about the use of the Gurkhas by the British, their potential value in handling communal violence and coercing recalcitrant princely States was readily acknowledged. Gurkha recruitment constituted a valuable bargaining chip in Nepal's realigned relationship with India.

A tripartite agreement with Britain and India divided the ten existing Gurkha regiments, four being allotted to the British and six to the Indians. Nepal specified that these units were not to be used against Nepal, other
Gurkha units or Hindus. And unlike the agreement with the British on recruitment, which was initially subject to renewal every five years, the agreement with India remains operative until one side formally requests its abrogation.

**Constitutional Reform**

Implementation of the reforms announced by the Prime Minister in May 1947 soon began. Within a month, on 11 June 1947, municipal elections were held in Kathmandu. The city was divided into 21 wards, each of which was entitled to elect one representative. Voter turn-out was an enthusiastic 77 per cent. Amongst the 21 elected counsellors, seven were from the business community and seven from the teaching profession. The Municipal Council also had ten nominated members.

But, along with the forward steps, there were also backward steps as the reactionary faction within the regime, led by Commander-in-Chief Mohan Shumsher, fought a rearguard action to keep the forces of reform at bay. In July 1947 students of the Sanskrit College in Kathmandu staged a strike for better hostel facilities, higher pay for their teachers and a revised curriculum to include such subjects as history and economics. Their agitation was directed as much against the Rana regime as against the

![The top echelon of the Rana hierarchy in 1946. Left to right: Eastern Commanding General Keshar Shumsher, Commander-in-Chief Mohan Shumsher, Prime Minister Padma Shumsher, Western (Senior) Commanding General Baber Shumsher and Southern Commanding General Bahadur Shumsher.](image)
Brahmin priests who ran the school. The strike was called off when the Prime Minister assured the students that their demands would be favourably considered, but no sooner had the incident faded from public attention than Mohan Shumsher and the senior raj guru had the student leaders expelled from the Kathmandu Valley, whereupon several of them went to India to swell the ranks of the Nepali National Congress.

At Padma Shumsher's request, a three-man team of Indian constitutional experts travelled to Kathmandu in June 1947 to advise the darbar on political
reforms. It was an advisory team of moderate bent and it drew up for consideration by a Reform Committee a draft constitution that would provide a middle way by which the Prime Minister might retain a formidable array of powers, but which would permit the people to be associated with the body politic of the nation. The Reform Committee met regularly but it failed to reconcile the basic features of the proposed constitution with the views of the hardliners in the regime. The introduction of a constitution, even one so politically circumscribed as that which Padma Shumsher had commissioned, was vehemently opposed by the reactionary elements within the Rana family and the priestly establishment. Pressure was brought to bear from all sides to make the Prime Minister abandon his political reforms. For his part, Padma Shumsher was determined to force the pace and promulgate a constitution in the spring of 1948. It was a deadline that he was determined to keep, for the pressures of office and the interminable, destructive internecine squabblings of the Rana family were taking too great a toll on his health. He had decided to follow the precedent set by his uncle and resign the prime ministership.

The 1948 Constitution

On 26 January 1948 Nepal’s first written constitution was proclaimed jointly in the name of His Majesty King Tribhuvan and the Maharaja Prime Minister Paduma Shumsher. It envisaged the establishment of a Council of Ministers, a bicameral legislature and a High Court. The hereditary right of the Ranas to the office of Prime Minister was declared to be “for all time inalienable and unalterable”, and the holder of that office was vested with absolute authority as head of the government and Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister was to appoint five Ministers to the Council, two of whom were to be chosen from the elected members of the legislature. Ministers were appointed to the Council for a term of four years. The Council of Ministers was to define government policy, scrutinise the budgets of the various departments, give final consideration to bills placed before the legislature and conduct the executive business of government. The Prime Minister had the right to dismiss any Minister who lost his confidence. He also enjoyed wide discretionary powers, such as the power to modify or suspend the constitution by enacting special ordinances that had the force of law for six months.

The constitution provided for the establishment of panchayats or councils at the village and district levels as the unit of local government. The primary unit was the village panchayat and the town panchayat consisting of 5 to 15 members elected by universal suffrage. Above these were the district panchayats consisting of 15 to 20 members elected by the chairmen of the village and town panchayats. The panchayats at both levels were empowered to spend whatever revenue they could raise by local taxation
and whatever grants they received from Kathmandu to provide such services as education, health, transport, water and electricity and the upkeep of public buildings.

The bicameral legislature was to consist of the *Rastriya Sabha*, or National Council—the lower house—and the *Bharadari Sabha*, the Council of Nobles. The *Rastriya Sabha* was to have 25 nominated and 42 elected members. The 42 elected members were to be the chairmen of the 32 district *panchayats*; the chairmen of the four town *panchayats* of Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur and Birgunj; two members to represent the intelligentsia; one member to represent each of four occupational groups—merchants and traders, landlords and *birtawalas*, government employees, and workers. Political parties were banned. Only persons who had matriculated from high school could vote for the two representatives of the intelligentsia, while the candidates for election to these positions had to hold a college degree. Merchants and traders who paid Rs. 100 or more in customs duty per annum could elect one of their number as the representative of their occupational group. Landlords or *birtawalas* owning more than one hectare of land could vote for the landowners' representative. Rules for election of the civil servants' and workers' representatives were left to the government to frame. The President of the *Rastriya Sabha* was to be appointed by the Prime Minister and its Vice-President would be elected from among its members.
The two houses of the legislature were to meet at least twice a year. The Prime Minister had the right to veto any motion and his assent was required for any bill to become law. Four topics were removed from the purview of the legislature: the civil lists of the King and the Prime Minister, the pay and pensions of public servants appointed by the Prime Minister, expenditure on the armed forces and expenditure on foreign affairs. In addition, the national budget was to originate with the Prime Minister who would lay it before the legislature.

In spite of all its constraints and shortcomings, the constitution was a positive and constructive attempt by Padma Shumsher to meet the challenge of the times. From the people’s point of view, its most important provisions were the creation of representative and responsible government at the local level and the provision of formal safeguards against arbitrary government through the establishment of an Auditor General’s Office and a Public Service Commission. Above all, the 1948 Constitution granted the Nepalese people basic civil rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, that they had not enjoyed before.

On the debit side, the Constitution assumed the hereditary right of the Rana family to the offices of Prime Minister of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung. The Indian constitutional advisers pressed hard for the inclusion of a phrase to the effect that the constitution had been drawn up “with the ultimate aim of responsible and representative government”. The inclusion of this goal even in vague and general terms would, they pointed out, ensure the continued support of the Prime Minister of India for the Rana regime. Padma Shumsher himself was quite amenable to their proposal but the leading members of the Chandra and Juddha families were not prepared to accept any instrument that might in the future compromise the pre-eminent position of the Rana family.

The constitution might have survived its own reactionary preamble; what doomed it was Padma Shumsher’s decision to resign before it was due to come into effect on 14 April 1948. For a man of evident political foresight and strong liberal tendencies, his decision must forever be held against him as a dereliction of duty.

Resignation

Padma Shumsher left Kathmandu on 21 February 1948, having wound up his domestic affairs and made up his mind to resign after he had settled down in India. The Government of India had allotted him 16 hectares of land at Ranchi in Bihar at a nominal price and there he planned to build houses for himself and several members of his family. Major General Vijaya Shumsher, the son of his successor-designate, Mohan Shumsher, travelled with him in order to bring his resignation back to Kathmandu. But much to the discomfort of Mohan Shumsher, who had already installed
himself in the Prime Minister’s official residence, Vijaya Shumsher returned empty-handed. Several weeks passed without any word from Ranchi and the Chandra family began to fear that Padma Shumsher was being pressured by Nepalese expatriates to reverse his decision to resign. The real reason for the Prime Minister’s procrastination, however, was actually much more mundane. Padma Shumsher was negotiating with British revenue officials on the tax status of his investments in India and he felt that the authorities would be more likely to grant favourable consideration to a Prime Minister of a friendly State than to an ex-Maharaja.

In the event, Padma Shumsher despatched a letter to the Nepal darbar tendering his resignation with effect from Friday 30 April 1948. The way was now clear for Commander-in-Chief Mohan Shumsher to assume the prime ministership. The hardliners’ hour had come.

* * *
The end of the Second World War, which coincided with Padma Shumsher’s appointment to the primeministership, brought neither political stability nor tangible rewards to Nepal. Rather, the darbar was faced with the problem of reintegrating some 200,000 war veterans whom the British had demobilised quickly and with minimal financial assistance, many of whom had been exposed to the insidious subversive influences of the Indian nationalist movement. Padma Shumsher could probably have mastered the challenge posed by the return of the troops had it not coincided with the departure of the British from India and the transfer of power to the Indian National Congress, who had long regarded the Ranas as the entrenched opponents of the socialist, democratic elements of the independence movement, and had it not been for the relentless and destructive pressures within the Rana family that handicapped his efforts to accommodate the increasingly insistent demands of the people that they be allowed to participate in the political affairs of the nation.

Padma Shumsher was caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, he genuinely believed in the need to introduce liberal political reforms and associate the people with the processes of government. On the other, he could not bring himself to compromise the future interests of the Ranas and their continued exploitation of the country as a family fief. Sadly, he lacked the statesmanship and the qualities of leadership needed to forge a compromise.
13

Mohan Shumsher
(1948–1951)
13. Mohan Shumsher (1948-1951)

On 21 February 1948 General Sir Mohan Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, Knight Commander of the Indian Empire and Knight Commander of the Star of India, became Acting Prime Minister of a regime under siege. The British had departed from the sub-continent and the attitude of the new Indian Government towards the absolute and autocratic rule of the Rana family was beginning to harden. The communists were gaining the ascendancy in the civil war in China, their intentions toward Tibet and Nepal unknown but suspect. Internally, political opposition was becoming more broad-based, more vociferous and more difficult to suppress. Mohan Shumsher must have known in his heart that he was about to preside over the demise of the regime. It is to his credit that the regime chose not to destroy itself in a bloodbath but to disband honourably.

The new Prime Minister wasted no time in declaring the Nepali National Congress illegal and quietly shelving the Constitution that was supposed to have come into effect on 14 April 1948. In retrospect, it was probably this latter act that doomed the Rana regime to extinction, for it deprived the Prime Minister of much of his flexibility in dealing with both the Indian Government and the domestic opposition. Denying the need for political reforms, he focussed his attention on expanding Nepal’s diplomatic relations with a view to obtaining aid for the country’s economic development. He was convinced that popular discontent was more economic than political and that he could satisfy the people by developing the country with the financial and technical assistance of the West.

In September 1948 he inaugurated the National Economic Planning Committee with a speech calling for the fulfilment of the people’s basic needs by increasing production and ensuring an efficient and equitable distribution of goods and services. He called on the Committee to draw up a 15-year development plan that would improve transport, agriculture, mines, industry, forests, education, health and the basic living standards of
the people. The President of the National Economic Planning Committee was to be the Prime Minister's younger son, Vijaya Shumsher, while the Committee's more important meetings would be chaired by the Prime Minister himself or Commander-in-Chief Baber Shumsher. Rhetoric and high ideals apart, the Committee produced very little, for the senior Ranas who headed government departments regarded its exertions as a strategem by Vijaya Shumsher to gain control of their personal fiefs and their power bases. Without their cooperation the Committee withered.

At the same time as he was promoting the country economically, Mohan Shumsher was attempting to strangle it politically. During his first two years in office he promulgated laws that drastically curtailed what little freedom of expression and association the people had won. Anything that was written or said that could be construed as having an adverse effect on the interests of the regime was harshly punished. The opening of private schools, reading rooms and libraries was discouraged and plans for establishing a University and a Sanskrit College were shelved, despite the appointment of a government commission for that purpose. In response to his critics, Mohan Shumsher pointed out that some 150 village panchayats had been elected by universal adult franchise throughout the Kingdom. What he did not add was that their authority
was confined to minor administrative and judicial functions. Municipalities also began to function in Kathmandu, Patan and Birgunj, but they were so completely emasculated that in Kathmandu eleven of the 21 members of the municipal board resigned in disgust.

Unity in Diversity: The Growth of Oppositional Politics

The outlawing of the Nepali National Congress, far from crushing political activity within Nepal, merely gave a unity of purpose to the diverse political groups opposed to the regime and redirected them towards a more extreme programme.

In September 1948 another political party, the Nepal Praja Panchayat, was formed with the aim of cooperating with the Rana government in
implementing the moribund 1948 constitution. At first it voiced its demands at open air meetings and popular demonstrations in the towns of the Kathmandu Valley but then, having reached the conclusion that the Prime Minister had no intention of introducing his predecessor's political reforms, it decided to launch a satyagraha. As the civil disobedience movement gained momentum, B.P. Koirala travelled *incognito* to Kathmandu to propose to the *Nepal Praja Panchayat* that it coordinate its activities with those of the Nepali National Congress. But the fledgling party rebuffed his overtures. To add to his woes, B.P. Koirala was arrested after he had been in Kathmandu some weeks and thrown into prison. After six months in jail, he went on a hunger strike to protest the treatment of political prisoners and the lack of political freedom in Nepal. His action triggered widespread anti-Rana protests in India and several leading politicians, including Prime Minister Nehru, interceded on his behalf. Not wanting a political martyr on his hands, Mohan Shumsher very sensibly decided to release B.P. Koirala and expel him from Nepal. Meanwhile, the strength of the anti-Rana movement was considerably enhanced when a new political party, the Nepal Democratic Congress, was formed in Calcutta in August 1948. Though it enjoyed the patronage of two wealthy exiled Ranas, Subarna Shumsher and Mahabir Shumsher, whose branch of the family had been excluded from power in the purge of 1934, it was very much a left-leaning
organisation and it had strong institutional links with the communist movement in India. It spent the first year and a half of its existence in the political doldrums and its fortunes rose only when it decided to merge with the Nepali National Congress. On 9 April 1950 the two parties combined to form the Nepali Congress and immediately commenced preparations for launching a revolutionary movement in Nepal.

Their proposal was for armed members of the Nepali Congress to seize King Tribhuvan during the Indra Jatra festival in September and take him to western Nepal, probably to Palpa, where they would set up a parallel government. This move would be the signal for an army mutiny to be led by disgruntled officers with whom the leadership of the Nepal Democratic Congress had been plotting. Unfortunately for the conspirators, word of the plot was picked up by the Prime Minister’s intelligence network. On 24 September 1950, a group of armed Nepali Congress volunteers and several serving army officers were arrested in Kathmandu and a cache of arms, ammunition and radio equipment was seized. Under interrogation, several of the detainees implicated King Tribhuvan in the planned coup d’état.

The Crucial Variable: Relations with India

The Government of Nepal and its tormentors, the oppositional political parties, were not the only players on the Nepalese political stage. Neither of these parties could plan or act without taking into account the attitudes and objectives of the Government of India. For New Delhi had explicitly stated that, so far as security matters were concerned, India’s frontiers lay along the Himalayas, even in areas where the territory of independent sovereign states intruded. In other words, if the security of India required it, India would intervene militarily in Nepal.

Mohan Shumsher was keen to cultivate the Congress government in New Delhi in the hope that he would thereby avoid pressure to liberalise his regime. In mid-1948 he offered India the loan of ten battalions of the regular Nepalese army to assist with the Hyderabad and Kashmir crises at a time when Indian forces were stretched to the limit. The offer was gratefully accepted and the Nepalese detachments played an important role in the maintenance of public order in northern India while the Indian army coerced the two recalcitrant States into acceding to the Indian Union. While the regime’s support doubtless earned it credit points, it did not alter Prime Minister Nehru’s conviction, and that of most Indian government leaders, that limited political reforms were essential if a serious upheaval were to be avoided in Nepal.

In February 1950, Mohan Shumsher travelled to New Delhi for discussions with Prime Minister Nehru on Nepalese affairs and on Indian
PLOT TO KILL NEPAL MAHARAJA FOILED

Arrests In Capital

NEW DELHI, September 29. A CONSPIRACY to assassinate the Maharaja of Nepal, his Minister and Commander-in-Chief and leading officers of the Government, was discovered in Kathmandu following the arrest on September 24 of Mr. Sunder Raj Chalise and other members of the Nepalese Congress, according to a Press statement issued by the Nepalese Embassy here tonight.

The Press statement says that all persons in Kathmandu implicated in the conspiracy have been taken into custody and they have made confessions that they were entrusted with the task of assassinating the Maharaja, his relatives and leading Government officials and blowing up arsenals and ammunition stores and strategic places with high explosives.

The Press statement further says that Mr. Sunder Raj Chalise is a member of the Nepalese Congress and a close associate of a former Commanding General of the Nepalese Army and had been on a "previous surreptitious visit to Kathmandu to distribute money among the Army personnel with a view to creating disloyalty and disaffection in the Army."

Mr. Sunder Raj Chalise had also among his associates "a former Major in the Indian National Army and relative and personal servants of a former Major General of the Nepalese Army, now a treasurer of the so-called Nepal Congress."

The Press statement adds that following a search, arms including a sten-gun, ammunition, strips of explosives and a wireless receiving and transmitting set were discovered, hidden within the compound walls of the house of a captain who is a son-in-law of a former Commanding General of the Nepalese Army.

The press statement says that, on two previous occasions, numerous assaults with firearms were made on unarmed Nepalese policemen engaged in routine patrolling on the Nepal-India border, but the assailants made good their escape.—PTI.

Deccan Herald. 30 September 1950.

proposals for treaties of friendship and trade. Shortly before the visit, hoping to deflect Indian criticism, he announced plans for the formation of a constituent assembly that would draft a constitution for Nepal. The Maharaja returned to Kathmandu convinced that he would be able to mollify the Indian government simply by signing the drafts of the treaties he had been given. The only problem was India’s insistence that the conclusion of the treaties should be linked to the introduction of political reform. He therefore engaged in delaying tactics in the hope that China’s recent occupation of Tibet would force New
Delhi to come to terms with his regime with no conditions attached. It proved to be a shrewd piece of negotiating. With the situation in the north becoming increasingly threatening, India wanted to conclude the treaties, particularly the treaty of peace and friendship, as quickly as possible. The linkage with political reforms was dropped and the two treaties were signed in Kathmandu on 31 July 1950.

The reason that India wanted to conclude a treaty of peace and friendship in such haste only became evident when the text of a secret memorandum of understanding signed as an appendix to the treaty was made public ten years later. By this letter it was agreed that:

"Neither Government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat the two Governments shall consult with each other and devise effective countermeasures."

Although "effective countermeasures" is clearly a euphemism for military action, this letter does not under international law constitute a formal military alliance. Nevertheless, it does impose specific mutual obligations that are highly unusual in a treaty of peace and friendship.

The treaty of trade and commerce that was concluded at the same time became the subject of intense controversy in Nepal from the moment that it was signed. While Nepal gained the right to import and export goods across India without having to pay Indian excise or customs duty, it also agreed to tax its own exports to India at such a
CALCUTTA, June 15.—An Indian National Airways Dakota, which left Dum Dum this morning on the Inaugural flight of a weekly Calcutta—Katmandu service via Patna, returned to Calcutta this evening after two unsuccessful attempts to land at the capital of Nepal.

The plane was first detained at Patna by bad weather for 90 minutes. Then it failed to locate the aerodrome at Katmandu because of foggy weather and returned to Patna. On its second attempt, the pilot could not see clearly the runway, from 1,400 feet, though he succeeded in contacting the aerodrome authorities by wireless and finally decided to turn back to Calcutta.

Besides the crew of two, the plane was carrying four officials of the I.N.A. and six others, including Mr. Mritunjay Prasad, son of President Rajendra Prasad.

A plane will leave Dum Dum for Katmandu every Thursday and return the same afternoon. It will carry a maximum of 20 passengers and halt at Patna on either way.

The service will cut the otherwise three day’s arduous journey by rail road and pony to only three hours’ flying time.—PTI.

Deccan Herald 16 June 1950.

rate that they could not be sold on the Indian market more cheaply than identical products produced in India. The Nepalese business community took particular exception to this blatant piece of protectionism, while the cumbersome procedures established for the transit of goods through India were also strongly criticised. The Ranas were accused of anti-nationalism for having accepted an unequal treaty and demands were voiced for its revision.

The Nepalese opposition parties were, not surprisingly, quite distressed at the manner in which the Indian Government had struck a bargain with the Rana regime. They pressed the Congress Party to support their proposed shift from non-violent tactics to violent ones, but the response was not favourable. While the Indian Government was willing to use Nepali Congress insurgency to pressure the Ranas into conceding political reforms, it did not want the regime toppled. A compromise was reached. New Delhi would aquiesce in a struggle that did not threaten the existence of the regime, but it would not give the insurgents any material support. Although this was less than the Nepali Congress had hoped for, at least it gave them the green light to launch a revolution.
Crown Prince Mahendra with his bag. 1948.

Maharaja Mohan Shumsher with King Tribhuvan (third from right) at a ceremony at the Hunuman Dhoka Palace. 1949.
But then, virtually overnight, the plans and assumptions of all three parties—Mohan Shumsher, the Government of India and the Nepali National Congress—were rendered obsolete by a dramatic move on the part of the King.

**The King Plays His Hand**

The actions of the Nepali Congress in mounting an attempted *coup* placed King Tribhuvan in an untenable position. There is no doubt that
he maintained links with the regime's enemies in exile in India, notably with Subarna Shumsher and Mahabir Shumsher, whom he had met during his visit to Calcutta in 1946, but whether he was also a party to the abortive coup d'état of September 1950 is open to speculation. Nevertheless, there were rumblings in the Rana family that the King was becoming too involved in politics and should be deposed, while, for his part, the King feared that he might be forced to give royal approval to the execution of some of the coup leaders who were under arrest. The time had come for him to play his hand. His opening move was to seek and obtain the Prime Minister's approval to take his family on a picnic.

On the morning of Monday 6 November 1950 a motorcade of vehicles drew out of the royal palace in the centre of Kathmandu and headed north towards a forested tract of country that the royal family had permission to visit for the day. Travelling in the convoy were King Tribhuvan, his two queens and his three sons: the recently widowed Crown Prince Mahendra, Prince Himalaya and Prince Basundhara. Crown Prince Mahendra's eldest son, 5-year-old Prince Birendra, was also in the party. Their route lay past the Indian Embassy and as the cars drew level with it, the gates of the diplomatic compound swung open. The motorcade braked and turned sharply into the Embassy grounds and the gates swung shut again. The whole incident had taken less than a minute and was over before the startled Nepalese soldiers guarding the entrance to the Embassy could react. For the first time in history, a reigning monarch had sought asylum in a foreign Embassy. The final showdown had begun.

The first reaction of the Rana hierarchy was to storm the Indian Embassy and seize the King. But then cooler heads prevailed. Two emissaries were sent to the Embassy to ask the King to return to the royal palace. He refused to meet with them. An emergency session of the Bharadari Sabha was convened at 7.30 a.m. the next morning to consider the crisis. Shortly afterwards it issued a unanimous proclamation: by law, usage and the constitution of Nepal, Maharajadhiraj Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev had forfeited his right to the Crown. It was to be offered instead to the 5-year-old Prince Birendra, the eldest child of Crown Prince Mahendra. Two emissaries were sent again to the Indian Embassy to convey the decision of the Council of Nobles. The King told them that he did not recognise their decision, that he had no intention of abdicating and that young Prince Birendra would not return to the palace. Within hours the Bharadari Sabha responded: King Tribhuvan was formally deposed and his four-year-old grandson, Prince Gyanendra, whom the Ranas had found in the royal palace, was proclaimed King.
SITUATION IN NEPAL EXPLOSIVE
GROWING DISAFFECTION AGAINST RANA REGIME

FROM OUR SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN U.P. ON THE NEPALESE BORDER, Nov 10.—The situation in Nepal as a result of the action of the King who on November 6 sought asylum in the Indian Embassy at Khatmandu continues to be exceedingly serious and explosive, both in respect of internal and external aspects, according to reports from the interior.

The existing regime has tightened up security measures and strengthened frontier patrols and it is not easy to enter or leave that country without interrogation at least. However movement of people in and out of Nepal continues through devious routes and stratagems. Almost every train from the Nepal border carries important personages who evidently have found it too hot to live there any longer. Among those who have left for various destinations in India during the last three days are generals, colonels and members of lesser status belonging to the Rana family, indicating that the trouble in Nepal now developing is not entirely as between the Nepali Nationalists and the ruling Rana family, but has wider ramifications.

Among the incognito visitors to India from Nepal today was General Prachand Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana. The General was on his way to Butwal to take over as C-in-C of Nepal’s Western Command from General Rudra Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana who, according to accounts, has come under suspicion of the Khatmandu authorities on account of his political leanings and associations.

Nepalese armed detachments are being reinforced slowly and unostentatiously at all strategic areas and large-scale and widespread changes are being made in the administrative set-up in the various regions, indicating that the conspiracy against the present regime is deeply laid and confined to various sections of the population.

For some time there has also been a constant flow of arms, explosives and other modern weapons into Nepal where, according to indications, a sizable section of the existing army is also in a state of disaffection, especially after the action of their King in seeking asylum in a foreign Embassy. The King of Nepal, known as Panch Sarkar, though constitutionally powerless is held in special reverence by the people of Nepal, specially by the armed forces, who consider that their loyalty is to him only. Besides, there are about 25,000 army pensioners in Nepal and on them the Nepalese Nationalists have been working fairly effectively for some time.

DISAFFECTION SPREADING

The position now appears to be that, in addition to the Nepalese Nationalists, disaffection has spread to sections of the Rana family itself, while the King by his act has clearly indicated which way his sympathies do not lie. Besides, large hidden stocks of arms and ammunition have been built up in Nepal and a certain amount of demoralization has also set-in in the administrative machinery.

The position is therefore exceedingly explosive. Anything can happen at any moment.

With his grandfather, King Tribhuvan, and his father, Crown Prince Mahendra, in self-imposed exile in India, the four-year-old Prince Gyanendra is crowned ‘King’ of Nepal. 7 November 1950.

The reaction of the Nepali Congress was immediate. That same day it issued a statement that King Tribhuvan, by his action, had branded the Ranas as usurpers and that they no longer commanded the allegiance of the people. Four days later it launched an armed invasion of Nepal. To defend his regime, Mohan Shumsher immediately requested recognition of the new ruler by the three countries with which Nepal had diplomatic relations—India, Britain and the United States.

In the interim, the impasse over the King’s flight to the Indian Embassy was the subject of frantic negotiations between Kathmandu and Delhi. Finally a compromise was reached. Following personal assurances from Nehru to Mohan Shumsher that the King would not be allowed to engage in political activities in India, the royal family was allowed to leave Nepal. On 11 November 1950 the international press reported that King Tribhuvan had arrived in New Delhi on an Indian Air Force plane “for medical treatment”. On that same day, the Nepali Congress launched its armed invasion of Nepal.

The Collapse of Power

In the small hours of Saturday 11 November 1950 three hundred
armed insurgents of the Nepali Congress' "liberation army", the *Mukti Sena*, attacked Birgunj, a substantial border town that served as the main gateway from India to Kathmandu. The army garrison was heavily outnumbered but not finally overwhelmed until its last round of ammunition had been spent. The Governor and his senior district administrators were captured. A simultaneous attack on the industrial town of Biratnagar to the east was repulsed by the government forces stationed there, but four days later 300 well trained and well armed insurgents over-ran the district headquarter of Butwal, the principal town in the western Tarai.

Nehru was reportedly furious at these developments, which completely upset his plans for a negotiated settlement to Nepal's constitutional crisis. He turned down the insurgents' request for arms

Sir Mohan Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, GCSI, GCIE, Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung. 1948.
and ammunition and denied them the use of Indian railways to move their men and material up to the Indo-Nepalese frontier. As a result, an attack by 200 armed insurgents on Jhapa in the far eastern Tarai on 19 November was repulsed and the next day the detachment that had seized Birgunj was obliged to withdraw into India. During the whole of this unfolding drama, King Tribhuvan refrained from issuing a statement supporting the insurgents, thus depriving the Nepali Congress of crucial support at a critical time.

With armed opposition faltering, the survival of the Rana regime now hinged upon recognition of Gyanendra as King of Nepal by Britain, the

General Rudra Shumsher. His defection to the Congress insurgents was a decisive factor in the collapse of the Rana regime.
United States and India. The British were initially prepared to accord recognition. They, too, had just signed a treaty of peace and friendship with Kathmandu, providing for improved recruitment facilities for the British Gurkha regiments. They knew that the Nepali Congress was opposed to the employment of Nepalese “as mercenary soldiers by foreigners for imperialist purposes” and they feared that the collapse of the Rana regime would jeopardise this arrangement. However, they did not want to risk recognising a new ruler who might subsequently be disowned by both Nepal and India, so they reserved their decision.

Vijaya Shumsher and Keshar Shumsher, the Foreign and Defence Ministers, travelled to New Delhi on 27 November to discuss the succession issue with the Indian government. The Ranas were prepared to introduce a limited amount of reform into the administration, they conceded, but they were not prepared to accept the restoration of King Tribhuvan. The intransigence of the Ranas and the procrastination of the British and Americans exhausted Nehru’s patience. India announced that it would continue to recognise King Tribhuvan. The two Rana emissaries returned to Kathmandu carrying a three point Indian proposal for a compromise: the election of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution; the formation of an interim government with popular (i.e. Nepali Congress) representation but a Rana Prime Minister; and recognition of King Tribhuvan.

The Indian proposals coincided with an upsurge of armed incursions into the Tarai by the Mukti Sena that had managed to obtain illegal arms from Kashmir and the new socialist government of Burma. Biratnagar and several other towns in the Tarai were captured and large areas of the eastern and western hills came under the control of the insurgents.

The Rana family was deeply divided as to the best course of action to take, with the younger and less-favoured members of the family urging that the government accept the Indian proposals. The die was cast when General Rudra Shumsher, the former Commander-in-Chief who had been struck off the Roll of Succession in the purge of 1934 and who had, until a few weeks earlier, been governor of Palpa, threw in his lot with the rebels, taking a well armed, well trained garrison of government troops over with him. Having failed to obtain foreign recognition of the new ruler and with the internal security situation deteriorating rapidly, Mohan Shumsher had no option but to capitulate. On 8 January 1951 he announced that, as no foreign country had recognised Gyanendra as King, Tribhuvan would be restored to the throne and a cabinet with popular representation would be formed.

Negotiations between the Ranas and the Nepali Congress began in Delhi in early February under the supervision of King Tribhuvan.
Under the “Delhi compromise”, as their agreement came to be known, a ten man cabinet, equally divided between the Ranas and the Nepali Congress, would be formed. Mohan Shumsher would remain Prime Minister. After receiving assurances that popular representatives would be included in the interim government, the Nepali Congress president, M.P. Koirala, agreed to the “Delhi compromise” and ordered a ceasefire. King Tribhuvan and the Nepali Congress leaders flew back to Kathmandu on 15 February to a tumultuous public welcome. Three days later, on 18 February 1951, King Tribhuvan issued a lal mohur revoking all the hereditary powers and privileges that his great-great-grandfather had bestowed on the Rana family in 1847.

The revolution that had been triggered on the day that King Tribhuvan fled to the Indian Embassy had succeeded. The regime that had lasted 104 years had collapsed in 104 days.
PART THREE

TWILIGHT OF THE RANAS
14. An Epilogue

King Tribhuvan’s revocation of the powers and privileges of the Rana family on 18 February 1951 marked the first occasion for more than a century on which a King of Nepal had freely exercised his sovereign powers. Now it was the task of the King to dismantle the old regime and construct a representative government that would enable the people to participate in the country’s political life, and an administrative system that would transform Nepal into a modern welfare state. Having spent forty years as a figurehead monarch under five successive Rana Prime Ministers, King Tribhuvan became the guiding hand in moving Nepal towards a democratic constitution to be framed by a constituent assembly.

As provided for in the “Delhi compromise”, the country would, in the interim, be governed by a 10-man cabinet composed of equal numbers of Rana and non-Rana appointees with Mohan Shumsher continuing to fill the post of Prime Minister. The social and economic objectives of the revolution were postponed and the emphasis placed on achieving a viable political system. To India fell the utterly thankless task of playing midwife at the birth of that system.

The composition and ranking order of the interim Rana-Congress cabinet and the portfolios and political persuasions of its members were as follows:

1. Mohan Shumsher Rana. Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs.
2. Baber Shumsher Rana. Minister for Defence (Next in line of succession to the hereditary prime ministership under the ancien régime).


10. Bharat Man Sharma. Minister for Food and Agriculture (A Nepali Congress organiser from the western Tarai).

The proposed changes in the political system of post-Rana Nepal necessitated changes in the administrative system as well. A central Secretariat was established in the Singha Darbar with government Departments headed by permanent Secretaries, operating under the political direction of cabinet Ministers. Reorganising the country’s bureaucracy was a task fraught with difficulties, not only because of the hidebound nature of the institutions being overhauled, but also because of resentment within the Secretariat to the secondment of Indian advisors to assist with this complex undertaking. The Indian advisors produced a long and detailed report on the Nepalese administrative system and an equally long list of suggestions for its reform, based on the Indian civil service but with perceptive modifications to suit Nepal’s traditions and experiences. Their report provided the framework for a reorganisation of the Secretariat into eleven departments in 1953, but few of its recommendations were ever fully implemented. No less resented by senior Nepalese civil servants was the appointment of Indian officials to top positions in the Secretariat in functional rather than advisory roles. The first Attorney-General of Nepal, for example, was an Indian lawyer, and the reorganisation of the police force was entrusted at one stage to a senior Indian police officer. Only a few Indians ever served in such capacities in the Secretariat, and these only for short periods, but their presence unsettled senior Nepalese civil servants who feared that the key positions in the administration would eventually be monopolised by Indians.

But of all the Indian advisory missions to Nepal, the one that aroused the most hostility and which struck most directly at public sensitivity was the Indian military mission that arrived in Kathmandu in February 1952 to assist in the reorganisation and training of the Nepalese army. The Nepalese had long taken pride in the reputation of the Gurkhas
as fighters and now the Indians had come to teach them how to soldier. It was a slur on the nation's self-respect. To add injury to insult, the reorganisation programme involved a reduction in the size of the army from 25,000 to 6,000 men. This caused extreme resentment amongst those dismissed from service. The Indian military mission, which had originally been scheduled to complete its task in one year, stayed on for six and became an object of public abuse and dissent.

In April 1951 King Tribhuvan granted an interim constitution to the people "on the advice of the Council of Ministers". Though most of its provisions were not justiciable, it did constitute a set of directive principles of state policy intended to serve as a guide to the compilation of a final constitution. It enshrined the rights of freedom, belief, expression and association, and the rights to work, education and social welfare. It transferred the powers previously enjoyed by the Rana Prime Ministers to the King-in-Council. The executive was separated from the judiciary at the highest level by providing that the judgements of the Supreme Court could not be reversed by the King or the Prime Minister. Formal democratic safeguards were incorporated by creating a Public Service Commission, an Electoral Commission and an Auditor General's Office. The first departure from the administrative traditions and practices of the Shah rulers and the Ranas had been made, for the 1951 interim constitution was not a grant from the King to the people but an act promulgated by the King on the advice of a Council of Ministers. It assumed the concept of a King-in-Council which is the very essence of a constitutional monarchy.

Relations between the Nepali Congress members of the interim cabinet and its Rana members had been strained from the outset of their association, with the former group constantly searching for an opportunity to unseat the Prime Minister. B.P. Koirala made his first attempt to topple Mohan Shumsher by ordering the arrest in the small hours of the morning of 12 April 1951 of the grandson of Defence Minister Baber Shumsher, who led a small political party that enjoyed the support of the Rana members of the cabinet. He was arrested along with a veteran politician of the revolution, Ranadhir Subba, a former leader of the All-India Gorkha League. The arrests provoked mass demonstrations by supporters, during which one person was killed and the Home Minister's residence was attacked. There was panic and general confusion throughout Kathmandu and the Congress members of cabinet, fearing that the Prime Minister had launched a counter revolution, fled to the safety of the royal palace. It was due only to the calm and decisive actions of Senior Commanding General Keshar Shumsher that public order was restored without bloodshed.
An emergency cabinet session was convened in the palace under the chairmanship of King Tribhuvan, during which the Congress Ministers and two of the Rana Ministers demanded Mohan Shumsher's resignation. The King, however, felt that it would not contribute to the political stability of the nation to have the Prime Minister resign in disgrace. Though his position was severely weakened, he would remain as the head of the government. More ominously, the incident gave the Nepali Congress a pretext to retain its liberation fighters who were reorganised as a paramilitary force and renamed the Rakshya Dal.

On 10 November 1951, the first anniversary of the revolution, the Home Minister, B.P. Koirala, made an emotional speech over Radio Nepal, demanding a more representative cabinet to replace what he described as an unnatural coalition. To enable “progressive forces to re-examine the political situation” he ordered the release of the leaders of a dozen or so political parties who had been arrested some weeks earlier when a disturbance during a football match, at which Crown Prince Mahendra and most Ministers were present, had turned into a spontaneous anti-government demonstration. That same day the five Congress Ministers in the cabinet handed their resignations directly to the King. The Prime Minister did not even learn of their mass resignation until the following evening, whereupon he and his Rana Ministers had no choice but to follow suit, leaving King Tribhuvan free to form a new government. The first of a series of experiments in a form and structure of government for Nepal had come to an end.

With the release of their leaders, the opposition political parties were able to express their dissatisfaction at a year of political turbulence and arbitrary administration and demand a more broad-based government. On 16 November 1951 King Tribhuvan announced the appointment of a 14-member Council of Ministers containing representatives from the eastern and western hills and the Tarai and from ethnic groups such as the Gurungs and the Kiranti. Keshar Shumsher Rana retained the defence portfolio and the veteran opponent of the old regime, Subarna Shumsher Rana, retained the finance portfolio. In a surprise move, B.P. Koirala was dropped and his brother, M.P. Koirala, was appointed Prime Minister. The cabinet contained eight Congress members and six independents. Although the independents had been nominated by the outgoing Prime Minister with the King’s approval, they looked to the King for guidance and were effectively his men in the Cabinet.

On 14 December 1951 Mohan Shumsher, the last Rana Prime Minister, left Kathmandu to attend his granddaughter’s wedding in Bombay. He never returned to Nepal. After visiting Bombay he retired to
Bangalore in south India where he lived until his death in 1965 at the age of 80.

The new, broadly-based government proved to be no more stable than its predecessor. The Nepali Congress was deeply divided by the personal rivalry between the Koirala brothers and by disagreement within its ranks on a basic economic and social programme. When the Prime Minister and most of his cabinet colleagues were expelled from the Nepali Congress at the party's annual conference in August 1952, the government was forced to resign. Unwilling to accept B.P. Koirala as Prime Minister again, but unable to find a suitable alternative, King Tribhuvan decided to rule directly with the assistance of an advisory council headed by Keshar Shumsher Rana. It was an interim measure, for the King was not in good health and he viewed direct rule as a burdensome expedient to be terminated as soon as a party government that met with his approval could be formed. Finally, in August 1953, he again called upon M.P. Koirala to form a government.

The Prime Minister was instructed to form a coalition government that included all major political interests except the Ranas and the communists. The result, whether intentional or not, was a government that excluded not only the Ranas and the communists but the Nepali Congress as well. It was a coalition of four insignificant parties that bickered from the time it was formed until it fell apart in March 1955.

The political situation had become so unsatisfactory that one month earlier, in a speech to mark the fourth anniversary of the overthrow of the Rana regime, Crown Prince Mahendra had observed in a tone of evident frustration:

"Today marks the completion of four years of democracy in the country, but it is a matter of great shame that we cannot point to even four important achievements that we have made during this period. If we say that democracy is still in its infancy, we have seen such qualities as selfishness, greed and jealousy that are not found in an infant. If we say it has matured, we do not, unfortunately, see it flourishing anywhere. And I presume that this is obvious to everyone in the country."

King Tribhuvan's death on 13 March 1955 and the accession of Crown Prince Mahendra to the throne marked a dramatic turning point in post-Rana Nepal. The new King quickly demonstrated his intent to participate directly and actively in the political process. He would serve as *de facto* Prime Minister as well as head of state. Negotiations amongst the various political parties were held under his direct supervision and on his terms, and when it became evident that no acceptable coalition government could be formed he decided upon a one-party government based on the *Nepal Praja Parishad*, the organisation that had instigated an unsuccessful conspiracy against
the Ranas in October 1940, and complemented by several independents with close ties to the palace. Tanka Prasad Acharya, the organisation’s leader, was asked to form a government in January 1956.

The Acharya cabinet chalked up some modest accomplishments in the areas of land reform, administrative reorganisation and economic development but it made no impression on the basic political situation in which the oppositional forces, spearheaded by the Nepali Congress, were gaining in popular support. In a surprise move, the reasons for which are still not clear, King Mahendra dismissed Tanka Prasad Acharya in July 1957 and appointed in his place the colourful and controversial political figure, Dr. K.I. Singh.

K.I. Singh had been one of the Nepali Congress fighters in the 1950 revolt against the Ranas. He had refused to accept the ceasefire agreement of February 1951 and continued to fight on in the western hills. It had taken a joint military operation by the Nepalese army and Indian police units to suppress his activities and capture him. He was still in prison in Kathmandu when, on the night of 22 January 1952, the Nepali Congress’ paramilitary wing, the Rakshya Dal, mutinied against its political masters. One thousand armed men captured the Government Secretariat at the Singha Darbar, the airport, the radio station, the wireless and telegraph office, the ordnance depot and several factories. They released Dr. K.I. Singh and then threw open the central prison. Although most of the mutineers were from eastern Nepal and had had nothing to do with Singh’s insurrection in the western hills, they nevertheless co-opted him as their spokesman. With the Rakshya Dal in effective control of the capital, Singh conveyed the rebels’ demand for an all-party interim government to the King. But before the palace or the government had time to respond, Singh slipped out of the Singha Darbar and made his way north through one of the Himalayan passes and into the safety of Chinese-occupied Tibet. Meanwhile, back in Kathmandu, the army quickly recaptured the Singha Darbar and other key installations. The mutiny collapsed and the Rakshya Dal was officially disbanded. The Nepalese government demanded Singh’s extradition and the Tibetans were willing enough to comply but the Chinese intervened and removed him to Peking. In August 1955 Singh returned to Kathmandu and received a pardon from King Mahendra. In June 1957 the King invited him to form a government.

The King and his new Prime Minister fell out within three months and Dr. K.I. Singh was summarily dismissed in November 1957. King Mahendra next tried a different system of direct rule—a national government in which he would function as Prime Minister in a cabinet composed of party leaders whom he himself would select. Under his
direct supervision the interim government prepared the country for its first general election.

On 18 February 1959, eight years to the day after the abolition of the Rana regime, Nepal held its first general elections. It was a tribute to the Electoral Commission that the elections were conducted honestly and peacefully in the face of enormous organisational difficulties created by the mountainous terrain and by the fact that 96 per cent of the electorate was illiterate. The Nepali Congress won a landslide victory, the party’s president, B.P. Koirala, was appointed Prime Minister and a party cabinet whose right to govern was based upon a solid majority in an elected legislature was installed in office. But King Mahendra became increasingly dissatisfied with subsequent political developments. He was disturbed at the appointment of Congress Party supporters as district development officers and the possibility that the rural areas of the Kingdom would be politicised and then fall victim to the partisan political acrimony that had plagued Kathmandu. He was particularly upset at the government’s heavy handed suppression of riots in Gorkha, the ancestral home of the Shah dynasty, in October 1960, in which several people died. He was also dissatisfied with the passive role of a constitutional monarch and he was apprehensive that the leadership of the Nepali National Congress, which was fundamentally unsympathetic to the institution of the monarchy, was plotting its eventual abolition. His reaction, when it came, was swift and decisive. On 15 December 1960 the cabinet was dismissed, its Ministers were arrested and parliament was dissolved. A new cabinet was appointed in which the King functioned as de facto Prime Minister. Another period of direct rule had begun.

King Mahendra renewed his experimentations with political systems designed to institutionalise the central role of the monarchy in the process of government. These events were not without their opponents and there was serious internal disorder throughout Nepal in 1961 and 1962, mostly directed by Nepali Congress leaders in exile in India, notably Subarna Shumsher Rana. But the Sino-Indian border war of October–November 1962 brought this opposition to a sudden halt. King Mahendra’s political system, the panchayat raj, was formalised in a new constitution promulgated on 16 December 1962. Political parties were banned and the national parliament was composed of independent members elected by universal adult suffrage and appointed representatives of class and professional organisations. Concurrently, the King worked tirelessly towards the economic emancipation of the common man in a country where, even today, more than 90 per cent of the population is directly dependent upon the land. Basic land reform legislation was introduced, the Muluki Ain was rewritten, the
administration was reorganised in accordance with modern principles of public management, education and health services were expanded exponentially and, with a broadening of diplomatic relations, technical assistance and development aid flooded in.

The Ranas, meanwhile, quietly found their niche in the new social order. Many members of the erstwhile ruling élite became businessmen while others chose to live in genteel retirement. The officer corps is still dominated by Ranas and several of them have, purely on the grounds of their professional merit, risen to the rank of Ambassadors and Cabinet Ministers.

The partyless panchayat system of guided democracy was continued by King Birendra, who succeeded his father on 31 January 1972. However, serious civil disturbances in 1990 that resulted in the deaths of several hundred people throughout the Kingdom led the King to abolish the panchayat system and legalise political parties. The transition from autocracy to constitutional monarchy has proved to be more difficult than had been anticipated at the time of King Tribhuvan’s restoration and the process still relies upon the monarch’s firm, guiding hand. Assisting the King to provide that guidance are the twin centres of executive power in Nepal: the civil service in the Singha Darbar and the palace secretariat in the Narayanibani royal palace.

During the Rana period the civil service was monopolised by client families, mostly Brahmins but with a good proportion of Newaris, and today most of the personnel at the upper levels of the bureaucracy are still drawn from these groups. Though the procedures are no longer as elaborate and stylised, a chakari relationship between high ranking secretariat officials and their subordinates is still commonplace. Success in a civil service career still depends as much upon a capacity to foresee bureaucratic power struggles and back the winning side as upon the quality of work performed. The entry into the civil service of a large number of highly educated technocrats from outside the traditional feeder group has not made much of an impact on the general character of the bureaucracy since they, too, have had to accept the established traditional operating procedures. If they are to have any chance of surviving they must adapt themselves to the prevailing rules of the game in an incredibly complex and competitive institution; an institution in which a high official is still evaluated by the lower ranks of the bureaucracy more by his success in protecting and advancing his clients than by the skill and efficiency with which he performs his duties.

Despite the introduction of a fledgling multi-party democracy, the palace secretariat still remains a most important centre of decision making in the Kingdom. During the pre-Rana period, the royal palace
was the hub of the country’s administrative structure and appointments to most official positions within the palace were the privilege of the old Gorkha families that had come with the Shah kings to Kathmandu. But with the transfer of power to the Rana family the influence of the officials at the royal palace declined drastically and the staff at the Prime Minister’s palace became the centre of administrative authority. Following the 1951 revolution, the palace secretariat regained its pre-eminent position as the focus of the political and administrative process and its predominance over other government bodies in Nepal is both recognised and accepted—a position that is enhanced by the politically passive role of the bureaucracy.

The dramatis personae on today’s national stage would not be strangers to those who witnessed the formative years of the Kingdom of Nepal. The Shah family sits securely on the throne. The officer corps in the army is dominated by the Rana family. Though a few key positions in the administration are held by members of a new modernising elite whose origins lie outside the traditional ruling class, the majority are still in the hands of members of the other old bharadari families of Gorkha who have featured so prominently throughout our story—the Thapas, the Pandes, the Basniats and the chautariyas. Plus ça change.
In order to complete the story of Nepal under the Ranas it remains for us to consider the nature of Rana rule and to make an assessment of it. Reflecting the structure of this book, our starting point will be the setting in which this unique family rose to power.

The Setting

The transfer of the capital of the Gorkhali state to Kathmandu following Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of the Valley involved more than just a change of location. It necessitated the creation of a new political and administrative system and resulted in significant changes to the structure of the ruling elite. Government policy at Gorkha had been formulated through extensive consultations amongst the six leading families of the principality, all of which were of high caste Hindu stock. Policy at the Shah court at Kathmandu, by contrast, was formulated with the assistance of a Bharadari Sabha, a Council of Nobles, consisting not only of the leading families of Gorkha who had transferred their home base to the new capital, but also of high caste Hindu families from other principalities that had been absorbed into the expanding Kingdom of Nepal. The Bharadari Sabha rapidly became central to the decision making process of the state. The assent of its members, never easy to obtain in the conspiratorial, faction-ridden atmosphere of the darbar, was essential to the development of government policy, and if a clique of bharadars was not disposed to support the King on a particular issue, it could place a considerable constraint upon the royal power.

The monarchy faced two serious problems in the decades following the conquest of the central Himalayan region. Firstly, there was a lack of unity within the royal family itself. The King, his two Queens, their respective sons and the royal collaterals—the chautariyas—often worked at cross purposes, making manipulation of the royal family by other elite factions both irresistible and rewarding. This self-inflicted
vulnerability was exacerbated by the fact that the throne was occupied by minors from 1777 to 1840, during which period affairs of state were controlled by the regent or the mukhtiyar and by the alliance of family factions that supported them.

In the period up to 1846, politics at the centre were characterised by intense and sometimes bloody struggles amongst family-based political cliques. Besides the ruling Shah family, the principal players were the Thapas, the Pandes, the Basniats and the chautariya families. A number of other Kshatriya families, such as the Konwars, who were later to be known as the Ranas, and some Newari families from the Kathmandu Valley also played important roles in court politics, usually as power bases for the leading bharadari families. Not unexpectedly, productive working arrangements were almost impossible to achieve under such conditions and the period was marked by chronic instability and paralysis. Ruling coalitions rarely accommodated opposition factions in the government system but sought instead to eliminate them through assassination or expulsion. When the opposition gained the ascendancy it retaliated in kind. The result: every one of the mukhtiyars who headed the government between 1775 and 1846 died a violent death.

Two other elite groups who played an important role in the new social order bear mentioning: the Brahmins and the Newars. The prominent Brahmin families who had followed the Shah court from Gorkha did not participate in the rough and tumble of centre stage politics. On the contrary, their role as priests and gurus to the royal and bharadari families, their skill as astrologers and their virtual monopoly of the state's legal system led them to act as a restraining influence upon the leading families. They enjoyed a prominent social status and they had an important voice in decision-making forums. The Newar families who had managed the affairs of the three kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley prior to their conquest were initially excluded from the new order. But their administrative and commercial skills, which the Brahmins and Kshatriyas of Gorkha lacked, were badly needed by the rapidly expanding Nepalese state and they were soon accommodated into the administrative hierarchy. They served as confidential secretaries and economic advisers and, in time, the mid-level positions in the central bureaucracy came to be their exclusive preserve. They, too, kept themselves discreetly in the background but they nevertheless wielded substantial influence and assumed an important role in the decision making process.

The expansion of British power throughout northern India in the opening decades of the 19th century and the establishment of a British Residency in Kathmandu added another dimension to factionalism and instability in the darbar. Although the British had no direct influence upon Nepalese politics, various factions sought their support
in the Kingdom's internal power struggles. Thus the court consisted of constantly dividing and regrouping pro- and anti-British factions, a characteristic that remained very evident until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The bulk of the population—the millions of subsistence farmers and their families who struggled to eke out a living in the hills and in the Tarai—were unaffected by the turbulent events that at times paralysed the court at Kathmandu, while the local élites became quite adept at adjusting to sudden, traumatic changes at the centre. In fact, the weakening of central authority that accompanied such political upheavals often worked to the advantage of the latter groups, for it enabled them to obstruct or sabotage central government policies, such as those affecting land tenure and taxation, that were not to their liking.

Although the Shah dynasty was beset by internal strife, hampered by the presence of minors on the throne and buffeted by faction fighting at court, it never completely lost its political prerogatives during these turbulent years. Indeed, the Crown, as the ultimate source of legitimacy that each succeeding government needed, provided the only continuity and stability in the Kingdom. Nor did it endure its troubles passively. The monarchy itself was no stranger to political ambition and it was frequently driven by the same single-minded goal of advancing its family interests as were the bharadari families.

The fall of Bhim Sen Thapa in 1837 precipitated a near breakdown of central authority as the bitter struggle amongst the various factions contending for power brought the state to the brink of anarchy. This volatile situation persisted for a decade until it was finally resolved in a manner typical of Nepal during that period: a sudden crisis led to a bloody confrontation, many of the leading bharadars perished or were driven into exile, and a new dominant faction emerged and quickly took control of the army and the administration. The event in this instance was the famous Kot Massacre of 15 September 1846 and the victors were the Konwars, a minor bharadari family that had previously been in a client relationship with the Thapas.

The Rise of the House of Rana

All the leading members of the Thapa, Pande, Basniat and chautariya families who did not perish in the Kot Massacre were forced to flee the country. King Rajendra was allowed to make a pilgrimage to Benaras along with his troublesome queen and, in his absence, was deposed and replaced by his minor son. Even the rajguru lost his hereditary position and a family allied to the Konwar faction became the supreme moderator of the moral and religious life of the Kingdom. Jang Bahadur's position was then legitimised by a lal mohur that
granted him what was, in effect, a range of sovereign powers and ceded all effective political authority to the Rana family in perpetuity.

Initially, large sections of the population welcomed the Ranas. While they did not promise greater participation in the political process, they provided a greater degree of stability than Nepal had known for over 70 years. Although the principal bharadari families had been decimated in the Kot Massacre, the survivors still could not be ignored. For a generation they were subjected to systematic repression but gradually, through a process of intermarriage and accommodation into the mid-levels of the administration, most bharadari elements were reconciled with the regime. Concurrently, the royal family was neutralised by isolating it from the people and keeping its members as virtual State prisoners. Henceforth the King appeared in public only on the most important of religious or state occasions. In addition, intermarriage between the Shah and Rana families was encouraged as a way of binding together the fortunes of the two families.

All in all, it was an impressive performance by Jang Bahadur who ruled as an absolute dictator until his death in 1877. He drew up a comprehensive legal code for the country, introduced far-reaching reforms in land settlement and revenue collection in the Tarai, created a national army under a unified command, developed and maintained an excellent rapport with the government of British India and added to the Kingdom's territories. In a very real sense, Nepal was spared the fate of all the other native kingdoms on the sub-continent, which were either annexed by or became vassals of the East India Company, through the emergence of Jang Bahadur from the political debris of the Kot Massacre. By any standards, he ranks along with Prince Bahadur Shah and Bhim Sen Thapa as one of the great political leaders of unified Nepal.

**Nepal under the Ranas**

In their administration of Nepal, the Ranas continued and expanded the efforts made by previous regimes to centralise the decision making process. The officer corps of the army was exclusively Rana, hereditary land grants were made only to members of the Rana family, and all government servants, whether at the central or district level, were made directly answerable to the Prime Minister. Reappointment at the annual pajani was dependent upon loyalty to the regime. However, at the same time a gradual and prolonged effort was made to modernise the administration. Administrative rules and procedures were standardised throughout the country, as were legal regulations and procedures. The regime's administrative centralisation policy met with some success but only on a very limited range of subjects and the local elites out in the provinces managed to retain a considerable capacity to
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manipulate policies along lines that better served their own interests. This rarely involved outright opposition to a particular directive but, rather, a liberal interpretation or a subtle redefinition of it. For their part, the Ranas treated the local élites with some degree of circumspection, for they could neither be safely ignored nor easily replaced.

The concept of a bureaucracy as an independent and permanent body of functionaries devoted to the apolitical implementation of public policies was unknown in Rana Nepal. The administration, centred as it was around the wishes of the command figure at the apex, tended to make decisions from the top down. Control was centralised, personalised and completely devoid of any delegation of authority. Initiative, enterprise and moral courage on the part of its personnel were rare and suspect to the point of being dangerous. As it had few commitments beyond maintaining law and order and collecting revenue, the administration had no reason to innovate or change. As with the economic system that it presided over, its principal characteristic was a torpor that bordered on stagnation.

Although the administration of post-Rana Nepal has embraced the more complex organisational structures required to meet the nation’s goal of becoming a modern welfare society, these structural changes have not always been matched by attitudinal changes. The nature of today’s bureaucracy has been heavily influenced by traditional administrative systems and some of its basic characteristics are still in evidence, albeit in a somewhat altered form.

During the Rana period the sovereignty of the King, though strictly nominal, still continued to be acknowledged. All state documents, for example, required the royal seal, though this gesture was purely symbolic since the Prime Minister controlled the Lal Mohur. The sanctity of the King’s person was given special prominence—and he was kept politically isolated by the twin expedients of physical constraint and family inter-marriage. The Ranas realised that the most dangerous threat to their continued authority came from the monarchy and Jang Bahadur for one seriously considered deposing the Shah dynasty and usurping the throne. Several considerations stayed his hand: counterplots would surely have followed, the army’s reaction was uncertain and the British made it clear they would not countenance such a move. But the principal deterrent may well have been opposition from within the Rana family itself. The concept of an hereditary prime ministership that allowed each of Jang Bahadur’s ambitious brothers the opportunity of becoming de facto ruler of the Kingdom was a crucial element in gaining their support and enabling Jang Bahadur to consolidate his success. The collateral branches of the Rana family were not prepared to permit one of
their number to seize the Crown and relegate the rest of them to comparative obscurity.

Even in their enforced isolation the Kings of Nepal managed to maintain contact with dissident political groups, and they or their siblings were active participants in most attempts to topple the regime. But it was not until the time of King Tribhuvan that the opportunity presented itself for the Crown to reassert its sovereign prerogatives. King Tribhuvan's superb sense of political timing in fleeing to the Indian Embassy on 6 November 1950 and the shrewd manner in which he handled himself during the consequential crisis that brought the regime to its knees, enabled the monarchy to re-emerge as the dominant force in Nepalese politics.

Following this impressive display of resilience, the Shah dynasty once again plays a pre-eminent role in the nation's polity; a role that is accepted unquestioningly by political groups of every persuasion.

The Rana family's monopoly of political power gave it a monopoly of economic power as well, and enabled it to exploit the nation's resources for its exclusive use. In order to sustain this monopoly the Ranas were obliged to share some of the benefits with the other leading bharadari families and with the most influential of their bureaucrats. As a result, the major part of what the peasants of Nepal produced was appropriated by socio-economic groups that fulfilled no useful economic function, while the bulk of the population was left to eke out a living at subsistence level. By allowing these groups access to the economic spoils of their rule, the Ranas may have avoided any challenge to their political supremacy, but the price was high. A miniscule gross national product, a highly inelastic revenue structure and an absence of investment capital left Nepal on the eve of the regime's demise amongst the poorest and least developed countries on earth—a legacy that still bedevils the country to this day. The simple and inescapable fact is that the Ranas did not want extensive economic development of Nepal. As long as the economy produced enough to fulfil its primary purpose of catering to the wants of the ruling oligarchy, there was no point in interfering with the status quo. The economic uplift of the subsistence masses did not enter the equation: in the traditional Nepalese political culture the governing élite did not envisage a constituency of the masses. Nor was any appreciable economic growth actually possible, even if it had been on the national agenda, for under the Rana fiscal system the entire revenue of the state was treated as the Prime Minister's personal income and no distinction was made between the public treasury and his privy purse. Such a total concentration of a country's political power in the hands of a single
family, whose only motive was to preserve its wealth and interests, was not conducive to economic development.

Nor was an almost total lack of investment capital. The Ranas, prudently hedging against a sudden reversal of their political fortunes, preferred to invest in India, while most other Nepalese preferred to invest in land. As a consequence, no Nepalese entrepreneurial or managerial class emerged and the little investment that did take place was financed by Indian capital which still has a stranglehold on the Nepalese economy today.

Despite the tragic record of the Ranas in the field of national economic development, the fiscal burden of the Nepalese peasant was probably no worse than that of the Indian ryot under the British raj. While the economic improvements that colonialism made in India have been the subject of much acclaim, their deleterious effects upon the subsistence farmers who constituted the overwhelming proportion of the population of the subcontinent should also be noted. For the manner in which taxes were administered in British India—that is, the extractive capacity of the colonial regime as compared with that of the Indian princely states and Nepal—is at least as important as the form that these taxes took. A traditional state such as Nepal, with a primitive administrative infrastructure, did not have the means to impose its will completely, and there was always a slippage between what the tax regulations decreed and what the people delivered. Peasants migrated, black markets circumvented state monopolies and villages faked records. By contrast, colonial regimes made their presence felt even in the furthest corners of their possessions, and to follow the development of a colonial regime is to follow the inexorable progress of cadastral surveys, revenue settlements, census reports, the issue of land titles, the compilation of tax rolls and a growing body of regulations and procedures—the objective of much of this activity being the collection of revenue. Nets of finer and finer official weave caught and recorded the status of each inhabitant, each piece of land, each transaction and each activity that was assessable. There is no doubt that, compared with the administration of Nepal, the bureaucracy of British India left very few places to hide.

Other aspects of life in Nepal during the last half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century also invite comparison with the situation in India. Before this can be done, however, a distinction needs to be drawn between British India, that two-thirds of the subcontinent that the British carved out by force of arms and administered directly, and princely India, the remaining one-third that was fragmented into 562 principalities over which the British exercised paramountcy but whose internal affairs were managed by traditional rulers according to
traditional Hindu or Muslim political and social systems.

A comparison of Rana Nepal with British India is invidious and scarcely valid, as the two political entities are such a study in contrasts. The former was a small, impoverished, self-isolated country, while the latter was the centrepiece of the most powerful empire the world has ever known. Rana Nepal was a conservative autocracy in which change was largely dependent upon external stimulus, while British India was an incipient democracy in which change came about progressively from within. Opposition within the former was closed, indirect and based on intrigue, whereas in the latter it was open, direct and institutionalised. Nevertheless, passing comparative comment can be made on three topics: health, education and the law.

The Government of India did not accept any major responsibility for public health until the 1880s. Before that date, its activities were confined to providing a certain amount of medical relief and some medical education, but nothing more. The reasons for this are not hard to find. In the first place, medical knowledge was not far enough advanced to do much more than recognise the existence of different tropical diseases. Second, the British had little expertise in public sanitation themselves, having passed their first Public Health Act dealing with sanitation, drinking water, street cleaning and so on only 30 years before. Nevertheless, rapid advances were made in the early part of the twentieth century, particularly in fighting recurrent epidemics such as cholera and typhoid. But by its sheer scale, the problem of bringing public health care to the masses defied solution. As a result, the provision of public health facilities in Nepal, though primitive, was actually in advance of the level of services in most areas of British India. In 1947, over half the municipalities and three quarters of the administrative districts of British India lacked medical officers, while at least a third of the towns with over 30,000 inhabitants had no proper water supply. Some 4,000 hospitals and dispensaries had been established in rural areas, but each of these had to serve a population of about 62,000 people—a far greater unit load than applied to rural hospitals and dispensaries in Nepal. As in Nepal, the bulk of the population relied upon ayurvedic medicine, although the goddesses of smallpox and other diseases were presumably kept busy by the endless stream of sacrifices made to them. Resistance to Western medicine was strong, as is evidenced by an astonishing article written by a British-educated Indian barrister, one Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi:

"Doctors are injurious to mankind, but European doctors are the worst of all... Medical treatment fosters self-indulgence, so that men are deprived of self-
control and become effeminate. Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin.
To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery.”

Although education in India expanded rapidly during the last years of British rule—the country boasted over 600 institutions of higher learning as compared with two in Nepal—it made no impact on the rural masses. As in village Nepal, children in village India played an important ancillary role in the work of the family, so that attendance at school deprived the family of an essential part of its labour. At the same time, the basic education that the child received had no relevance to the economic realities of rural life. Education was simply not an attractive proposition for the subsistence farmers of either country. When the British departed in 1947 they left behind a rural population that was 99 per cent illiterate.

Several points about the application of the law in each country also warrant mention. Nepalese law and English law were, of course, a study in contrasts. The former was based exclusively on religious precepts and administered according to the subjective wishes of the man at the apex of the state’s legislative and executive power structure. The latter was strictly secular and administered objectively by highly trained professionals acting independently of the legislature and the executive. But, in fact, English law was not the only system of law operating in British India. The government of British India deliberately left traditional Hindu (and Muslim) religious law outside its legislative purview and allowed it to operate in cases where it did not, in their view, offend the laws of nature—as did suti, for example. The Indian penal code allowed customary law to prevail in the case of bigamy, for instance, and originally there was no legislation against child marriage or incest. The British interfered little in matters of Hindu personal law, partly because they feared a massive and violent backlash and partly because of the formidable problems in any attempt at codification. In general they sought to protect customary law, though during the last 25 years of their rule they did react to pressure from Hindu reform groups to legislate, inter alia, on female education and the property rights of women. To the end, however, they remained reluctant to interfere in the question of child marriages.

For a valid comparison between socio-political conditions in Rana Nepal and on the Indian sub-continent, we must turn to the Indian princely states—those traditional Indian societies based on Hindu or Muslim polity in which traditional customs and mores and social structures were preserved intact, untainted by the Western political and social ideas that were permeating British India.
When the British Crown assumed paramountcy over the princely states after the Mutiny, it inherited a collection of principalities whose standards of administration lagged far behind those prevailing in Rana Nepal. Their revenue administration was primitive, land rent was not fixed and there was no security of tenure for the peasant cultivators. Villages were generally farmed out for revenue purposes, as were the customs and excise functions of the state. The administration of justice was rough and ready and no attention was paid either to the education or the public health of the people.

However in the decades following the Indian Mutiny, no state in India remained impervious to British influence. The spread of English education and western ideas placed at their disposal a group of administrators who were determined to introduce reforms. Improvements were made in some of the larger and more progressive states but these were not emulated by the remaining 500 or so. The rulers of all the states, large and small, were absolute autocrats without any restraint on their power to oppress their subjects. The rule of law that gave protection and security of life and property to every subject of the King of Nepal was completely lacking in most of the Indian princely states. The personal wish or caprice of their autocratic rulers was unchecked by any legal code or convention, and several of the more notorious maharajas actually provoked their subjects to armed insurrection. Others mismanaged their states so badly that the British were forced to step in and depose them. As late as 1879, for example, the British had to appoint an administrator to clean up one of the largest of the Indian States, Baroda, following the deposition of an ineffective ruler. The administrator's reform programme set out to provide the people of Baroda with the same basic government services that the people of Nepal had been enjoying for a generation: "public order and tranquillity" was at the top of his agenda, followed by "a proper and sufficient machinery for the dispensation of justice".

The introduction of public amenities and institutions in Nepal, though lagging far behind British India, compared favourably with the princely states. The earliest famine relief measures to be undertaken in a princely state, for example, were launched in Hyderabad in 1876, though even then they were no more comprehensive than the measures that the government of Nepal had implemented during the great famine of 1863–66. Not many of the state capitals had piped drinking water when Bir Shumsher provided this utility to Kathmandu in 1891, nor electricity when it was installed in the Valley in 1911. In 1897 the British Resident in Kathmandu commented favourably in his annual report on "the administration of the country by the present Minister, Sir Bir Samshere Jang" and on "the prosperity of the inhabitants", adding that "Nepal compares not unfavourably with the larger native
States in the plains of India.” Three years later, the Resident noted in his annual report that “the people are particularly happy and contented and pauperism seems unknown, even with a poor harvest such as that of last year.” By contrast, a British official travelling in Cutch State in 1932 commented that “if any European has been here before, he hasn’t left any trace”, while a Political Agent to a group of states in the Deccan lamented in 1937 that he “would not have imagined that things could have been so primitive and backward in a place we have been in for over 100 years.”

Despite relentless British pressure on the rulers to improve the administration of their states, including direct management during the minority of a prince, only a handful of rulers emerged of the calibre of that benevolent and relatively enlightened autocrat, Chandra Shumsher. On the contrary, during Chandra Shumsher’s tenure of office from 1901 to 1929, the Udaipur State was so badly administered that its maharaja was deposed, and, for the same reasons, the maharaja of Nabha State was forced to abdicate and the maharaja of Indore stepped down “voluntarily”. During the same period, the maharaja of Alwar, who had left his state to go on holiday, was prevented from returning because of gross misrule, the maharaja of Bikaner had his ruling powers curtailed, the paramount power intervened in Bharatpur on the grounds of gross financial mismanagement, and the ruler of Dewas Senior fled to the French enclave of Pondicherry following a threat to appoint a British administrator to take charge of his state.

The reaction of the Indian princes to the nationalist movement in their states did not differ markedly from the reaction of the Rana regime to the oppositional politics of the Nepali Congress. As autocrats, the princes too had a vested interest in the political status quo and an instinctive aversion to democracy. Before the advent of the non-cooperation movement in 1920, most of them had dwelt in political obscurity, shielded from public criticism by the Press Act of 1910 that contained penalties for newspapers that sought “to bring into hatred or contempt... any Native Prince or Chief under the Suzerainty of His Majesty”. By 1921, with the Congress Party showing a most unwelcome interest in the states and with the repeal of the Press Act, that obscurity had gone. Threatened for the first time by organised agitation within their own dominions, the princes reacted with a policy of stern repression. Most of the darbars already had laws barring public assembly for political purposes, while press censorship was universal, but as the tempo and the temperature of politics in British India increased, the states responded by further clamping down on political activity and expression to a point that would have met with the approval of the regime in Nepal.

With the advent of Rana rule, the terms of Nepal’s relationship with the British was defined for the ensuing century. A modus vivendi that was
basically satisfactory to both governments emerged: the British agreed to refrain from interference in Nepal's internal politics and to respect the country's self-imposed isolation; the Nepalese agreed to the recruitment of mercenaries into the imperial forces and accepted "guidance" on the Kingdom's foreign relations. This arrangement gave the British their best and most reliable soldiers: men who could be confidently deployed in situations, such as confrontations with Indian nationalist mobs, in which the reliability of Indian and even British forces was questionable. It gave the Nepalese an important source of foreign earnings and, by raising Nepal's value to the British, enhanced the regime's bargaining power with the Government of British India. A treaty signed in 1923 formally recognised the independent status of Nepal, but this did no more than enshrine in the legislation what was already a question of fact. Clearly, the criticism that the Rana regime was slavishly dependent upon the British does not stand up under scrutiny. Given the extremely unfavourable geopolitical climate in which the darbar had to operate during most of this period and the lack of any alternative external source of support, the Ranas were remarkably successful in maintaining a broadly defined and respected independence for Nepal whilst preserving the nation's cultural and social values from contamination.

Until the 1930s there was absolutely no impetus for political change from the broad mass of the population in Nepal. Decision making was the preserve of a few small groups: the Ranas, the priests, the landowning élite and the high caste Newari and Brahmin families in important administrative positions. Only rarely were persons from other castes or communities entrusted with official responsibility. As a consequence, political activity was palace-oriented and conducted principally through intrigue and conspiracy. Over the years these skills were developed to a high level of sophistication—a level that has been maintained to a large degree in the country's administration today.

In the early years of Rana rule, politics centred around conspiracies initiated by members of the royal family and the non-Rana élite. But gradually the old bharadari families, weakened by the relentless suppression of their unsuccessful conspiracies, made their peace with the regime. At the same time Brahmin support was gained by the restoration of lands confiscated by King Ran Bahadur in 1806 and by the ultra-orthodox policies followed by the Ranas in religious and social affairs. The leading Newari families of the Valley, meanwhile, had been granted important hereditary posts in the administration. Although none of these groups was completely satisfied with its position, each had sufficient stake in the regime to oppose any attempt to alter the status quo.

Until the 1930s the greatest threat to the regime came from divisions within the ranks of the Ranas themselves. As the family grew in size
and subdivided into different branches, family unity against the outside world became more and more difficult to maintain. In particular, the succession issue became more complex as the number of males who could claim a place on the Roll of Succession expanded and as each succeeding Prime Minister manipulated the Roll so as to give his branch of the family certain advantages. Matters came to a head when Juddha Shumsher purged the Roll along caste lines in 1934, thereby creating a potent opposition force.

During the 1930s opposition organisations, some of which were revolutionary and others outrightly terrorist in nature, began to emerge in Kathmandu, but the army remained loyal to the regime and was able to foil their plots with comparative ease. The period immediately following the Second World War, however, presented the regime with a challenge it could not meet. The return home of hundreds of thousands of ex-soldiers who had been exposed to new cultures and political perspectives, the activities of militant emigré opposition groups of alternative political vision, the departure of the British—the regime's most important support base—and pressure for democratisation from the new Indian Government, all combined to bring about its collapse—a collapse that was hastened by the intransigence of the regime itself and by its inability to compromise with the forces of political change. And herein lies the regime's greatest failure: in political terms, it offered less to its own people than the people of the subcontinent were being offered by their colonial masters.

* * *

Without wishing to discount the evident shortcomings of Rana rule, it bears noting in conclusion that the regime should not be judged by contemporary social and political standards. Until its closing years, it had always been a regime for its time. During its formative decades its domestic experiences—the intrigues, the bloodletting, the economic exploitation of the population—were typical of most native principalities of the subcontinent. From 1901 onwards, its social, judicial and administrative policies were as enlightened as those of any Indian princely state. Towards the end, though, it failed in political terms to move with the times, to judge correctly the new world order that emerged from the ruins of the Second World War, to realise that the freedoms that the people of British India were winning must inevitably come to Nepal.

The protracted and difficult events surrounding the demise of the regime are still too vivid to permit Nepalese society to consider the positive contributions of Rana rule with sufficient objectivity. It is to be hoped, however, that such a time will not be too long in coming, for there are many aspects of this period of Nepalese history—particularly aspects of the Kingdom's foreign relations—of which the people of Nepal can be justly proud.
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## APPENDIX 1

### GENEALOGY OF THE SHAH DYNASTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dravya Shah</td>
<td>(1559-1570)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purendra Shah</td>
<td>(1570-1605)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatrapati Shah</td>
<td>(1605-1606)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram Shah</td>
<td>(1606-1633)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dambar Shah</td>
<td>(1633-1642)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna Shah</td>
<td>(1642-1658)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudra Shah</td>
<td>(1658-1669)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prithvi Pati Shah</td>
<td>(1669-1716)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nar Bhupal Shah</td>
<td>(1716-1743)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prithvi Narayan Shah</td>
<td>(1743-1775)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratap Singh Shah</td>
<td>(1775-1777)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran Bahadur Shah</td>
<td>(1777-1799)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranodyut Shah</td>
<td>GIRVAN JUDDHA (1799-1816)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajendra Bikram Shah</td>
<td>(1816-1847)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surendra Bikram Shah</td>
<td>(1847-1881)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribhuvan Bikram Shah Dev</td>
<td>(1911-1955)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahendra Bikram Shah Dev</td>
<td>(1955-1972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birendra Bikram Shah Dev</td>
<td>(1972-1977)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Marriages

- Pratap Singh Shah (1775-1777) m Rajendra Laxmi Devi
- Ran Bahadur Shah (1777-1799) m Raj Rajeshwari
  - Ranodyut Shah m Girvan Juddha (1799-1816)
  - Ranodyut Shah m Rajendra Bikram Shah (1816-1847)
    - Surendra Bikram Shah (1847-1881) m Trailokya Bikram Shah
      - Trailokya Bikram Shah m Tara Kumari
      - Trailokya Bikram Shah m Lalit Kumari
    - Surendra Bikram Shah (1847-1881) m Suddha
      - Surendra Bikram Shah m Upendra
      - Surendra Bikram Shah m Deendra
- Tribhuvan Bikram Shah Dev (1911-1955) m Revatiraman
  - Tribhuvan Bikram Shah Dev (1911-1955) m Lakshmi Divyeshwari
  - Tribhuvan Bikram Shah Dev (1911-1955) m Kirti Divyeshwari
  - Tribhuvan Bikram Shah Dev (1911-1955) m Durga Divyeshwari
- Mahendra Bikram Shah Dev (1955-1972) m Himalaya
  - Mahendra Bikram Shah Dev (1955-1972) m Basundhara
- Birendra Bikram Shah Dev (1972-1977) m Gyanendra
  - Birendra Bikram Shah Dev (1972-1977) m Dhirendra

(This chart includes only those queens and princes mentioned in the text or whose inclusion is necessary to make the family inter-relationships clear)
APPENDIX 2
GENEALOGY OF THE RANA FAMILY

Ahiram Konwar
Ram Krishna Konwar
Ranjit Konwar
Bal Narsingh Konwar

Jagat Jang
  Juddha Pratap
  Jit Jang
  Padma Jang
  Babar Jang (C)
  Ranabir Jang (C)
  Juddha Jang (C)
  Dambar Jang (C)
  Lalit Jang (C)
  Nar Jang (C)
  Harka Jang (C)
  Bir Jang (C)

Jang Bahadur

Bam Bahadur
  Yaksha Bikram (C)
  Tek Bikram (C)

Badri Narsingh
  Kedar Narsingh
  Dhoj Narsingh
  Bhairab Narsingh (C)
  Kumar Narsingh (C)
  Kishore Narsingh (C)
  Amir Narsingh (C)

Krishna Bahadur

Ranaudip Singh

Jagat Shumsher
  Ambar Jang
  Bhupendra Jang

Bir
  Khadga
  Rana
  Dev
  Chandra
  Bhim
  Fateh
  Lalit
  Jit
  Juddha
  Dambar (C)
  Purna (C)
  Jayadu (C)
  Durga (C)
  Shere (C)
  Khamba (C)
  Harka (C)

Dhir Shumsher
**APPENDIX 3**

**SHAH-RANA MATRIMONIAL CONNEXIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bal Narsingh Konwar</th>
<th>King RAJENDRA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JANG BAHADUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jagat Jang</td>
<td>Princess Tika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jit Jang</td>
<td>second daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Kumari</td>
<td>Crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalit Kumari</td>
<td>Prince Trailokya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep Kumari</td>
<td>Prince Narendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadga Kumari</td>
<td>Prince Upendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhir Shumsher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIR SHUMSHER</strong></td>
<td>Princess Dhana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirti Divyeshwari</td>
<td>King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durga Divyeshwari</td>
<td>PRITHVI BIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gehendra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sur</td>
<td>Princess Suman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHANDRA SHUMSHER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keshar</td>
<td>Princess Laxmi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singha</td>
<td>Princess Rama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>Princess Tara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King TRIBHUVAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JUDDHA SHUMSHER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hari</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indra Rajya</td>
<td>King MAHENDRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhahadur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princep</td>
<td>Prince Himalaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Prince Basundhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agni</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiswarya</td>
<td>Crown Prince Birendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komal</td>
<td>Prince Gyanendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preksha</td>
<td>Prince Dhirendra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Dates               |               |
| May 1854            |               |
| Feb 1855            |               |
| Feb 1857            |               |
| Jun 1860            |               |
| Jun 1857            |               |
|                     |               |
| 1888                |               |
| 1888                |               |
| 1930                |               |
| Apr 1904            |               |
| May 1906            |               |
| Nov 1909            |               |
| May 1940            |               |
| Dec 1952            |               |
| Mar 1945            |               |
| Jun 1945            |               |
| Feb 1970            |               |
| Mar 1970            |               |
| May 1970            |               |
| May 1973            |               |
## APPENDIX 4

**KINGS, REGENTS AND PRIME MINISTERS OF NEPAL 1743–1951**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>KING</th>
<th>REGENT</th>
<th>PRIME MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 Dec 1722</td>
<td>Prithvi Narayan Shah born.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Apr 1743</td>
<td>Prithvi Narayan Shah becomes king. (aged 20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Jan 1775</td>
<td>King Prithvi Narayan Shah dies.</td>
<td>Pratap Singh becomes king. (aged 23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May 1775</td>
<td>Crown Prince Ran Bahadur Shah born</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Nov 1777</td>
<td>King Pratap Singh dies. Ran Bahadur becomes king (aged 2 1/2)</td>
<td>Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi assumes the regency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Aug 1778</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bahadur Shah seizes the regency.</td>
<td>Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi imprisoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Jun 1779</td>
<td></td>
<td>Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi regains the regency.</td>
<td>Bahadur Shah exiled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Jul 1785</td>
<td></td>
<td>Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi dies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(contd.)
### Nepal under the Ranas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>KING</th>
<th>REGENT</th>
<th>PRIME MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Apr 1794</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bahadur Shah resumes the regency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regency terminated. King Ran Bahadur rules in his own right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Aug 1794</td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hands over the administration to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the chautariya Sher Bahadur Shah,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kaji Kirtiman Singh Basniat and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kaji Damodar Pande.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Oct 1797</td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>takes charge of the administration.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Feb 1799</td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>abdictates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girvan Juddha Bikram Shah born and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>declared Crown Prince in place of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranodyut Shah.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Apr 1800</td>
<td>King Ran Bahadur</td>
<td>Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari becomes Regent.</td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur manages the administration as mukhtiyar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Feb 1803</td>
<td>Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur hands over the administration to the chautariya Sher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accompanies her husband, ex-King</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bahadur Shah, Kaji Kirtiman Singh Basniat and Kaji Damodar Pande.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ran Bahadur, into voluntary exile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Benaras.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girvan Juddha Bikram Shah becomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>king. (aged 1 ½)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— March 1804</td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>returns to Kathmandu and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>seizes the regency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>returns to Kathmandu and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>seizes the regency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Details

- **Crown Prince Ranodyut Shah born.**
- **Prince Girvan Juddha Bikram Shah born and declared Crown Prince in place of Ranodyut Shah.**
- **Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari becomes Regent.**
- **Queen Mother Raj Subarna Prabha assumes the regency.**
- **Senior Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari returns to Kathmandu and seizes the regency.**
- **Ex-King Ran Bahadur returns to Kathmandu and seizes the regency.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>KING</th>
<th>REGENT</th>
<th>PRIME MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 Feb 1806</td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari banished.</td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur appoints himself <em>mukhtiyar</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Apr 1806</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur assassinated.</td>
<td>Ex-King Ran Bahadur assassinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Junior Queen Mother Tripura Sundari assumes the regency (aged 12).</td>
<td>Bhim Sen Thapa appointed <em>mukhtiyar</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Nov 1816</td>
<td>King Girvan Juddha dies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rajendra becomes king. (aged 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Jul 1837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ran Jang Pande appointed acting <em>mukhtiyar</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Aug 1837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ran Jang Pande dismissed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Dec 1837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raganath Pandit appointed <em>mukhtiyar</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(contd.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>KING</th>
<th>REGENT</th>
<th>PRIME MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 Aug 1838</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raganath Pandit resigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Oct 1838</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joint Ministry appointed: <em>Chautariya</em> Pushkar Shah to be assisted by Ran Jang Pande.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Apr 1839</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ran Jang Pande gains the ascendancy in the Joint Ministry with <em>Chautariya</em> Pushkar Shah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Feb 1840</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joint Ministry terminated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ran Jang Pande appointed sole <em>mukhtiyar</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Nov 1840</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ran Jang Pande dismissed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coalition Ministry headed by <em>Chautariya</em> Fateh Jang Shah appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Dec 1843</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coalition Ministry terminated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathbar Singh Thapa appointed Prime Minister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 May 1844</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathbar Singh Thapa resigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post remains vacant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Oct 1844</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathbar Singh Thapa appointed Prime Minister for life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 1845</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathbar Singh Thapa assassinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Post remains vacant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>KING</td>
<td>REGENT</td>
<td>PRIME MINISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Sep 1845</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coalition Ministry headed by Chautariya Fateh Jang Shah appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Sep 1846</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chautariya Fateh Jang Shah killed in the Kot Massacre. Jang Bahadur Konwar appointed as Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Nov 1846</td>
<td>King Rajendra goes into voluntary exile at Benaras.</td>
<td>Crown Prince Surendra becomes Regent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 May 1847</td>
<td>King Rajendra deposed. Surendra becomes king. (aged 27)</td>
<td>Regency terminated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Aug 1856</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jang Bahadur resigns. Bam Bahadur appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Feb 1877</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Mar 1877</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>KING</td>
<td>REGENT</td>
<td>PRIME MINISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 1881</td>
<td>King Surendra dies Prithvi becomes king (aged 5).</td>
<td>Junior Queen Mother Lalit Kumari appointed regent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Nov 1885</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ranaudip Singh assassinated. Bir Shumsher appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Aug 1893</td>
<td></td>
<td>King Prithvi Bir reaches his majority. Regency terminated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mar 1901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bir Shumsher dies. Dev Shumsher appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Jun 1901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dev Shumsher forced to resign. Chandra Shumsher appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Dec 1911</td>
<td>King Prithvi dies. Tribhuvan becomes king. (aged 5 (\frac{1}{2}))</td>
<td>Senior Queen Mother Revatiraman appointed regent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Nov 1929</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>KING</td>
<td>REGENT</td>
<td>PRIME MINISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Dec 1929</td>
<td></td>
<td>King Tribhuvan reaches his majority. Regency terminated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sep 1932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bhim Shumsher dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Nov 1945</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juddha Shumsher appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Apr 1948</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Padma Shumsher appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Feb 1951</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Padma Shumsher resigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mohan Shumsher appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hereditary prime ministership of the Ranas abolished by royal decree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RANA ADMINISTRATION

A. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE - EARLY PERIOD

PRIME MINISTER & COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF NEPAL

Commander in Chief

Western Commanding General

Eastern Commanding General

Southern Commanding General

Northern Commanding General

Generals

Lt. Generals

Maj. Generals

Colonels

Lt. Colonels

jangi Adda

Defence Office

Muluki Adda

Home Office

Kumari Chowk

Accounts & Audit Office

Kitab Khana

Civil & Military Registry

Kausi Tosakhana

Office of Public Expenditure

Kausi Khana

State Treasury

Muluki Khana

Law Office

Chapraisi Adda

Post Office

Chhebhadel

Public Works Office

Darsanbhet Tahsil

Collector of Appointment Levies

Fil Khana

Elephant Stables

Guthi Kachahari

Religious Affairs Office

Jafati-ko Adda

Administrator of Confiscated Property

Kampu Daftar Khana

Military Lands Office

Kapardari Kotha

Comptroller of the Royal Household

Moth Adda

Land Tax Assessment Office

Palki Khana

Transport Office

Pustak Khota

Government Archives

Sadar Daftar Khana

Civil Lands Office

Saraf Khana

Foreign Exchange Office

Sera Fera-ko Adda

Royal Lands Office

Taksar

Mint

Thana Kachahari

Police Headquarters

Top Khana

Armoury

Vaidya Khana

Medical Laboratory

Dharma Kachahari

Anti-Corruption Court

Munsi Khana

Foreign Office

Astabel Khana

Horse Stables

Bajar Adda

Customs Office

Bhubhadel

Residential Titles Office

Chapraisi Adda

Post Office

Chhebhadel

Public Works Office

Darsanbhet Tahsil

Collector of Appointment Levies

Fil Khana

Elephant Stables

Guthi Kachahari

Religious Affairs Office

Jafati-ko Adda

Administrator of Confiscated Property

Kampu Daftar Khana

Military Lands Office

Kapardari Kotha

Comptroller of the Royal Household

Moth Adda

Land Tax Assessment Office

Palki Khana

Transport Office

Pustak Khota

Government Archives

Sadar Daftar Khana

Civil Lands Office

Saraf Khana

Foreign Exchange Office

Sera Fera-ko Adda

Royal Lands Office

Taksar

Mint

Thana Kachahari

Police Headquarters

Top Khana

Armoury

Vaidya Khana

Medical Laboratory

Dharma Kachahari

Anti-Corruption Court

Munsi Khana

Foreign Office
APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

B. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE - LATER PERIOD

PRIME MINISTER & COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF NEPAL

HAZURIA GENERAL

Papa Goswara

Commander in Chief

Western (Senior) Commanding General

Eastern Commanding General

Southern Commanding General

Northern Commanding General

Generals

Lt. Generals

Maj. Generals

Colonels

Lt. Colonels

Jangi Bandobast Adda

Defence Office

Muluki Bandobast Adda

Home Office

Kumari Chowk

Accounts & Audit Office

Commandari Kitab Khana

Civil & Military Registry

Hazari Goswara

Gov't Pers'l Office

Director General

Education Office

Muluki Khana

State Treas.

Kausi Tosakhana

Office of Public Expendit.

Shrestha Office

Audit Office

Municipal Goswara

Municipal Office

Goswara Tahvil

Central Records Office

Taksal Adda

Mint

Tirja Adda

Tirja Office

Nagadi Adda

Office of the Estates of the Prime Minister

Kadel Chowk

Bijuli Goswara

Electric Board

Jail Khana

Prisons Office

Astabel Khana (Horse Stables)

Bajar Adda (Customs Office)

Banaspati Goswara (Botanical Gardens)

Bandobast Adda (Land Revenue Administration Office)

Bhubhadel (Residential Titles Office)

Census Goswara (Census Office)

Chaprasi Adda (Post Office)

(contd.)
(Appendix 5 B contd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Works Office</th>
<th>Collector of Appointment Levies</th>
<th>Government Stores Depot</th>
<th>Elephant Stables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chhebhadel</td>
<td>Darsanbhet Tahsil</td>
<td>Faras Khana</td>
<td>Gharelu Adda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fil Khana</td>
<td>Gokh Goswara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guthi Kachahari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hulak Goswara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jafati-ko Adda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juddha Varun Yantra Adda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kampu Dafdar Khana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kapardari Kotha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Krishi Parishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moth Adda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narayanhatti Goswara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Government Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage Industries Development Office</td>
<td>Government Dairy</td>
<td>Religious Affairs Office</td>
<td>Central Registry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture Development Office</td>
<td>Government Dairy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Land Tax Assessment Office</td>
<td>Royal Household</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Office of the Royal Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nepal Bureau of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nepal Bureau of Mines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nepal Sarkar Hospital (Hospital Board)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nepal Trading Corporation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palki Khana (Transport Office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pani Goswara (Water Board)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pustak Khota (Government Archives)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sadar Dafdar Khana (Civil Lands Office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saraf Khana (Foreign Exchange Office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sera Fera-ko Adda (Royal Lands Office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shahar Saphai (Sanitation Office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Teen Mohan Akashvani (Radio Broadcasting Service)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Teen Mohan Hawai Adda Vibhag (Airport Office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taksrar (Mint)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Loans Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone Adda (Telephone Office)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thana Kachahari (Police Headquarters)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Printing Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top-Khana (Armoury)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Udyog Parishad (Industrial Development Board)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaidya Khana (Medical Laboratory)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khadga Adda Prime Minister's Office</th>
<th>Bintipatra Niksari Adda Appeals Office</th>
<th>Munsi Khana Foreign Office</th>
<th>Gharkaj Adda Public Works Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

**RANA ADMINISTRATION**

#### C. STAFFING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION OR RANK</th>
<th>NOTICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The King</td>
<td>de jure Head of State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prime Minister [Rs 123,000]*</td>
<td>de facto ruler of Nepal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commander-in-Chief [Rs 60,000]</td>
<td>Chief administrator of the Kingdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Western (Senior) Commanding General [Rs 50,000]</td>
<td>Senior Rana positions occupied according to seniority on the Roll of Succession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eastern Commanding General [Rs 40,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Southern Commanding General [Rs 40,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Commanding General [Rs 40,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generals [Rs 25,000]</td>
<td>Junior Rana positions occupied according to seniority on the Roll of Succession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt. Generals [Rs 15,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majors General [Rs 7,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonels [Rs 6,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officials holding the rank of Kaji [Rs 7,000]</td>
<td>High ranking civil and military functionaries on the periphery of power, occupying the most senior positions to which non-Ranas could aspire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kazarachi (Treasurer) [Rs 5,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vakils (Diplomatic representatives) [Rs 5,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officials holding the rank of Sardar [Rs 3,600]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mir Munsi (Foreign Secretary) [Rs 3,400]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officials holding the rank of Subba [Rs 2,500]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kapardar (Comptroller of the Royal Household) [Rs 2,500]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Takarsi (Mint Master) [Rs 2,000]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt. Colonels [Rs 1,800]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dadas (ADCs to the Princes) [Rs 650]</td>
<td>Middle-level administrators and specialists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dithtas (Executive Administrators/Senior Legal Officers) [Rs 600]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khardars (Senior Secretaries) [Rs 460]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munsis (Junior Secretaries) [Rs 400]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicharis (Legal Officers) [Rs 300]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyotisis (Astrologers) [Rs 300]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaidyas (Physicians) [Rs 300]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopdars (Royal Attendants) [Rs 300]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jetha-Budhas (Assistant Legal Officers) [Rs 250]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharghars (Land Surveyors) [Rs 200]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotuws (Watchmen) [Rs 150]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahuildars (Accountants)</td>
<td>Junior-level clerical and administrative staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukhiyas (Office Assistants)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausindas (Scribes)</td>
<td>General support staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raitars (Writers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karobaris (Clerks)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaprasis (Orderlies/Messengers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahluwas (Peons)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhoka-Dwares (Gate Keepers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhand-Badarus (Sweepers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Approximate annual income (cash + jagirs) in the 1850s*

In the final analysis, an official’s importance arose from his proximity to the King or, later, to the Rana Prime Minister. Thus, throughout Nepalese history, some men enjoying less impressive titles were able to exercise an influence far beyond that normally attaching to their rank.
1. Amini: A land revenue administrative office in the Tarai, having power to try civil and criminal cases, and headed by a mal subba.

2. Mahal: Or mal adda; a revenue collection office.


APPENDIX  5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

E. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION. LATER PERIOD

During the later period of Rana rule the Kingdom was divided for administrative purposes into the following 32 Districts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Area (Sq. kms)</th>
<th>Population*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>367,010</td>
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<td>Western Hill Districts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baglung</td>
<td>12,081</td>
<td>not known</td>
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<td>2,034</td>
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<td>Western Tarai Districts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banke-Bardiya</td>
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<td>3,468</td>
<td>49,202</td>
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<td>1,554</td>
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<td>1,717</td>
<td>39,486</td>
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*according to the 1920 census
RANA ADMINISTRATION

F. THE LAW COURTS

1. THE JUDICIAL HIERARCHY BEFORE 1846

State Council

Char Adalat

Kathmandu Valley Grand Section West

Kathmandu Valley Grand Section East

Patan

Bhaktapur

Eight Hill Districts (2)

Eight Tarai Divisions (3)

Kalipar Division (4)

Majkhand Circuit (5)

- Court of original jurisdiction and the highest court of appeal. Presided over by the King or the mukhtiyar assisted by the dharma adhikar.

- The four Courts of original and appellate jurisdiction: Ita Chapali, Koti Ling, Taksar and Dhansar.

- District courts of first instance.

1. Bounded by the Mehi and Dudh Kosi Rivers with judicial seats at Majhkirat and Chainpur.
2. The Hill Districts were divided into eight judicial areas but their territorial limits were not precisely defined.
4. Bounded by the Bheri and Kali Gandak Rivers with judicial seats at Baglung and Bedi.
5. Bounded by the Kali Gandak and Marsyangdi Rivers with judicial seats at Pokhara and Lamjung.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

F. THE LAW COURTS

2. THE JUDICIAL HIERARCHY IN 1860

The Law Council sitting as the highest court of law in the Kingdom with both original and appellate jurisdiction. The President of the Court was the Prime Minister.

Four courts of original and appellate jurisdiction known collectively as the Char Adalat.

District courts of first instance and, except for Patan and Bhaktapur, of appeal against the village level courts.

Village level courts.


APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

F. THE LAW COURTS

3. THE JUDICIAL HIERARCHY IN 1888

The Commander-in-Chief in consultation with the Muluki Adda and a panel of bharadars.

A judicial office created to hear appeals against the Char Adalat.

The four courts of original and appellate jurisdiction.

Regional courts of original and appellate jurisdiction.

Zilla adalats or district courts of first instance and, except for Bhaktapur and Patan, with jurisdiction to hear appeals from the amals.

Village level courts of first instance.
APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

F. THE LAW COURTS

4. THE JUDICIAL HIERARCHY IN 1901

Since 20 March 1901 the final avenue of appeal in the judicial system of Nepal.

Formerly the Adalat Goswara, a judicial office created as the final, permanent court of appeal.

Regional courts of original and appellate jurisdiction

District courts of first instance and, except for those in the Kathmandu Valley, with jurisdiction to hear appeals from the amals.

Village level courts
APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

F. THE LAW COURTS

5. THE JUDICIAL HIERARCHY IN 1927

A final court of appeal answerable directly to the Prime Minister.

A court of original and appellate jurisdiction combining the Appeal Adda and the appellate functions of the Commander-in-Chief in Council with the Bharadars.

Regional courts of original and appellate jurisdiction.

District courts of first instance and, except for Kathmandu, Kerung and Lhasa, with jurisdiction to hear appeals from the amals.

Village level courts of first instance.
APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

F. THE LAW COURTS

6. THE JUDICIAL HIERARCHY IN 1940

B. The Law Courts

Butwal Appeal Adda

District Courts AT:
Butwal Dhauwa

DHANKUTA APPEAL ADDA

District Courts AT:
Dhankuta East No. 4
East No. 6
Ilam Taplejung

DOTI APPEAL ADDA

District Courts AT:
Baitadi Dailekh
Darchula Doti
Humla Jumla
Surkhet

KATAHARBAN APPEAL ADDA

District Courts AT:
Bara Mahotari
Parsa Rautahat
Sarlahi

NAYA MULK APPEAL ADDA

District Courts AT:
Banke Bardiya
Kailali

PALPA APPEAL ADDA

District Courts AT:
Baglung Palpa
Pithan Salyan
Thak West No. 4

AMALS

AMALS

AMALS

AMALS

AMALS

(cont'd.)
APPENDIX 5 (Contd.)

RANA ADMINISTRATION

F. THE LAW COURTS

7. THE JUDICIAL HIERARCHY IN 1951

PRIME MINISTER

PRADHAN NYAYALAYA

KANIPUR APPEAL DOSRA

KANTIPUR APPEAL PAHILA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Charikot
Kavre Palanchok
Okhaldhunga
Sindhu Palanchok
Sindhuli
Udaipur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bhaktapur
Kantipur Adalats
Lalitpur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bhojpur
Chaintpur
Dhankuta
Ilam
Khotang
Tapelejung

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Baitadi
Dadeldhura
Dailekh
Darchula
Doti
Dullu
Humla
Jumla
Surkhet

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Banke
Bardiya
Kailali
Kanchanpur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Dang
Deokhuri
Khajahanj
Majhhkhand
Palhi
Seoraj

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
BKH.
I

Khotang
Taplejung

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
APPEAL ADDA

DOTI

AMALS

BUTWAL

APPEAL ADDA

DHAN-

KUTA

APPEAL ADDA

BANKE

APPEAL ADDA

AMALS

PRIME

MINISTER

PRADHAN

NYAYA-

LAYA

KANIPUR

APPEAL

DOSRA

KANTIPUR

APPEAL PAHILA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bank
Bardiya
Kailali
Kanchanpur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Dang
Deokhuri
Khajahanj
Majhhkhand
Palhi
Seoraj

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bhojpur
Chaintpur
Dhankuta
Ilam
Khotang
Tapelejung

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bhojpur
Chaintpur
Dhankuta
Ilam
Khotang
Tapelejung

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bhaktapur
Kantipur Adalats
Lalitpur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Charikot
Kavre Palanchok
Okhaldhunga
Sindhu Palanchok
Sindhuli
Udaipur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Banke
Bardiya
Kailali
Kanchanpur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Dang
Deokhuri
Khajahanj
Majhhkhand
Palhi
Seoraj

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bhojpur
Chaintpur
Dhankuta
Ilam
Khotang
Tapelejung

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bhaktapur
Kantipur Adalats
Lalitpur

AMALS

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Charikot
Kavre Palanchok
Okhaldhunga
Sindhu Palanchok
Sindhuli
Udaipur

AMALS

(contd.)
(Appendix 5-F7 contd.)

KANTIPUR APPEAL ADDA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bandipur
Chitwan
Dhading
Gorkha
Makwanpur
Nawakot
Pokhara

AMALS

KATA-HARBAN APPEAL ADDA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Bara
Parsa
Rautahat

AMALS

MAHOTARI APPEAL ADDA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Mahotari
Sarlahi

AMALS

MORANG APPEAL ADDA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Biratnagar
Jhapa

AMALS

PALPA APPEAL ADDA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Baglung
Palpa
Syanja
Thak

AMALS

SALYAN APPEAL ADDA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Piuthan
Salyan

AMALS

SAPTARI APPEAL ADDA

DISTRICT COURTS AT:
Hanuman Nagar
Siraha

AMALS
Appendices

APPENDIX 6

ROLLS OF SUCCESSION

1. The last Roll framed by Jang Bahadur. (3 Feb 1668)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Jang Bahadur Konwar Rana-ji;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Ranaudip Singh. (Jang Bahadur’s brother);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Jagat Shumsher. (Jang Bahadur’s brother);
4. Eastern Commanding General Dhir Shumsher. (Jang Bahadur’s brother);
5. Southern Commanding General Jagat Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s eldest son);
6. Northern Commanding General Jit Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s second son);
7. General Padma Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s third son);
8. Any other legitimate son born to Jang Bahadur.
9. Lt. General Babar Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s illegitimate son);
10. Lt. General Ranabir Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s illegitimate son);
11. Juddha Pratap Jang, son of Jagat Jang and his wife, King Surendra’s first daughter. (Jang Bahadur’s grandson);
12. Any other son born to Jit Jang and his wife, King Surendra’s second daughter. (Would be Jang Bahadur’s grandson);

Positions 13-28 were given to the sons of Jang Bahadur’s 6 brothers (i.e. to Jang Bahadur’s nephews), as follows:

13. Maj. General Kedar Narsingh. (Badri Narsingh’s son);
14. Maj. General Bam Bikram. (Bam Bahadur’s son);
15. Maj. General Buddh Bikram. (?);
16. Lt. Colonel Bir Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
17. Lt. Colonel Ambar Jang. (Jagat Shumshefs’s son);
18. Lt. Colonel Dhoje Narsingh. (Badri Narsingh’s son);
19. Maj. General Ram Krishna. (?);
20. Lt. Colonel Khadga Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
21. Lt. Colonel Bhupendra Jang. (Jagat Shumsher’s son);
22. Lt. Colonel Rana Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
23. Lt. Colonel Dev Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
24. Lt. Colonel Chandra Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
25. Lt. Colonel Bir Bikram. (?);
26. Lt. Colonel Bhim Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
27. Lt. Colonel Fateh Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
28. Lalit Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);

The subsequent positions were reserved for future legitimate sons of Jang Bahadur and of his 3 remaining brothers. In the meantime, the positions were allocated as follows:

29. Lt. Colonel Bhairab Narsingh. (Badri Narsingh’s illegitimate son);
30. Colonel Yaksha Bikram. (Bam Bahadur’s illegitimate son).

2. The Roll at the time of Ranaudip Singh’s assassination. (22 Nov 1885)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Ranaudip Singh Konwar Rana-ji;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Jit Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s second son);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Padma Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s third son);
4. Eastern Commanding General Ranabir Jang. (Jang Bahadur’s illegitimate son);
5. Southern Commanding General Juddha Pratap. (Jagat Jang’s eldest son. Jang Bahadur’s grandson);
Nepal under the Ranas

6. Northern Commanding General Kedar Narsingh. (Badri Narsingh’s son);
7. General Bir Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
8. General Ambar Jang. (Jagat Shumsher’s son);
9. General Dhoj Narsingh. (Badri Narsingh’s son);
10. General Khadga Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
11. General Bhupendra Jang. (Jagat Shumsher’s son);
12. General Rana Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
13. General Dev Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
14. Colonel Chandra Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
15. Colonel Bhim Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
16. Colonel Fateh Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
17. Colonel Lalit Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
18. Colonel Jit Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
19. Colonel Juddha Shumsher. (Dhir Shumsher’s son);
20. General Bhairab Narsingh. (Badri Narsingh’s illegitimate son);
21. General Yaksha Bikram. (Bam Bahadur’s illegitimate son).

3. The Roll drawn up by Bir Shumsher upon his appointment. (Nov 1885)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Bir Shumsher Jang Rana Bahadur;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Khadga Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Rana Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
4. Eastern Commanding General Dev Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
5. Southern Commanding General Chandra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
6. Northern Commanding General Bhim Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
7. General Fateh Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
8. General Lalit Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
9. General Jit Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
10. Colonel Juddha Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
11. Colonel Gehendra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s eldest son);
12. Colonel Dharma Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s second son);
13. Colonel Padma Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s eldest son);
14. Colonel Punya Shumsher. (Khadga Shumsher’s eldest son);
15. Colonel Bikram Shumsher. (Khadga Shumsher’s second son);
16. Colonel Tej Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s son);
17. Colonel Pratap Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s son).

4. The Roll as revised by Bir Shumsher after the expulsion of Khadga Shumsher and the death of Rana Shumsher (1887)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Bir Shumsher Jang Rana Bahadur;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Dev Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Chandra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
4. Eastern Commanding General Dev Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
5. Southern Commanding General Fateh Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
6. Northern Commanding General Lalit Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
7. General Jit Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
8. Colonel Juddha Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s brother);
9. Colonel Gehendra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s eldest son);
10. Colonel Chakra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s son);
11. Colonel Rudra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s son);
12. Colonel Padma Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s eldest son);
Appendices

14. Colonel Punya Shumsher. (Khadga Shumsher’s eldest son);
15. Colonel Bikram Shumsher. (Khadga Shumsher’s second son);
16. Colonel Tej Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s son);
17. Colonel Mohan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s eldest son);
18. Colonel Pratap Shumsher (Bir Shumsher’s son);
19. Colonel Jang Shumsher (Dev Shumsher’s eldest son).

5. The Roll as drawn up by Chandra Shumsher. (c. 1928)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Chandra Shumsher Jang Rana Bahadur;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Bhim Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class brother);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Juddha Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class brother);
4. Eastern Commanding General Dharma Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
5. Southern Commanding General Rudra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
6. Northern Commanding General Padma Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
7. General Tej Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
8. General Mohan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
9. General Pratap Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
10. General Baber Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
11. Lt. General Keshar Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son)
12. Lt. General Bahadur Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son)
13. Lt. General Agni Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son)
14. Lt. General Singha Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
15. Major General Hari Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
16. Major General Prachandra Shumsher. (Fateh Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
17. Colonel Bhupal Shumsher. (Fateh Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
18. Major General Krishna Shumsher (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
19. Lt. Colonel Surya Shumsher (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
20. Major General Vishnu Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
21. Major General Shanker Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
22. Lt. Colonel Narayan Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
23. Major General Madan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);

6. The Roll as drawn up by Bhim Shumsher. (1930)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Bhim Shumsher Jang Rana Bahadur;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Juddha Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class brother);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Dharma Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
4. Eastern Commanding General Rudra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
5. Southern Commanding General Padma Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
6. Northern Commanding General Tej Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
7. General Mohan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
8. General Pratap Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
9. General Hiranya Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
10. General Baber Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
11. Lt. General Keshar Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son)
12. Lt. General Bahadur Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son)
13. Lt. General Agni Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son)
14. Lt. General Singha Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
15. Major General Hari Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
16. Major General Prachandra Shumsher. (Fateh Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
Nepal under the Ranas

7. The Roll as drawn up by Juddha Shumsher on his appointment. (1932)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Juddha Shumsher Jang Rana Bahadur;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Rudra Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class brother);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Padma Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
4. Eastern Commanding General Tej Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
5. Southern Commanding General Mohan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
6. Northern Commanding General Pratap Shumsher. (Bir Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
7. General Hiranya Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
8. General Baber Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
9. General Keshar Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
10. General Bahadur Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
11. Lt. General Agni Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
12. Lt. General Singha Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
13. Lt. General Hari Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
14. Lt. General Prachandra Shumsher. (Fateh Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
15. Major General Ram Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s ‘C’ class son);
16. Major General Krishna Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
17. Major General Surya Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
18. Major General Shanker Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
19. Lt. Colonel Narayan Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
20. Major General Madan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);

8. The Roll as revised by Juddha Shumsher. (18 March 1934)

1. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal Sri Teen Maharaja Juddha Shumsher Jang Rana Bahadur;
2. Commander-in-Chief General Padma Shumsher. (Bhim Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
3. Western (Senior) Commanding General Mohan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
4. Eastern Commanding General Baber Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
5. Southern Commanding General Keshar Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
6. Northern Commanding General Bahadur Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
7. General Agni Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
8. General Singha Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
9. General Hari Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
10. General Prachandra Shumsher. (Fateh Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
11. Lt. General Krishna Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
12. Lt. General Surya Shumsher. (Juddha Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
13. Lt. General Shanker Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
14. Lt. General Madan Shumsher. (Chandra Shumsher’s ‘A’ class son);
APPENDIX 7

PRINCIPAL EVENTS

Chapter 1: THE SETTING.

27 Dec 1722 Prithvi Narayan Shah born.
3 Apr 1743 Prithvi Narayan Shah becomes King of Gorkha (aged 20)
26 Sep 1744 Prithvi Narayan Shah launches his campaign of conquest by capturing the strategic fort of Nuwakot guarding the northeastern approach to the Kathmandu Valley.
16 Apr 1751 Crown Prince Pratap Singh Shah born.
31 May 1757 Prithvi Narayan Shah launches an unsuccessful first attack on Kirtipur.
1 Jul 1759 Gorkhali forces capture the fort at Shivpuri that commands the northern approaches to the Kathmandu Valley.
18 Jan 1760 Gorkhali forces capture the forts at Palanchowk and Kabre that command the eastern approaches to the Kathmandu Valley.
24 Aug 1762 Gorkhali forces capture the principality of Makwanpur, south of the Kathmandu Valley.
23 Oct 1763 Gorkhali forces capture Dhulikhel, thus completing the blockade of the Kathmandu Valley.
16 Sep 1764 Prithvi Narayan Shah launches an unsuccessful second assault on Kirtipur.
— Oct 1765 Gorkhali forces lay siege to Kirtipur.
15 Mar 1766 Kirtipur falls.
— Sep 1766 The Raja of Lamjung attempts to invade Gorkha but is repulsed.
— Sep 1767 At the request of Jaya Prakash Malla, King of Kathmandu, a British expeditionary force under Captain Kinlock attempts without success to break the Gorkhali blockade of the Kathmandu Valley.
25 Sep 1768 Kathmandu falls.
6 Oct 1768 Patan falls.
12 Nov 1769 Bhaktapur falls.
— Apr 1771 Prithvi Narayan Shah launches an unsuccessful campaign to conquer the Chaubisi rajas.
— Aug 1772 Prithvi Narayan Shah launches a successful campaign to conquer the eastern hill region.
16 Jul 1773 The Kingdom of Chaudandi in the eastern Tarai falls to the Gorkhali forces.
17 Jul 1774 The Kingdom of Vijayapur in the eastern Tarai falls to the Gorkhali forces.
4 Sep 1774 Gorkhalis secure their eastern frontier by defeating the Raja of Sikkim who then cedes the district of Ilam.
11 Jan 1775 King Prithvi Narayan Shah dies. Pratap Singh becomes king (aged 23).
9 Aug 1775 Nepal and Tibet sign the Treaty of Kuti regulating bilateral commercial relations and currency exchange rates.
17 Nov 1777 King Pratap Singh dies. Ran Bahadur becomes king (aged 2 1/2 ). Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi assumes the regency.
12 Aug 1778 Bahadur Shah seizes the regency. Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi is imprisoned.
20 Jun 1779 Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi regains the regency. Bahadur Shah is exiled.
17 Jun 1785 Gorkhali forces complete their subjugation of the Chaubisi territories east of the Kali River.
13 Jul 1785 Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi dies. Bahadur Shah resumes the regency.
— Nov 1786 Bahadur Shah completes the subjugation of the Chaubisi territories west of the Kali River.
— Jul 1788 First Nepal-Tibet war. Nepalese forces under Kaji Damodar Pande enter Tibet to enforce the terms of the Treaty of Kuti (1775).
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2 Jun 1789  Treaty of Kerong ends the First Nepal-Tibet war.
30 Sep 1789  Nepal despatches a goodwill mission to Peking to assess Chinese reaction to the recent Nepal-Tibet conflict.
 — Nov 1789  Gorkhali forces complete their conquest of the Baisi rajas and push the Nepal territories westward to the Mahakali River.
 — Jan 1790  Gorkhali forces cross the Mahakali River and press into Kumaon.
6 Aug 1791  Second Nepal-Tibet War. Nepalese forces invade Tibet to enforce the terms of the Treaty of Kerong (1798).
28 Oct 1791  Nepalese forces capture Shigatze, loot the monastery of Tashilumpo, then withdraw into Nepal.
1 Mar 1792  Hoping to win British support for the war against Tibet, Nepal signs a commercial treaty with the East India Company.
 — Jun 1792  Tibet counter-attacks, supported by a Chinese army that crosses the Himalayas into Nepal.
30 Sep 1792  A Chinese army defeats the Nepalese forces near Kathmandu. Bahadur Shah sues for peace and signs a treaty with China.
20 Oct 1792  Nepal despatches the first of a series of quinquennial missions to Peking as required by the terms of the peace treaty ending the Second Nepal-Tibet War. Regency terminated. King Ran Bahadur rules in his own right.
19 Aug 1794  Crown Prince Ranodyut Shah born to (Second) Queen Subarna Prabha.
19 Oct 1797  Prince Girvan Juddha Bikram Shah born to (Third) Queen Kantimati Devi and declared Crown Prince in place of Ranodyut Shah.
 — Feb 1799  King Ran Bahadur abdicates. Girvan Juddha becomes king (aged 1½). (Senior) Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari becomes Regent. Ex-King Ran Bahadur manages the administration as mukhtiyar.
 — Apr 1800  (Senior) Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari accompanies ex-King Ran Bahadur into voluntary exile in Benaras. (Second) Queen Mother Subarna Prabha assumes the regency. The administration of the Kingdom is entrusted to Chautariya Sher Bahadur Shah, Kaji Kirtinman Singh Basnait and Kaji Damodar Pande.
26 Oct 1801  Nepal and the East India Company sign a commercial treaty under the terms of which Nepal will accept an envoy at the Court in Kathmandu and the British will keep ex-King Ran Bahadur in honourable custody in Benaras. Captain W.D. Knox, the first British Resident, takes up duty in Kathmandu.
16 May 1802  Captain W.D. Knox, the first British Resident, takes up duty in Kathmandu.
 — Feb 1803  Senior Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari returns to Kathmandu and seizes the regency. Damodar Pande is appointed principal kaji.
18 Mar 1803  After a year of fruitless effort to establish closer political relations between Nepal and the East India Company, Captain Knox closes the British Mission in Kathmandu and returns to India.
24 Jan 1804  The East India Company renounces the commercial treaties of 1792 and 1801 with Nepal.
 — Mar 1804  Ex-King Ran Bahadur returns to Kathmandu and seizes the regency. Senior Queen Mother Raj Rajeshwari is banished to Helambu. Damodar Pande is executed. Ex-King Ran Bahadur takes charge of the administration.
 — Oct 1804  Nepal resumes its westward expansion and launches a successful campaign to conquer Gharwal.
26 Feb 1806  Ex-King Ran Bahadur appoints himself mukhtiyar.
25 Apr 1806  Ex-King Ran Bahadur is assassinated. Junior Queen Mother Tripura Sundari (aged 12) assumes the regency. Bhim Sen Thapa is appointed mukhtiyar.
 — May 1806  Nepali forces under Kaji Amar Singh Thapa resume their conquests westward and reach the boundaries of the Kingdom of Lahore along the Sutlej River.
1 Nov 1814  The East India Company declares war on Nepal.
4 Mar 1816  The Treaty of Segauli ends the Anglo-Nepal War.
Appendices

20 Nov 1816 King Girvan Juddha dies. Rajendra becomes King (aged 3).
6 Apr 1832 Regent Queen Grandmother Tripura Sundari dies. The regency is terminated and King Rajendra rules in his own right.
24 Jul 1837 Prince Debendra, youngest son of Senior Queen Samrajya Laxmi, dies. Bhim Sen Thapa, who is rumoured to have poisoned him, is dismissed. Ran Jang Pande is appointed acting mukhtiyar.
— Aug 1837 Ran Jang Pande is dismissed.
— Dec 1837 Raganath Pandit is appointed mukhtiyar.
17 Aug 1838 Raganath Pandit resigns as mukhtiyar.
21 Oct 1838 Joint Ministry appointed: Chautariya Pushkar Shah to be assisted by Ran Jang Pande.
— Apr 1839 Ran Jang Pande gains the ascendancy in the Joint Ministry with Chautariya Pushkar Shah.
18 May 1839 Bhim Sen Thapa is imprisoned on the false charge of having poisoned Prince Debendra in July 1837.
28 Jul 1839 Bhim Sen Thapa dies by his own hand in prison.
14 Feb 1840 Joint Ministry is terminated. Ran Jang Pande appointed sole mukhtiyar.
— Mar 1840 Nepalese incursions into Ramnagar District of British India begin.
20 Jul 1840 Governor General decides to send troops to the Nepal frontier.
11 Aug 1840 Nepalese troops withdraw from Ramnagar District.
1 Nov 1840 Ran Jang Pande is dismissed. Coalition Ministry headed by Chautariya Fateh Jang Shah is appointed.
6 Oct 1841 Senior Queen Samrajya Laxmi dies of awal fever while crossing the Tarai on a pilgrimage to Benaras.
7 Dec 1842 General discontent culminates in a petition from the bharadars, senior military officials and leading merchants to King Rajendra demanding that he curb the excesses of Crown Prince Surendra.
1 Jan 1843 In response to public pressure King Rajendra transfers his authority over the administration of the state to Junior Queen Rajya Laxmi Devi.
17 Apr 1843 Mathbar Singh Thapa returns to Kathmandu at the invitation of Junior Queen Rajya Laxmi Devi.

Chapter 2: THE RISE OF JANG BAHADUR

2 Feb 1783 Bal Narsingh Konwar born.
5 Apr 1806 Bal Narsingh Konwar throttles Prince Sher Bahadur to death minutes after the latter had assassinated the Regent, ex-King Ran Bahadur.
18 Jun 1817 Jang Bahadur Konwar born.
1818 or 1819 Bam Bahadur Konwar born.
c.1821 Badri Narsingh Konwar born.
c.1823 Krishna Bahadur Konwar born.
3 Apr 1825 Ranaudip Singh Konwar born.
c.1827 Jagat Shumsher Konwar born.
c.1828 Dhir Shumsher Konwar born.
— Dec 1828 Bal Narsingh Konwar is appointed Governor of Dhankuta and moves there with his family.
— Jan 1832 Bal Narsingh Konwar is appointed Governor of Daneldhura and moves there with his family.
— Jan 1835 Bal Narsingh Konwar is appointed Governor of Jumla and moves there with his family.
— Jul 1837 Bal Narsingh Konwar is dismissed from his post as Governor of Jumla and Jang Bahadur is dismissed from the army in a purge of Bhim Sen Thapa’s followers.
Chapter 3: JANG BAHADUR (1846-1856).

15 Sep 1846 Kot Massacre. Jang Bahadur is appointed Prime Minister.
31 Oct 1846 Bandarkhel Massacre.
23 Nov 1846 King Rajendra, Queen Rajya Laxmi Devi and her children go into exile in Benaras. Crown Prince Surendra becomes Regent.
24 Apr 1847 A plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur is uncovered.
12 May 1847 King Rajendra is deposed. Surendra becomes king (aged 17).
23 Jul 1847 Ex-King Rajendra crosses into Nepal at the head of an armed force with the intention of regaining the throne.
28 Jul 1847 Ex-King Rajendra is captured at Alau in the Tarai.

3 Sep 1847 Governor-General Hardinge recognises Surendra as King of Nepal.
11 Apr 1848 A plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur, organised by the chautariya Guru Prasad Shah from his exile in India, is discovered.
5 May 1848 King Surendra issues a lal mohur entitling Jang Bahadur and his brothers to adopt the family name Rana.
27 Jul 1848 Another plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur, again organised by Guru Prasad Shah, is discovered.
— Oct 1848 Nepal renews its offer of military assistance to the East India Company.
22 Dec 1848 King Rajendra and Prime Minister Jang Bahadur, accompanied by all the senior civil officials of the Kingdom and over 7,000 troops, set out on a shikar and a tour of inspection of the Tarai.
— Jan 1849 An outbreak of malaria forces the royal entourage to return to Kathmandu.
15 Jan 1850 Jang Bahadur leaves Kathmandu for an official visit to Britain.
25 May 1850 Jang Bahadur and party arrive in England.
29 Jun 1850 Jang Bahadur meets with the Court of Directors of the East India Company to discuss problems in Anglo-Nepalese relations.
21 Aug 1850 The Nepalese mission leaves England to return home via France.
6 Feb 1851 The Nepalese mission reaches Kathmandu.
16 Feb 1851 Bam Bahadur reveals a plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur.
24 Feb 1851 Jang Bahadur appoints a Law Council (Ain Kausal) to reform and codify Nepalese law.
24 Jun 1851 Badri Narasingh Rana, Prince Upendra Bikram Shah, Jai Bahadur Konwar and Karbir Khatri are exiled to the confinement of a British fortress at Allahabad for their part in the alleged plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur.
— Aug 1852 Quinquennial Mission under Sardar Gambir Singh leaves for Peking.
— Sep 1853 The death of Jai Bahadur Konwar prompts Jang Bahadur to order the release of the remaining 3 State prisoners at Allahabad.
6 Jan 1854 The Legal Code (Muluki Ain) is promulgated.
8 May 1854 Jagat Jang, eldest son of Jang Bahadur, marries the eldest daughter of King Surendra and his Senior Queen.
22 May 1854 The quinquennial mission that left for China in August 1852 returns to Kathmandu.
10 Feb 1855 Extradition treaty signed between Nepal and the East India Company.
24 Feb 1855 Jit Jang, second son of Jang Bahadur, marries the second daughter of King Surendra.
6 Mar 1855 The Third Nepal-Tibet War commences.
13 Aug 1855 A Tibetan delegation arrives in Kathmandu in an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate a cease fire.
1 Nov 1855 Tibet resumes hostilities.
24 Mar 1856 A peace treaty signed in Kathmandu ends the Third Nepal-Tibet War.
1 Aug 1856 Jang Bahadur resigns the prime ministership.

Chapter 4: BAM BAHADUR (1856-1857).

1 Aug 1856 Jang Bahadur resigns. Bam Bahadur is appointed Prime Minister.
6 Aug 1856 King Surendra issues a lal mohur conferring the maharajaship of Kaski and Lamjung on Jang Bahadur.
25 May 1857 Bam Bahadur dies of consumption.

Chapter 5: JANG BAHDUR (1857-1877).

25 May 1857 Prime Minister Bam Bahadur dies. Krishna Bahadur becomes Acting Prime Minister.
31 May 1857 Acting Prime Minister Krishna Bahadur offers military assistance to the British to suppress the Indian Mutiny.
1 Jun 1857 Jang Bahadur offers to train and lead troops to support British efforts to suppress the Mutiny.
26 Jun 1857 Governor-General formally requests military assistance from the Nepal darbar.
28 Jun 1857 King Surendra issues a lal mohur appointing Jang Bahadur Prime Minister for life.
2 Jul 1857 3,000 Nepalese troops are sent to assist the British.
10 Dec 1857 Jang Bahadur leaves Kathmandu at the head of 9,000 troops to join British forces in suppressing the Mutiny.
17 May 1858 In recognition of Nepalese assistance during the Indian Mutiny, the British
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restore Nepal's former territory below the hills between the Karnali River and Gorakhpur District that was lost in the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16.

10 Jun 1860 Crown Prince Trailokya marries Jang Bahadur’s daughter, Lalit Kumari.
23 Jul 1866 Supplementary extradition treaty signed between Nepal and the East India Company.
14 Mar 1873 Nepalese vakil in Lhasa is assaulted by Tibetan officials, precipitating a crisis in Nepal-Tibet relations.
19 Dec 1874 Jang Bahadur leaves Kathmandu for an official visit to England.
3 Feb 1875 A riding accident in Bombay forces Jang Bahadur to cancel his visit to England.
8 Aug 1875 Prince Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah, eldest son of Crown Prince Trailokya and Lalit Kumari, is born.
20 Feb 1876 Prince of Wales visits the Nepal Tarai on a hunting trip.
— Mar 1876 Ram Lakhan Thapa uprising.
25 Feb 1877 Jang Bahadur dies of cholera while on a hunting trip in the Tarai.

Chapter 6: 

RANAUDIP SINGH (1877-1885).

25 Feb 1877 Jang Bahadur dies.
16 Mar 1877 Ranaudip Singh appointed Prime Minister and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.
16 Jul 1877 Quinquennial mission leaves for Peking.
11 May 1879 Jagat Shumsher (Commander-in-Chief) dies.
17 May 1881 King Surendra dies. Prithvi Bir becomes King (aged 5).
10 Jul 1881 Ex-King Rajendra dies.
6 Jan 1882 Bomb conspiracy foiled.
16 Jun 1882 Quinquennial mission of 1877 returns from China.
7 Apr 1883 Looting of Nepalese shops in Lhasa precipitates a crisis with Tibet.
26 May 1884 Treaty of Rasuwa ends Tibetan crisis.
14 Oct 1884 Dhir Shumsher dies.
6 Apr 1885 Jagat Jang returns voluntarily to Kathmandu to clear himself of involvement in the bomb conspiracy of January 1882.
1 Jun 1885 Prince Narendra and Bombir Bikram Rana, exiled for their alleged involvement in the bomb conspiracy of January 1882, are allowed to return to Kathmandu.
22 Nov 1885 Ranaudip Singh is assassinated.

Chapter 7: 

BIR SHUMSHER (1885-1901).

22 Nov 1885 Ranaudip Singh is assassinated.
23 Nov 1885 Bir Shumsher is appointed Prime Minister.
30 Jan 1886 Government of India recognises the administration of Bir Shumsher.
2 Apr 1886 Two army officers are executed and a further 24 imprisoned for allegedly conspiring against the new government.
— Aug 1886 Jit Jang, self-exiled son of Jang Bahadur, organises armed opposition to the new regime in eastern Nepal.
11 Dec 1886 A major revision of the Legal Code (Muluki Ain) is promulgated, making it more compact, precise and up to date.
13 Mar 1887 Commander-in-Chief Khadga Shumsher is dismissed from his post and banished to Palpa for allegedly plotting to oust the Prime Minister.
— Dec 1887 Ranabir Jang, one of Jang Bahadur's sons in exile, launches a well armed but poorly organised military expedition into the central Tarai from India.
— Feb 1888 Bir Shumsher visits Viceroy Lord Dufferin in Calcutta.
3 Aug 1888 Bikram Bahadur Sijapati's alleged plot against the Prime Minister is discovered.
Appendices

— Mar 1892 Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India, pays an official visit to Kathmandu.
— Feb 1893 Bir Shumsher visits Viceroy Lord Lansdowne in Calcutta.
5 Mar 1901 Bir Shumsher dies of an aneurism.

Chapter 8: DEV SHUMSHER (1901).

5 Mar 1901 Bir Shumsher dies of an aneurism. Dev Shumsher is appointed Prime Minister.
27 Mar 1901 The first newspaper in Nepal, the Gorkha Patra, is founded.
— Apr 1901 The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, visits the Nepal Tarai on a hunting trip.
4 May 1901 The Prime Minister orders the liberation of all female slaves in his estates of Kaski and Lamjung and in the Kathmandu Valley.
17 May 1901 Dev Shumsher convenes a popular assembly as a first step towards a representational form of government.
27 Jun 1901 Dev Shumsher is forced out of office and banished to Dhankuta.

Chapter 9: CHANDRA SHUMSHER (1901-1929).

27 Jun 1901 Chandra Shumsher is appointed Prime Minister of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.
— May 1902 The Prime Minister appoints a series of commissions to enquire into reforms required in the administration.
— Dec 1903 Khadga Shumsher, Governor of Palpa, is discovered plotting to overthrow the Prime Minister and flees to India.
25 Jan 1904 Chandra Shumsher visits Viceroy Lord Curzon in Calcutta to discuss the Tibetan crisis.
25 Nov 1906 Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief of India, visits Kathmandu.
6 Apr 1908 The Prime Minister leaves Kathmandu for an official visit to Great Britain.
27 Aug 1908 The Prime Minister returns to Kathmandu.
11 Dec 1911 King Prithvi Bir dies. Tribhuvan becomes king (aged 5½).
18 Dec 1911 King George V visits the Tarai on a hunting trip.
4 Aug 1914 First World War commences.
11 Nov 1918 First World War ends.
28 Jun 1920 Suti is officially proscribed.
17 May 1921 Nepalese dissidents living in exile in Dehra Dun form the Gorkha League to air popular grievances against the Rana government.
14 Dec 1921 The Prince of Wales visits the Tarai for a hunting trip.
21 Dec 1923 An Anglo-Nepalese treaty defines the independent status of Nepal.
17 Oct 1924 Chandra Shumsher is awarded the Legion of Honour by the President of France.
28 Nov 1924 Chandra Shumsher issues a proclamation urging the abolition of slavery.
25 Nov 1929 Chandra Shumsher dies.

Chapter 10: BHIM SHUMSHER (1929-1932).

25 Nov 1929 Bhim Shumsher is appointed Prime Minister of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.
— Jun 1930 The Prime Minister’s youngest son, Yajna Shumsher, is implicated in an alleged plot to overthrow his father.
— Jul 1931 A distant cousin of the King, Umesh Bikram Shah, is arrested and tried for plotting to overthrow the Rana regime and restore the power of the monarchy.
Chapter 11: JUDDHA SHUMSHER (1932-1945).

1 Sep 1932 Juddha Shumsher is appointed Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.
4 May 1933 An official Italian delegation, the first mission from a European country, arrives in Nepal to confer a decoration on the Prime Minister.
15 Jan 1934 The most devastating earthquake of its recorded history strikes Nepal.
18 Mar 1934 The Prime Minister purges all ‘C’ class Ranas from the Roll of Succession.
23 May 1934 An official French delegation arrives in Kathmandu to confer a decoration on the Prime Minister.
6 Jun 1934 An official Chinese delegation confers a decoration on the Prime Minister in a ceremony held on the Tundikhel parade ground.
23 Oct 1937 The Kingdom’s first bank, the Nepal Bank, is established.
7 Nov 1938 Shukra Raj Shastri, a social reformer, is arrested in Kathmandu for his anti-establishment teachings.
4 Sep 1939 Second World War commences.
24 Jan 1941 Dharma Bhakta Mathema, a founder member of the Nepal People’s Congress, is hanged for his anti-Rana political activities.
27 Jan 1941 Shukra Raj Shastri, founder of the Nepal Civil Rights Committee, is executed for his political activities, along with two founder members of the Nepal People’s Congress, Dasarath Chand and Ganga Lal.
8 Aug 1942 The Indian Congress Party launches a civil disobedience movement. Disturbances in northern India cut communications between Nepal and India completely for several weeks.
22 May 1943 An armed group of Indian Congress Party supporters crosses into Nepal and attacks the town of Hanumannagar, prompting a crackdown against political activity in the Tarai.
2 Sep 1945 The capitulation of Japan marks the end of the Second World War.
29 Nov 1945 Juddha Shumsher resigns as Prime Minister and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

Chapter 12: PADMA SHUMSHER (1945-1948).

29 Nov 1945 Padma Shumsher is appointed Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.
10 Dec 1945 Prime Minister delivers a major policy statement outlining the aims and objectives of his administration.
31 Oct 1946 Nepalese political exiles in India form the All-India Nepali National League under the chairmanship of Dev Prasad Sapkota.
14 Nov 1946 Nepalese political dissidents in India form the All-India Gorkha League under the chairmanship of D.N. Pradhan.
24 Jan 1947 The All-India Nepali National Congress and the All-India Gorkha Congress combine to form a single, mass political party, the Nepalese National Congress, with the aim of establishing through non-violent means a democratic constitutional monarchy in Nepal.
4 Mar 1947 Workers at the Biratnagar Jute Mill launch a strike and invite the involvement of the Nepali National Congress.
Troops open fire to disperse a procession of mill workers in Biratnagar and their strike collapses.

The Nepali National Congress launches a nationwide civil disobedience campaign to press for the release of B.P. Koirala and others arrested in the Biratnagar strike.

Nepal and the United States establish diplomatic relations.

The Prime Minister announces major reforms in the administration designed to associate the people with the country's political affairs.

Working committees are established to implement the new administrative reform programme.

The Nepali National Congress calls off its civil disobedience movement.

Municipal elections are held in Kathmandu.

Britain grants independence to India and Pakistan.

Nepal's first constitution is proclaimed. The date of its introduction into force is set for 14 April 1948.

Padma Shumsher leaves Kathmandu to settle in India.

Padma Shumsher resigns as Prime Minister and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

MOHAN SHUMSHER (1948-1951).

With Padma Shumsher's departure for India, Mohan Shumsher becomes Acting Prime Minister.

Acting Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher bans the Nepali National Congress.

Padma Shumsher resigns and Mohan Shumsher is appointed Prime Minister of Nepal and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

The left wing Nepal Democratic Congress is formed in Calcutta to overthrow the Rana regime.

The Prime Minister inaugurates the National Economic Planning Committee.

China announces its intention to "liberate" Tibet.

Mohan Shumsher announces the formation of a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution.

Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher travels to New Delhi for talks with Prime Minister Nehru.

The Nepali National Congress and the Nepal Democratic Congress merge to form the Nepali Congress.

Nepal and India sign a treaty of peace and friendship and a treaty of trade and commerce.

Armed Congress volunteers and several serving military officers are arrested in Kathmandu for plotting a coup d'etat.

King Tribhuvan and his family seek refuge in the Indian Embassy, Kathmandu.

The Bharadari Sabha declares that King Tribhuvan has forfeited his right to the throne and proclaims his 4-year-old grandson, Gyanendra, as King.

King Tribhuvan and his family are flown to New Delhi in an Indian Air Force plane. The Nepali Congress launches an armed invasion of Nepal, capturing the important town of Birgunj.

An attack by Nepali Congress forces on the town of Jhapa in the eastern Tarai is repulsed.

Indian refusal to supply the Nepali Congress with arms and ammunition forces the insurgents to abandon Birgunj.

Resupplied with illegal weapons, the Nepali Congress resumes its insurgency in the hill areas of Nepal and captures the industrial town of Biratnagar in the Tarai.
Rudra Shumsher, Governor of Palpa, defects to the insurgents along with the troops under his command.

Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher announces that, as no foreign country has recognised Gyanendra as King of Nepal, Tribhuvan would be restored to the throne and a cabinet with popular representation would be formed.

King Tribhuvan and the Nepali Congress leaders return to Kathmandu.

King Tribhuvan issues a *lal mohur* revoking the hereditary powers and privileges of the Rana family.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 8

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

(Entries have been alphabetised on the basis of the first element of a person’s name)

ABHIMAN SINGH. General. Appointed a member of the Coalition Ministry headed by the chautariya Fateh Jang Shah (September 1845). Killed by Krishna Bahadur Rana (Jang Bahadur’s brother) during the Kot Massacre (15 September 1846).

AMAR SINGH THAPA. Kaji. Born 1761. Took a leading part in all the western campaigns during the regency of Bahadur Shah. Later conquered Garhwal and Kumaon and pushed the limits of the Gorkhali state up to the frontiers of the Kingdom of the Sikhs along the Sutlej River. Fought brilliantly against the British in the area around Simla during the Anglo-Nepal war (1814-16). Following Nepal’s defeat he withdrew from public life and retired to Gosainkhund where he died on 16 August 1816.


BADRI NARSINGH RANA. Third son of Bal Narsingh Konwar. Born c.1821. Placed in charge of the Kumari Chowk (September 1846). Implicated in the alleged plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur upon his return from Europe (February 1851) for which he was struck off the Roll of Succession and confined to a British fortress at Allahabad (June 1851). Released after 2 1/2 years, he returned to Nepal in January 1854 and was sent to Palpa where his ten year old son, Kedar Narsingh, was appointed governor. A few months later he was made commander of the western army. Commanded a section of the Nepalese forces in the Third Nepal-Tibet War (1855-56). Appointed Governor of Palpa in 1858, a position he held until his death in May 1874.

BAHADUR SHAH. Prince. Son of King Prithvi Narayan Shah. Born 1757. Imprisoned then exiled by his elder brother, Pratap Singh, when the latter succeeded Prithvi Narayan Shah (January 1775). After Pratap Singh was succeeded by his infant son Ran Bahadur (November 1777) Bahadur Shah seized the regency from the dowager Queen Rajendra Laxmi (12 August 1778). He lost it to her on 20 June 1779 but resumed it after her death on 13 July 1785. During this period as Regent (1785-1794) he presided over the incorporation of the Chaubisia and Baisi principalities into Nepal, the conquest of the territories as far west as Garhwal, the First Nepal-Tibet War (1788-1789) and the Second Nepal-Tibet War (1791-1792). Dismissed from all offices when King Ran Bahadur attained his majority (April 1794), he was later arrested and thrown into prison (February 1797) where he died of ill-treatment (June 1797).

BALKRISHNA SAMA. Dramatist. *Nom de plume* of Balkrishna Shumsher Rana. Born 1902. One of the few literary figures recognised in his own lifetime, he introduced a new trend in Nepali literature by synthesising oriental and western philosophic and scientific thought. He was also an accomplished artist. Died 1981.

BAL NARSINGH KONWAR. *Kaji*. Eldest son of Ranjit Konwar. Born 2 February 1783. Middle ranking court official until he killed Sher Bahadur after the latter murdered the Regent, ex-King Ran Bahadur (25 April 1806). For this action he was promoted to the rank of *kaji*. Married Ganesh Kumari, a daughter of Bhim Sen Thapa's younger brother and later the mother of Jang Bahadur. Appointed Governor of Dhankuta (1828), Dadeldhura (1832) and Jumla (1835). Dismissed during a purge of Bhim Sen Thapa's supporters (1837), but regained public office a year later. Died 24 December 1841.


BAM BIKRAM RANA. Elder son of Bam Bahadur Rana. Held several minor posts in the administration, rising to the rank of Major General. Was implicated in the bomb conspiracy against Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh (January 1882)—probably without foundation but as a political expediency since he was associated with the Jang Ranas. Sent as a state prisoner to Ootacamund for five years, he was allowed to return to Kathmandu in June 1885. Shortly afterwards he was appointed Governor of Dhankuta.

BASANTA SHUMSHER RANA. Eldest son of Padma Shumsher. Implicated in an alleged plot against Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher in June 1930, he remained in official disgrace until politically rehabilitated when his father became Prime Minister in 1946.

BHIM SEN THAPA. *Mukhtiyar*. Born between 1772 and 1779 (no accurate date of birth has yet come to light). Accompanied ex-King Ran Bahadur into exile at Benaras (April 1800) where he served as his Military Secretary. Returned to Kathmandu with him in March 1804 and was appointed a *kaji*. Appointed *Mukhtiyar* when the Regent, ex-King Ran Bahadur, was assassinated (25 April 1806). He was the virtual dictator of Nepal until the death of his powerful protector, the Regent Queen Tripura Sundari, herself a Thapa (April 1832), after which his hold on government came under increasing challenge. Forced out of his office in July 1837. Imprisoned on the false charge of having poisoned Prince Debendra, the youngest son of King Rajendra (18 May 1839). Died by his own hand in prison (28 July 1839).

BHIM SHUMSHER RANA. Prime Minister (1929-1932). Sixth son of Dhir Shumsher Rana. Born 21 April 1865. Promoted to Eastern Commanding General following the expulsion of Khadga Shumsher Rana from the Roll of Succession and the death of Rana Shumsher Rana in 1887. Became Western (Senior) Commanding General under Prime Minister Dev Shumsher Rana (March-June 1901). Served a long apprenticeship (28 years) as Commander-in-Chief under Chandra Shumsher whom he succeeded as Prime Minister on 25 November 1929 at the age of 65. His 33 months in office were not particularly noteworthy. The country was still digesting the far reaching reforms of Chandra Shumsher and relations with the British were on
such a good footing that there was no scope for further initiatives. A kind hearted man of religious temperament with a conservative and domestic turn of mind, he wanted only to follow quietly in his brother’s footsteps. Died 1 September 1932.

BIKRAM BAHADUR SIJAPATI. Police Colonel. Implicated, along with eight other members of the Sijapati family, in an alleged plot to assassinate Prime Minister Bir Shumsher (3 August 1888) for which he was dismissed and banished to Dhankuta.

BIR DHOJ BASNIAT. Chief conspirator in Queen Laxmi Devi’s plan to lure Jang Bahadur Rana to the Bandarkhel Palace and murder him; in return for which he was promised the prime ministership for life. The plot was betrayed and Bir Dhoj Basniat was killed by Ran Mehar Adhikari (31 October 1846).


BIR SHUMSHER RANA. Prime Minister (1885-1901). Eldest son of Dhir Shumsher Rana. Born 10 December 1852. Appointed a Lieutenant-Colonel by the age of six. Educated, though without conspicuous success, at Doveton College, Calcutta. Married Princes Dhana, a daughter of Prince Upendra. At the age of 18 he was appointed vakil at Calcutta (October 1871). In 1874 he succeeded Badri Narsingh Rana as Governor of Palpa. After Jang Bahadur’s death he returned to Kathmandu and acted as Chief Secretary to his father. Instigated the assassination of his uncle, Ranaudip Singh, and immediately succeeded him as Prime Minister on 22 November 1885. Died in office of an aneurism on 5 March 1901.


CHANDRA SHUMSHER RANA. Prime Minister (1901-1929). Fifth son of Dhir Shumsher Rana. Born 8 July 1863. Educated by palace tutors and later at Calcutta University, though he was forced to abandon his studies and return to Kathmandu when his father was dying in 1884. Became Western (Senior) Commanding General in 1885. From 1888 onwards Prime Minister Bir Shumsher increasingly involved him in key areas of the administration including, at one stage, responsibility for the Foreign Office. Became Commander-in-Chief upon Bir Shumsher’s death (5 March 1901). Deposed Dev Shumsher in a bloodless coup and assumed the prime ministership himself on 27 June 1901. His long tenure of office was marked by the consolidation of the regime, numerous administrative and social reforms and the enhanced security and independence of Nepal. Died 25 November 1929.

DAL BHANJAN PANDE. Kaji. Led a quinquennial mission to China in 1822. Member of the four man Coalition Ministry appointed in November 1840 and headed by the chautariya Fateh Jang Shah. Additional member of the Coalition Ministry appointed in September 1845 and again headed by Fateh Jang Shah. Died in the Kot Massacre (15 September 1846).

DAMODAR PANDE. Kaji. Had a long and brilliant military career in the campaigns to conquer the Kathmandu Valley and the Chaubisia and Baisi lordships. Chief military and administrative officer of the newly conquered western hills region (1786). Led the Nepalese forces in the Second Nepal-Tibet War (1791-1792). Appointed chief kaji by Queen Raj Rajeshwari when she assumed the regency (February 1803). Removed from office and executed when
ex-King Ran Bahadur returned from voluntary exile in Benaras and seized the regency. (March 1804).

**DASARATH CHAND.** One of three founder members of the Nepal People's Congress who were executed on the orders of Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher for anti-Rana activities (27 January 1941).

**DEBENDRA BIKRAM SHAH.** Prince. Youngest son of King Rajendra and Senior Queen Samrajya Laxmi. His death by poisoning (24 July 1837) was blamed on Bhim Sen Thapa and led to his dismissal from the office of mukhtiyar and imprisonment.

**DEV BAHADUR RANA.** Cousin and close companion of Jang Bahadur. Executed in 1843 for remarks he made that hinted at an illicit relationship between General Gagan Singh Bhandari and Junior Queen Laxmi Devi.

**DEV PRASAD SAPKOTA.** An official of the Foreign Ministry who was dismissed by Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher for opposing Nepal's support for Britain's military adventurism in Tibet in 1904. He moved to Benaras where he founded a Nepali language weekly, Gorkhali, that called for democratic rights for the people of Nepal. When it began to attract a considerable following of educated and politically aware Nepalese-in-exile, the British authorities closed it down. Founder member (Chairman) of the All-India Nepali National Congress (January 1947). Took a leading role in the activities of successive organisations (Nepali National Congress, Nepali Congress) that led to the downfall of the Rana regime.

**DEV SHUMSHER RANA.** Prime Minister (1901). Fourth son of Dhir Shumsher Rana. Born 17 July 1862. Became Commander-in-Chief following the death of Rana Shumsher Rana in 1887, a post he discharged competently until the death of Bir Shumsher on 5 March 1901 elevated him to the prime ministership. His liberal tendencies alarmed his brothers, who feared for the stability of the regime, and alienated the more conservative elements in Nepalese society. He was forced out of office (27 June 1901) after only 114 days. Banished to Dhankuta, he was allowed to escape to India where he lived in comfortable retirement at Mussoorie until his death on 20 February 1914.

**DHARMA BHAKTA MATHEMA.** One of three founder members of the Nepal People’s Congress who were executed on the orders of Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher for anti-Rana activities (24 January 1941).

**DHIR SHUMSHER RANA.** General. Seventh son of Bal Narsingh Konwar. Born c.1828. Accompanied Jang Bahadur to Europe (15 January 1850–6 February 1851). Fought with distinction in the Third Nepal-Tibet War (1855-56). Represented the King of Nepal as his ambassador at the Imperial Darbar held in Delhi in January 1877. Became Commander-in-Chief upon the death of Jagat Shumsher (11 May 1879). Dhir Shumsher was a staunch supporter of Jang Bahadur during his rise to power and thereafter of the institutionalised rule of the Rana family, ruthlessly putting down any conspiracies against the regime, including those perpetrated by his close relatives. During the prime ministership of his weak and ineffective brother, Ranaudip Singh, he was the de facto ruler of Nepal until his death on 14 October 1884.

**DHIREDRA BIKRAM SHAH.** Prince. Son of Prince Upendra and grandson of King Rajendra. Married Jang Bahadur's daughter, Khadga Kumari.

**DOJ NARSINGH RANA.** General. Second son of Badri Narsingh Rana and adopted son of Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh. Expelled from Nepal following the coup d'état that brought Bir Shumsher to power (November 1885).
Appendices

DIP KUMARI. Daughter of Jang Bahadur. Known as the Kanchi Maiya or the Princess of Bagh, from her residence, the Bagh Darbar. Married Prince Dhirendra. Sided with the Shumsher brothers in their struggle against the Jang Ranas during the prime ministership of Ranaudip Singh. Later plotted with Khadga Shumsher, whose lover she was reputed to have been, to oust Prime Minister Bir Shumsher, for which she was banished to a remote hill district.


FATEH JANG SHAH. Chautariya. Born 1805. Appointed head of a four-man Coalition Ministry in November 1840. (The other members were his two brothers, Guru Prasad Shah and the rajguru Ram Krishna Shah, and Raganath Pandit). Appointed head of a four-man Coalition Ministry in September 1845. (The other members were Gagan Singh Bhandari, Abhimanyu Singh and Jang Bahadur). Died in the Kot Massacre (15 September 1846).

FATEH SHUMSHER RANA. General. Seventh son of Dhir Shumsher Rana. Eastern Commanding General (1901). Served as Prime Minister Dev Shumsher Rana’s Huzuria General but became alarmed at his liberal tendencies and conspired with Chandra Shumsher to remove him from office (1901). Relieved of the post of Hazuria General in 1903 but continued to serve as Jangi Lat. Died 1907.

GAGAN SINGH BHANDARI. Chobdar or attendant in the royal palace who rose to the rank of General by virtue of being the paramour of Rajya Laxmi, Junior Queen of King Rajendra. Following the assassination of Mathbar Singh Thapa (17 May 1845), Gagan Singh was included in the Coalition Ministry headed by Chautariya Fateh Jang Shah (September 1845). Assassinated at the instance of King Rajendra (14 September 1846).

GANGA LAL. One of three founder members of the Nepal People’s Congress who were executed on the orders of Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher for anti-Rana activities (27 January 1941).

GEHENDRA SHUMSHER RANA. General. Eldest son of Bir Shumsher Rana. Alarmed by the liberal policies of his uncle, Dev Shumsher Rana, he acquiesced in Chandra Shumsher’s conspiracy to depose him and succeed him as Prime Minister (1901). Died 1905.

GIRVAN JUDDHA BIKRAM SHAH. King of Nepal (1799-1816). Son of King Ran Bahadur Shah and a Maithili Brahmin widow, Kantamati Devi. Born 19 October 1799. Succeeded his father at the age of 1 ½ (February 1799). Died of smallpox on 20 November 1816.

GURU PRASAD SHAH. Chautariya. Member of the Coalition Ministry appointed in November 1840 and headed by his brother, the chautariya Fateh Jang Shah. Exiled in the aftermath of the Kot Massacre. Was instrumental in persuading the deposed King Rajendra to invade Nepal from his exile in Benaras. Escaped back into India during the fighting at Alau (Tarai) that resulted in Rajendra’s capture (28 July 1847) and return to Kathmandu. (Had Rajendra’s invasion of Nepal been successful, Guru Prasad Shah would have been appointed Prime Minister). Plotted actively against the life of Prime Minister Jang Bahadur but finally sued for a pardon and retired to a farm in the Tarai (1854).

HARI PRIYA DEVI. Senior wife of Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh. A vain and domineering woman, her interference in affairs of state contributed substantially to the political tensions that finally exploded in the coup d’état of 22 November 1885 and the murder of her husband. She took refuge in the British Residency from where she was exiled for life to India.
HIRANYA SHUMSHER RANA. General. Second son of Bhim Shumsher. Appointed Hazuria General by his father when he became Prime Minister in 1929, a post which his strong-willed brother, Police Chief Ram Shumsher, virtually usurped from him. Hiranya Shumsher spent much of his time thereafter in Calcutta, ostensibly for medical treatment, and gradually became completely estranged from his father.


JAGAT JANG RANA. General. Eldest son of Jang Bahadur Rana. Born 1 March 1848. Married Princess Tika, the eldest daughter of King Surendra (8 May 1854). Appointed a Colonel at the age of eight. Rose to the third highest office in the Rana hierarchy, that of Western (Senior) Commanding General, upon the death of Jagat Shumsher Rana on 11 May 1979. Accused of being the leader of the 1882 bomb conspiracy against Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh, he was struck off the Roll of Succession and barred from returning to Nepal from India, where he happened to be on a religious pilgrimage. He was eventually able to return to Kathmandu (April 1885) to plead his innocence but was not reappointed to public office because of a feared backlash from the Shumsher Ranas, the main rivals of the Jang Ranas for political influence in Nepal. Murdered during the coup d'état in which Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh was assassinated. (22 November 1885).


JAI BAHADUR KONWAR. Cousin of Jang Bahadur. Inspector General of Land Revenues. Implicated in the alleged plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur after he returned from Europe (February 1851). Confined in a British fortress at Allahabad (June 1851) where he died of cholera (September 1853).


JIT JANG RANA. General. Second son of Jang Bahadur Rana. Married the second daughter of King Surendra (24 Feb 1855). Appointed a Colonel at the age of seven. Became Commander-in-Chief when his elder brother, Jagat Jang, was struck off the Roll of Succession for his alleged involvement in the plot to assassinate Ranaudip Singh (January 1882) but resigned the post and went into self-imposed exile in India. Organised guerilla raids into the Nepal Tarai in a futile attempt to topple the regime of Bir Shumsher after the coup d'état of November 1885.

JUDDHA PRATAP RANA. Eldest son of Jagat Jang Rana. Was Southern Commanding General and fifth on the Roll of Succession when he was murdered during the coup d'état that brought Bir Shumsher to power (22 November 1885).
JUDDHA SHUMSHER RANA. Prime Minister (1932-1946). Tenth son of Dhir Shumsher Rana. Born 19 April 1875. Northern Commanding General (March 1901). Southern Commanding General (June 1901). Eastern Commanding General (1907). Western (Senior) Commanding General (1913). Commander-in-Chief (1930). Prime Minister 1 September 1932. The last of the Rana Prime Minister to wield absolute power, Juddha Shumsher was adamant that a more constitutional form of government was neither possible nor desirable in Nepal. His term of office was characterised by futile attempts to stem the rising tide of populist opposition to the regime. Resigned 29 November 1945 and settled down in Dehra Dun (India) where he died on 20 November 1952.

KARBIR KHATRI. Kaji. Veteran of numerous diplomatic missions for the Nepalese government. Arrested by the British in Benaras while carrying secret letters to Lahore proposing an anti-British alliance with the Sikhs (November 1840). Accompanied Jang Bahadur to Europe (1850-51). Implicated in the alleged plot to assassinate Jang Bahadur upon his return to Nepal. Confined to a British fortress at Allahabad (June 1851), he was released after 2½ years and allowed to return to Kathmandu (January 1854).

KANTAMATI DEVI. Maithili Brahmin widow. Mistress of King Ran Bahadur and mother of King Girvan Juddha. Died by her own hand (November 1799).

KEDAR NARSINGH RANA. Eldest son of Badri Narsingh Rana. Born 1839 or 1840. Appointed Governor of Palpa at the age of 10. Vakil at Calcutta (Oct 1864). Northern Commanding General under Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh. Expelled to India following the coup d'état that brought Bir Shumsher to power (22 November 1885).


KHADCA KUMARI. Daughter of Jang Bahadur. Known as the Chidibidi Maiya or Princess of Bagh, from her residence, the Bagh Darbar. Married Prince Dhirendra. Sided with the Jang Ranas in their struggle against the Shumser brothers during the prime ministership of Ranaudip Singh.

KHADGA SHUMSHER RANA. General. Second son of Dhir Shumsher Rana. Born 16 February 1861. Took an active role in the assassination of his uncle, Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh (22 November 1885) and was then appointed Commander-in-Chief. Struck off the Roll of Succession because of his involvement in a conspiracy against Prime Minister Bir Shumsher (1887) and banished to Doti (Palpa District). Later appointed Governor of Palpa, he plotted against Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher. When the conspiracy was discovered he fled to India where he lived in comfortable retirement at Sangor in the Central Provinces until his death on 22 December 1921.

KRISHNA BAHADUR RANA. Fourth son of Bal Narsingh Konwar. Born c.1823. Played a supportive but not important role in the rise to power of his eldest brother, Jang Bahadur. Died 9 August 1863.
KONWAR INDRAJIT SINGH. Politician. Born May 1906. Started life peddling rice balls. Assistant to a homeopath in Rangoon. Moved to Gorakhpur when the Japanese invaded Burma (1942). Practised homeopathy and managed a hotel in Nautanwa. Led a brief armed revolt in western Nepal against the Rana regime in 1951, refusing the cease fighting after the Ranas and the Nepali Congress had reached the “Delhi compromise.” He was captured during a joint Indian-Nepalese military operation to suppress his insurgency and imprisoned in Kathmandu. Led an attempted coup d’état in January 1952, controlling the Kathmandu Valley for 12 hours before fleeing to Tibet and thence to Peking. Returned to Nepal and was pardoned by King Mahendra in September 1955. Founded the United Democratic Party (29 December 1956). Prime Minister 26 July–14 November 1957.


LAXMI PRASAD DEVKOTA. Poet. Born 1909. One of the most versatile literary figures of modern Nepal, he also wrote epics, plays, essays, short stories and novels. He was a Professor of English and for a brief period, Assistant Minister for Education. Died 1959.


MADHAV RAJ JOSHI. A Newari Brahmin of Kathmandu. Member of the Hindu reform movement, Arya Samaj, who started preaching in Pokhara in 1893 then opened a branch of the movement in Kathmandu in 1896. In 1905, having aroused the hostility of the priestly establishment which opposed the egalitarian and anti-clerical spirit of the Arya Samaj, he was arrested and imprisoned for two years. Upon his release he moved to Darjeeling and resumed his reformist activities there.

MAIJU RANI. Newari woman of Patan. Mistress of King Pratap Singh and mother of Sher Bahadur.


MATRIKA PRASAD KOIRALA. Politician. Born Biratnagar 1911. Involved himself in anti-Rana politics after a stint as an officer in the Nepalese Forestry Service. Founder member of the Nepali National Congress (January 1947) and its successor, the Nepali Congress (April 1950). Appointed Prime Minister in November 1951 but was forced to resign due to differences with his brother, B.P. Koirala, then party president (August 1952). Formed a new party, the National Democratic Party, and became Prime Minister of a coalition government (1953-55).

MOHAN SHUMSHER RANA. Prime Minister (1948-1951). Eldest son of Chandra Shumsher Rana. Born 23 December 1885. Accompanied his father on his official visit to Britain in 1908. Southern Commanding General (1932). Appointed Western (Senior) Commanding General following the purge of the ‘C’ class Ranas on 18 March 1934. Commander-in-Chief and
Director General of Home Affairs and other civil departments (1945). Prime Minister from 30 April 1948 to 18 February 1951 when King Tribhuvan revoked the hereditary powers and privileges of the Rana family. Thence Prime Minister in a mixed Rana-Congress government until his resignation on 12 November 1951. Retired to Bangalore where he died in 1965. Although he inherited a regime under siege from increasingly revolutionary political opponents and an unsympathetic government of an independent India, Mohan Shumsher refused to make any concessions to the changed political realities of the subcontinent. His intransigence virtually ensured that he would be the last of the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers.

MOTIRAM Batta. Writer. Born 1866. Spent most of his first 25 years in Benaras then returned to Kathmandu to found a small publishing business. An accomplished prose author and poet, he is now regarded as one of the founding fathers of Nepali literature. Died 1897.

NARENDRA BIKRAM SHAH. Prince. Son of King Surendra by a junior wife of pure Thakuri blood. Born 1849. Conspired with Jagat Jang Rana to seize the throne from Crown Prince Prithivi Bir upon the death of King Surendra but was unable to carry out his plans. Implicated in the bomb conspiracy of 1882 against Prime Minister Ranaudip Singh, he was sent as a state prisoner to Ootacamund (India) for 5 years. He was allowed to return to Nepal in June 1885 and reside in Gorkha. Exiled to India after the coup d'etat of 22 November 1885 that brought Bir Shumsher to power.


PADMA SHUMSHER RANA. Prime Minister (1946-1948). Eldest son of Bhim Shumsher Rana. Born 1 January 1883. Accompanied Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher on his official visit to Britain in 1908. Headed the Gurkha contingent stationed in the North West Frontier Province in India during the First World War. Northern Commanding General (1901-1929). Southern Commanding General (1929-1932). Western (Senior) Commanding General (1932). Promoted to Commander-in-Chief following the purge of 'C' class Ranas on 18 March 1934. Prime Minister 29 November 1945. Resigned 30 April 1948 and settled in India. A man of liberal political persuasion who described himself as "the servant of the nation", Padma genuinely believed in the need to introduce political reforms. He did attempt to associate the people with the process of government but he could not bring himself to compromise the future interests of the Rana family and their continued exploitation of Nepal as a family fief.

PRATAP SINGH SHAH. King of Nepal (1775-1777). Son of King Prithvi Nārāyān Shah. Born 16 April 1751. Succeeded his father on 11 January 1775. His interest in promoting trade with Tibet led to the conclusion of a commercial treaty with that country in 1775. Extended his kingdom extensively towards the west. Died, possibly of smallpox, on 17 November 1777.


PRITHVI NARAYAN SHAH. King of Gorkha (1743-1775). Son of King Nar Bhupal Shah (1716-1743). Born 27 December 1772. Succeeded his father as raja of Gorkha on 3 April 1743. In a series of brilliant military campaigns, complemented by shrewd diplomacy, he conquered the Kathmandu Valley, the eastern foothills of the Himalayas and large portions of the Tarai lowlands, thus creating the modern Kingdom of Nepal. Died 11 January 1775.
PUSHKAR SHAH. Chautariya. Born 1784. Appointed Governor of Doti (1831). Led the quinquennial mission to China (July 1837–October 1838). Headed a Joint Ministry with Ran Jang Pande (October 1838). By April 1839 Ran Jang Pande had gained the ascendancy and in February 1840 Pushkar Shah was dropped from the Ministry, leaving Ran Jang Pande as sole Minister. Died 1840.

RAGANATH PANDIT. Mukhtiyar and rajguru. Born 1773. Appointed mukhtiyar and given command of the armies after the downfall of Bhim Sen Thapa (December 1837). Lost the command to Ran Jang Pande in the pajani of January 1838. Resigned August 1838. Was a member of the Coalition Ministry appointed in November 1840 and headed by the chautariya Fateh Jang Shah. Joined King Rajendra in exile at Benaras (November 1846). Was instrumental in persuading him to invade Nepal in order to regain his throne, though he himself did not leave the safety of British Indian territory. Had Rajendra succeeded, Raganath Pandit would have been appointed rajguru.

RAJ RAJESHWARI. Senior Queen of King Ran Bahadur. Appointed regent for the infant King Girvan Juddha when Ran Bahadur abdicated in February 1799. In April 1800 she went into exile with her husband at Benaras, following his abdication in favour of his infant son by Kantimati Devi, King Girvan Juddha. (She herself had no children). Returned to Kathmandu in February 1803 and seized the regency from Junior Queen Subarna Prabha. When ex-King Ran Bahadur returned to Kathmandu and seized the regency from her (March 1804), she was banished to Helambu. When her husband was murdered by Sher Bahadur she was recalled to Kathmandu by Bhim Sen Thapa and forced to commit suti (May 1806).

RAJENDRA BIKRAM SHAH. King of Nepal (1816-1847). Son of King Girvan Juddha. Born 3 December 1813. Succeeded his father at the age of three on 20 November 1816. His inability to control his son Surendra led to chaos in the administration until pressure by leading civil and military officials forced him to hand over sovereign powers to Junior Queen Rajya Laxmi (1 January 1843). Following Jang Bahadur’s rise to power he was forced into exile at Benaras along with Queen Laxmi Devi (23 November 1846). Deposed in favour of his son Surendra (12 May 1847). Attempted to invade Nepal and regain the throne but was captured in the Tarai (28 July 1847) and brought back to Kathmandu where he remained a virtual state prisoner until his death on 10 July 1881.

RAJENDRA LAXMI. Senior Queen of King Pratap Singh. Assumed the regency when her son, Ran Bahadur, succeeded Pratap Singh at the age of 2 1/2 (17 November 1777). Deprived of the regency and imprisoned by the King’s uncle, Bahadur Shah (12 August 1778). Was freed and regained the regency on 20 June 1779. Remained as Regent until she died of tuberculosis (13 July 1785).

RAJYA LAXMI DEVI. Junior Queen of King Rajendra. Strove ceaselessly to have her son Ranendra enthroned in place of Crown Prince Surendra, the King’s eldest son by Senior Queen Samrayja Laxmi Devi. Following her failed attempt to have Jang Bahadur assassinated at the Bandarkhel Palace (31 October 1846) she was exiled to Benaras (23 November 1846) where she lived until her death.

RAM KRISHNA KONWAR. Sardar. Great grandfather of Jang Bahadur Rana. Born c.1728. At the age of twelve his family moved to Gorkha where his father, Ahiram Konwar, took service with Prithvi Narayan Shah’s father, King Nar Bhupal Shah (c.1740). Ram Krishna Konwar is recorded as fighting in the army of Gorkha as a sardar at the age of 16 (1744). Defeated the British expeditionary force sent to assist the King of Kathmandu against the Gorkhali invaders (September 1767). Distinguished himself in the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley kingdoms and the eastern hill tribes. For five years from 1777 he was Governor of the newly conquered Chitwan area on the border with British India. Died on campaign in the western hills in late 1787 or early 1788.
RAM LAKHAN THAPA. Soldier from Gorkha who claimed to be a reincarnation of Ram Lakhan Thapa, a traditional hero of the Magar people. Claiming the patronage of the goddess Manokamna, he led a popular uprising against Jang Bahadur Rana. Captured and hanged (March 1876).

RAM SHAH. King of Gorkha (1606-1633). Traditionally respected as one of the most enlightened of the Shah kings, he is famous for the legal code which he compiled and which formed the basis of pre-unification Gorkhali law.

RAM SHUMSHER RANA. General. Fourth son of Bhim Shumsher Rana. Became Chief of Police when his father was appointed Prime Minister, a position which he used to harass his enemies and advance his friends and supporters. As the Prime Minister became more isolated from the other branches of the Rana family he came to rely heavily on Ram Shumsher who, in turn, fed his father's insecurity with "evidence" of plots against his rule. As Bhim Shumsher's senility increased so did Ram Shumsher's influence on the administration. He lost his position and his place on the Roll of Succession when Juddha Shumsher purged all 'C' class Ranas from the Roll in March 1934.

RAN BAHADUR SHAH. King of Nepal (1777-1799). Son of King Pratap Singh. Born 25 May 1775. Succeeded his father at the age of 2½ (17 November 1777). Disinherited Ranodyut Shah, his son by Queen Subarna Prabha and the legitimate heir, then abdicated in favour of his son Girvan Juddha by his mistress, Kantimati Devi (February 1799). Went into voluntary exile at Benaras (April 1800). Returned to Kathmandu and seized the regency from his Senior Queen Raj Rajeshwari (February 1803). Appointed himself mukhtiyar (26 February 1806). Assassinated by his half-brother, Sher Bahadur (25 April 1806).

RAN JANG PANDE. Mukhtiyar. Son of Damodar Pande. Together with Senior Queen Samrajya Laxmi he was the political nemesis of Bhim Sen Thapa. Given command of the four battalions that made up the military complement of eastern Nepal (1836). Appointed a kaji in the pahani of February 1837. Appointed mukhtiyar on the fall of Bhim Sen Thapa (24 July 1837). Dismissed August 1837. Formed a Joint Ministry with Chautariya Pushkar Shah (October 1838). Appointed sole mukhtiyar (14 February 1840). Dismissed 1 November 1840.

RAN MEHAR ADHIKARI. Senior Captain. Childhood friend and lifelong confidant of Jang Bahadur Rana. Accompanied him to Europe (January 1850—February 1851). Died of dropsy (October 1852).

RANA SHUMSHER RANA. Third son of Dhir Shumsher. Took part in the assassination of his uncle, Ranaudip Singh. Became Commander-in-Chief in March 1887 when Khadga Shumsher was struck from the Roll of Succession for plotting the overthrow of Prime Minister Bir Shumsher, but died of alcohol abuse within 3 months.

RANABIR JANG RANA. Son of Jang Bahadur Rana. Held a series of official posts, both military and civil, including that of vikil in Calcutta. He was an able military officer and a capable administrator which was why, despite his being illegitimate, his father placed him on the Roll of Succession. Expelled to India following the coup d'état that brought Bir Shumsher to power (22 November 1885). In an effort to topple the new regime that had destroyed the power and position of the Jang Ranas, he organised a series of well armed but poorly led guerrilla raids across the border into the Tarai districts in December 1887. However the mass desertion of government troops to his cause that he had hoped for did not occur and the rebels were easily crushed. Ranabir Jang made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Bir Shumsher while the latter was on an official visit to India in 1893, after which his resistance to the new regime seems to have died out.
RANAUDIP SINGHRANA. Prime Minister (1877-1885). Sixth son of Bal Narsingh Konwar. Born 3 April 1825. During Jang Bahadur’s visit to Europe he was Governor of the Eastern and Western Provinces of Nepal. Master of Ordnance during the Third Nepal-Tibet War (1855-56). Accompanied Jang Bahadur into India as second in command of the Nepalese forces that assisted the British to suppress the Indian Mutiny. By virtue of the removal of Badri Narsingh from the Roll of Succession (February 1851) and the deaths of Bam Bahadur (25 May 1857) and Krishna Bahadur (9 August 1863) he became Commander-in-Chief. Appointed Prime Minister on 16 March 1877. Assassinated 22 November 1885.

RANENDRA BIKRAM SHAH. Prince. Eldest son of King Rajendra and his Junior Queen Rajya Laxmi Devi. His mother’s obsessive efforts to remove Crown Prince Surendra and his brother Prince Upendra in order to secure the throne for him led to chronic instability in the government and contributed materially to the rise to power of Jang Bahadur Rana. After the Bandarkhel Massacre of 31 October 1846 Prince Ranendra accompanied his parents into exile at Benaras (23 November 1846) where he lived until his death.


RANODYUT SHAH. Prince. Legitimate son of King Ran Bahadur (1778-1799) and his Second Queen Subarna Prabha. Born 19 August 1794. Disinherited by his father in favour of Girvan Juddha, his son by his mistress Kantamati Devi (October 1797). He seems to have accepted his fate and he served the new king faithfully as a chautariya.

RUDRA SHUMSHER RANA. General. Fourth son of Bir Shumshcer Rana by his favourite unmarried wife. Born Tansen 1879. Was later legitimised by a formal decision of the Bharadari Sabha. Accompanied his uncle, Prime Minister Chandra Shumshcer, on his official visit to England in 1908. Southern Commanding General and Quartermaster General (1914-1929). Eastern Commanding General and Adjutant General (1929). Rotary Judge of the Supreme Court of Appeal (1922-1929). Became Commander-in-Chief and next in the line of succession when Juddha Shumshcer was appointed Prime Minister (1932) but was struck from the Roll of Succession in the purge of ‘C’ class Ranas on 18 March 1934 and exiled to Palpa as Commanding General, Western Command. His defection to the Congress insurgents on 4 January 1951, along with the Palpa garrison, was a decisive factor in the fall of the Rana regime seven weeks later. Promoted to Field Marshal (1954). Died 1964.

SAMRAJYA LAXMI DEVI. Senior Queen of King Rajendra. Mother of King Surendra. Strong supporter of the Mukhtiyar Ran Jang Pande. Her anti-British activities and her persistent attempts to compel King Rajendra to abdicate in favour of Crown Prince Surendra contributed to the general instability of Nepalese internal politics in the period following the downfall of Bhim Sen Thapa. In October 1841 she left Kathmandu to make a pilgrimage to Benaras but died of awal fever crossing the Tarai.

SHER BAHADUR SHAH. Prince. Illegitimate son of King Pratap Singh and Maiju Rani. Slew his half-brother, the Regent ex-King Ran Bahadur, during an argument in open darbar and, minutes later, was himself throttled to death by Bal Narsingh Konwar (25 April 1806).

SHUKRA RAJ SHASTRI. Son of the social reformer, Madhav Raj Joshi. Founded the Nepal Civil Rights Committee (1937) whose aim was to create public awareness of the need for social reform through writings and discourses on Hindu literature. A teacher by profession, Shastri was strongly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi whom he had met in Calcutta. Arrested in November 1938 for his anti-establishment preachings he was imprisoned for six years.
Executed on 27 January 1941 along with two of the leaders of the Nepal People's Congress, a revolutionary movement with which he had no connection.

SUBARNA PRABHA. Second Queen of King Ran Bahadur. Mother of the legitimate heir to the throne, Ranodyut Shah. Assumed the regency when King Ran Bahadur abdicated in favour of another son, Girvan Juddha, and went into exile at Benaras with his Senior Queen Raj Rajeswari (April 1800). Ousted from the regency when Queen Raj Rajeswari returned to Kathmandu in February 1803. Committed sati upon the assassination of her husband (April 1806).

SURENDRA BIR BIWKRAM SHAH. King of Nepal (1847-1881). Son of King Rajendra. Born 20 October 1829. Succeeded his father when he was deposed (12 May 1847). Died on 17 May 1881.

TANKA PRASAD ACHARYA. Politician. Born Kathmandu 1912. Founded the Nepal Praja Parishad (Nepal People's Congress) in 1936. Arrested in October 1940 for anti-Rana activities, he escaped the death penalty because he was a brahmin and was sentenced to life imprisonment instead. Reorganised the party following his release from prison in 1950. Minister for Home Affairs (1954-55). Prime Minister (January 1956-July 1957).

TARA KUMARI. Elder daughter of Jang Bahadur Rana. Born c.1851. Married Crown Prince Trailokya (26 February 1857). Sided with the Jang Ranas in their struggle with the Shumsher brothers during the prime ministership of Ranaudip Singh. Following the coup d'etat of 22 November 1885 she went into exile in India where she spent the remainder of her days.

TEJ SHUMSHER RANA. General. Son of Bir Shumsher by a senior mistress. Born 1885. Was later legitimised by a formal decision of the Bharadari Sabha. Headed the Gurkha contingent serving in the United Provinces of India during the First World War. Politically very active, Tej Shumsher led a clique of fellow 'C' class Ranas against the senior 'A' class Ranas on Bhim Shumsher's Roll of Succession with the object of having them struck off and expelled to India, but a paralytic stroke early in 1932 that confined him permanently to bed cut short his political ambitions. A British "Memorandum on Nepal and Leading Personages in that Country" dated 1922 noted that he was "an energetic man with sporting tastes but no marked ability". Died 13 May 1942.


TRIBHUVAN BIR BIWKRAM SHAH DEV. King of Nepal (1911-1955). Son of King Prithvi Bir and his Indian born Second Queen Laxmi Divyeshwari. Born 30 June 1906. Succeeded his father on 11 December 1911. Although he was confined to the role of a figurehead monarch during the rule of five Rana Prime Ministers over a period of forty years, Tribhuvan was able to maintain active links with several oppositional political organisations and is known to have been associated with at least two coup attempts aimed at the overthrow of the regime and its replacement by a constitutional monarchy. Finally, on 6 November 1950, he precipitated the fall of the Rana family by seeking asylum in the Indian Embassy and subsequently going into voluntary exile in India. Three days after his restoration to power on 15 February 1951 he signed a lal mohur revoking all the powers and privileges of the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers. Thereafter he worked tirelessly to develop parliamentary democracy in Nepal by granting the country an interim constitution (April 1951) and guiding it towards stable party democracy. Died 13 March 1955.

TRIPURA SUNDARI. Fourth Queen of King Ran Bahadur. Born c.1794. When Bhim Sen Thapa seized power following the assassination of the Regent, ex-King Ran Bahadur (25 April
1806), Tripura Sundari assumed the regency which she held until her death 26 years later (6 April 1832).

**UMESH BIKRAM SHAH.** Distant member of the royal family who founded an organisation called Prachanda Gorkha (Terrible Gorkha), the aim of which was to overthrow the Rana regime and restore the power of the monarchy as the head of a parliamentary democracy. Arrested in July 1931, he was exiled to Palpa.

**UPENDRA BIKRAM SHAH.** Prince. Son of King Rajendra and his Senior Queen Samrajya Laxmi Devi. Born 1832. At first supported the rise of Jang Bahadur, whose side he took against his father's ill-fated attempt to regain his throne at Alau (28 July 1847). Implicated in the alleged plot against the life of Jang Bahadur (February 1851), he was confined in a British fortress at Allahabad (June 1851). Released two years later, he returned to Kathmandu in January 1854. Sided with the Shumsher Ranas in their struggle against the Jang Ranas. One of his daughters, Princess Dharna, later married Prime Minister Bir Shumsher Rana.

**VIJAYA RAJ PANDE.** Dharma adhikar (October 1845). Sent to lure Jang Bahadur to the Bandarkhel Palace so that he could be assassinated there (31 October 1846). Jang Bahadur subsequently obtained religious backing for his regime by coming to a modus vivendi with Vijaya Raj Pande who rose to the position of senior raj guru, the chief spiritual counsellor to the royal family.

**VIJAYA SHUMSHER RANA.** General. Second son of Mohan Shumsher. As Foreign Secretary he played a decisive role in the negotiations with the Nepali National Congress that led to the “Delhi compromise” of February 1951 and the return of King Tribhuvan from self-imposed exile in India.

**WAZIR SINGH BHANDARI.** General. Son of Gagan Singh Bhandari. Deputed to assassinate Jang Bahadur Rana at the Bandarkhel Palace on 31 October 1846. When the plot failed and most of the conspirators were themselves massacred, Wazir Singh Bhandari escaped and fled to India.

**YAJNA SHUMSHER RANA.** Youngest son of Bhim Shumsher. Implicated in an alleged plot against the Prime Minister in June 1930 on the evidence, probably fabricated, of his older brother, Chief of Police Ram Shumsher Rana.
Glossary

(The words in this glossary have been given only such meanings as they bear in the context of the book.)

Adalat Goswara: Established by Bir Shumsher, the Adalat Goswara was, until 1901, the highest appellate court in Nepal. Located at Naxal in Kathmandu, it heard appeals from the Char Adalat. Dev Shumsher renamed it the Appeal Adda and appropriated to the prime ministership the power of passing final judgement against its decisions.

Agri: The collective name given to castes and communities engaged in mining.

Ain Kausal: The Law Council, created in 1851 to reform and codify Nepalese law. After completing this project and publishing the Legal Code (the Muluki Ain) in 1854, the Law Council was retained as a standing body of legal experts drawn from the most important officers of state. Chandra Shumsher reorganised it as a Section within the Home Office and renamed it the Ain Sawal Phant.

Ain Khana: The Law Office, created by Jang Bahadur in 1851 or 1852. This office drafted new legislation, usually at the initiative of the Prime Minister, and proposed the amendment or repeal of laws for consideration by the Law Council.

Ain Sawal Phant: Formerly the Ain Kausal or Law Council, established by Jang Bahadur in 1851, it was reorganised as a Section within the Home Office by Chandra Shumsher and renamed.

Amal: A village council, a village level revenue collection office and court of first instance.

Amali: A village level revenue collector having police and judicial duties. An amali was, in effect, a local magistrate and judge empowered to try minor cases not punishable by mutilation or confiscation of property. In his capacity as a revenue collector he also had the power to try cases relating to land and revenue disputes. The position was abolished during a reorganisation of district administration in 1909 and replaced by that of mal subba.

Amini: A land revenue administration office in the Tarai with responsibility for maintaining law and order and having the power to try civil and criminal cases.
Nepal under the Ranas

**Appeal Adda:** The highest appeal court in Nepal, known before its name was changed on 20 March 1901 as the Adalat Gosuwra. It was later divided into the First Appeal Court (Sadar Appeal Pahila) and the Second Appeal Court (Sadar Appeal Dosna).

**Ashram:** A traditional Hindu place of learning where, under the guidance of a teacher and mentor (guru), students receive spiritual, intellectual, physical or vocational training.

**Astabal Khana:** The Government Horse Stables.

**Awal:** A deadly viral fever prevalent in the swamps and jungles of the Tarai.

**Bada hakim:** A district governor in the later Rana period.

**Baisi:** The collective name given to the 22 principalities in the Karnali region of the far west of Nepal prior to their conquest by the Shah rulers of Gorkha.

**Bajar Adda:** The Customs Office.

**Banaspati Goswara:** The Botanical Gardens established by Padma Shumsher in 1945 to improve the quality of herbs and medicinal plants.

**Bandobast Adda:** The Land Revenue Administration Office.

**Basant Panchami:** Spring Festival. The main ceremonies, attended by the King and all the senior officials of the Kingdom, are held at the Hanuman Dhoka Palace. The season is heralded in with gun salutes and the royal priest conducts elaborate rites in honour of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning.

**Betel:** A shrub that grows throughout the Indian subcontinent, where its leaf is wrapped around the parings of the areca nut and a little lime and chewed.

**Bhagavad Gita:** The Song of the Lord. A religious code of human behaviour forming part of the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata.

**Bharadar:** Literally “a bearer of the burden of the State”. The most senior military and civil personages of the Kingdom who collectively formed the Bharadari Sabha (the Council of Nobles or Council of State).

**Bharadari Sabha:** The Council of Nobles or Council of State.

**Bhubhadel:** The Residential Titles Office. An office that registered the transfer of residential property and that also had jurisdiction in disputes concerning boundaries of plots of lands and houses. The Shah Kings inherited this office from the Malla rulers of the Kathmandu Valley.

**Bichari:** A judicial officer.

**Bijuli Garad:** A special military unit formed by Ranaudip Singh as a personal bodyguard for the Prime Minister.

**Bijuli Goswara:** The Electricity Board. Established by Chandra Shumsher in 1911.

**Bintipatra:** A petition, a complaint against a government official or an appeal against a court decision which the common people could present to the Prime Minister or the King.

**Bintipatra** **Niksari Adda:** The Appeals Office. A final court of appeal created by Chandra Shumsher and answerable directly to the Prime Minister. It was the Prime Minister’s highest judicial office and was independent of the judicial hierarchy.

**Birta:** A land grant made by the King to an individual, usually on an inheritable and tax-exempt basis.

**Birlawala:** A holder of birta land.

**Cand:** A leaf shaped ornament mounted with diamonds and emeralds, five of which adorn the royal crown of Nepal and three of which adorned the
Catechu: *Terra japonica.* An extract from the *khair* tree used for medicinal purposes and as a dye.

*Census Goswara:* The Census Office. Established by Chandra Shumsher in 1919.

*Chakari:* The practice of civil servants paying formal obeisance to their senior officers at meetings held almost every morning or evening.

*Chaprasi:* An orderly or messenger.

*Chaprasi Adda:* The office responsible for the operation of the *hulak,* the government postal service.

*Char Adalat:* Literally "the four courts." The collective name given to the four principal courts of justice of Nepal in the early Rana period. Grouped about the western front of the Basantpur Palace complex in Kathmandu, they were the *Ita Chapali,* the *Koti Ling,* the *Taksar* and the *Dhansar.*

*Charkha Guthi:* An institution founded by Chandra Shumsher to popularise village handicrafts and the use of home-spun cloth.

*Chaubisi:* The collective name given to the 24 principalities in the Gandaki region of central west Nepal prior to their conquest by the Shah rulers of Gorkha.

*Chaudhari:* A land revenue collector in the Tarai region having a five year contract from the government to collect taxes from a group of villages. As part of Jang Bahadur’s reform of the administration of the Tarai the *chaudhari* were replaced by salaried government revenue collectors appointed by Kathmandu.

*Chautariya:* Up to the end of the 18th century, a royal collateral holding the office of Chief Minister and, during the King’s absence on campaign or through illness, the chief administrator of the Kingdom. When the post of *mukhtiyar* was created in the early 1800s its incumbent replaced the *chautariya* as Chief Minister. It then became usual to appoint several royal collaterals as *chautariyas* and give them important assignments in the administration. From the advent of the Rana period when all positions of importance were reserved for members of the Rana family, the term *chautariya* became a simple title not tied to any particular responsibility, though the *chautariyas* did sometimes function collectively as a political faction.

*Cheroot:* Hindi and Nepali: *churot.* A cigarette made from rolled tobacco leaves and held together with fine cotton thread.

*Chetri:* See *Kshatriya.*

*Chhebhadel:* The Public Works Office. This office was inherited from the Malla kings of Kathmandu and functioned until the end of Rana rule.

*Chopdar:* A royal attendant.

*Chumawan:* A special levy collected on the occasion of investing a royal prince with the sacred thread worn by high caste Hindus.

*Commandari Kitab khana:* Formerly the *Kitab Khana* or Civil and Military Registry founded by Jang Bahadur in 1848, it was reorganised and renamed by Chandra Shumsher.

*Dacoity:* An attack by robbers, especially armed or in a gang. (Hindi *dakait* = a robber).

*Dadar:* An ADC to a royal prince.

*Darbar:* A palace. By extension, a ruler in council or a royal audience.

*Darsanbhet:* A levy paid to the King and principal members of the royal family and to...
the Rana Prime Minister by civil and military officers at the time of their first appointment and when their services were reconfirmed at the annual pajani.

**Darsanbhet Tahsil:** The office responsible for the collection of the darsanbhet levy.

**Dasain:** The longest and most auspicious festival in the Nepalese calendar, celebrated country-wide by all castes during the lunar fortnight ending on the day of the full moon in late September or early October. The festival glorifies the ultimate and inevitable triumph of Good over Evil.

**Daudaha:** An *ad hoc* judicial commission and inspection team sent from Kathmandu to inspect a District's administration, audit its financial affairs, dispose of court cases and hear grievances against local officials. Daudahas were always headed by a senior member of the Rana family.

**Dhakre:** An off-roll soldier; a soldier who has been stood down at the pajani. Dhakres constituted a reserve army that could be called back to active duty at short notice.

**Dhansar:** One of the Char Adalat, the four principal courts of justice in Kathmandu in the early Rana period. The court was of uncertain origin but probably predated the Shah unification.

**Dharma adhikar:** The chief raj guru or royal priest of the Kingdom who, in the early Shah period, also carried the judicial responsibilities of a Chief Justice.

**Dharma Kachahari:** An anti-corruption court established by Jang Bahadur in 1870 to try cases of bribery, corruption, dishonesty and maladministration involving officials of all ranks. It consisted of 11 members headed by an officer of the rank of subba and was answerable directly to the Prime Minister. The Dharma Kachahari was abolished by Ranaudip Singh in 1878.

**Dharni:** A unit of weight used in the hill regions, equivalent to 2.2 kgs.

**Dhoka dware:** A gate keeper.

**Director General:** A post created by Chandra Shumsher to introduce, improve and expand all aspects of education in the Kingdom.

**Dittha:** A civil functionary employed as a senior judicial officer or a senior administrator in a civil or military establishment.

**Dub:** A species of grass used to weave ceremonial garlands.

**Faras Khana:** The Government Stores Department.

**Fil Khana:** The Government Elephant Stables.

**Fulpati:** Literally: sacred flowers and leaves. The name given to the seventh day of the Dasain festival on which a ritual vessel filled with flowers, banana stalks and sugar cane and representing the patron deity of the ruling family is carried from the ancestral darbar at Gorkha and installed with solemn religious ceremony in the Hanuman Dhoka Palace, in Kathmandu.

**Gadi:** A throne.

**Gadi Mubarak:** A special levy raised on the occasion of a King's coronation.

**Gaunda:** The largest unit of district administration in the early Rana period, consisting of a number of Districts and/or rajya holdings, and headed by a gaunda governor.

**Gharelu Adda:** The Cottage Industries Development Office. Established by Juddha Shumsher in 1939.
Glossary

Gharkaj Adda: The Public Works Office. Established by Chandra Shumsher and placed under the control of the Hazuria General, this office was responsible for the design, construction, maintenance and repair of royal and Rana residences.

Ghee: Clarified butter. A staple ingredient in the Nepalese diet.

Godan: A special levy to finance the funeral rites of a ruler.

Goddhuva: A special levy to finance the marriage ceremonies and the dowry of a royal princess.

Goswara: Headquarters of a district’s administration, both for executive and judicial purposes (goswara is a Persian word meaning “abstract of accounts”).

Goswara Tahvil: The Central Records Office. Set up by Chandra Shumsher in the old Basantpur Palace complex in 1924.

Goth Goswara: The Government Dairy. Established by Chandra Shumsher with a herd of 2,000 cows to supply milk and ghee to the royal palace and the Prime Minister’s residence.

Guthi: Land endowed by the State or by individuals to temples, monasteries and other religious institutions for their maintenance and for the performance of religious and charitable functions.

Guthi Kachahari: The Religious Affairs Office. An office responsible for the welfare of orphans and the poor and for the management of land given by the government to temples or religious institutions.

Harouri: A fee paid to the court by the loser in a lawsuit. See also jitouri.

Havildar: A non-commissioned soldier of a rank equivalent to sergeant.

Hazari Goswara: The Government Personnel Office. It was established by Bir Shumsher to record the attendance and leave entitlements of all government employees.

Hazuria General: Title given to the aide de camp to the Prime Minister. The post was created by Bir Shumsher and the first appointee was his eldest brother, Dambar Shumsher.

Holi: An important Hindu festival in February or early March that celebrates events from the life of Lord Krishna.

Howdah: A seat or covered pavilion on the back of an elephant.

Hulak: The government mail service operated by relays of porters along fixed routes that linked all the district headquarters of the Kingdom with Kathmandu. The hulak was administered by the Chaprasi Adda.

Hulak Goswara: The Central Registry. It was established by Chandra Shumsher as a clearing house for all government documents passing between government offices or between Kathmandu and the district headquarters.

Ijaradar: A private land revenue collector in the hill regions who contracted to collect taxes from a given number of villages and who paid the government, in advance, the amount that he contracted to collect. The ijaradar’s profit lay in subsequently collecting more from the villagers in taxes than he had paid to the government for the right to collect them. From the beginning of the 19th century onwards the ijaradars were gradually replaced by the government revenue officials.

Indra Jatra: Eight days of religious festivities in honour of Indra, the god of rain. The most spectacular of the religious festivals of the Kathmandu Valley, Indra Jatra has been celebrated at the beginning of September by Hindus and...
Buddhists alike since the 10th century A.D. It was at the height of the Indra Jatra festival in 1768, when the court, the army and the people had abandoned themselves to revelries, that Prithvi Narayan Shah’s troops breached the walls of Kathmandu and captured the city.

**Ita Chapali:** The most important of the Char Adalat, the four principal courts of justice in the early Rana period, and the only one empowered to award the death penalty. It was a court of original and appellate jurisdiction inherited from the conquered Malla rulers of Kathmandu.

**Jafati-ko Adda:** The Office of the Administrator of Confiscated Property. An office that managed property confiscated from anti-Rana and criminal elements.

**Jagir:** Land granted to soldiers and government employees in lieu of a cash salary or wage.

**Jagidar:** The holder of a jagir.

**Jail Khana:** The Prisons Office. An authority established by Chandra Shumsher to administer prisons and make available prisoners to work on public construction projects.

**Jaj:** Judge.

**Jangi Adda:** The Defence Office. Created by Jang Bahadur upon his return from Europe in 1851, it functioned as the Army Headquarters. It was later reorganised by Chandra Shumsher and renamed the Jangi Bandobast Adda.

**Jangi Bandobast Adda:** Formerly the Jangi Adda or Defence Office founded by Jang Bahadur in 1851. It was reorganised and renamed by Chandra Shumsher.

**Jangi lat:** Literally “war lord”. The name given to the Western (Senior) Commanding General.

**Jetha Budha:** An assistant legal officer posted at village level in the hill districts and the Tarai who played a significant role in matters of land revenue administration and justice in the early Rana period.

**Jhand badaru:** A sweeper.

**Jhara:** Compulsory unpaid labour that every adult male was obliged to perform for the state.

**Jimadar:** Revenue collector in the Tarai districts. Among Jang Bahadur’s revenue reforms in the Tarai was the introduction of the post of jimadar at the village level. Prior to these reforms the villagers had had direct access to revenue officials at sub-district level.

**Jitouri:** A fee paid to the court by the winner in a lawsuit. See also harouri.

**Juddha Varun Yantra Adda:** Fire Brigade service founded by Juddha Shumsher in 1937.

**Jyotisi:** An astrologer.

**Kadel Chowk:** A factory that produced gold and silver ornaments, ritual vessels and implements, and household utensils for the royal family and the Rana family.

**Kaji:** As used in some principalities in pre-unification Nepal, including Gorkha, a Minister of the King. From the last quarter of the 18th century kajis performed both civil and military functions and ranked immediately after the Chief Minister.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kalo pani:</td>
<td>Literally “black water”. A sea or an ocean. In the 19th and early 20th centuries Hindus believed that they would lose caste by crossing the kalo pani.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalsa:</td>
<td>A ritual vessel containing the holy water to be used in marriage rites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampu Dafdar khana:</td>
<td>The Military Lands Office. An office responsible for the registration and management of land assigned to the army and soldiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapardar:</td>
<td>The Comptroller of the Royal Household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapardari Khota:</td>
<td>The Office of the Comptroller of the Royal Household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karobari:</td>
<td>A clerk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kath Mahal:</td>
<td>A local government Forestry Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kath Mahal Niksari Phant:</td>
<td>The Forestry Office. A Section within the Home Office established by Chandra Shumsher to manage state forests and the sale of timber and forest products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kausi Tosa Khana:</td>
<td>The Office of Public Expenditure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadga Nishana:</td>
<td>The official seal of the Prime Minister under which all laws and regulations were enacted and decisions promulgated. Introduced by Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher, it consisted of an abbreviated signature of the Prime Minister surmounted by a sword or trident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadga Nishana Adda:</td>
<td>The Prime Minister's Office. Established by Chandra Shumsher in 1927 as the apex of the administrative apparatus, it issued directives to other government departments and offices, coordinated their various activities and exercised a general supervision over them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khair:</td>
<td>A type of tree common in the Tarai and used for oil presses, sugar crushes and the like.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khardar:</td>
<td>A Senior Secretary. The Khardars were originally the secretaries who prepared all government despatches. During the Rana period there was a khardar attached to every major civil department and military establishment with the duty of writing official letters and drafting administrative regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khas kura:</td>
<td>The language of the Khas people, i.e. Gorkhali, which later became the lingua franca of Nepal and is now known as Nepali.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khazanchi:</td>
<td>The Treasurer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khillat:</td>
<td>Ceremonial robes of honour bestowed by the King as a mark of distinction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitab Khana:</td>
<td>The Civil and Military Registry. Founded by Jang Bahadur in 1848, this office maintained a register containing the name and emolument of every civil and military employee of the state. It was later reorganised by Chandra Shumsher and renamed the Commandari Kitab Khana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kot:</td>
<td>A military store.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Koti Ling:</td>
<td>One of the Char Adalat, the four principal courts of justice in Kathmandu in the early Rana period. It was a court of original and appellate jurisdiction dating from Malla times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotwal:</td>
<td>A watchman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kshatriya:</td>
<td>The socio-religious group to which kings, warriors and aristocrats belong; one of the four castes into which Hinduism divides its adherents, the other three being the Brahmins (priests), vaisya (merchants and people engaged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glossary
in other professions) and sudras (cultivators and servants). In Nepal the word *kshatriya* has been corrupted to Chetri.

**Kukri:** A heavy, curved knife peculiar to Nepal.

**Kumari Chowk:** The Accounts and Audit Office. It was probably established at the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah.

**Kut:** A system of land tenancy in the hill regions under which rent was payable to the landlord (or tax was payable to the government) in the form of a fixed proportion of the produce or a fixed sum of money.

**Lac:** A resinous substance produced by insects found in certain species of trees in the Tarai and used for varnishing.

**Lal Mohur:** Literally "red seal". The official seal of the King of Nepal. By extension, and more usually, the edict to which the royal seal was affixed.

**Lama:** A Tibetan Buddhist priest or monk.

**Madhes Bandobast Phant:** The Tarai Revenue Administration Office. A Section within the Home Office established by Chandra Shumsher.

**Mahabharata:** The most famous of the Hindu epics, some 90,000 couplets in length, the *Mahabharata* is a story of conflict between two branches of the same family over rights of succession. Written almost 2,000 years ago, it is a rich storehouse of material about Indian cultural traditions and it contributed substantially to the formation of a Hindu code of moral conduct. It has provided material for literature, drama, songs and folklore for almost two millennia.

**Mahal:** Or *mal adda*. A revenue collection office.

**Mahout:** A man who trains, drives and handles elephants.

**Mal:** Revenue.

**Mal Adda:** Or *Mal*. A revenue collection office.

**Mal hakim:** District level revenue official in the hill areas in charge of a *mal adda* or district revenue collection office.

**Mal subba:** District level revenue official in the Tarai in charge of a *mal adda* or district revenue collection office. The position was created to replace that of the village *amali* following a reorganisation of district administration in 1909.

**Mandap:** A temporary pavilion in which wedding ceremonies are conducted.

**Manu smriti:** The most authoritative of ancient Hinduism's legal treatises.

**Mir Munsi:** The official-in-charge of the *Munsi Khana*, the Foreign Office (from the Arabic *amir munshi* = Chief Secretary).

**Mir umrao:** The commander of a fort or military post during the early Shah period.

**Moth Adda:** The Land Tax Assessment Office.

**Mukhiya:** An office assistant.

**Mukhtiyar:** Chief Minister. The term came into use in the early 1800s and was replaced by Mathbar Singh Thapa with "Prime Minister". From the advent of Rana rule the term *mukhtiyar* was applied to the second person on the Rana Roll of Succession, the Commander-in-Chief, who headed the civil administration.

**Mukti Sena:** The armed wing of the Nepali Congress party, later re-organised and renamed the Rakshya Dal.

**Muluki Adda:** The Home Office. The *Muluki Adda*, which was established by Jang
Bahadur and placed under the control of the Commander-in-Chief, had vast jurisdiction over the internal affairs of the Kingdom. It was reorganised by Chandra Shumsher and renamed the Muluki Bandobast Adda.

**Muluki Ain:** Legal Code. The first *Muluki Ain* was the product of a complete revision and codification of the Nepalese legal system between 1851 and 1854. With only minor modifications, it remained in force until 1962.

**Muluki Bandobast Adda:** Formerly the *Muluki Adda* or Home Office, founded by Jang Bahadur, it was reorganised and renamed by Chandra Shumsher.

**Muluki Khana:** The State Treasury.

**Municipal Goswara:** The Municipal Office. It was set up by Chandra Shumsher as a limited experiment in municipal government in the Bhotahiti area of Kathmandu.

**Munsi:** A Junior Secretary.

**Munsi Khana:** The Foreign Office. Established during the reign of Ran Bahadur Shah (1777-1799) or the prime ministership of Bhim Sen Thapa (1806-1837).

**Muri:** Unit of measurement for grain equal to 71 kilograms. A *muri* is equal to 20 *pathis*.

**Nagadi Adda:** An office established by Chandra Shumsher to collect the revenues of the Prime Minister's estates of Kaski and Lamjung.

**Narayanhiti Goswara:** Office of the Royal Household. This office was responsible for the administration of the Narayanhiti royal palace.

**Nausinda:** A scribe.

**Naya Muluk:** Literally "the new territories". The name given to that portion of territory lost to the British in the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16 and returned to Nepal in 1858 in recognition of her assistance in suppressing the Indian Mutiny. It consisted of the Districts of Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur.

**Nazzar:** A present or offering, especially one from an inferior to a superior; a fee, often of token value, to the King or his representative on succeeding to office.

**Nepal Pahad Bandobast Phant:** The Hill Districts Revenue Administration Office. A Section within the Home Office established by Chandra Shumsher.

**Nepal Praja Panchayat:** An organisation founded in 1948 to cooperate with the Rana government in putting the 1948 constitution into effect. When it eventually realised that Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher had no intention of implementing his predecessor's reforms, it launched a *satyagraha* that was quickly crushed by the regime.

**Nepal Praja Parishad:** Nepal People's Conference. An organisation founded in 1936 with the avowed aim of overthrowing the Rana regime. It was smashed in October 1940 when 43 of its members were arrested. Three were executed and the remainder given heavy prison sentences.

**Nepal Sarkar Hospital:** The Hospital Board. Established by Juddha Shumsher to manage the country's hospital and ayurvedic dispensaries.

**Nyaya:** Justice.

**Nyaya shastra:** Jurisprudence.

**Pahad:** The hill areas of Nepal.

**Paise:** One hundredth of a rupee, the unit of currency in Nepal and India.

**Pajani:** The annual screening of all civil and military office holders, from the
highest to the lowest rank, after which they were either confirmed in their posts for another year or dismissed. The pajani was the most effective mechanism the Shah kings had to control the nobility.

Palki Khana: The Government Transport Office. (palki = palanquin or sedan chair, the principal form of transport of the Ranas and members of the royal family)

Panchayat: (i) A court of arbitration consisting of five or more members chosen by the parties themselves or appointed by the civil officers of the government for the determination of petty disputes.

(ii) Following the 1948 Constitution, the basic unit of local government consisting of councils at the village and district levels elected by universal suffrage.

Pani Goswara: The Water Board. This office was established by Bir Shumsher.

Pani patia: Permission given by the Brahmin priests for Gurkha recruits to go overseas and, upon their return, to be accepted back into Hindu society without any religious penalty, provided they performed certain religious ceremonies.

Pathi: Unit of measurement for grain equal to 3.55 kilograms. Twenty pathis equals 1 muri.

Pipa Goswara: The Manpower Office. An organisation under the control of the Hazuria General that maintained an army of coolies on its payroll for use as porters or beaters at a shikar.

Prachanda Gorkha: Terrible Gorkha. An organisation founded in 1931 by Umesh Bikram Shah, a distant collateral of the royal family, to overthrow the Rana regime and restore the power of the monarchy as a prelude to the establishment of parliamentary democracy in Nepal.

Pradhan Nyayalaya: The Supreme Court. Founded by Juddha Shumsher in 1940.

Puja: An act of worship or adoration; a prayer ritual; a religious sacrifice.

Puranas: Popular traditional texts of the Hindu religion, often in the form of legends.

Purji Phant: The Authorisation Office. A section within the Home Office, established by Chandra Shumsher, that authorised the activities of government departments on the basis of the approval (purji) of the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief.

Pustak Khota: The Government Archives.

Raitar: A writer.

Raj: Hindi: a kingdom or principality. By extension, the rule of a certain people or group (e.g. the Moghul raj, the British raj).

Raj gurus: Spiritual counsellors to the King or members of the royal family. Under the Rana regime the chief raj guru was also the dharma adhikar.

Raja: A ruler. The chief of a principality in the western hill region.

Rajya: Land owned or held by a raja. A vassal principality in the western hill region.


Raksha Dal: The paramilitary arm of the Nepali Congress Party.

Rakshapat Mandal: The Bloodshed Group. A conspiracy formed in late 1940 to assassinate Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher and leading members of the Rana family as a prelude to restoring the authority of the monarchy.
Ramayana: A Hindu epic that relates the story of the great and just King Rama, whose wife Sita is abducted by Ravana, King of Lanka, and is later rescued by Rama after he defeats Ravana’s forces. Many subsidiary stories are interpolated in the form of incidental tales told by the characters of the main narrative, either for amusement or to illustrate points of philosophy under discussion. The Ramayana is also a rich storehouse of material about Indian cultural tradition.

Rastriya Sabha: The National Council. The lower house of a bicameral legislature as provided for in Nepal’s first constitution that was to have come into effect on 14 April 1948.

Report Niksari Phant: The Reports Office. A section within the Home Office established by Chandra Shumsher. The Reports Office received reports from the districts about law and order, revenue and administration in general.

Ryot: A peasant, a farmer, a cultivator.

Sabai: A type of grass growing in the Tarai and traditionally used for making rope.

Sadar Appeal Dosra: Second Appeal Court, created as a result of Juddha Shumsher’s reorganisation of the Appeal Adda.

Sadar Appeal Pahila: First Appeal Court, created as a result of Juddha Shumsher’s reorganisation of the Appeal Adda.

Sadar Bharadari: A court of original and appellate jurisdiction created by Chandra Shumsher by combining the appellate functions of the Commander-in-Chief in Council with the bhuradars and those of the Appeal Adda.

Sadar Dafdar Khana: The Civil Lands Office, responsible for land management and land revenue administration throughout the Kingdom. The Civil Lands Office kept records of all birta and jagir land grants to private individuals and state functionaries and of all unallocated land available for future grants.

Sadar Jangi Kotwali: The Kathmandu Municipal Administration. An office under the direct supervision of the Hazuria General that was responsible for administrative and judicial affairs in the capital.

Sadar Police Goswara: The Kathmandu Valley Police Administration. An office headed by the Director General of Police that was responsible for law and order in the Kathmandu Valley.

Sahebju: Popular honorific applied to a brother of the King.

Sal: A type of timber common in the Tarai and prized for its hardness. It is used for beams, piles, gun carriages and, most extensively, railway sleepers.

Salami: A levy paid to the Prime Minister by civil and military officers at the time of their first appointment and when their services were confirmed at the annual pajani.

Sanyasa: According to the ideals of Hinduism, the last of the four stages of man: that of a hermit or religious recluse.

Saraf Khana: An office established by Jang Bahadur for dealing in foreign exchange.

Sardar: A senior military commander of the early Shah period who led major military expeditions, commanded a strategic fort or administered newly incorporated territory. From the time of Jang Bahadur sardars were employed exclusively as civil functionaries and were appointed as district Governors or heads of government Departments.

Sarkari manche: Literally a “government man”. The popular term for a civil servant or public functionary.
Sarvaswa-haran: A typically feudal device whereby a government servant was deprived of all his property on the charge of his being corrupt, incompetent or disloyal to the Prime Minister.

Satyagraha: Mass civil disobedience and non-violent resistance, a technique perfected by Gandhi during the Indian nationalist movement's struggle against the British.

Seer: A unit of weight equal to 1.23 kilograms.

Sera Fera-ko Adda: The Royal Lands Office. An office that managed the private lands of the King and other members of the royal family.

Shahar Saphai: The Sanitation Office.

Shastra: Ancient Hindu religious texts that propounded a legal code.

Shikar: Hunting. Used mainly with reference to big game.

Shikari: A hunter.

Shrestha Office: An Audit Office established by Chandra Shumsher in 1917.

Shrestha Pathsala: An office established during the prime ministership of Chandra Shumsher to provide education and training to government employees.

Sindur jatra: A triumphal procession held upon the assumption of a high office such as the coronation of a King or the appointment of a Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

Sipahi: A soldier. (Anglo-Indian: sepoy.)

Sisu: A type of timber common in the Tarai and useful for all work requiring strength and elasticity, such as furniture, boats, saddle frames and agricultural implements.

Sri: In the Hindu lexicon, an honorific prefaced before the name of an important personage and repeated a number of times according to the dignity and social station of the person named. The King of Nepal is addressed as Sri panch (5 times Lord). The Rana Prime Ministers were addressed as Sri teen (3 times Lord).


Sri Teen Mohan Hawai Adda Vibhag: An office set up by Mohan Shumsher to regulate the operations of Nepal's first airport that was built in Kathmandu in 1950.

Stupa: A distinctive form of building, used by Buddhists for religious worship, that originated in the Kathmandu Valley. It consists of a hemispherical masonry mound topped by a stylised tower.

Subba: A senior official of the civil administration.

Suti: The practice by a widow of self-immolation on her husband's funeral pyre. Suti was proscribed by Chandra Shumsher on 28 June 1920 though the practice had largely died out before then.

Tah卢wa: A peon.

Tahvildar: An accountant.

Taksal Adda: The Government Mint. Formerly the Taksar, it was reorganised and renamed by Chandra Shumsher.

Taksar: (i) One of the Char Adalat, the four principal courts of justice in Kathmandu in the early Rana period. This court was of uncertain origin but probably predated the Shah conquest. (ii) The Government Mint.
Taksari: The Mint Master. The Taksari was also responsible for the collection of Customs duties on the Nepal-Tibet trade.

Talukdar: A local revenue collector in the hill districts during the later Rana period.

Tarai: A dense forest belt, 40 to 60 kilometres wide, running the length of Nepal’s southern frontier with India. The Tarai is the point at which the vast north Indian plain meets the foothills of the Himalayas. The term is of Persian origin meaning “damp”. The Tarai is characterised by swamps and jungles and the climate is sub-tropical and malarial.

Teen chand: The distinctive headdress of the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung.

Tehsil: An administrative unit in the hills in the later Rana period. Each tehsil was governed by a bada hakim.

Tejareth Adda: The Government Loans Office. This office was established by Chandra Shumsher in 1916 to advance loans to civil servants and military officers.


Thana Kachahari: Police Headquarters. In the absence of a separate police force, this office was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the Kathmandu Valley. It was located at Indrachowk on a site previously owned by the raj guru and mukhtiyar Raganath Pandit.

Tharghar: A land surveyor.

Thugi: The practice of strangling and robbing.


Tihar: An important Hindu festival in honour of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, and occurring some three weeks after Dasain.

Tikka: A dot of red paste placed on a person’s forehead to invoke the blessings of good fortune.

Tirja: A document authorising a State functionary or a soldier to collect his share of the harvest from the tenants on his jagir land.

Tirja Adda: The government office responsible for issuing tirjas.

Top Khana: The Armoury.

Tula dan: A Hindu act of charity in which a ruler gives away his weight in gold or jewels to the Brahmin priests and the poor.

Udyog Parishad: The Industrial Development Board. Set up by Juddha Shumsher in 1934 to promote the industrial development and regulate the establishment of new industrial concerns.

Vaidya: A physician.

Vaidya Khana: The Government Medical Laboratory and office of the chief government physician located near the Tundikhel.

Vakil: A diplomatic envoy or representative.

Vanaprasthya: According to the ideals of Hinduism, the third of the four stages of man: that of a retreat aimed at loosening all bonds with the material world prior to adopting the life of a religious recluse.

Vedas: The most ancient of the sacred writings of Hinduism.

Walak: A homestead levy, in cash or kind, to finance the expenses of the royal palace.

Zilla: An administrative unit in the Tarai in the latter Rana period. The zillas were grouped into circles, each governed by a bada hakim.
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