

THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
IN NEPAL 1950-70

(Conflict between Tradition and Modernity)

R. S. Chauhan



BARNES & NOBLE, Inc.
NEW YORK

PUBLISHERS & BOOKSELLERS SINCE 1873

First Published in the United States, 1971
by BARNES & NOBLE, Inc.

ISBN 389 04580 2

Published in India by
Associated Publishing House
New Market, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-5

© R. S. Chauhan 1971

All Rights Reserved

No part of the Copyright material may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photo-copying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

LESLIE J. SAVAGE LIBRARY
WESTERN STATE COLLEGE OF COLORADO
GUNNISON, COLORADO 81230

PRINTED IN INDIA

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY R. K. PAUL FOR
ASSOCIATED PUBLISHING HOUSE, NEW DELHI-5

To
Mamma and Babuji

Preface

NE P A L is situated in the remote Himalayas and wedged in between the two giant Asian countries. This geographical factor as well as many other factors has rendered its political system unique. The present book, which is a revised and up-to-date version of the author's dissertation, "Political Institutions in Nepal—Conflict between Tradition and Modernity", submitted to the University of Rajasthan for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a modest attempt to understand the politics of Nepal.

An attempt has been made in this book to analyse the undercurrent in the Nepalese polity which has been very active since the royal takeover in 1960. The struggle for power between the "traditional forces" and the "progressive forces", which are trying to inject a modest dose of social change and modernization in the socio-political structure of Nepalese society through the modern institutional apparatus of parliamentary democracy, is a fascinating area for study but the very configuration of power-structure imposes certain limitations and constraints on a researcher analysing the cut and thrust of politics in Nepal.

The book is based on a first-hand study of the Nepalese politics for a period of five years when the author had an opportunity to travel to some of the remote corners of the country.

The study is based on the materials published by the government, and those by the political parties and private sources. The author has interviewed many eminent political leaders, members of the Rashtriya Panchayat, anchal panchayats, zila panchayats and village panchayats, administrators, writers, teachers, social workers, local and foreign journalists. In addition he undertook the field-survey of 80 village panchayats, 14 district panchayats, and six anchal panchayats during the year 1965-66 and these information has been utilized in the book.

The thesis was written under the supervision of Dr. S.P. Verma, Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science and the Director of South Asia Studies Centre, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. Needless to say the author is indebted to him for his guidance and invaluable suggestions.

The author wishes to thank Shri Virendra Narian and Shri P. C. Mathur, Research Associates in the Department of Political Science, University of Rajasthan, both of whom have read the manuscript with loving care. He is also grateful to his colleagues Sarvashri M. V. Lakhi, B. M. Kaushik, H. A. S. Jafri, S. D. Muni, A. K. Saxena, P. C. Shastri and S. K. Garg for inspiring him to complete the work. His sincere thanks are due to Shri and Shrimti R. S. Varma and Yati Varma who made his stay comfortable in Kathmandu.

Department of Political Science
University of Rajasthan
Jaipur

R. S. Chauhan

Contents

- 1 THE REVOLUTION OF 1950 *Page 1*
Socio-Economic Infra-Structure, Economic Setting, Political Heritage, Initial Reforms, Reform Movements in India and their Impact, Socio-Political Movement in Nepal, Praja Parishad, India-based Movements, The Nepal Rashtriya Congress, The Constitution of 1948. The Impact of India's Independence, Nepali Congress—Its Programme, The Revolution and Its Aftermath.
- 2 RE-EMERGENCE OF TRADITIONAL FORCES (1951-54) *Page 42*
Inter-Party Rivalry, Intrigues by the Ranas, Prime Minister Koirala, Nepali Congress Intervenes, Political Confusion, Direct Rule, M.P. Koirala Again, The Politics of Opportunism, Other Political Parties.
- 3 MONARCHY VERSUS PEOPLE: 1955-59 *Page 79*
Demands for Popular Government, K.I. Singh as Prime Minister, Popular Demand for Immediate Elections, Constituent Assembly or Parliament? Preparations for Elections, The Election.
- 4 POPULAR GOVERNMENT: TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS *Page 109*
The Preceding Events and their Shadows, Administrative Reforms, Land and Economic Reforms, Reforms and its Impact, The Opposition, King Mahendra's Attitude, The Bajhang Revolt, Gorkha Uprising.

- 5 END OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY *Page 146*
The Charges: Myth and Reality.
- 6 CONSOLIDATION OF THE KING'S
POWER *Page 167*
Administrative Reforms, Repressive Measures,
Panchayat Democracy.
- 7 PANCHAYAT DEMOCRACY—A STUDY
IN MOTIVATIONS *Page 195*
Structural Pattern.
- 8 RISE OF NEO-TRADITIONALISM *Page 222*
The King and The Bureaucracy, Pillars of
Monarchical Power, The Army, The Articulate
Section of the Society, Panchayat Elections,
Panchayat Leadership, Economic Conditions,
Agriculture Development.
- 9 RESURGENCE OF PROGRESSIVE FORCES *Page 268*
The Rashtriya Panchayat, Administrative
Quagmire, Shape of Economy, Popular Indiffe-
rence, The Communists.
- 10 CONCLUSION *Page 313*
INDEX *Page 329*

THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL
1950-70

CHAPTER 1

The Revolution of 1950

EVER SINCE the events of 1950 leading to the overthrow of the Rana autocracy, Nepal has been in the throes of political upheavals setting at naught all attempts to provide the country with a democratic and stable politico-institutional framework. The people of this land, who had been living a life of docility and subservience under an oppressive feudal system and who, it appeared, had liberated themselves from the clutches of an autocratic feudal rule, found themselves suddenly engulfed in a drama of political experimentation. Democratic institutions under the hegemonic control of the monarch which had replaced the Rana autocracy, were institutionally self-contradictory in nature and contrary to the hopes and aspirations for the ushering in of an era of democracy and freedom; they soon tended to be more monarchical than democratic. This led to an acute political crisis which could be resolved only by introducing the parliamentary institutions in the country. But having tasted the real power, the institution of monarchy and the forces rallying around it did not allow these institutions to function and, taking advantage of the chaotic state of political parties in the country, struck them off the political scene. Then came into existence the Panchayat Democracy under the hegemonic control of the monarch. This rule, too, which is at present in vogue has failed and its fate is hanging in the balance.

How is it that no institutional framework seems to be successful in Nepal? Is there any possibility of establishing a stable political order in the country? Or, can there ever emerge, out of the fragmented and conflict-ridden political situation, a consensus conforming to the infra-structural pulls and requirements? In attempting to provide a plausible answer to these questions, it is necessary to delve deep into

2 *The Political Development in Nepal*

the socio-political history of Nepal since the usurpation of absolute power by the Ranas in 1846.

Before the events of 1950, Nepal had been a strong bastion of traditional forces epitomized in the autocratic rule of the Ranas. The traditional elements in the society, characterized by the supremacy of the Brahmins and resting on the servility of other castes and creeds, had joined together in support of the Ranas who, having come to power through deceit and intrigues, were lacking both in conventional as well as popular sanctions for an autocratic rule. The Rana Prime Minister, with a few exceptions, perpetuated the rule of their clan by resorting to intimidating methods for coercing the people into submission. Their sole aim appeared to be to fill the coffers of their family through ruthless exploitation of men and material resources of the country.

They could ride rough-shod over the people because, apart from the privileged few like the *Rajgurus* (royal priests) dinning into the ears of the people the so-called "divine right" of some to rule over them, and the nobles and feudal lords supporting the Ranas in maintaining their own social and political status, the British imperialists also extended their protective hand to them. The two—the Ranas and the British Government in India—entered into a *quid pro quo* agreement wherein the latter recognized "that a powerful Hindu State as Nepal could exert considerable influence" in damping the spirit of Indian national movement.¹ The Ranas, on their part, permitted the British Government to draft 10,000 Gorkha soldiers into the Royal British army which could be used to perpetuate the imperial rule in India. Thus, the traditional forces, supported by the Brahmin and feudal classes, were firmly saddled under the hegemony of the Ranas. With the extension of cover to the Rana regime by the British Government to meet any challenge hurled at it, the traditional forces were further strengthened in Nepal.

For the first time in the beginning of twentieth century the hegemony of traditional forces was challenged. As time passed, the challenge assumed the character of a movement to overthrow the Rana regime from power. In this movement the institution of monarchy played a distinct role peculiar to the socio-political conditions in Nepal. Monarchy in Nepal, as is well-known, had

been reduced to a totally defunct institution by the Ranas. Therefore, a fight against the Rana autocracy in effect assumed the character of a struggle in support of the institution of monarchy. The king in Nepal represented, or at least was, with forces struggling against the Ranas—the custodians of traditional forces.

A study of this struggle between the forces of reaction and medievalism on the one hand, and the forces of change, modernization and progress, on the other, requires, therefore, a thorough understanding of the course of events which shaped its contours and character. In order to evaluate properly the role of various elements and institutions on both sides in a correct historical perspective, it is necessary to deal with the history of the Rana autocracy in Nepal. One may also discuss, in this context, the origin and nature of popular resistance against the cruel and oligarchic rule of the Ranas and its impact on the course of events which led to the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951 and ushered in a new era of political struggle, wherein the clash between the traditional and modernizing forces became more acute and comprehensive, descending from the exclusive preserve of the handful of politically conscious individuals and groups and engulfing the people at large. To begin with, it is necessary, however, to examine the basic structure of the Nepalese society in all its aspects—geographical, socio-economic, cultural and political, for this would facilitate a proper understanding of the nature of developments which led to the transformation of perennial struggle in a society between the static and stagnant elements and the dynamic and progressive forces into, what may be called, the modern phase wherein the modern concepts of democracy, modernization and political culturization became part and parcel of that struggle.

Socio-Economic Infra-Structure

Stretched over 54,000 square miles in the centre of the Himalayas and wedged between the Tibet region of China and India, Nepal is a landlocked country, cut off from the rest of the world by high mountains in the north and malarial forest belts in the south. Physically, it may be divided into three zones: the Greater Himalayas, the Inner Himalayas and the Terai. The

4 *The Political Development In Nepal*

landscape of the Greater Himalayan zone is characterized by the lofty serrated ridges and sharp peaks rising between the height of 12,000 and 29,000 feet above the sea level. The Inner Himalayan zone consists of an intricate system of ranges some fifty miles deep between the Great Himalayas and Chaurai hills bordering the Terai. The north and north-eastern slopes are covered with dense forests and snow covering the upper reaches. The southern slopes, except the protected valleys, are bare. The Terai is a low, fertile, alluvial plain—an extension of the Gangetic plain to the north.²

Interlinked with geography, and to a great extent affected by it, are the demographic features characterized by the congregation of many ethnic groups: Aryans, Mongolians and Indo-Burmans. During the course of their growth they have undergone many changes getting fragmented into many tribes and acquiring characteristics of their natural habitat. Owing to geographical peculiarities and difficult terrain, and because of the absence of any communication between them, the tribes or groups of people have developed distinctive cultural patterns. Their allegiance to the central political authority has been subject to the latter's source of legitimacy. Thus, for instance, the Bhots, the inhabitants of Great Himalayan zone and one of the four socially recognized groups, have remained generally alienated from the central authority and their allegiance to it has never been unquestioned. Having originated from Tibet, they are culturally akin to the Tibetans and are easily amenable to the Tibetan and Chinese ways of life. Another tribal group—the *Pahariyas* (highlanders), occupy the Inner Himalayan zone and are physically isolated from the people of Terai as they dwell on hills bordered by slopes, swamps, and jungles. They are further separated from the Bhots by high, rugged mountain peaks covered with snow. They "share common origins, history, context and environment and interact with one another more than with outsiders".³ It was these highlanders who helped the Shah King of the present ruling dynasty to establish themselves in Nepal and thus they have proudly associated themselves with the rulers. Similarly, the rulers reposed more faith in them and recruited bulk of their army personnel from this stock. Thus, interest of the *Pahariyas*

had been, in the past, to keep the Shah rulers in power. The *Newars*, another distinct group, had been the rulers of the valley before the advent of Prithvinarayan Shah in 1769. Evidently, they acquired superiority in arts, literature and technical skill over other groups. Inhibited with a sense of superiority complex, the *Newars* looked down upon other social groups. Living generally in the neighbourhood of Kathmandu, they gradually acquired ascendancy over others in civil services, trade and education. To maintain their cultural and social superiority, they developed the habit of supporting the power that be. The last group is known as *Madhasias*—the inhabitants of the Terai region. They had evinced little interest in the rulers and the political system of the country, because they regarded themselves, by and large, as belonging to the Indian family. They considered the Shah rulers of Nepal as expansionists who had separated them from India and forced them into the company of the *Pahariyas*—the highlanders, whom they had always looked down upon. The *Madhasias* entertained the view that the rulers had been adopting discriminatory attitude towards them, because they found that their region, despite being the economic back-bone of Nepal, was being neglected. To their utter dismay, they also found themselves threatened with the dispossession of their fertile land because the rulers at Kathmandu were bringing into the Terai region “alien” social groups to settle them there. The Terai people were also denied high places in the civil and military services. Thus, they remained generally hostile to the ruling circles at Kathmandu.

Demographically speaking, Nepal lacked a coherent and well-integrated population. Consequently, nationalism, in the modern sense, was not a characteristic feature of the Nepalese society. Tribal loyalties and the quest for regional identity were more overwhelming than a sense of belonging to a national entity known as Nepal. Some of the groups were opposed to the central political authority at Kathmandu, while others supported the powers that be; still others preferred to remain indifferent to the politics of the country.

While both geography and demographical features turned Nepal into a highly segmented political entity, the super-structure of a Hindu society imposed on her people, introduced a

caste-ridden hierarchical social system which inhibited the process of the emergence of Nepal as a well-integrated nation. While the Hindu society in India demonstrated, at least in its hay days, the quality of dynamism and progress, the Nepalese society under the impact of Hinduism, on the other hand, remained static and stagnated. It was so because the Nepalese society came under Hinduism at a time when the Hindu culture was passing through a phase of decadence and decline. Although six centuries before the birth of the Buddha the Aryans had entered Nepal and started propagating Vedic religion⁴ it was only when a large number of Brahmins from Methila and Bengal and Rajputs from northern India entered Nepal in the wake of Muslim invasion and established their cultural supremacy over the hill tribes, that Nepal accepted the culture of Hindu society.⁵ With the establishment of Rajput dynasty in Gorkha, Brahminic orthodoxy also increased there. Subsequent conquest of the whole of Nepal by the Gorkhas further strengthened the hold of Hindu religion in the kingdom. In due course of time the Nepalese society assumed a few characteristic traits and we may now discuss these.

Before the large-scale entry of Brahmins and Rajputs into Nepal it had provided an example of splendid blending of Buddhism and Hinduism. The Brahmins gave a new impetus to Hinduism and the influence of Shiva, which was so far confined to the upper stratum of the society, now spread to the lower strata of the society as well.⁶ With the advent of the Shah dynasty to power, the canons of Hindu tradition further expanded and deepened. The country was regarded as protected by Lord Pashupatinath and ruled by the king who was considered to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.⁷ The laws of the State were governed by Hindu *Shastras* and interpreted by *Dharmadhikar*. During Rana oligarchy, Nepal was proclaimed a Hindu State and the norms of Hindu religion were strictly followed. Cavenagh observed that Rajguru was the most influential man in Nepal, next to the Prime Minister.⁸ The society was divided on the basis of Vedic religious precepts. The highest class—the Brahmins—enjoyed respect from the people as well as from the rulers. No Brahmin was ever executed in Nepal howsoever heinous crime he might have committed.⁹ Moreover, in the eyes of law cow-killing was as grave an

offence as homicide, and punished by death, and even the maiming of cows was severely dealt with, sometimes with imprisonment for life.¹⁰ The conversion of the Hindus to any other religion was unlawful.¹¹ The State granted land and other subsidies for the erection and maintenance of temples. On religious occasions the rulers participated in them in person.

The Nepalese rulers were extremely orthodox and they frustrated all attempts to liberalize the religion. In the nineteenth century, Jan Bahadur, for instance, ordered the murder of a saint called Lakhan Thapa II—a self-proclaimed incarnation of a previous saint of the same name—who was propagating a non-conformist creed named *Josmani* at Gorkha.¹² Similarly, he expelled Sant Gyan Dil Dass from Nepal for having propagated a similar creed in the eastern part of the country.¹³ In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Arya Samaj movement of India also influenced the people of Nepal and threatened the supremacy of the Brahminic class. The privileged Brahmins advised the rulers to take stern action against the leaders of Arya Samaj movement lest they should prove dangerous to the prevailing politico-religious system. Chandra Shamsher, the Rana Prime Minister, publicly whipped and exiled Madhavraj Joshi for being a follower of Swami Dayanand. Juddha Shamsher, another Rana Prime Minister, became so afraid of the movement that he hanged Sukraj Sastri, the leader of the Arya Samaj Samiti in Nepal.

The establishment of the hegemony of Hinduism in Nepal gave rise to the emergence of a new hierarchical social order. The rulers of the country and the priestly class occupied the top positions in the society; next came the Thakuris or local ruling class. Following the Thakuris in the hierarchy were the fighting tribes (Magars and Gurungs), the Vaishyas (high caste Newars), the Sudras (Limbu and Rais), the unclean castes (Murmis and Sunwars), and the untouchables.¹⁴ Since State affairs were managed by persons of high castes, those belonging to low caste were shabily treated and exploited. Different laws were prescribed for different castes. For instance, if anyone defiled the wife of a Newar merchant while he was absent in Tibet, the offender was fined rupees 120; if the injured husband was at Nepal or anywhere near his house, the offender was fined only rupees 60.

While if anybody defiled the wife of a Brahmin or Khas or Gurung or Rana the injured husband was allowed to revenge the wrong-doer by killing him and cutting the adultress's nose.¹⁵ Besides making differentiation among various classes, the law of the State enjoined upon every person to adhere to his caste and perform duties prescribed by it. Its violation was punishable under the law. The general law prescribing the sanctity of the caste system reads: A low caste person pretended to belong to a higher caste and induced a high caste person to partake of food or water that he had touched was liable to be heavily fined, or imprisoned, or deprived of his property. The victim of his deception could be readmitted to his caste on payment of certain fees to the priest and after the performance of certain fasts and ceremonies.¹⁶ Further, should a high caste person willingly infringe the rules of his caste, he was to be excommunicated from his caste and could never be readmitted to it, besides, he was liable to be fined and imprisoned. Should he, however, choose to give up his caste, he was at liberty to do so by giving prior public notice of his intention.¹⁷

Thus the Nepalese law provided the imposition of fine and punishment in case anyone mixed or mingled with the Sudras. Likewise, if any Nepali mixed and sojourned with foreigners, particularly with those who ate beef, he was considered an outcaste. He had to observe a religious ceremony—*Suddhi*—before he could be accepted in the fold of his own caste. Even Jung Bahadur, the most powerful and fearless Rana Prime Minister, had to undergo this penance after his return from the tour of Europe.

Such a caste-ridden society was characterized by a complete dominance of the lower castes by the higher castes in all aspects of life—social, political and economic. Moreover, the whole society was compartmentalized between the rulers and the ruled. The Rana rulers were addressed by the people as *Prabhu* (the God) and the Ranas, on the other hand, regarded and addressed others as *duniyadars* (the earthly creatures). Thus there were two distinct classes—one was of the rulers who had religious sanctity and who regarded it as their birth right to rule over the country, and the other were the masses who were destined to be ruled in a manner their rulers liked.

The Nepalese rulers had always been conscious of the geographical situation of the country. They had an apprehension that, if exposed to foreign influence, the kingdom might meet the same fate at the hands of the colonial powers as had befallen the other States of Asia. Prithvinarayan Shah not only had expelled the foreign missionaries from the kingdom but had also put restrictions on foreign merchants to trade in Nepal. Though with the coming of the Ranas to power and the establishment of their liaison with the British in India, the threat to the integrity of the country had receded, yet the rulers preferred to pursue the policy of isolation. They also had a suspicion that if the kingdom was exposed to liberal and radical ideas, the people, who were ignorant of the higher order of existence, might get politicized and eventually demand the end of their autocratic rule. As such, the Rana rulers postponed the introduction of Western education in Nepal. Although a High School was opened in the country in 1894, followed by the establishment of a college in 1912, the entry to these academic institutions was restricted to the sons of the privileged classes. The acquisition of knowledge by a commoner was regarded as an act of sedition. The consequence of such a policy had been that before the events of 1950 Nepal had only seven persons who held the degrees in arts.¹⁸ Apart from discouraging the people to come in contact with the Western liberal education, the rulers also prohibited them from making use of newspapers and radios—the media of communication through which people might have known about the political and social developments that were taking place around Nepal. Similarly, the teaching of political science was prohibited in the classes. Reading of biographies of liberal and radical leaders was an illegal act.¹⁹ People were not allowed to open schools and libraries without the permission of the government. The violation of this rule was severely dealt with. Those who were opposed to the oligarchic rule of the Ranas and advocated democratization were either imprisoned or banished to India.

Economic Setting

The above policy was rigourously enforced primarily to preserve age-old socio-economic privileges of the ruling classes.

The Ranas were the usurpers of power, and, as such, they could not think in terms of national development. Whatever revenue was left after meeting the expenditure of the administration went into the coffers of the Rana Prime Ministers.²⁰ Moreover, all the high-ranking civil and military posts were reserved for the members of the Rana family. No non-Rana person could think of attaining a post above that of a *Bada Hakim* in civil services and of a *Subedar* in the army. Besides taking away a large portion of State revenue and holding control over civil and defence services the Ranas also tried to capture trade. Moreover, the Ranas and the others, who formed the ruling class, held fertile land and national forests. Thus, it was estimated that they together owned 95 per cent wealth of the country.²¹

Nepal's economy had been an agrarian one. The prevailing land tenure system during the Ranas, as discussed below, vested in a few persons who controlled large territories and made others dependent on them for their humble existence. Five main types of land tenure system were in vogue during the Rana regime. First, *Raiker*, a land system under which land revenue was paid directly to the State. Secondly, *Birta*: it was tax-exempted land usually awarded to individuals by the State. Thirdly, *Guthi*, under which the land was donated by the State for religious or philanthropic purposes which remained tax-free. Fourthly, *Kipat*: it was a form of community land tenure, and finally, *Rikar*, awarded to an individual for his specific service. The above land system gave rise to Zamindars, Birta holders and Mahants who thrived in the society while 40 per cent of the people constituted the landless and rootless peasantry.²²

The rulers hardly attempted to improve the lot of the people and develop the country. Nepal's whole transport system consisted of some 20-30 miles of rail-roads and 40-50 miles of motorable roads. In the name of industries there existed only a few match and jute factories in Biratnagar. As regards agricultural facilities, there were none. Trade was at a very low key.

Thus one finds that the feudal order in Nepal not only upheld the interests of the privileged classes but kept the State underdeveloped and weak, the society conservative and orthodox, and the people ignorant and exploited.

Political Heritage

Having discussed the socio-economic factors inhibiting the growth of an effective challenge to the Rana autocracy in Nepal, it is now worthwhile to bring into relief those events and factors in the political history of Nepal which moulded the psychology of the people in general and the trends of political development in particular since the beginning of the present dynasty's rule.

The rule that Prithvinarayan Shah had established in Nepal was despotic and ruthless. Immediately after coming to power he had mercilessly dealt with the erstwhile rulers of the land—the Newars—killing “every person of distinction connected with the late Newar dynasty”.²³ He remained an absolute ruler and administered the country with the help of a small coterie of persons and the army of which he himself was the supreme commander. There was no room for opposition to the monarch and his writ was obeyed without any hesitation. Even when the reins of power were controlled by a Prime Minister the rule was absolute in nature. For instance, after the death of King Ran Bahadur on April 25, 1806, the power came into the hands of Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa who established a tradition of “a reigning King and a ruling Minister” for a period of thirty years.²⁴ Similarly, the power wielded by Rana Prime Ministers was autocratic and overwhelming: The Maharaja's (Jang Bahadur's) work was not confined only to initiative in legislation, as in the case with that of the Prime Minister of Great Britain; it was not only limited to control and superintendence, not only of sanctioning and signing, but it also comprehended all those minute details of execution and accomplishment which fall to the lot of a hoary patriarch of a huge family.²⁵

The absolute rule over the country for a long stretch of time left the people as mere subjects from whom obedience was extracted through coercive methods at the disposal of the State. The history of Nepal was replete with instances of chaos in the country bringing in its trail greater miseries for the people whenever there was a slackening in the absolute power of the rulers. Absolute power, in spite of its tyrannical nature, was thus considered *sine qua non* for stability and orderly life, so much

so that the people would rather tolerate hardships than be victims of the internecine wars which invariably resulted from struggles for power among the kings, nobles and their henchmen. In all such struggles, the army, the most well-organized group, always tended to support the side which had better prospects of success. The successful incumbent to power could keep the people obedient and loyal to him only with the support of the army, and the people, out of fear, became more docile and submissive.

Nepal had a peculiar power pattern. It was, as it were, like a triangle, at one end of which was the monarch; the nobility and the army formed the remaining sides. According to a tradition of the country, the monarch was vested with the supreme power of the State. The nobility, which was supposed to help the king in the administration of the country, always waited for a chance to grab power from the king particularly when he happened to be a weak one. The Shah kings who reigned after the death of Pratap Shah in 1778 were feeble and imbecile. Thus there started a struggle for power between the king and the nobility. But the nobility could not establish its supremacy in the Nepalese politics after the exit of Pratap Shah because it was divided into two hostile camps—one led by the Thapas and the other by the Pandes. Thus a balance was maintained between the King and the nobility. But whenever either of the camps succeeded in banishing its counterpart, the balance of power was tilted in favour of the victorious group because the army in Nepal was known for throwing its lot with the party that had a better chance of survival in the struggle for power. The consequence had been the surveillance of the king under the leader of the newly emerged nobility, who used to declare himself as the *Mukhtiyar* (Prime Minister) and ruled the country in the name of the king. The moment the Prime Minister started losing his grip over power, the suppressed king and the nobility immediately asserted themselves and the Prime Minister, in most of the cases, had to pay for it by his life.

After the death of Prithvinarayan Shah in 1775 there was a gradual erosion of the powers of the Shah kings. In 1800 a famous general of Nepal, Damodar Pande, succeeded in exiling King Ran Bahadur to India, and after taking the possession of

the infant King, Girvan Juddha Bikram Shah, he started ruling the country as Prime Minister. Ran Bahadur Shah, however, staged a comeback in 1804. The army, till now supporting the general, changed its loyalty and sided with the returning King. Damodar Pande was beheaded by the order of Ran Bahadur. Two years later, on the death of Ran Bahadur, Bhim Sen Thapa became the Prime Minister and virtually ruled the country for three decades. But once his power was shaken, he was ousted, imprisoned and humiliated to such an extent that he preferred to commit suicide in prison in 1839. An attempt of Mathabar Singh, a nephew of Bhim Sen Thapa, who was appointed Prime Minister in 1843, to tread a similar path resulted in his murder in the royal palace in 1845. The finale of this trend in Nepalese politics came on September 15, 1846, when Jang Bahadur, after slaying his opponents at Kot, compelled the King and the Queen to go in exile. He assumed *de facto* sovereign power of the State while serving as Prime Minister and made the office hereditary to the members of his family. Though the life of the infant king was spared, he was kept as a prisoner of the Prime Minister. The system continued till it was thrown asunder by the events of 1950. The prolonging of such a trend in Nepalese politics was mainly due to the fact that the State power was in the hands of a few chosen people. No attempt was ever made by the ruler to gain the confidence of the people in the administration of the country. Consequently, the people remained quiescent and passive towards political developments in the country.

Since there had been neither an established tradition nor consensus among the influential persons on the process of transfer of power in the country, all major changes were carried out through intrigues and violent methods. Even the establishment of the Shah dynasty is credited more to intrigues than to the excellence of the Gorkhas valour over Newars: Prithvinarayan was almost invariably beaten when it came to open fighting, in spite of the war-like quality of his Gorkhas. It was his mastery of intrigue and propaganda, and his untiring persistence, that gave him the victory, just as it was the disunion and ineptitude of their rulers that brought the Newars to grief.³⁶

His son Pratap Shah could come to power after exiling his uncle Bahadur Shah. With the death of the former in 1778, a

bitter struggle between the Queen Mother and Bahadur Shah ensued for gaining control over regency. The Queen Mother did succeed in retaining the regency but Bahadur Shah was again exiled. After attaining the age of maturity King Ran Bahadur imprisoned Bahadur Shah, who had returned to power after the death of the Queen Mother in 1785. Ran Bahadur, in turn, was forced by *Bhardars* and Brahmins to abdicate the throne in favour of the minor king and go in exile to India. His success in regaining power after four years was shortlived because he was assassinated by his half-brother Sher Bahadur. After his death, the rise of Bhim Sen Thapa to power resulted in the execution of Pandes and his fall brought misery to the Thapas and their supporters. Worst intrigues followed. The clandestine attempt of the junior queen to get her prince installed as king resulted in the Kot massacre when almost all the nobility of the kingdom was wiped out by Jang Bahadur Rana.²⁷ This paved the way for the establishment of Rana oligarchy in Nepal. With no potential opposition to the Ranas and with the framing of the Role of Succession to the post of Prime Minister for the members of Jang Bahadur's family, it was hoped that the transfer of power would be peaceful and easy. Instead, the old tradition of intrigues and violence was followed by the Ranas in capturing the seat of Prime Minister. With the exception of the succession of Ranoddip to the office, the Role of Succession was not followed by those Ranas who became Prime Minister later on.²⁸ In eliminating the claimants, they plotted and forced them out of their way mercilessly. As Ranas had maintained their rule by intrigues and violence, history attests that their regime too was overthrown by intrigues and violence. Such a process of change in the kingdom adversely affected the working of the democratic system in the country in two ways: first, there could not be established a tradition of peaceful, democratic methods of introducing certain changes in the society, and, secondly, the people at large could not become an instrument of change in the politics of the country.

Autocratic rule without any liberal tradition hardly go hand in hand with representative institutions. The Nepalese rulers had little confidence in the ability of the people to manage their own affairs. What made the rulers decide not to allow the

people to have a say in the administration of the country was their apprehension that in due course of time it would politicize the people to such an extent that a serious threat to their absolute rule might be posed. Hence the people were not only denied the popular institutions and training in their operation but all those avenues that might make them politically conscious of their legitimate rights were also plugged. When asked by King George V why the kingdom had so little education, the then Rana Prime Minister, Chandra Shamsher, answered—to check the growth of revolutionaries in Nepal.

Two decades later, however, Nepal had a revolution that overthrew the feudal system and ushered in an era of democratic processes in the country. How could in a society where traditional forces were well-entrenched such radical changes occur?

Initial Reforms

These changes occurred because the seeds of change are normally inherent in those very efforts which the upholders of the hide-bound traditions frantically make to maintain themselves. The Ranas, in order to perpetuate their rule, required an administrative set-up and a regalia of status symbols which, of necessity, needed both skill and efficiency. Having realized this, they had to arrange for the imparting of education, to begin with, to a chosen few. For purely personal reasons and in order to justify his usurpation of power, the Rana Prime Minister Jang Bahadur attempted to introduce a number of administrative reforms in the country.²⁹ This became necessary also because the Prime Minister wanted to raise his prestige in the eyes of the British Government whose protection he had sought to consolidate his position. The steps that the various Rana Prime Ministers took in the field of education were insufficient and restrictive. Yet they were important. During the reign of Ranoddip (1877-1885), Dhir Shamsher, a member of the Rana family, succeeded in persuading the authorities to establish an English Primary School and a Sanskrit Boarding School in Kathmandu at Tendhara.³⁰ In 1894, Bir Shamsher established Darbar High School on the Western educational

pattern which was the first of its kind in the country. He also opened Bir Library containing old valuable works of Nepalese literature and arts. He permitted scholars to undertake research work in the valley and at the grove of Lumbini, the birth place of the Buddha. He sent five students to Japan for training in engineering.³¹ Dev Shamsheer (March-June, 1901) gave further impetus to the development of education when he established many vernacular schools and started the bi-weekly *Gorkhapatra*. Chandra Shamsheer (1901-1929) established the Trichand College in Kathmandu in 1918 and founded the *Gorkha Pracharni* for the translation of religious works, novels and other works into Nepali. Padma Shamsheer, after coming to power in 1945, diverted his attention towards spreading mass education by establishing Basic Schools. He also started a school for girls whose education till then had not caught the attention of the rulers.³²

Thus, in spite of the inhibitions against the spread of education which marked the attitude of the Rana rulers, they themselves became instrumental in its promotion. Education in its trail, as was feared by the rulers, brought new ideas which infused a sense of intolerance in the new generation and impelled them to protest against injustice and tyranny of the Rana oligarchy. Together with the spread of education which brought the Nepalese students into contact with Indian intellectual milieu, the awareness of the prevalent social evils also grew. The rulers, too, could not remain indifferent to such social evils which tarnished their image abroad, because while they were interested in keeping the country isolated, they themselves were coming more and more in contact with the outside world through their evergrowing interest in trade and commerce. The rulers, therefore, took steps to abolish the dreaded custom of *Sati* in 1920 and slavery in 1924.³³

Though the Rana rulers did not encourage industrialization and economic development, yet they did not overlook this aspect altogether. Jang Bahadur, as back as in 1860, had founded a workshop for moulding cannons and rifles. It was, however, during the thirties that industrial units started coming up in Nepal particularly at Biratnagar and Birganj. Match factories, rice mills, saw-mills, a jute mill and a cotton mill were established. This was a significant development for it created a

class of workers in the country who could be counted upon to contribute in the struggle against traditional forces.³⁴ In the field of communication, the first Rana Prime Minister, Jang Bahadur, established postal system. Chandra Shamsher arranged for a ropeway between Bhempadi and Matatirtha. In 1927, Martin Company, Calcutta, joined Raxaul, the last Indian railway station on the southern border of Nepal, with Amalikhganj covering 25 miles with a rail link. In 1934 railway lines between Jainagar and Janakpur were laid. Moreover, Chandra Shamsher introduced telephone services and some important bridges were constructed during his reign.³⁵ Other development works like generation of electricity (1904), hospital and drinking water in Kathmandu (1891), at Bhadgaon (1895), at Jagarkot, Pokhra, Dhankuta and Patan (1904) and at Morang (1930) were undertaken. Bhim Shamsher had abolished taxes on salt, cotton and live-stock. He had also suspended capital punishment except for in cases of high treason.³⁶

These steps in the field of education, social and economic reforms and the establishment of a better communication system, though half-hearted and generally taken for purely personal and administrative reasons, helped in creating a sense of social and political awareness among the masses. They became more and more conscious of their miserable existence. Those among them who had the opportunity to get education and were the recipients of new ideas, started demanding the right to challenge the negation of their fundamental rights. The attempts of the traditional forces to keep them down in fear and submission no longer seemed to be as productive as before. The shell of outmoded traditions, which was considered impregnable and perpetuated by the rulers, began to crack.

The forces which were thus developing inside the country consequent upon education and other reforms, were, however, not strong enough to challenge decisively the well-entrenched traditional forces. But they received impetus from across the southern borders—India, where the movement for social and political changes was making new strides. The Nepalese student in India breathing in an atmosphere surcharged with an upsurge for national independence and social reforms, became more and more conscious of the necessity to change the traditional set-up

in his own country. A perusal of the contemporary situation in India and its impact on Nepal will bear out the point.

Reform Movements in India and their Impact

In the beginning of the twentieth century when Nepalese society was in the strong grip of the traditional forces, a movement for socio-religious reforms was sweeping in north India under the dynamic leadership of Swami Dayanand Saraswati. The movement aimed at reviving the purity of the Vedas and removing the dust of superstitions, bigotry and rituals in order to re-establish a true Aryan society in India. It challenged the established position of the Brahmin class in the social set-up of the country. The Brahmins were held responsible for upholding such social evils as child marriage, restriction on widow marriages and on women's right of getting education and other privileges enjoyed by men. Since the Nepalese society was equally orthodox and the tyranny of the Brahmin class weighed heavily over other castes, enlightened Nepalese were attracted towards this movement. The ideas of Arya Samaj were carried over to the kingdom by those Nepalese who came in contact with it in northern India.

Apart from the socio-religious reform movements, the Indian society was also experiencing great turmoils of a political nature. This was bound to have a tremendous impact on the docility of the Nepalese people.³⁷ The Gurkhas serving in the British Indian army could not escape being influenced by the liberal traditions of the West which had already created an impact on the Indian society. The Gurkha soldier who fought in Germany, France, Afghanistan, Turkey and Mesopotamia during World War I brought back with him the radical ideas and message to his people.

Under the impact of socio-religious and political upheavals in India and because of the increasing contacts between Nepalese and Indian students and intellectuals, there came into existence an articulate group of the Nepalese educated class around the Indian centres of learning particularly in Benaras and Calcutta.³⁸ This emerging elite class had imbibed radical socio-political ideas. It became the main driving force behind the movement

against the Rana autocracy.³⁹ In Kathmandu itself a group of educated persons was getting organized and worked in close liaison with their counterparts in India. A reference has already been made to the Arya Samaj movement which was striking a responsive note in Nepal also. Madhav Raj Joshi, who came under the spell of Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1893, established Arya Samaj offices at Pokhra and Kathmandu.⁴⁰ Inevitably he came into clash with the priest class which was one of the mainstays of the Rana oligarchy. On the pursuance of Rajgurus and on "suspecting that the proselytizing activities might lead to political consciousness among the people,"⁴¹ Prime Minister Chandra Shamsheer imprisoned Madhav Raj Joshi and ostracized other Arya Samajists. The severity of these measures, however, did not dampen the spirit of young Arya Samajists. In 1920, the sons of Madhav Raj Joshi and other leaders of this creed like Chakra Bahadur and Tulsi Meher took upon themselves the task of keeping the flame of movement burning in the country. Their continued activities evoked the ire of the establishment and, consequently, they were arrested and, later on, banished to India.

Though curbed and crushed, the Arya Samaj movement triggered off a socio-political movement against the established traditions in Nepal. While it encouraged the budding elite class to mount further assault against the custodians of the State power on the one hand, it provided them with a new tool and technique for this purpose on the other. As a result, during 1930s many socio-political agitations broke out in Nepal paving the way for pure political movements.

Socio-Political Movement in Nepal

During 1930-37, three notable social leaders, Naga Bhagwan Das, Buddesh Lal and Udai Raj Lal, adopted a novel method of spreading political consciousness. In order to escape the attention of the ruling authorities and circumvent the prohibitory rules and regulations, they posed themselves as engaged in the task of spreading education and the message of the great Ramayan. But while reciting the great epic, they, in fact, carried on the work of social and political awakening parti-

cularly in the Terai region. The Prime Minister Judha Shamsheer, however, discovered the clandestine manner in which they were inciting the people for a revolt against the Ranas and he came down heavily on the triumvirate. He confiscated the property of Udai Raj and exiled him to India. Naga Bhagwan Das, too, was banished to India.⁴² The Rana Prime Minister ultimately prohibited the collective *Kirtan*.⁴³

During the same period, Sukhraj Shastri, son of Madhav Raj Joshi, Raja Lal, Kedar Man and Ganga Lal formed the *Nepali Nagarik Adhikar Samiti* (The Nepalese Committee for Civil Liberty) ostensibly for imparting religious teachings. They, however, attempted to create dissatisfaction among the people against the Rana tyranny through the activities of this organization. Murlidhar, while interpreting the teachings of *Puranas* (ancient stories) attempted to impart political consciousness.⁴⁴ The Samiti used to organize weekly lectures and public meetings. While delivering a lecture on *Karma Yoga*, Sukhraj Shastri was arrested. Ganga Lal, who hurled abuses at the Rana rulers in the meeting, was also taken into custody.

Thus, the organization could not escape the ire of the Rana rulers. Its organizers were met with severe punishment. But the flame, once lit, could never be extinguished. The Nepalese intellectuals, particularly of the Valley, who had received college level education at Kathmandu and at Indian cities, were greatly influenced by the writings of Indian social and political leaders. They could no longer remain indifferent to the despotic rule of the Ranas. It was through their writings—novels, plays and poetry that the Nepalese intellectuals started eulogizing the Nepalese nationalism and directly or indirectly attacking the Rana autocracy. The writings of Krishna Prasad Koirala and Dharnidhar Sharma's *Naivedya*, which "ushered in the twilight of modernity", the revival of historical interest through the works of Surya Bikram Gyawali and Lekhnath Paudyal's forceful novel *Pinjda Ko Suga* helped the process of development of nationalist sentiments among the new generation of literate Nepalese.⁴⁵ In 1919, Babu Ram Acharya wrote a book, *Nepal Shiksha Darpan*, in which he compared the Rana Government with that of Shogunate of Japan.⁴⁶ Copies of the book were confiscated and the work was banned by the Government. In 1914,

Kishan Lal, a member of Kaushal Adda wrote *Makkai Ko Kheti*. In the Preface the author mentioned: "We pamper foreign dogs and discard native ones, but at crucial hours native dogs will stand by us and not those who spent nights on gaddi (cushion)".⁴⁷ This book depicted the plight of the peasantry which raised maize crops for zamindars but were deprived of their share in it. For the writing of the book the author was, awarded nine years imprisonment during the course of which he died. Likewise, when in 1930, some forty-five persons of the Valley sought the permission of the Government to establish a public library (since it was illegal to establish a public library without the permission of the Rana Prime Minister) the authorities prosecuted the signatories, and each of them was fined one hundred rupees.⁴⁸

These socio-religious reform movements, which had definite political overtones, however, did not succeed very much in mobilizing the people on a large scale. They, therefore, could not pose a challenge to the supremacy of the absolute rulers who dealt severely with each one of them. It was increasingly felt that a real challenge to the Rana tyranny had to be a political one. In India, a political battle had already been won and the British imperial Government had been forced to grant provincial autonomy in the form of the Act of 1935. Now the time had come when the Nepalese elite could think in terms of purely political movements aimed at changing the existing political set-up in the country.

Praja Parishad

In 1936, a political party—Nepal Praja Parishad—was formed by T. P. Acharya, Dashrath Chandra and Ram Hari Sharma.⁴⁹ The object of the Parishad was to establish a democratic government under the aegis of the monarch in the country.⁵⁰ The first task the Parishad undertook was to expose the Ranas and unmask the real face of their despotic rule before the people—the Nepalese, Indians and others. For this purpose, the party attempted to run a Press. Owing to lack of finances, the party could not succeed in procuring a Press; however, it succeeded in getting a column in the *Janta*, a weekly journal published by R.B. Benipuri from Patna (Bihar). The articles published in this

column were vehemently critical of the Rana regime.⁵¹ In Kathmandu, the Parishad engaged itself in clandestine activities—from distributing leaflets to planning the overthrow of the regime through violent means.⁵² Between July and September 1940, leaflets were distributed thrice throughout the country demanding constitutional rule, and the introduction of other reforms. The people were asked to be alive to the situation and understand their problems. In the last pamphlet a plan to stage a *satyagraha* was also announced.⁵³ The Parishad, however, could not keep cover over its activities for long. On October 18, 1940, about 500 persons were arrested and after a brief trial Sukhraj Shastri, Ganga Lal, Dashrath Chandra and Dharambhakta were executed. T.P. Acharya, Ram Hari Sharma, Chauda Prasad, Ganeshman Singh, Hari Krishna, Gobind Prasad, Pushkarnath and Balchand were awarded long terms of imprisonment. King Tribhuvan was also interrogated on the suspicion of his complicity with the Parishad. With the stern action against the leaders of the Parishad the Rana rulers dealt a crushing blow on the political opposition to their regime and killed, at least for the time being, the possibility of any organized attempt within Nepal to overthrow their power.

India-based Movements

Simultaneously with the political turmoils inside the country, there was being organized a movement against the autocratic regime of the Ranas by the Nepalese residents in India. Inspired by the radical ideas of the leaders of the Indian national movement and enthused by the success that this movement was achieving in the struggle against British imperialism, the articulate Nepalese launched a two-pronged attack on their oppressors. First, they started a vigorous campaign in India against the Rana regime in order to expose its true nature and to make the Nepalese and the Indian people aware of the autocratic, corrupt and feudal rule of the Ranas; secondly, they combined their efforts with those of the Indian national movement against the British imperialists for they “considered Nepal’s feudal regime as an extension of the British rule in India.”⁵⁴

The first demand for civil liberties and responsible government for Nepal was made in India through the columns of a Nepalese

weekly, *The Gorkhali*, founded in Benaras during the early years of World War I by the efforts of Subba Devi Prasad Sapkota. *The Gorkhali* vehemently criticized the oligarchic rule of the Ranas and exposed the cruelties and torture to which the people were being subjected by the Rana regime. The paper was, however, banned by the British Indian authorities in 1922.⁵⁵ This act did not discourage the politically conscious Nepalese from carrying forward their struggle. Chandan Singh in 1927 established the League of Gorkhas at Dehra Dun. He also published two weekly papers—*The Gorkha Sansar* and *Tarun-Gorkha*. Through his papers, Chandan Singh tried to inculcate political consciousness among the Gorkha residents in India and to mobilize them against the Ranas. Some of his supporters, however, betrayed him by crossing over to the Ranas, thus weakening the edge of his movement.⁵⁶

In 1930, when Gandhiji launched the famous Salt Satyagraha, it created a stir among the Nepalese community in India, and quite a number of the Nepalese participated in it.⁵⁷ Again, in December 1931, when Gandhiji led Lagan Bandhi movement, many young and educated Nepalese youth, particularly of the western Terai region of Nepal, participated in it.⁵⁸

In 1942, when the Indian political situation took a serious turn, the Nepalese students and political leaders, residing in India, decided to throw in their lot with the Indian national movement. When Gandhiji launched “Quit India” struggle in August, 1942, “the more informed of the Nepalese thought that in the event of the British Empire collapsing, the Rana family would have to follow suit”,⁵⁹ and, as such, a sizable section of the Nepalese in India participated in the “Quit India” movement. Along with Indian leaders many Nepalese leaders like B. P. Koirala, D. R. Regmi, S. P. Upadhyaya, Hari Prasad Pradhan and Udairaj Lal were arrested.⁶⁰ The involvement of the Nepalese in the Indian national movement could not remain hidden from the Rana rulers. They promptly arrested two Indian leaders—Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia—when they, in order to avoid the arrest by the British Indian police, slipped into the Nepalese territory, and lodged them in the Hanuman-nagar jail. The people, who had identified themselves with the Indian national movement could not tolerate this action of their

rulers. They broke open the jail and freed the Indian leaders.⁶¹

The Nepal Rashtriya Congress

Following the end of World War II in 1945-46, kaleidoscopic changes took place in the world. The Labour Party came to power in Britain; the Indian National Congress Ministries were restored in most of the provinces of British India; independence of India was in sight; and a liberal Rana—Padma Shamsheer—came to power in Nepal in December 1945. Moreover, with the coming of the Congress Party to power in a number of British Indian provinces the restrictions imposed on the political activities of the Nepalese leaders in India were, more or less, removed. The situation encouraged the Nepalese leaders to plunge into more vigorous political activities. Immediately after the setting up of the Interim Popular Government at the Centre in India, the *All India Nepalese Congress* was organized at Benaras with the old revolutionary Subba Devi Prasad as its President.⁶² It held its inaugural conference at Calcutta on January 25 and 26, 1947, where other organizations also joined it. It was baptized as the *Nepali Rashtriya Congress*. It decided, among other things, to launch a non-violent movement inside Nepal against the Ranas.⁶³

The newly formed party did not have to wait for long for an opportunity when they could mobilize the people against the Rana regime. While the Terai was in the grip of famine and the discontent of the people of the region was mounting, a trouble arose at Biratnagar industrial units where the workers went on strike for an increase in their wages. The Nepali Rashtriya Congress decided to support the strike, which started on March 4, 1947. The situation took a serious turn when the police resorted to firing, killing several workers including women. The authorities arrested Man Mohan Adhikari, B. P. Koirala, Bal Chand Sharma and G. P. Koirala on March 24. The Nepali Rashtriya Congress held a meeting at Calcutta and sent an ultimatum to the Rana Government asking them to release these political leaders and to give up the policy of coercion. The Rana rulers did not respond to this call. The party met at Jogbani (north Bihar) to take stock of the situation, and decided to launch *satya-*

graha. The party leaders staged *satyagraha* in various parts of the country.⁶⁴ On April 20, at Birgunj, a big procession was taken out in which more than two hundred students participated. There were demonstrations and processions at many places throughout the country. At Kathmandu itself, despite heavy mobilization of police by the authorities, big processions were taken out, in violation of the century-old prohibitory orders, demanding the release of political prisoners and the institution of civil rights. Women participated in these movements for the first time. The movement against the Rana regime was thus becoming more widespread and representative.

The Constitution of 1948

The intensity of the Rashtriya Congress movement and the failure of the Government to suppress it effectively had a sobering impact on the Rana rulers. On May 16, 1947, Padma Shamsher announced the introduction of a number of reforms.⁶⁵ The Government also ordered the release of many political leaders. In view of this, the Rashtriya Congress called off its strike on June 2. In order to implement the announced programme of reforms, the Prime Minister Padma Shamsher formed a Reform Committee and invited two constitutional experts from India—Sri Prakasa (a Congress leader of U.P.) and Ramanug Singh (of Lucknow University) to assist in the preparation of a constitution for the country. Elections for 21 seats to the Kathmandu Municipality were held in June based on adult franchise. This election was the first experiment in democratic process in the country. On January 26, 1948, Padma Shamsher promulgated the *Government of Nepal Act, 1948*, which became the first written constitution of the country.

The Act, however, omitted terms like “responsible government” and “democracy” and safeguarded the privileges of the Rana family. The Preamble of the Act stated that the order of succession to the high office of the Prime Minister would be governed as hitherto by prevailing traditions, customs and usages and the present rule of succession would ever remain immutable. The Act further provided for the establishment of a Council of Ministers, a bicameral legislature and a judiciary

under a Pradhan Nyayalaya (High Court). All executive authority was vested in the Rana Prime Minister who could exercise it either directly or through the officers subordinate to him. The Council of Ministers, composed of five members, was to assist the Rana Prime Minister in the discharge of his duties. The Prime Minister retained final authority over the decisions, appointment and dismissal of the Ministers.⁶⁶

The legislature, which according to the Act, was composed of two Houses—the *Bhardari Sabha* (Council of Nobles), consisting of twenty to thirty nominated members of the Prime Minister, and the *Rashtriya Sabha* (National Council), consisting of forty-two elected members and twenty-eight members nominated by the Prime Minister, was more or less an ostracized body whose powers were severely restricted. It could not, for instance, discuss the powers and position of the King and the Prime Minister. Likewise, it could neither discuss the list of expenditure charged upon the revenues of the State, nor could it consider a demand for a grant without the permission of the Prime Minister. The veto power rested with the Prime Minister who could use it as many times as he wished.⁶⁷

Similarly, the *Pradhan Nyayalaya*, consisting of a Chief Justice and other judges not exceeding twelve, was not free from official pressure. The power of appointment and dismissal of judges rested with the Prime Minister. He could appoint a judicial committee to act as the Supreme Court of Appeal in special cases, to frame rule any regulation for the administration of justice, and to resolve any differences arising out of the interpretation of any provision of the Act.⁶⁸

Article 47 of the Act made the Prime Minister an absolute ruler of the country when it stated that he could, during emergency situations, of which he himself was the sole determining authority, assume unto himself all or any of the powers vested upon anybody or any authority.

The 1948 constitution, however, for the first time in the history of Nepal conferred upon the citizens the right to exercise the freedom of speech, expression, religion and assembly “in conformity with the established practices of public policy and morality”. This could be taken as a concrete achievement of the reform movements.

But even these meagre reforms were not to the liking of the die-hards among the Ranas who criticized Padma Shamsher for his "liberalism". They asked him to adopt the traditional policy of suppressing the progressive forces rather than appeasing them by such reforms. The Commander-in-Chief of the army and next in the line of succession to the office of the Prime Minister, Mohan Shamsher, with the help of other conservative Rana elements, forced Padma Shamsher to resign. Thus in April 1948, Mohan Shamsher came to power and soon after his assumption of office, he made it abundantly clear that he was not going to honour the reforms announced by his predecessor. He banned the Nepali Rashtriya Congress and promulgated laws stripping the people of their fundamental rights that they had won under the 1948 constitution.

At a time when the Rana autocracy was becoming more repressive and ferocious in its attempt to crush the people's movement, an important development took place. In the Rana hierarchical system it was the assumption that the custom of inheritance as laid down in the line of succession would be strictly followed and that only Ranas of unpolluted parentage would be eligible to succeed to the office of the Prime Minister. But owing to the system of marriages and concubinage prevalent in the Rana clan,⁶⁹ difficulties arose, which led Chandra Shamsher to institutionalize the line of succession by laying down that only "A" class Ranas would be entitled to the office of the Prime Minister. This affected a large number of Ranas belonging to "B" and "C" classes. Notable among the affected ones were Hiraniya Shamsher and Prakash Shamsher who were also expelled from the capital for their opposition. Padma Shamsher who was comparatively a liberal Rana Prime Minister had permitted Subvarna Shamsher and Mahavir Shamsher, sons of Hiraniya Shamsher and Prakash Shamsher, respectively, to return to Nepal. Subvarna Shamsher was even appointed a member of the Constitutional Reform Committee which Padma Shamsher had set up. But with the die-hards coming to power, the "B" and "C" class Ranas again came into conflict with those of "A" class. Mohan Shamsher confiscated the property of Subvarna Shamsher which led the latter to mobilize support against the Rana autocracy. A number of prominent "B" and "C" class

Ranas joined hands together and established *Nepal Prajatantrik Party* with Subvarna Shamsher as its leader. Although initially motivated more by personal reasons than any deference to the popular cause, the dissident Ranas and their organization could prove a force of tremendous political significance. The aim of the party, as claimed by it, was to establish a government elected by a constituent assembly on the basis of universal franchise. It did not believe in non-violent methods to achieve its end and openly declared that it would launch an armed struggle to do away with the Rana regime. It set out immediately to collect arms and recruit cadets.⁷⁰ Demobilized Gorkha soldiers in the British army joined the ranks of this party.⁷¹

The Impact of India's Independence

Another event of considerable political significance was the fact that India was now independent and was watching the struggle of the Nepalese people against the Rana regime favourably and sympathetically. Owing to the traditions of the Indian national movement and its preference for democracy and freedom, and also because of the developing situation in Tibet and China, where Communists had established their authority, the Indian Government was all for a democratic set-up in the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. Speaking in the Indian Parliament on March 17, 1950, Prime Minister Nehru stated: "Freedom interests us in the abstract as well as in the guise of a practical and, in the context of Asia, a necessary step. If it does not come, forces that will ultimately disrupt freedom itself will be created and encouraged. We have accordingly advised the Government of Nepal, in all earnestness, to bring themselves into line with democratic forces that are stirring in the world today. Not to do so is not only wrong but also unwise from the point of view of what is happening in the world."⁷²

Thus the struggle of the powerful group within the Rana clan challenging the autocratic rule of the Ranas, and having the positive attitude of the Government of India to count upon, entered upon a new phase. The struggle against feudalism and entrenched out-moded traditions, and for democracy and freedom also took a new shape. Now all was set for a final decisive blow at the rule of

the Ranas. But before dealing with the events which led to the overthrow of the Rana supremacy in 1950-51, it would be rewarding to have a perusal of the organized strength of various political parties, their programme and activities, for that would give an idea of the role that they were going to play in the ultimate battle.

Among the few organized political groups in Nepal was *Praja Panchayat* which came into existence in the wake of the 1948 constitution, with a programme to seek its implementation. Claiming that it had nothing to do with the India-based Rashtriya Congress, it pledged itself to work strictly within the confines of the constitution. Since the constitutional reforms of 1948 remained largely on paper, this political organization launched a non-violent *satyagraha* in the Valley. B. P. Koirala, Kedar Man and Krishna Prasad, leaders of the Rashtriya Congress, crossed into Nepal from India and joined the movement. But in December, the police got the clue of their involvement in the movement. Alarmed by this finding, the Government arrested all prominent leaders of the *Praja Panchayat* and also B. P. Koirala and hundreds of other politicians, students, intellectuals and business men on charges of complicity in the movement.⁷³ B. P. Koirala was put under severe conditions in the jail. As a protest against the inhuman treatment meted out to political prisoners, B. P. Koirala went on hunger strike unto death in May 1949. This evoked protests both from inside and outside Nepal against Mohan Shamsheer's attitude towards political prisoners. The leaders of the Indian Socialist Party, Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia, as well as the Indian Government protested against this policy of repression and demanded the immediate release of B. P. Koirala.⁷⁴ Ultimately B. P. Koirala was released and deported to India.

Thus the *Praja Panchayat's* efforts to see the constitution implemented ended in a fiasco. But the Rashtriya Congress learnt a significant lesson from the Panchayat's agitation. It was now evident that the Rana oligarchy did not intend to liberalize the political system in the country and it was necessary, for the emancipation of Nepal, to overthrow the rule of the Ranas altogether.

Thinking on parallel lines was another party in Nepal—the Communist Party which formally came into being in 1949. The

Communists, however, had been working in Nepal since 1930 confining their activities to peasantry and landless labourers. They had links with the now defunct Praja Parishad of T.P. Acharya and worked for mobilizing the people against feudalism. They joined hands with the Rashtriya Congress in response to a call by B. P. Koirala, but later on withdrew from it when they found that it was more busy with intra-party wranglings than to think in terms of a resolute struggle against the Ranas.

When the Rana autocracy fell heavily on the leaders of the Rashtriya Congress in the wake of the Praja Panchayat agitation in 1948, B. P. Koirala gave another call for the united action against the Rana regime and sought the support of the Prajatantrik Party of which Suvarna Shamsher was the leader. The Communists resented this hobnobbing of the Rashtriya Congress with the Rana feudals and moved farther away from it. Leaving the Communists aside B.P. Koirala went ahead with his plan of forging unity between the Rana dissidents and his party. The Rana dissidents had abundant financial resources while the Rashtriya Congress commanded an organized core of workers. The two parties, if merged together, could become, so thought B. P. Koirala, a tremendous political force to reckon with.

The two parties held a joint session in Calcutta's Tiger Hall from April 9 to 11, 1949. They resolved to merge their parties, and thus came on the political scene of Nepal, a new political party, the Nepali Congress, which was destined to play a decisive role in the political developments which followed. Here it is worthwhile to note that the leadership of B. P. Koirala, who was instrumental in bringing about the unity of the two parties, was not acceptable to a powerful section of Prajatantrik Party because of his professed radical ideas.⁷⁵ There was, however, an agreement on the name of M. P. Koirala who was known for his honeyed tongue.

Nepali Congress—Its Programme

The policy statement of the new party included—(a) fundamental rights; (b) democratic system of the government; (c) economic welfare; and (d) immediate intensification of the struggle.⁷⁶ The Nepali Congress took immediate steps to revitalize the

organization and to prepare for the coming struggle. B. P. Koirala was entrusted with the task of shaping the "political wing" and Suvarna Shamsher of the "action wing" of the party, thus included the procuring of arms and ammunition and recruiting of cadre.⁷⁷

In September 1950 the Nepali Congress formally declared its decision to abandon the technique of non-violent mass action.⁷⁸ Since many "C" class Ranas were in the army it was hoped that they would prevent the army from siding with the Rana regime. King Tribhuvan, upon whom the Ranas had imposed restrictions, was becoming restless. The Nepali Congress, therefore, thought the time opportune to strike. It planned for the: (a) abduction of the King to western Nepal probably to Palpa; (b) the establishment of the government under the king; (c) a revolt by a section of the army mostly commanded by "C" class Ranas; and (d) liquidation of the Prime Minister Mohan Shamsher and a few high-ranking State officials.⁷⁹ Ganeshman Singh was entrusted to carry out the plan.⁸⁰ On September 29, the Rana Government announced that it had discovered a plot to murder State dignitaries and therefore it came down with a heavy hand on the suspects. Sunder Raj Chalise and his wife, Col. Toran Shamsher, Mohan Bikram and others were arrested.⁸¹ Ganeshman Singh attempted to escape but was arrested while crossing the Nepalese territory. The official statement named a number of "C" class Ranas and some members of the royal family as having been involved in the plot.⁸² The discovery of the plot alarmed the Ranas so much that they not only resorted to terrorizing methods but also planned to banish King Tribhuvan to Gorkha after installing his three-year-old grandson Gyanendra to the throne.⁸³

The Nepali Congress met at Bargania on September 26, under the shadow of these developments. In a resolution it called for a revolution against the feudal regime of the Ranas. It authorized its President M. P. Koirala to take whatever steps he deemed necessary to meet the situation.⁸⁴ Meanwhile the situation in Nepal took a dangerous turn. On November 6, the royal family, except the three-year-old Gyanendra, took refuge in the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu.⁸⁵ Infuriated by the king's seeking political asylum in the Indian Embassy, Mohan Shamsher

sent an emissary under his son Vijay Shamsher to persuade the royal fugitive to come back to the palace. On the assurance of the Indian Government, "for the first time in his life he (King Tribhuvan) was able to say "no" to a Rana.⁸⁶ On November 7, Mohan Shamsher summoned the Bhardari and proclaimed the deposition of King Tribhuvan and the enthronement of Gyanendra as the King of Nepal.⁸⁷ The Rana Government immediately sought the recognition of the new King by India, Britain and the USA. The airlink with India was suspended to check the entry of the royal family into India. The next day, however, two special air planes of Indian Air Force brought the royal family to Delhi under an agreement between the Indian and the Nepalese officers.

The Revolution and Its Aftermath

Taking the full opportunity, the Nepali Congress struck fast at the Rana regime. Operating from Raxaul, about 200 armed volunteers led by Thirbom Mall and Tej Bahadur attacked and captured Birgunj during the night of November 10-11. The Mukti Sena of the Nepali Congress also attacked Amlekhganj and Biratnagar but owing to stiff resistance by the State forces it had to beat a retreat. The struggle between the State armed forces and the Mukti Sena, however, went on for a month.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, five notable developments took place which decided the fate of the Ranas. First, the war-like Kiratas of Eastern Nepal proclaimed the establishment of an independent republic over an area of 6,000 square miles.⁸⁹ Secondly, the rift among the Ranas themselves widened. About 100 "C" class and young "A" class Ranas demanded the liberalization of administration and the return of King Tribhuvan to the throne.⁹⁰ The situation further deteriorated when a "C" class Rana, Rudra Shamsher, who was Bada Hakim of Palpa district, staged a *coup d'etat* and seized control of the Government. One thousand and five hundred soldiers stationed there defected to Rudra Shamsher and defied the central authority.⁹¹ Thirdly, unprecedented uprising in the form of processions and demonstrations-demanding the return of King Tribhuvan and the end of the Rana regime was witnessed in the Kathmandu Valley. Fourthly, the Rana regime failed to receive the recognition of

the new King from the U. K. and the USA in deference to the stiff attitude of the Indian Government which had refused to give recognition to the proclaimed new King and still considered Tribhuvan as the monarch of Nepal. Finally, the Indian Government forcefully insisted upon the institution of democratic reforms in Nepal. It urged upon the Government of Nepal (a) to call a constitutional assembly composed entirely of properly elected members to draw upon a constitution for Nepal; and (b) pending the meeting of the constituent assembly, to constitute an interim government composed of persons representing popular opinion and enjoying public confidence. The interim Cabinet was to function on the principle of joint responsibility and could frame its own rules of business. It was emphasized that King Tribhuvan should continue as the King in the interest of the realm.⁹³ One significant aspect of the Indian Government's advice was that instead of insisting on total elimination of the Rana elements from the government, it gave considerable weightage to them. In fact Mohan Shamsher was to continue as the Prime Minister of the interim government.

The prevailing internal conditions forced Mohan Shamsher to accept the Indian proposals *in toto*. On January 8, 1951, in a proclamation he announced that:

(a) elections based on adult franchise would be held not later than 1952 in order to form a constituent assembly, which would draw up a constitution for the country;

(b) pending the completion of the constitution and the formation of a government based on it, an interim Cabinet would be established for the transitional period and would consist of fourteen members, seven of whom would be representatives of the people; and

(c) an amnesty for all political prisoners would be granted.⁹³

King Tribhuvan, on January 10, signifying his approval of Mohan Shamsher's proclamation appealed to the Mukti Sena to lay down the arms as a new era of democracy had ushered in the country.⁹⁴

With this began a new era in the political development of Nepal. But before dealing with the subsequent events, it is desirable to examine the immediate consequences of the November revolution in the context of the prevailing socio-economic and political situation in the country.

The full impact of the November events was yet to be felt when it became evident that all was not well with the manner in which they had been brought about. The tragedy of the situation was that while the revolution, evidently, brought in its trail democratic changes in the structure of the feudal society, it could hardly bring any change in the outlook of the masses, who, by and large, appeared to be unconcerned and indifferent. Moreover, while the revolution had succeeded in bringing to the helm of affairs an elite class which had imbibed liberal and democratic ideas, it at the same time, rendered this class more or less ineffective to realize its objectives. This situation arose owing to the fact that the struggle for the liberalization of administration in Nepal had mostly been conducted from outside the country. The Delhi Agreement further dampened the possibilities of a real change since it envisaged the sharing of power with the erstwhile Rana rulers. The political leaders who came to power in alliance with the Ranas, having been remote from the indigenous people, found themselves incapable of inspiring confidence. It was because of the fact that the political movement was led mostly by students, ex-Servicemen, exiled persons and fugitives, who had no direct contact with the common man. Thus the scope of frequent dialogue and intermixing between the leaders and the people appeared non-existent. Another weakness of the revolution was that it had occurred in the absence of a hard core of cadre which should have been the mainstay of any political party or force organizing the revolution. Moreover, since the prime aim of the political parties was to topple down the Rana regime by armed revolution, the emphasis was laid more on armed training of the workers than on ideology. The party workers, thus trained, were bound to be interested in spoils immediately after achieving their aim. Besides, the launching of struggle from outside the country by the Nepalese leaders and their associations with the leaders of other countries provided ready excuse to ultra-rightist and ultra-leftist elements to accuse the leaders of the revolution as having extra-territorial loyalty.

The consequence of an easy victory against the Ranas had a deep impact on the subsequent political structure and political development. The people could not become ripe and ready to

run a sophisticated political system like parliamentary democracy. Moreover, the political parties could not extend their organizations throughout the country. Finally, the contact between the leaders and people could not become strong. Thus the political situation, after the revolution, did not appear favourable to the quick development of progressive forces to the extent that they could fill the vacuum caused by the overthrow of the Rana regime and sustain new political set-up in the country.

It was thus left to the traditional forces to fill the vacuum and establish its hegemony in the administration of the country. This was partly due to the Delhi Agreement itself which had envisaged a new political structure in which feudalistic elements had been given supremacy; and partly due to the great hold of traditional culture on the Nepalese people and the weakness of modernizing forces. Obviously, the agreement tilted the balance of power in favour of traditional forces. The monarchy was restored to power; feudalism was not only left to survive but, by giving the Ranas half of the membership in the Cabinet with one of them as the Prime Minister, they were given a new lease of life; and only residuary power was given to the modernizing forces. The Delhi Agreement was, more or less, concluded between the King and the Ranas and the voices of modernizing forces were not taken into account, though an assurance was given for the introduction of modernization.

Such reasoning is based on two facts: First, the prime aim of the revolution and of political parties, which launched it, was to end feudalism in the country and to establish a people's government. Secondly, when the agreement was reached on January 10, the political party that had spearheaded the revolution—the Nepali Congress—was not consulted at all. It was only when M. P. Koirala, the President of the party, categorically expressed “disillusionment” over the agreement and declared that unless the effective power was transferred to the people, arms would not be laid down,⁹⁵ that the leaders of the movement were summoned to Delhi on January 14. After a brief discussion with the King and the Indian officials they acquiesced in favour of the agreement and appealed to the people to assist in the restoration of law and order.⁹⁶ It appears that no other way was left for the Nepali Congress to press its demands further

except by accepting the agreement. Thus the agreement restored monarchy into power with the task of introducing democratic reforms in the country. It was left to the political parties—the modernizing forces of the country—to see and safeguard their implementation.

Besides, the agreement posed many questions without giving answers to them. Was it possible to force monarchy to introduce democratic reforms when it was restored to its traditional position? What constitutional steps could be taken against it, in case it failed or refused to act? After the fall of the Rana regime in Nepal there were left three potent forces—feudals, now represented by the monarch; modern, represented by the political parties; and the Indian influence. The agreement had indicated that India sided more with monarchy than with modern forces. Probably, it was due to her apprehension that modern forces were weak, scattered and immature, and could not, therefore, be entrusted to carry on the administration in the given condition of Nepal, while the monarchy, probably, in her view, was a bulwark against the expansion of communism. Under such conditions there was no potent power to compel the monarch to introduce democratic reforms in their true sense. Could the King, then, violate the agreement? Since an elite class had emerged and the political consciousness had gradually started spreading, he could not overlook the implementation of democratic reforms in the country without resorting to dictatorial methods.

The Delhi Agreement, thus, released two virtually contradictory political forces—traditional and modernizing—and put them face to face to fight against each other for the supremacy of power. The agreement was nothing more than a truce between two rival forces. The modernizing forces had accepted the agreement because at that time they could not extract more concessions while the acceptance of the agreement by the traditional forces may be due to their calculation that once their importance had been recognized they would come to power with the support of the predominantly traditionalist forces inside Nepal. Thus, a struggle between two rival forces became inevitable and imminent.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Mazumdar, Kanchanmoy, "British Policy Towards Nepal", *Modern Review*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 477.
- ² For details see Karan, Pradyumna P. and Jenkins, Jr., William M., *The Himalayan Kingdom: Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal*, New York, 1963.
- ³ Berreman, G.R., *Hindus of the Himalayas*, Bombay, 1964, p. 349.
- ⁴ Yami, D.R., *Nepalko Kura*, Kathmandu, 1957, p. 9.
- ⁵ Srivastava, K.P., *Nepal ki Kahani*, Delhi, 1955, p. 16.
- ⁶ Bhandari, D.R., *Nepalko Itihasik Vivachana*, Banaras, 1957, p. 146.
- ⁷ "In Nepal the king never visited the temple of Vishnu because the people feel that some calamity would befall their country if the two Vishnus face each other". Wayfarer (pseudo), *Nepal Today*, Delhi, 1950, p. 5.
- ⁸ Cavenagh, Orfeur, *Rough Notes on the State of Nepal*, London, 1851, p. 56.
- ⁹ The operative part of the *Ain* declared: "No Brahmin is ever punished with death, whatever his offences might be. He has his head shaved, all sorts of unclean things put into his mouth to contaminate his caste, and he is then taken to the frontiers and expelled from the country". Rana, Padma Jung Bahadur, *Life of Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal*, Allahabad, 1909. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ Immediately after capturing power Prithvinarayan Shah had ordered the expulsion of Capuchin missionaries from the kingdom.
- ¹² Acharya, *Collections*, and Hemraj's, *Gurujya Vamsavali*, Kathmandu.
- ¹³ Sharma, Janak Lal, *Nepali San Gyan Dass ra Unko Prampara* (unpublished)
- ¹⁴ Nepali, Gopal Sing, "The Ethnic Groups of Nepal", *United Asia*, Bombay, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1960, p. 342.
- ¹⁵ Hodgson, *Secret Consultation*, p. 2.

- ¹⁶ Wright, Daniel, *Sketch of the Portion of the Country of Nepal Open to the Europeans*, Calcutta, 1872, p. 19. ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ In the year 1948 the break-up of educated persons in the kingdom was as follows: Holders of B.A. or M.A. degrees 7, Undergraduates 48, Sanskrit degree holders 14, *Gorkhapatra*, Asadh 12, 2005 V.S.
- ¹⁹ Bhandari, M.R.R., *The Rise and Fall of Ranas in Nepal* (unpublished thesis).
- ²⁰ Mohan Shamsher, the last Rana Prime Minister, could be singled out of the charge. When he relinquished the office in 1951, the national treasury had seven crores worth cash in rupees, bullion and negotiable securities all combined.
- ²¹ Regmi, D.R., *Whether Nepal*, Lucknow, 1957.
- ²² Joshi, B.L., and Rose, Leo E., *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, Berkeley, 1967.
- ²³ Oldfield, H.A., *Sketches from Nepal—Historical and Descriptive*, London, 1880, p. 275.
- ²⁴ Nepali, Chittaranjan, *Bhim Sen Thapa ra Tatkalin Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2013 vs, No. 15. ²⁵ Rana, n 9, p. 275.
- ²⁶ *Nepal and the Gorkhas*, London, 1965, p. 27.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ After reviewing the administrative machinery of Britain and France, Jang Bahadur introduced many administrative reforms. He also codified the laws, repealed old primitive laws and gave them a shape suiting to the new conditions. He, however, left untouched the civil and criminal laws based on Hindu *Dharmshastras*, for details see Srivastava, n. 5.
- ³⁰ Thapa, N.B., *A Short History of Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1960.
- ³¹ Srivastava, n 5, p. 7. ³² Thapa, n 30, p. 139.
- ³³ From 1924 to 1926 Chandra Shamsher emancipated sixty thousand slaves. For this purpose he spent forty-three lacs of rupees. Since the money for the purpose was paid to the owners from the treasury of Lord Shiva, persons thus emancipated were known as “Shiv-Bhakta”.
- ³⁴ At Biratnagar, most of the industrial units were owned by Indian capitalists and majority of workers employed—10,000—were also Indians. Some Ranas—Padma Shamsher and Judha Shamsher—had substantial capital investments in these undertakings.

- ⁸⁵ Srivastava, n 5, p. 75. ⁸⁶ Thapa, n 30.
- ⁸⁷ "From across the plains down south a rough wind was blowing that carried a message of freedom from fear and tyranny and enslavement. India was awake. Its struggle for freedom raged in unabated fury. This could not but inspire those Nepalese who looked upon the Rana regime as an extension of British rule in India to act; to act so that the grip of the feudal octopus would loosen, paving the way for a humane system of government in Nepal".
Chatterji, Bhola, *A Study of Recent Nepalese Politics*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 29.
- ⁸⁸ "In the 1920's a small group of middle class Nepalese emerged on the nucleus of a new educated elite. Most of them had received a college level education, had travelled abroad, and had been exposed to the nationalistic political winds blowing in India". Joshi and Rose, n 22, p. 53.
- ⁸⁹ "Young intellectuals (at Calcutta and Benaras) were wedded to changing the feudal society that then existed in Nepal. Although nothing was either explicitly written or talked about, the organizers knew well that it was to prepare the nation for a fight with the military oligarchy ruling the country." Tail, Louis, "Where are the Intellectuals? *Nepal Today*, Calcutta, March 1968, p. 1262.
- ⁹⁰ Thapa, n 30, p. 160. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² Srivastava, n 5, p. 128. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁴⁴ "We decided to impart political consciousness through the medium of the Mahabharata stories. Lessons were drawn through citing examples from current life." Bhattarai, Murlidhar, *Nepal Kranti Va Mera Jail Jeevan*, Kathmandu, 1963, p. 3.
- ⁴⁵ Gupta, A., *Politics in Nepal*, Bombay, 1964, p. 24.
- ⁴⁶ Aggarwal, S.K., *Rana Polity*, Delhi, 1967, p. 139.
- ⁴⁷ Sharma, B.C., *Nepal Ko Itihasik Rooprekha*, Benaras, 1951, p. 355. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 358.
- ⁴⁹ There are conflicting views about the birth place of the Parishad. While some authors hold that the organization was established in Kathmandu at the house of Dharambhakta, the royal physical instructor, some maintain that it was established in India (probably at Benaras) due to prevailing

comparatively congenial atmosphere there; for details see Regmi, D.R., *A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal*, Benaras, 1952, p. 237.

⁵⁰ Singh, J.B., *Nepal Praja Parishad Ko Samkshipta Itihas*, Lucknow, p. 4. ⁵¹ Regmi, n 49, p. 239.

⁵² "The Praja Parishad was inspired by rather militant political ideas . . . (It) did not exclude the use of any available means in so far as the liquidation of the Rana regime was concerned", Chatterji, n, 37, p. 30. ⁵³ Regmi, n 49, p. 245.

⁵⁴ Chatterji, n 37, p. 34. ⁵⁵ Regmi, n 49, p. 227.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* ⁵⁷ Srivastava, n 5, p. 127. ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Regmi, n 49, p. 257. ⁶⁰ Srivastava n 5.

⁶¹ Gupta, n 45, pp. 28-9. ⁶² Regmi, n 49, p. 263.

⁶³ The other resolutions adopted at the Conference demanded— (a) all leaders of Praja Parishad detained in jail be released; (b) a non-violent movement be launched inside Nepal against the Ranas; and (c) support to the cause of Vietnamese people in their struggle against France. For details See *Nepal Rashtriya Congress Udghatan Samaroha*, Calcutta, 1947, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁴ Under the leadership of K.I. Singh, Krishna Dass Bhakt, Udairaj Lal, Dashrath Prasad, Kulpati Din and Ramvaran Sharma *satyagraha* was started in western Nepal at Parasi, Butwal, Bhagwanpur and Jhandanagar. Kulu Singh led *satyagraha* at Nepalganj.

⁶⁵ The reforms included: (a) Formation of a Reform Committee to suggest changes in the administration so that it may be carried on by "an assembly of elected members;" (b) forming of panchayats, municipalities and district boards; (c) establishing independent judiciary and separate it from executive; (d) publish annual budget; (e) to give aid to schools; and (f) to establish Consular offices in India as well as in other countries. *Gorkhapatra*, Jaith 4, 2004.

⁶⁶ The Council of Ministers, however, was entitled to transact all executive business and to define the policy of the Government, scrutinize the budget of various departments, give final consideration to the Government Bills to be placed before the legislature, and bring about co-ordination and co-operation between various departments of the Government.

Art. 11 (a) of *Government of Nepal Act, 2004 Samvat*, Kathmandu, 1948.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 40.

- ⁶⁸ The main function of the Pradhan Nyayalaya was to work as a Court of Records and it was given the jurisdiction to supervise the lower courts, to issue general rules and to prescribe forms, in which books, entries and accounts shall be kept by the officers of any such court. Articles 55 and 56.
- ⁶⁹ As a result of the marriages between the castes of equal status and between unequal status, two classes of Ranas came into being. Sons born of the marriages between equal caste status were "A" class Ranas, while the progeny of the unequal marriages were classified as "B". There was a "C" class also, consisting of those born to the concubines in the Rana harem.
- ⁷⁰ Gupta, *n* 45, p. 68. ⁷¹ Chatterji, *n* 37, p. 77.
- ⁷² Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches (1949-53), Delhi, p. 147.
- ⁷³ Joshi and Rose, *n* 22. ⁷⁴ Chatterji, *n* 37, p. 52.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.* ⁷⁶ *Ibid.* ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53. ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80. ⁸⁰ *Ibid.* ⁸¹ Thapa, *n* 30, p. 165.
- ⁸² Jain, G.L., *India Meets China in Nepal*, Bombay, 1959.
- ⁸³ Joshi and Rose, *n* 22, p. 72. ⁸⁴ Thapa, *n* 30, pp. 165-66.
- ⁸⁵ For details see Lenchttag, Eriks, *With a King in the Clouds*, London, 1958.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 205. ⁸⁷ Chatterji, *n* 37, p. 98.
- ⁸⁸ The places where the Nepali Congress volunteers and supporters launched an attack, apart from the above mentioned areas were Bhairwa, Tharithum, Bhojpur, Bandipur, Rangoli, Haraicha, Janakpur, Gaur, Athamanja, Thapa, Gauriganj, Udaipurgarchi, Kalali Kanchanpur, Narayanpur, Bhagwanpur, Nawarpur, Palasi, Jhapa, Anarmani, Virta, Tokla, Nakalbandha, Dholamari, Malakheth, Dhangarhi, Baithari, Deoti, Dhangari and Dailekh. For details see Srivastava, *n* 5, pp. 150-57. ⁸⁹ Jain, *n* 82, p. 20. ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁹¹ Joshi and Rose, *n* 22, p. 75.
- ⁹² Karunakaran, K.P., *India in World Affairs*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 39.
- ⁹³ Devkota, G.B., *Nepal Ko Rajnitik Darpan*, Kathmandu, 1959, p. 39, ⁹⁴ *The Hindu*, January 11, 1951.
- ⁹⁵ Srivastava, *n* 5, p. 169. ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2

Re-Emergence of Traditional Forces (1951-54)

FOLLOWING the tripartite agreement between the King, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress at Delhi, the Royal family and the leaders of the Nepali Congress landed at Kathmandu on February 15, 1951. In a Royal proclamation, issued on February 18, King Tribhuvan, outlining the future political set-up of the country, stated: “. . . hereafter our people shall be administered in accordance with a democratic constitution to be framed by the constituent assembly elected by the people. Until such constitution is framed a council of ministers composed of popular representatives having people’s confidence shall be constituted to aid and advise us in our administration.

“The ministers shall hold office during our pleasure and shall collectively be responsible to us. It shall be the duty of our Prime Minister to submit all decisions of the ministry pertaining to the administration of the country to us. Again it shall be his duty to furnish all information regarding administration as asked by us from time to time.”¹

The above proclamation was noted for three distinct features—first, it ended the century-old family oligarchy; secondly, it upheld the right of the people to frame the constitution of the country on democratic lines; and, finally, during the interim period it put a premium on monarchy rather than on the people, in terms of power. Although the ministers were to be the representatives of the people, in the absence of any general election in the country, the strength and position of various political parties could not be ascertained. In such a situation the King was free to choose his favourites as ministers from among the politicians without apparently violating the terms of the Delhi Agreement. Since the ministers were collectively responsible to the King

and were to hold office during his pleasure, their loyalty to the King became an important factor. Moreover, there was no stipulation in the proclamation that the King was obliged to act upon the advice of his ministers. In the absence of a powerful, organized and united political force it was indeed very difficult to prevent the King from violating the terms of his own proclamation.

Inter-Party Rivalry

Generally, it was believed that the basic objectives of the revolution were to annihilate completely the feudal system and to establish a democratic set-up in the country. None of these two objectives, it appeared from the above Royal proclamation, were anywhere near realization. The prevailing political situation was to a great extent responsible for such a state of affairs. Of the two forces in the country—traditional and modernizing—the birth of the latter was a recent phenomenon, and as such, they did not have the requisite mass support and strength to compete with the former, to which they were squarely opposed. It was, however, owing to the initiative taken and the struggle waged by the modernizing forces—the political parties—that the autocratic feudal regime of the Ranas had been undermined and the provision for electing a constituent assembly was incorporated in the Delhi Agreement. It was, thus, for these modernizing and forward-looking political elements to see that the terms of the Delhi Agreement were fully and expeditiously implemented. Instead of devoting themselves to this formidable task, these political parties found themselves in complete disarray. The Nepali Congress which had loudly proclaimed the objectives of the revolution was found in the company of its erstwhile enemies—the feudal and reactionary Ranas—playing chores to them instead of mobilizing the people in favour of democracy and modernization.³ This undoubtedly damaged the prestige of the Nepali Congress. Consequently, influential leaders outside the fold of the Nepali Congress refused to extend their support to the new interim government.³

The attitude of the Nepali Congress towards the agreement was regarded by many critics as reactionary and opportunistic.

When, without consulting the Nepali Congress, King Tribhuvan had agreed to the terms of the agreement, M. P. Koirala, the President of the party, on January 10, 1951, rejected the agreement and affirmed that the aim of the revolution, which was carried under the banner of the Nepali Congress, was to throw the feudal system overboard, and establish a people's government. But when the party was invited to finalize the agreement, it raised three points, particularly concerning its own interest, ignoring the existence of other political groups and parties:⁴

(a) the announcement of the agreement should have been made by the King and not by the Prime Minister;

(b) who shall announce the seven names of people's representatives in the Cabinet along with allocation of portfolios and their powers? and

(c) the announcement referred to the existence of many political parties in Nepal while there was only one—the Nepali Congress.⁵

This attitude of the Nepali Congress had created a hiatus between it and other political parties which had also resented the manner in which the Delhi Agreement had been arrived at. They were particularly sore at their exclusion from the Delhi talks to which among the political parties, it was only the Nepali Congress which had been invited. They held India responsible for showing bias in favour of the Nepali Congress and ignoring the existence of other parties and groups. They asserted: “. . . parties other than the Nepali Congress were not allowed to participate in the talk. As the Government of India was acting as intermediaries, it was up to them to see that the parley was fully representative, because on the outcome of the talk depended the future of Nepal and what was more important was that any settlement reached without the cooperation of principal elements of Nepalese public opinion was not destined to be permanent.”⁶

Besides, the Nepali Congress, on its own, did not take any steps to enlist the cooperation of other parties and groups which had indeed contributed their bit in the realization of the revolution in the country. When the Delhi negotiations were going on, leaders of many political parties were in jail. They were,

however, released on January 17, 1951, in accordance with the Delhi Agreement. Prominent among these leaders were T. P. Acharya and Chauda Prasad Sharma of *Nepal Praja Parishad*, Khadag Man Singh of *Prachanda Gorkha*, Tripurwar Singh of the *Praja Panchayat* and also Ganeshman Singh of the *Nepali Congress*. All of them might have entertained the view that they would be taken into confidence by their compatriots of the Nepali Congress while deciding upon their participation in the interim arrangements. But to their dismay and shock they found that the interim Cabinet included the Rana and Nepali Congress members. Quite understandably, therefore, the reaction of political leaders, who had been kept out of the interim government, was one of hostility towards the Nepali Congress and the new political set-up. The President of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress bemoaned: "It was very wrong of them (the Indian leaders) to have helped the seizure of the reins of the government by a faction of politicians who stand without principle and programme, even though they be of their choice, while the majority of the conscious Nepalese were kept out of the settlement."⁷

The Nepali Congress, so its detractors claimed, considered itself an exclusive organization arrogating to itself the sole right to represent the entire Nepalese people. It refused to cooperate with other groups which were quite powerful in the Kathmandu valley. Two of its prominent leaders—Ganeshman Singh and S. P. Upadhyaya, who were responsible for its organization in the Kathmandu valley, "ignored most of the Kathmandu political factions, and chose instead the newest and weakest of the local organizations—the remnant of the *Praja Panchayat* but with the important exclusion of Gopal Prasad Rimal—as their local core organization."⁸

The arrogant attitude of the Nepali Congress created discontent among the elites. In this context when the President of the Nepali Congress, M. P. Koirala, criticized and ridiculed the local elites for not having contributed their mite in the struggle against the Ranas,⁹ the intellectuals and youths of the valley got further alienated from it and turned its critics. Thus the only political party which had a wide range of organization, resources and leadership to shape the destiny of the country landed itself in the quagmire of hostility and opposition of those whose

cooperation was absolutely essential if the objectives of the revolution were to be realized. As one observer commented: "The people would not swallow the interim arrangement as they look at it to be a retrograde step back to autocracy. The ministers appeared to them as upstarts who suddenly were pushed to the pinnacle of glory and offices without themselves deserving it by outside forces and very unfortunately the Congress ministers wounded public feeling by haughty and insolent manners."¹⁰

Even the rank and file of the Nepali Congress could not remain unaffected by the mounting criticism of the Nepali Congress leaders. Many workers of the party aired their grievances against their leaders who, according to them, had started neglecting them as well as the organization on entering the parlour of office. Sycophants were being given priority in the party and the office over the old ones. Consequently, the organization of the Nepali Congress was considerably shattered. Many of its workers crossed over to other parties and groups.

In the absence of any attempt to unite all modernizing forces, rivalry among the leaders over their association with the new political order, arrogant attitude of the ruling party leaders towards the people, the distribution of official posts to one's favourites, disturbed the unity of the politically articulate sections of the society. Consequently, a mushroom growth of political groups and organizations dividing the progressive forces in small factions became the order of the times. Within three months of the Royal proclamation setting up the interim government at least 32 political organizations, both old and new, were functioning in the country.¹¹ Thus within a short period there started a process of disintegration of democratic and modern forces, at a time when their solidarity, integration and compactness were of the utmost importance for the transformation of the feudalistic society into an egalitarian one.

While the modernizing forces were in the process of disintegration, the institution of monarchy was steadily growing in strength and stature as a bastion of traditionalism in the country. It was indeed a peculiar phenomenon that those very forces which had striven for the democratization and liberalization of political structure in the country were now proving instrumental in gearing up the traditional position

of the monarchy. The Nepali Congress was actively participating in the task of consolidating the position of the monarch to enable him to extend the control over the State. It had formed the coalition with the Ranas and this presumably gave it a guilty conscience. It could not forget its earlier objectives of not resting till the country was cleared of the feudal lords.¹⁹ So in its attempts to convince the people that it had not become reconciled with the feudal lords, it assailed the Ranas with whom it was sharing power. In doing so, it encouraged the King to embark upon aggrandisement of his own power, as it thought that the monarchy would grow only at the expense of the Ranas. And once the Ranas were ousted from power, the Nepali Congress hoped it would, with the help of the monarch, who, after all, had declared himself as the champion of the democratic cause, introduce radical reforms in the society, thus rooting out traditional forces from the soil. The Nepali Congress, therefore, aligned itself with the monarchy.

Another important political group, the Praja Parishad, which had reorganized itself in the wake of the revolution, in spite of its flare for Marxism, had shown considerable deference to the position of the King. King Tribhuvan had close relations, so it was believed, with the Parishad before he sought asylum in the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu. As such, the leaders of the Parishad had reason to regard the King as their "party man". Moreover, like many other political groups, the Parishad's organization was mainly confined to the valley and some pockets of Terai. This limited organization of the Parishad could not have brought it to power on its own. The short-cut to power, in the calculations of its leaders, lay in their aligning themselves with the King. Consequently, there was noted a competitive tendency among the Parishad leaders, like the leaders of many other political groups, to hover over the King and seek his favour.

With the fall of the Rana regime, the barrier that was maintained by the Rana rulers between the King and the people nearly collapsed. Now a direct avenue was available for articulate sections like administrators, professors, judges, writers and other high-ranking civil and military officers to meet and put forth their grievances before the King. Instances were not lacking when these persons utilized their meetings with the King

to complain against the working of democratic institutions and the behaviour of some political leaders against whom they had personal grudges and suggested that he should personally supervise the administration for the welfare of the country.¹³

Besides, after the revolution it had become clear that the Rana oligarchy had no chance to stage a comeback, even though prominent Ranas were still holding the reins of power. This created a tendency among the Ranas to seek new ways and means for their survival. "B" and "C" class Ranas had already come close to the Nepali Congress. Consequently they also developed a stake in the institution of monarchy which was now being buttressed by the modernizing political elements. Some "A" class Ranas, owing to their family relationship with the Royal House, veered round the institution of monarchy.¹⁴

Finally, the vested class—the Ranas, the *Birta* holders, *zamindars*, *Rajas*, *Mahants* and high military officers—started pampering monarchy in the hope that it might protect, if not enhance, their interests.

Thus what one witnessed in Nepal since the inception of democratic order was a struggle for power among the elites and political leaders which resulted in mutual denunciations and disunity among them. This left the ground completely free for the already well-entrenched traditional forces to further consolidate their position. They now had the institution of monarchy as their mainstay which was being supported by the opponents of traditionalism also. Thus monarchy emerged as the most significant political institution pampered both by the traditional and modernizing forces in the country.

The coalition Cabinet of the interim government (consisting of five members of the Ranas and five members of the Nepali Congress) was formed on February 18, 1951. The Rana block was led by Mohan Shamsheer who also held the office of the Prime Minister, and the Congress block was headed by B. P. Koirala who controlled the important portfolio of Home. The Delhi Agreement had thus put two antagonist forces to work together for the success of democratic order in the country. The Nepali Congress, which had been "in a sullen mood and licked the wound it considered Delhi had inflicted by compelling it to forego the fruits of its labour,"¹⁵ had not reconciled itself with the

feudal Ranas, and the Ranas, on the other hand, were "determined to recover as much of the lost power and privileges as would be possible in the circumstances. Therefore, there was little desire and no incentive for them to work the experiment in democracy".¹⁶

Consequently, the conflict between the two groups, even on trifling matters, became inevitable. The head-on clash between both the groups ranged from their seating arrangement in the Assembly hall to taking the decision against the uprising which was still raging in the country. "The clash of interests between the Nepali Congress and the Ranas only helped to strengthen the position of the King. The Nepali Congress, unable to resolve its conflicts with the Ranas, looked to the King for such assistance as he might render. For identical reasons, the Ranas also did the same. In the process the effective levels of powers quickly passed into the King's hand, enabling him to play the arbiter's role between the cantankerous partners in power."¹⁷

The power and position of the Rana group, however, were weak in view of the popular opposition against them as they were the perpetrators of the past autocratic rule and tyranny. The King, whose position had been completely undermined during the Rana regime also seemed determined to settle score with the Ranas. He, therefore, lent his support to the Nepali Congress in its drive against the Ranas. On March 30, 1951, the King announced the Interim Government of Nepal Act, 2007, with a view to putting an end to the acrimonious disputes between the Nepali Congress representatives and Rana ministers regarding their respective rights.¹⁸

The Act specifically laid down the powers of the Prime Minister. His tasks were (a) to communicate to the King all decisions of the Cabinet relating to administrative affairs; (b) to furnish information relating to such administrative affairs as the King might request; and (c) if the King so required, submit for consideration by the Cabinet any matter on which a decision had been taken by a minister but which had not been discussed by the Cabinet as a whole. Article 24 of the Act emphasized that the Council of Ministers shall collectively be responsible to the King. To have predominance of the King over all the administrative affairs, it was stated that all executive actions of the

government should be authenticated according to the rules framed by the King. The King was also authorized to frame all rules and instruments for the transaction of business of the government and the allocation of portfolios among the ministers.¹⁹ Likewise, he was empowered to appoint the Chief Justice and other judges of Pradhan Nyayalaya (High Court), the members of the Public Service Commission and the Auditor-General of Nepal on the advice of his ministers.²⁰ The King was also vested with the supreme command of the defence forces.²¹ Unlike the first proclamation, the Act did not make it incumbent upon the King to choose his ministers from among those enjoying the confidence of the people. This Act undoubtedly brought about a qualitative change in the King's position *vis-a-vis* his Council of Ministers.²²

Intrigues by the Ranas

Another significant event, which fortified the position of the King further, took place when, in the beginning of April 1951, rumours went round that the relatives of Babar Shamsher, the Defence Minister and advocate of "toughline" against the Nepali Congress and the monarch, were organizing a Vir Gorkha Dal to subvert the army and to overthrow the government by violent means. As a preliminary step, the Home Minister, B. P. Koirala, on April 11, ordered the arrest of top leaders of the Dal including its General Secretary, Bharat Shamsher, the grandson of Babar Shamsher. The next day, armed mob of the Dal attacked the Central Jail, released its leaders including Bharat Shamsher and attacked B. P. Koirala and ransacked his house. The episode gave sufficient handle to the monarch to strip the Ranas of their military power, since their involvement in the attempted *coup* was undoubted. The Nepali Congress leaders, particularly S. P. Upadhyaya, suggested to the King that he should extend his control over the army purging the dubious elements from it.²³ On April 16, the King relieved the Rana Prime Minister of his post as Commander-in-Chief and transferred three battalions —Bijuli Garal, Pasarv Dal and Kali Bahadur— with all arms and ammunition, explosives, which were so far kept at the residence of the Rana Prime Minister—Singhdarbar

—to the Royal palace—Narayanhetti Darbar.³⁴ Thirty-seven army officers suspected of complicity in the plot were dismissed. Several guards of the Prime Minister were arrested on the charge of participating in the disorder. The private palace guards who had previously guarded the residence of the Ranas as well as the Royal palace were disbanded and their duties transferred to the regular army. The King also praised the loyalty of the army towards the crown in spite of grave provocations by the Dal leaders and announced a general increase in the salary of the army officers and soldiers alike.³⁵

The episode strengthened the position of the King even more. The Nepali Congress leaders were obviously happy at this development, but they did not realize that the gain entirely accrued to the institution of monarchy, at the expense of the democratic institutions. The only change was that the leadership of traditional forces—the opponents of democracy and modernization—had now passed into the hands of the King.

The failure of the interim government to deliver the goods brought into disrepute not only the Nepali Congress, but the democratic institutions themselves. The administration was inefficient and there was complete breakdown of law and order in the country. The problem of maintaining peace and security became acute particularly in the Terai region. The Mukti Sena, organized to herald revolution in the country in 1950, became a hoard of dacoits engaged in loot and plunder.³⁶ It refused to lay down arms now that a revolution had taken place, since in the absence of alternative jobs and occupation, it considered dacoity a worthwhile venture. The situation became worse when K. I. Singh, with his 300 armed band, let the terror loose in Western Nepal. The administrative machinery was so weak that the Nepalese Government had to request the Indian Government to take a joint police action against the lawless elements.³⁷ Though the government succeeded in bringing the situation under control in Western Nepal, yet the over-all problem of law and order remained threatened. In Eastern Nepal, Limbus and Kiratis raised their banners for regional autonomy and created chaos in the eastern hill areas.³⁸ Western Terai again became terror-ridden when disgruntled Nepali Congress workers preached lawlessness which ended up in violent clashes. It was reported that

in the area of Taulihawa, Thanda Nagar, Bahadurganj and Koilabasa about 15 gangs of outlaws caused panic among the people by completely undermining the law and order machinery of the government.²⁹ The coalition government had become so weak by wasting its energy in internal conflicts that it had to make a second request to the Government of India to send constabulary to maintain law and order in Nepal.

The failure of the coalition government to maintain law and order in the country led the people to believe that the situation would improve if power was vested in a person for an effective rule. In Nepal such a person could only be the monarch who was regarded above party politics. The Nepali Congress which could have nipped in the bud the feeling in favour of dictatorial personal rule, was, however, busy in faction-fights that had become acute owing to the open criticism being levelled by the "have-nots" in the party against those occupying the ministerial and other posts. The foremost among the critics was M. P. Koirala, who had been excluded from the coalition government.

"A clever campaign was started against the party nominees in the government, the major charge being that they were acting in contravention of the party's basic policy. This was, they pointed out, what kept the Ranas in office, thus further damaging the prospects of an all-Nepali Congress government."³⁰ The rift among the top leaders of the party became so acute that the party's nominees in the government had to be changed. Bharat Mani Sharma was replaced by S. P. Upadhyaya as Food and Agriculture Minister.³¹

Infested with rivalry and dissensions and engaged in a fight-to-finish mission against the Ranas, the Nepali Congress failed to implement even those measures which it had considered basic for the welfare of the people. Measures like the abolition of *Birta* system, formation of Public Service Commission, the institution of Land Reforms and Labour Investigation Committee to suggest the lines of reforms, Food Council to arrange for fair price shops and the establishment of Emergency Committee to restore law and order in the country remained, more or less, on paper and did not bring relief to the people, who were expecting much from the government that was established after the fall of the autocratic regime. This alienated the Nepali Congress from the

people,³² who became more and more resentful of the political parties and looked expectantly at the King to improve the situation.

While the crisis was thus brewing, an episode gave a sudden twist to the political situation. On November 6, 1951, the police opened fire, by the order of the Home Minister, on a students' demonstration demanding the release of all political prisoners, killing one student and injuring two others. The Rana Prime Minister, Mohan Shamsher condemned the action of the police, promised a full and impartial inquiry and announced his intention to form a new party to fight for "full democratic rights for all and a better programme of economic development". On November 10, B. P. Koirala, the Home Minister, deprecated the Prime Minister's "veiled condemnation" of the Home Ministry, and declared that it was "amazing" that he should be "so much concerned with democracy and the people's right when he had always throttled them in the past". He further asserted: "There can be no peace or democracy in Nepal until Maharaja Mohan Shamsher goes out of the Cabinet. We have told King Tribhuvan that his exit from the office is imperative. I have a strong suspicion that reactionary forces are trying to stage a comeback by creating chaos and taking advantage of the emotional disturbances which occasionally occur. There is a perpetual crisis in the government and the Cabinet is paralysed by the Ranas and Congress groups always pulling apart."³³

B. P. Koirala and other four Nepali Congress ministers tendered their resignation directly to the King on November 11, 1951, ignoring the Prime Minister. In a broadcast on the same day to commemorate the first anniversary of the Congress uprising, B. P. Koirala said that the Congress ministers had resigned because "continued disharmony has rendered the situation intolerable," that their hope that a compromise with the Rana regime would have led to a smooth transition had been "dashed to the ground," and that at every stage "reactionaries" inside the government were "putting obstacles in the way". He also announced the release of all political prisoners and detinu in order to enable "all progressive forces" to re-examine the situation."³⁴ This episode hastened the exit of the Ranas from the domain of power. The Rana block tendered its resignation on November 12, 1951, which the King readily accepted.

Prime Minister Koirala

Since the coalition government, which was the product of the Delhi Tripartite Agreement, stood dissolved, the King was now free to choose the members of his liking to reconstitute the Cabinet. But it was expected in many quarters that adhering to the spirit of democratic conventions, the King would invite such a political leader who could organize the administration on democratic lines, introduce progressive reforms while commanding the confidence of a majority of the people. Such a leader, in the opinion of many, was B. P. Koirala. But the choice of King Tribhuvan fell on M.P. Koirala, who happened to be the President of the Nepali Congress but had not been included in the coalition government by the party for his "opportunistic outlook". On November 16 the King constituted the new ministry under M. P. Koirala.

The action of the King in preferring M. P. Koirala over B. P. Koirala was indeed stunning and appeared like the dark shadow of the events to come and led the politics of Nepal into a new phase of its development. Here it is relevant to ask why the King did not choose B. P. Koirala Prime Minister. B. P. Koirala was a popular and radical leader with a magnetic personality. His advocacy of progressive reforms and insistence on their ruthless implementation had made the feudal elements jittery. His assertiveness and aggressiveness had made the King restive. His uncompromising nature had earned despise for him from the leaders of other political parties. His early success in Nepalese politics had made him over-confident and flamboyant. Three big victories had been to his credit: (i) the overthrow of the Rana regime; (ii) his being consulted at the tripartite agreement; and (iii) his becoming the leader of the party in the coalition government and King Tribhuvan's banking on his advice during the period of coalition government. There was no other Nepalese leader to match his stature and personality. He, therefore, tended to be arrogant. These were perhaps the positive and negative features of B. P. Koirala which led the King to keep him away from power. On the other hand, among all the Nepali Congress leaders only M. P. Koirala had the desired quality of accommodating himself with the traditional authority. Since he had served

briefly as a Bada Hakim under the Ranas, he was well acquainted with the Royal protocol. He could serve the King with courteous manners without indulging in the new-fangled practices of egalitarian speech and arrogant behaviour. Moreover, the Indian ambassador who had been in close touch with the King and whose advice the King heeded, was also against B. P. Koirala. The latter had reportedly criticized the former for taking undue interest in the domestic affairs of Nepal. The Indian ambassador had also reportedly advised the King not to invite B. P. Koirala to take the responsibility of forming the new government.³⁵ Likewise, political leaders like T. P. Acharya and D. R. Regmi had told the King that if B. P. Koirala came to power, democratic institutions would be endangered. They had, however, suggested the formation of a national government.

The appointment of M. P. Koirala as Prime Minister had far-reaching consequences in the politics of Nepal, which may be summed up as follows:

(a) It created sharp dissensions in the Nepali Congress, particularly between the supporters of B. P. Koirala and M. P. Koirala. There was an increasing tendency among the party members to align with the group in power.

(b) It created an impression among leaders of other political parties that one could rise to power by winning over the King's personal favour;

(c) It encouraged the Prime Minister to keep the King appeased as he owed office by virtue of his favour even though in doing so he had to undermine his own party's programme; and

(d) Since, under the conditions, the Prime Minister could not be assertive and implement radical social, economic and political reforms, the image of democracy was bound to be tarnished with the people developing an attitude of cynicism towards political leaders and democratic institutions.

The King asked M. P. Koirala's Government: (a) to ensure civil rights to the people; (b) to work for the independent working of the judiciary; (c) to ensure the impartial working of the Public Service Commission; and (d) to hold general elections for the constituent assembly before the fall of the year 1952.³⁶ But in spite of the fact that an all Congress party government had come into being under the leadership of M. P. Koirala, it lacked

the basic traits of one party government. Instead of having harmony, coordination and team spirit, the Cabinet was beset with dissensions. Two mutually hostile groups emerged in the ministry. One group consisting of S. P. Upadhyaya, Ganeshman Singh and Suvarna Shamsheer supported B. P. Koirala and worked according to his instructions while the other group had Naradmuni Thulung, Bhadra Kali Misra, Mahendra Bikram Shah and Mahavir Shumsher as members supported M. P. Koirala. Since the assumption of power, M. P. Koirala had made it abundantly clear that he would fully abide by the established traditions and would not introduce reforms. Implementation of radical reforms during the interim period, so he thought ostensibly at least, would result in chaos.³⁷ He, therefore, advocated a go-steady policy. Though he reorganized the administration, it did not result in a major change in the composition and character of the Secretariat. A majority of the new secretaries had been prominent members of the Rana bureaucracy. The traditional elements got a further fillip in February, 1952, when a Civil Service Coordination Committee, composed entirely of former Rana administrators, was appointed by M. P. Koirala. The Committee, as was expected, did not suggest any significant change in the administrative set-up. Its composition, however, gave ample proof as to where the sympathies of the new Prime Minister lay.³⁸ Moreover, he indirectly encouraged the feudal lords to strengthen their hold. He withdrew the restrictions imposed by the coalition government on sales, transfer, mortgages, gifts, and sub-divisions of *Birta* land. Later through a notification, he assured the landlords that the abolition of the *Birta* system would not be done on a rough-and-ready basis.³⁹ Besides, in the new budget, M. P. Koirala announced a hundred per cent increase in the amount of privy purse over that allotted by the previous coalition government.⁴⁰

The above steps of the M. P. Koirala Government brought into disrepute the Nepali Congress. M. P. Koirala not only flouted the party directives to introduce and implement socio-economic reforms; on the contrary, he stressed the need to strengthen traditional institutions in the country.⁴¹ M. P. Koirala seemed to favour *status quo* in the social set-up, because this meant leaving the privileges of the traditional institutions intact. He, however,

was eager to tighten his control over the administration. He took advantage of the King's failing health and gradually assumed full control over the State apparatus.⁴³ He ignored the existence of the Public Service Commission and appointed his men in key positions.⁴³

The aggrandisement for personal power in which M. P. Koirala was engaged at the expense of democratic precepts and principles reached a high water-mark when he promulgated the Press and Publication Act, 1952. The Act empowered local authorities to punish the publishers of newspapers if they contained material that tempted:

- (a) to dissuade the government from its duties;
- (b) to foster hatred and disrespect towards royalty;
- (c) to create a feeling of disobedience and hatred towards the legally constituted government;
- (d) to instigate one community against the other; and
- (e) to pressurize any government official to act in a manner not required by his work or to make him abstain from or delay any work already undertaken by him or tempt him to relegate his work.⁴⁴

The publishers were also required to deposit a fixed security with the government which could be forfeited if any provision of the Act was violated. The concerned authorities were also vested with the power to seize and confiscate unauthorized newspapers, pamphlets and books.⁴⁵

Nepali Congress Intervenes

The policies that were being pursued by M. P. Koirala's Government seriously undermined the prestige of the Nepali Congress. The party therefore asked M. P. Koirala to take immediate steps to implement the party's programme. It decided that the Prime Minister should not simultaneously be the President of the party and that the Working Committee should not include those who occupied the ministerial posts.⁴⁶

M. P. Koirala did not react favourably to the decisions of the party. The fast approaching clash between the two sections of the party, the one in the government and the other in the organization, was, however, averted with the intervention of Jaya-

prakash Narayan, the Indian Socialist leader.⁴⁷ It was agreed that the Prime Minister should withdraw from the election of the party's presidency; the government should follow the general policy laid down at the annual conference of the party; the party should not interfere in government affairs; and, the members of the Working Committee should be selected through consultation between the Prime Minister and the President.⁴⁸

While, for the time being, intra-party differences were patched up, the Nepali Congress Government faced many serious problems in the country. The law and order problem had become precarious. In the wake of a weak central control over the district administration and lack of coordination between them the situation further deteriorated. "There was lawlessness in the Terai where dacoities and murders were taking place in broad daylight. The authority of the central government was hardly recognized by the Kirats living on the border of Tibet. The situation in Gorkha and Pokhra districts in the Central Nepal was particularly disturbing".⁴⁹

Another problem which the government faced was the prevailing discontent in Raksha Dal—a para-military wing of the party, whose number had reached 5,000. Most of these men had participated in the insurrection of 1951. "For a long period these men had waited for a final settlement regarding the regularization of their service and salary, but the fall of the coalition ministry and particularly the exclusion of B. P. Koirala, who had taken measures at personal risk to reorganize them from the ministry, dealt a hard blow to them".⁵⁰

In the prevailing circumstances, the extremist political elements started taking the advantage of the situation. Parties like the Gorkha Parishad that had been formed by the leaders of the outlawed Gorkha Dal and the Communist Party were seeking to increase their influence. The Communists were particularly active among the student community in Kathmandu, workers in the Terai Biratnagar and landless agriculture workers in the Terai.⁵¹ Meanwhile, two leaders of the separatist Kirati movement, A. P. Kharel and Ram Prasad Rai, who had been in command of the eastern wing of the Raksha Dal, were arrested and lodged with K. I. Singh in a prison. On the night of January 22-23, 1952, K. I. Singh after managing to escape, launched

an attack with the help of 1,200 Raksha Dal men and seized Singhdarbar, the treasury, the arsenal, airport and the broadcasting station and disrupted the telegraphic communications with India. He presented a five-point programme to King Tribhuvan for negotiations.⁵² But the State army, after some reverses, dislodged the rebels from all vantage points and forced K. I. Singh to flee the country with thirty-seven trusted comrades. He made his way into Tibet en route to China. On January 23, King Tribhuvan declared a state of emergency in the country and armed M. P. Koirala with emergency powers. The Rashtriya Mahasabha which had A. P. Kharel and Ram Prasad Rai as heads was banned. Similarly, the Communist Party, which had asked the people to support K.I. Singh's revolt, was also banned on January 27.⁵³ Though the government succeeded in restoring peace, this incident seriously damaged the prestige of the government. It brought to the fore the nemesis that had set in and called for an immediate operation.

But instead of closing its ranks and giving the country a stable and efficient administration, the Nepali Congress Government became more faction-ridden and less capable of dealing with the fast deteriorating political climate. The crisis within the party came to a head on July 21, 1952, when the Working Committee of the party directed the Prime Minister and his Cabinet to resign from office. Earlier M. P. Koirala had refused to accept the decision of the Working Committee directing him to reconstitute the Cabinet by including those Congress members suggested by it to make the government "more compact and efficient". He rejected the demand for his resignation on July 22, pointing out that such vital decision as withdrawal from the government could only be taken by the party's sovereign body or by a separate delegated session, and was beyond the powers of the Committee, which was a body nominated by the Congress President.⁵⁴ The three ministers in the M. P. Koirala Cabinet, who owed allegiance to B.P. Koirala, however, resigned on July 23, and issued a statement on July 26, accusing the Prime Minister of fostering "International rivalries" in Nepal; of approaching the USA for a loan without the Cabinet's knowledge; of displaying a "revivalist outlook" and pursuing a policy of "over-centralization;" of retarding the progress of

democratic institutions such as independence of judiciary and Public Service Commission; of “reversing progressive policies such as the nationalization of forestry; and of creating a situation in which people felt that they had “gained nothing by the replacement of Ranas.”⁵⁵

M. P. Koirala challenged the authority of the Working Committee to take such a decision and called upon the All-Nepal Nepali Congress Committee to resolve the dispute. The Committee, however, insisted upon him either to tender the resignation within 48 hours to the King or to face the expulsion from the active membership of the party. M.P. Koirala and his bloc in the Cabinet—Mahendra Bikram Shah, Naradmuni Thulung and Mahavir Shamsher—refused to resign, as in their opinion the action of the Committee was “unwarranted and unconstitutional”.⁵⁶ Consequently, the Working Committee expelled them from the active membership of the party for a year.

Political Confusion

According to democratic norms, M. P. Koirala should have resigned on his own after having lost the confidence of his party. And if he had preferred unashamedly to stay on in office, the King should have dissolved the ministry. None of these two alternatives materialized, thus causing considerable harm to the cause of democracy in the country. King Tribhuvan’s reluctance to dismiss M. P. Koirala was, however, understandable, since he had a personal liking for the man. Or, perhaps he might have also entertained the illusion that M. P. Koirala would still manage to win over a majority in his party. Or, the King was deliberately acting in the manner he did to “expose” the incompetence and worthlessness of the politicians and democratic institutions in order to pave the way for his own aggrandisement of power. M. P. Koirala did not take much time, however, to realize that his continuance in the office without the support of the party only brought him into popular contempt. Consequently, on August 6, 1952, he tendered his resignation which the King accepted on August 10. With it ended the rule of the Nepali Congress leaving in its trail a popular impression that the first government by a political party was inefficient, corrupt and unstable. Besides,

the rule of this government left the traditional forces even stronger than they were before. It was indeed a sad commentary on a political party which had proclaimed itself as the champion of modernization and an opponent of outmoded traditions and reactionary forces. Disintegration of modernizing forces and cross-multiplication of political parties was another distinctive feature of the Nepalese politics during this period. The Nepali Congress, the major political force, fell into many hostile groups after its Janakpur annual convention held in May 1952.⁵⁷ The diminutive Nepali Rashtriya Congress split into two parallel organizations. Owing to differences with his colleagues in the party, D. R. Regmi expelled four members of the Working Committee. Later on, he deprived them of even ordinary membership of the party. These infuriated and ousted leaders formed a parallel organization and announced the expulsion of D. R. Regmi from it and accused him for violating the constitution and misappropriating the party funds.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, another regional party—the Terai Congress—emerged in Terai area and demanded the end of step-motherly treatment the Centre, in its opinion, had been adopting towards the region.⁵⁹

The mushroom growth of splinter groups created far-reaching consequences. First, the people became apathetic towards political parties and the experiment with the democratic institutions could not thrill them any more. Secondly, there was the rise of a new breed of professional politicians whose primary goal was the achievement of high office in the government by currying favour with the royal palace, party loyalties and ideologies assumed secondary importance in such a context; personalities and influence at the royal palace became the paramount considerations.⁶⁰

Direct Rule

The exit of M. P. Koirala had posed a serious problem before King Tribhuvan in choosing the Prime Minister. If he chose B. P. Koirala for the post, the consequences appeared to be frightening for his own position. He, however, could not repose faith in any other leader also. Moreover, politics in the country presented a picture of utter confusion in which it was hard to point

out as to which political party enjoyed the confidence of the people. Therefore, while accepting the resignation of M. P. Koirala on August 14, 1952, King Tribhuvan announced his intention to administer the country himself with the assistance of an Advisory Council until a "harmonious, stable and effective" Cabinet was formed.⁶¹

Here it is relevant to analyse the composition of the King's Advisory Council. While selecting his nominees the King took care to see that they were:

- (a) non-party individuals;
- (b) well acquainted with royal protocol; and
- (c) had close association with the King and his habits.⁶²

A perusal of the powers of the Advisory Council revealed that the King's control over the administration had become almost complete.⁶³ The establishment of an Advisory Council and acquainted personal rule of the King ran counter to the provisions of the Interim Constitution. The King, therefore, promulgated special Emergency Power Act on September 9, 1952. The Act suspended the executive power of the Council of Ministers as provided under the Interim Constitution.⁶⁴ The main stipulations of the Act were as follows:

- (a) The executive power of the State shall be vested in the King who shall exercise it directly or through the subordinate officers according to the laws framed by him;
- (b) The King shall appoint Councillors or Advisers to assist him in his task;
- (c) The King shall decide the right and duties of the Councillors and Advisers from time to time;
- (d) The King shall proclaim laws and ordinances befitting the condition of the country. The laws and ordinances thus promulgated shall have the effect and the force of law of the country; and
- (e) The King shall have the right to frame other rules to implement the laws and ordinances promulgated by him.⁶⁵

Thus the King arrogated to himself enormous executive power and the original concept of King-in-Council was abrogated. The political parties were so weak and divided that they could not challenge the royal attempt to pick up levers of power one by one. Instead, there was an instance when some political groups,

like M. P. Koirala's *ad hoc* Nepali Congress even supported the imposition of direct royal takeover.⁶⁶

M. P. Koirala Again

The Councillors' regime, however, could not check the rot that had set in the administration. Economic conditions continued to deteriorate. Corruption and nepotism went on unabated.⁶⁷ The discontent among the landless peasants was mounting in the Terai region. Rumours about plots to overthrow the government and intrigues filled the air.⁶⁸ Popular disenchantment against the royal regime started growing. Those very elements which had welcomed the royal takeover now turned its critics. Even M. P. Koirala, who had now floated a new political party called *Rashtriya Prajatantrik Party* alleged that the corruption was rampant in all the departments from central secretariat down to the district administration. He urged the King to institute a popular government to arrest the pollution of administration.⁶⁹

With this the politics in Nepal took another turn. The growing unpopularity of the royal regime compelled King Tribhuvan to open negotiations with political parties for the formation of a "popular" ministry. B. P. Koirala, when approached, declined to accept the terms of the King according to which the ministers were to be appointed on individual basis and not on party basis.⁷⁰ The King's choice fell, finally, on M. P. Koirala, forgotten was the mess in which the earlier regime of M. P. Koirala had landed the country. In complete disregard to the tarnished image that this gentleman possessed, the King asked him to open negotiations with other parties to form the new ministry. The Councillors' regime was dissolved on June 15, 1953, thus paving the way for M. P. Koirala to assume Prime Ministership of the country for the second time. M. P. Koirala could count upon the support of a handful of his followers. His party consisted of disgruntled political elements and time-servers who had scant regard for democracy and well-being of the people. The King chose to ignore all these facts while entrusting M. P. Koirala with the task of forming the government. That he could manage to do so spoke volumes of the pathetic

state of affairs to which the politics of Nepal had descended. Taking shelter behind the confusion created by the political parties themselves in the country, King Tribhuvan struck the pose of an innocent man bedevilled by the partisan and sectarian attitudes of various political parties and groups. He, thus bemoaned: "It is difficult to decide which party is great and which small until general elections are held. And, as all parties claim to be the largest of all, our difficulty is aggravated rather than simplified. If the politicians had only given up their individual and partisan outlooks and taken a national outlook, this problem would have been solved and our burden, too, which we have been compelled to carry on, contrary to our taste and health, would have lightened."⁷¹

The M. P. Koirala Government, constituted as it was according to the wishes of the King in which ministers were appointed in their individual capacity, could not claim to be representative of the Prime Minister's own party, in spite of the fact that all members of the Cabinet barring one belonged to it. This government was, indeed, very much like the King's Advisory Council to which an aura of popularity had been sought to be given by calling it a party government.⁷² The Prime Minister, lacking popular support, had to depend more and more on the King for sustenance and this reduced to nought whatever popular character his government claimed. Despite the fact that doors were kept open for other parties and groups to join the Cabinet, the Prime Minister made hardly any attempt to draw them into his government. And when King Tribhuvan went for medical treatment in September 1953, he appointed a Regency Council empowering it to guide the Cabinet in its day-to-day business.⁷³ Thus M. P. Koirala's Government was reduced to the state of an instrument to carry out the wishes of the royal authority.

Although incapable of preventing the manoeuvres of the King and M. P. Koirala, other political parties felt outraged by the manner in which the King had hoisted a thoroughly unrepresentative party to power. Branding it as a government of "freebooters," the Gorkha Parishad asserted: "This government is the product of palace intrigue and is as unrepresentative and undemocratic as the Councillors' regime. It is wholly incapable of solving any problem facing the country. A splinter group of

the Nepali Congress, baptized as a party only a few weeks ago, has been, in a most objectionable manner, installed in the government to the amazement of the people of Nepal."⁷⁴

Behind this biting criticism there was, however, no genuine concern for democratic norms and practices which had obviously been bypassed by the King. The criticism emanated from their anger because it was M. P. Koirala and his rump and not they who had been elevated to power. As a matter of fact, all political parties, not excluding the Nepali Congress, were anxious to wield State power. It was B. P. Koirala—considered as the most consistent opponent of the reactionary forces—who put forward certain terms before the King to bargain for a position in the M. P. Koirala Government.⁷⁵ M. P. Koirala had known the faction-ridden state of political parties; he, therefore, rejected B. P. Koirala's terms, but offered to take three Nepali Congress representatives in the government if they agreed to an equal representation to both the Nepali Rashtriya Prajatantra Party and the group of independents. B. P. Koirala, however, did not accept the offer. Thus, despite the eagerness on the part of other political parties to join the government, M. P. Koirala failed to graft them because he was leaning too much on the King and cared very little for democracy and its prospects in the country.

Apart from his failure to win over any political party, M. P. Koirala could not resolve the problems the country was facing. Lawlessness was widespread in the Western Terai. The economic conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that the exchange rate between Nepali and Indian currency had touched the record height of 162 Nepali rupees for 100 Indian rupees. Corruption in the administration was on the increase. Favouritism in making appointments was rampant.⁷⁶ The situation became critical when agrarian unrest broke out in the Terai and the Nepali Congress launched a no-rent campaign in the affected areas. The army was called upon to maintain law and order. In Dhangari district the situation seemed to go out of control when 700 armed men under the leadership of Bhimdudd Pande let loose a reign of terror and even captured the town of Billauri.⁷⁷ The inability of the government to mop up unsocial

elements was exposed when it again requested the Indian Government to assist it in suppressing lawless elements.⁷⁸

But the worst jolt to the prestige of the ruling party came in September, 1953, when in the Kathmandu municipal elections the Rashtriya Praja Party could not capture even a single seat.⁷⁹ The dismal failure of the ruling party in the municipal elections gave an impression that the King might dismiss the Cabinet since it did not demonstrate the support of the people. The King, however, empowered M. P. Koirala to modify the Cabinet during his medical treatment abroad. The opposition parties, particularly the Nepali Congress, the Praja Parishad and the Nepali Rashtriya Congress reacted strongly against the action of the King. They formed a "Council of Action" to resist the "undemocratic government" of M. P. Koirala. Later on, these parties announced the formation of a "League of Democrats" and demanded the replacement of the Koirala Ministry by a coalition of democratic parties with a joint parliamentary board to conduct the government.⁸⁰

The Politics of Opportunism

But even at this stage, political parties did not appear to be sincerely motivated to fight against the undemocratic government of M. P. Koirala. They were more interested in toppling the government in order to step into the vacant parlours of office. The threats of a joint action against the government were pressure tactics and meant to bargain for positions in the State apparatus. Being aware of these motives behind the congregation of opposition parties masquerading as the League of Democrats, M. P. Koirala carried on separate talks with them. He succeeded in reaching an agreement with one of the constituent parties—the Nepali Congress—whereby he accepted to take four nominees of the party into his government.⁸¹ On October 16, he publicly offered four seats to the Nepali Congress in his Cabinet. The Working Committee of the Nepali Congress approved the names of B. P. Koirala, Suvarna Shamsher, S. P. Upadhyaya and R. P. Singh. Infuriated by the "unilateral decision" taken by the Nepali Congress without consulting other parties in the League, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Praja

Parishad left the League with bitterness towards the Nepali Congress. Following such an ignominious disintegration of the League, M. P. Koirala went back upon his words and announced that he would prefer to form the coalition government of five parties—the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, the Praja Parishad, independents, the Rashtriya Praja Party and the Nepali Congress.⁸² Apart from demonstrating the prevailing opportunism, self-aggrandisement and jealousies among political parties, the antics of the Nepali Congress and also of other parties exposed their inherent weakness to the glare of the people. The feudal forces took full advantage of the situation and tried to pose themselves as more concerned with the problems of the people than the political parties. Needless to say that the failure of political parties was the gain of the feudal elements.

The manifest consequences of the prevailing opportunistic condition was that the democratic institutions suffered further. This time it was the judiciary whose independence was stripped and was made subservient to the executive. The Pradhan Nyayalaya had declared the internment of B. P. Koirala and others as unconstitutional since it had violated Article 18 of the Interim Constitution. The government, however, advised the King to take away the powers of the judiciary to question any executive action. Consequently, on November 13, 1953, a Royal proclamation was issued which *inter alia* upheld the King's supreme legislative, executive and judicial authority. It declared that the powers exercised by the ministers or the government servants in accordance with the rules or regulations promulgated by the King under his authority "shall not be subject to question in any court". It took away the powers of the Pradhan Nyayalaya to issue writs under Section 30 of the Pradhan Nyayalaya Act. The Pradhan Nyayalaya also lost its position as the "highest court of justice in the country". It did not remain the court of record and also lost all the powers of such a court including the power to punish the contempt of its own authority.⁸³

The above Royal proclamation necessitated a third amendment of the Interim Constitution. Drastically it curtailed the power of judiciary, declared directive principles as guidelines of the State; upheld the right of the King to administer the country directly or through his subordinate officers and vested

the King with the power to grant pardons, reprieves, and respite or remission of punishment and to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any convict. The right of the King to appoint his Prime Minister was retained intact.

The M. P. Koirala Government thus enabled the King to arrogate to himself executive, legislative and judicial powers. The King became the supreme authority without any check on its exercise. Smarting under the concept of traditional authority and the divine right to rule, the King completely threw overboard his own pretensions about democracy and democratic institutions, when on February 13, 1954, he boasted: "The inherent sovereignty of the Monarch and his special prerogatives over the executive, legislative and judicial wings as the supreme head have been handed over to us by the tradition and custom of the country. For sometime these prerogatives of the Monarch were exercised by the Prime Ministers by virtue of the rights vested in them by our illustrious forefathers. Since those rights were ended by the Proclamation of February 18, 1951, the supreme authority in all affairs now rests in us."⁸⁴

Yet a facade of a popular government was necessary even for the King to maintain and strengthen his position, for such were the demands of the times. He suggested to his Prime Minister to broaden the base of his Cabinet which M. P. Koirala did by including such insignificant political groups as the Rashtriya Congress, Jan Congress and the Praja Parishad. Ironically, this coalition government was named as "National Government".

Other Political Parties

The autocratic tone of the King and the formation of a government by insignificant political groups started having a sobering impact on major political parties. Although belatedly, they now came to the conclusion that the King was not moved by the spirit of democracy. He, on the other hand, was strengthening the institution of monarchy at the cost of progressive forces. They also brought in the name of India which they thought was encouraging the King and M. P. Koirala to disregard democracy. They accused India of interference in Nepal's internal affairs. It may be because they could not dare criticize

the Crown openly, they used India's name as a cover to strike against the King and the "National Government". Open criticism of the King, however, was implicit in a statement issued on February 20, 1954, by the Politburo of the banned Communist Party wherein it was stated: "It is clear that this Cabinet will pave the way for the military dictatorship of the King and will meet the demands of the people with brutal repression which it had already begun by the arrest of several people at various places who voiced against the declaration quite peacefully."⁸⁵

Slowly, the opposition political parties were becoming vocal and adopting agitational methods. The Nepali Congress decided on March 2 to launch an agitation for the restoration of powers of the High Court which the Royal proclamation of January 10, 1954, had curtailed. For this purpose on March 28 the party observed the "Anti-Black Act Day" and called for general hartal, holding meetings and leading processions throughout the country. Other political parties also joined the fray. The agitators demanded the restoration of the civil liberties and the right of the judiciary. On October 18, the Nepali Congress announced a six-point programme as the basis of its agitational campaign.⁸⁶ It launched a nation-wide *satyagraha* on January 10, 1955, for the fulfilment of its demands. The party urged the observation of hartal, boycott of government offices and non-payment of taxes. The party workers picketed at the gates of Singhdarbar (Central Secretariat) and held meetings at various places asking that its demands be immediately met. Despite the fact that the Communist Party had not endorsed the charter of demands put forward by the Nepali Congress, it joined the agitation. The Crown Prince, who held the Regency in the absence of his father, King Tribhuvan, who had been away for medical treatment, communicated to the Nepali Congress that he would take suitable steps to meet the demands since they were reasonable.⁸⁷ The Nepali Congress soon gave up the agitation. This showed that the party was still not prepared to accept the fact that the institution of monarchy was the main pillar of the traditional forces in the country, and as such the words of the Crown Prince should not be so easily accepted. The party was so overwhelmed by the Crown Prince's message that it called it "the Magna Carta

of Nepalese history".⁸⁸ A significant aspect of the Crown Prince's message was that there was no reference to the "National Government" whose existence the Prince had completely ignored. This was a further proof of the fact that the real power rested with the monarch, and that the "National Government" was simply a puppet in his hands.

Meanwhile, a crisis was brewing in the Cabinet. Despite its subservient role the Cabinet had the opportunity at least to provide an efficient administration. But composed as it was of various political groupings with little or no support among the people, the Cabinet ministers were more busy in self-aggrandisement in a competitive spirit. Thus, the ministers belonging to other parties resented M. P. Koirala's dominant position in the administration. To undo this, T. P. Acharya, the Home Minister, demanded a complete overhauling of the administration. He criticized the Prime Minister for establishing an over-centralized administrative set-up and complained that the department of General Administration under the Prime Minister was interfering in the working of other departments.⁸⁹ Frustrated by the Prime Minister's refusal to change his ways, T. P. Acharya issued an order to his department staff requiring them to obtain his permission if they wished to see the Prime Minister on official business. He contended that such an order was necessary as the Prime Minister had been tampering with the working of his department.⁹⁰ The situation owing to continuous wranglings in the Cabinet came to such a pass that the Prime Minister threatened to quit the office if his colleagues did not extend to him full support and cooperation.⁹¹ His threat did not bring any change, however, in his colleagues' attitude. M. P. Koirala's position was also being challenged by his own party. Balchand Sharma, a member of the Working Committee of the Rashtriya Praja Party, criticized M. P. Koirala for being ineffective in bringing about any relief to the trouble-ridden country. M. P. Koirala retaliated by expelling Balchand Sharma from the Committee and reconstituting a new one.⁹² T. P. Acharya, after securing an approval of the Regency Council and over the head of the Prime Minister dismissed a Cabinet Secretary—appointee of M. P. Koirala. The Prime Minister retaliated by relieving T. P. Acharya of his portfolio. The hostile atmosphere in the

Cabinet, the defeat of the government in the Advisory Assembly many times, lack of sympathy from Regency Council and the deteriorating condition of the administration, compelled M. P. Koirala ultimately to tender the resignation of his government on January 31, 1955.

The ailing King Tribhuvan on February 18, 1955, issued a proclamation dissolving the Regency Council and vesting all Royal powers in the Crown Prince. On March 2, Crown Prince Mahendra accepted the resignation of the government. King Tribhuvan died on March 13, 1955 and with it a chapter of experiment with the democratic institutions ended in Nepal.

The chapter, however, left a trail of woe and despair as far as the common man was concerned. The hope and expectations that the new order, which had replaced the autocratic regime of the Ranas, would bring stability and prosperity to the country were dashed to the ground. In the far and wide areas of the land, administration had, for all practical purposes, broken down. The Bada Hakims preferred to stay in Kathmandu to promote their interests overlooking the administration of districts. Corruption in all walks of life had touched unprecedented heights.⁹³ The economic condition in the country had so much deteriorated that the exchange rate which used to be Rs. 105 (Nepalese) for Rs. 100 (Indian) at the time of the overthrow of the Rana regime dropped to Rs. 180 (Nepalese) for Rs. 100 (Indian).⁹⁴ Besides, no serious attempt was made to solve the age-old land problem. The feudal lords were thriving while the landless peasants continued to suffer. Forced labour remained in practice. The rate of interests went as high as 50 per cent.⁹⁵

In such a situation, the Crown Prince Mahendra stepped into the shoes of his father. He soon dispensed with the trappings of democratic pretensions which characterized the behaviour of his father, and embarked upon the course of unrestricted personal rule. Political parties and other articulate sections of the society standing for democracy and modernization, were themselves responsible for this deterioration in the Nepalese political situation. They now faced an uphill task to retrieve the ground that they had already lost to the traditional forces.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ *Gorkhapatra*, Fagun 8, 2007.

² On the next day of the announcement of the Delhi Agreement, K. I. Singh declared that the freedom fighters would not surrender until complete democratic government was established. He even alleged that by aligning with the feudal lords the Nepali Congress had strengthened despotic rule in Nepal. Srivastava, K. P., *Nepal-Ki-Kahani*, Delhi, 1955, p. 168. D. R. Regmi, the President of the Rashtriya Nepali Congress, observed that “the interim arrangement was permitted to stand with a full knowledge of the consequences likely to follow it, for the failures were writ large on its very face as democratic issue had been totally ignored. Regmi, D. R., *Whither Nepal?* Kathmandu, 1952, p. 173.

K. P. Srivastava, the President of the rebel government, Western Nepal, was particularly sore about the manner in which the Delhi Agreement had been arrived at. He had suggested that there should be a conference of all leaders of the movement, regardless of their party affiliation, to discuss the proposals before accepting them. Srivastava, *n* 2, p. 167.

³ K.I. Singh, for instance, declined to surrender arms and to help in the restoration of peace in the conflict-torn country. Instead, with his armed band that exceeded 300 in number, he let the terror loose in the Western Terai.

He reportedly extracted contributions from the shopkeepers, seized all available transport and committed all sort of known arson. See Rose, Saul (ed) *Politics in Southern Asia*, London, 1963, p. 86.

The Communist Party was equally bitter about the Delhi Agreement and regarded it a “clique of reactionary feudal forces” assisted by “imperialist India” through its “Nepali Congress instrument”.

⁴ These other political parties were:

(a) *Praja Parishad*—which was banned and its main leaders were in prison and yet it had influence over a powerful section of Kathmandu valley;

(b) *The Praja Panchayat*—which came into existence following the refusal by Mohan Shamsheer to implement the constitutional reforms of 1948 introduced by his predecessor Padma Shamsheer. Its influence was limited only to the Kathmandu valley;

(c) *The Communist Party of Nepal*—which had broken away from the Nepali National Congress following the merger of the latter with the Prajatantrik Party of the dissident Ranas. The Communists were also opposed to the Nepali Congress's policy of collaboration with the feudal lords. They were active particularly in Terai and Kathmandu valley; and

(d) *The Nepali National Congress*, headed by D. R. Regmi, had negligible influence in the kingdom.

⁵ Srivastava, *n* 2, p. 169.

⁶ Regmi, *n* 2, p. 114.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp., 172-73.

⁸ Joshi, B. L., and Rose, Leo E., *Democratic Innovation in Nepal*, Berkeley, 1966, p. 125.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 172-73.

¹⁰ Regmi., *n* 2.

¹¹ Such political associations ranged from national parties like the Nepali Congress, Rashtriya Congress and Praja Parishad to small and shortlived groups like *Janadhikar Suraksha Samiti*, *Janvadi Prajatantrik Sangh*, *Seva Samiti*, *Shanti Raksha Swayam Sevak Sangh* and *Paropkar*.

¹² The resolution was passed by the Nepali Congress at its convention held at Bargania (Bihar) in 1950.

¹³ Author's interview with various political leaders and administrators.

¹⁴ Such "A" class Ranas included Kaisher Shamsheer, who was married to King Tribhuvan's sister, and Hari Shamsheer whose both the daughters were married to Prince Mahendra. Both of them, it is notable, were made Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Nepal Army subsequently.

¹⁵ Chatterji, Bhola, *A Study of Recent Nepalese Politics*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 150.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 151.

¹⁸ Other reasons necessitating the enactment of the Act were that till then the administration was carried on in accordance with the wishes of the Rana Prime Minister; hence there was no principle on which the new administration

could work; and with the re-emergence of the King as the real executive head of the State his position in relation to the Prime Minister and other arms of the government needed to be defined in clear terms.

¹⁹ For details, see *Nepal Gazette*, Bhadon 4, 2008 vs. pp. 1-4.

²⁰ *Art. 21.* ²¹ *Art. 21 (b).*

²² There were, however, two restrictions imposed on the executive power of the King: (a) an action taken by the King was understood to be done on the advice of the Council of Ministers (Art. 21-i); and (b) The Pradhan Nyayalaya was declared the "highest Court of Justice in the country" (Art. 30-i).

²³ Author's interviews with political leaders.

²⁴ Devkota, G.B., *Nepal Ko Rajnitik Darpan*, Benaras, 1959, p. 88.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8. ²⁶ Gupta, A., *Politics in Nepal*, Bombay, 1964, p. 31.

²⁷ The joint operation against K. I. Singh and his followers started on April 11, 1951. Within a week about 358 rebels including K. I. Singh were arrested and lodged in the Bhairwa jail. On July 10, K. I. Singh, however, made an escape. On August 10, he was again arrested at Ghorepatan and interned at Singhdarbar in Kathmandu.

²⁸ Srivastava, *n*, 2, p. 173. ²⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, 10 Chaitra, 2007

³⁰ Chatterji, *n* 15, p. 152. ³¹ Srivastava, *n* 2, p. 173.

³² Cf. Bhola Chatterji's statement: "The Nepali Congress sank deeper into the morass of its politics of drift and dissolution. It failed to act when action was needed most. Instead what it did was to shift aimlessly from one expediency to another, which in turn only helped to add teeth to the people's increasing resentment against it." *n* 15, p. 152.

³³ *The Hindustan Times*, November 11, 1951. ³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Impression based on the interviews with political leaders closely associated with the working of government during the period.

³⁶ *Nepal Gazette*, Marg 4, 2008. ³⁷ Joshi and Rose, *n* 8, p. 95.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8. ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁴¹ The attitude of M. P. Koirala towards the institution of monarchy and party's direction, was summed up by the party's Working Committee at its sixth convention held at Birganj as: "On the role of the King, his (M. P. Koirala's)

stand was that he was not only a reigning monarch but also a ruling one. The party's line, as opposed to his, was that democracy was a habit whenever King had to learn... On the question of reforms, he (M. P. Koirala) held as against the party... that major reforms were the (translated) responsibility of the future." Manifesto adopted at the Sixth National Convention of Nepali Congress, Birganj, 1951, p. 7.

⁴² "Since King Tribhuvan was temperamentally and physically incapable of acting the role of an autocrat, much of the newly revived royal authority passed on to M. P. Koirala." Joshi and Rose, *n* 8, p. 170.

⁴³ M. P. Koirala's favouritism in the administration was commented upon by a notable paper as: "He began to fill civil posts by his yes-men. By a lame excuse, he extended a period of six months for making appointments without consulting the Public Service Commission. Within this span he allowed some 800 of his men to enter in the Civil Service. The posts up to Subba were filled by the orders of the Prime Minister." *Nepal Pukar*, Kathmandu, October 3, 1956 (Translated from Gorkhali).

⁴⁴ Article 5 (c) and (d) of *Press and Publication Act*. 1952.

⁴⁵ For details see *Nepal Gazette*, Paush 1, 2009 *vs.*

⁴⁶ See, *Nepali Congress ra Sarkar*, Birganj, 1952.

⁴⁷ *The Statesman*, August 6, 1952. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Jain, G.L., *India Meets China in Nepal*, Bombay, 1959. p. 34.

⁵⁰ Gupta, A., *n* 26, p. 68. ⁵¹ Jain, *n* 49, p. 35.

⁵² The five-point programme submitted by K. I. Singh was: the establishment of an all-party representative government; convening a conference of all political parties to outline a programme of action for the government; preparation of a five-year development plan with the cooperation of all political parties; establishment of friendly and equal relations with all neighbouring countries; and performance of all actions peacefully. Devkota, *n* 24, p. 63.

⁵³ *Nepal Gezette*, Baisakh 2, 2009 *vs.* ⁵⁴ Jain, *n* 49, p. 38.

⁵⁵ M. P. Koirala, however, denied these charges by stating that he had followed the foreign policy as it was approved by the party at its Janakpur session in May, 1952. He also denied that he had approached the USA for a loan, although

he admitted that he had discussed an American suggestion for the extension of "point-Four" aid programme to Nepal with the American Ambassador, but, he asserted, he did so in the presence of a majority of the Cabinet including those members who had resigned. He admitted the "over-centralization" of the administration but added he did so to stop the irregularities that had crept in various ministries. *The Statesman*, August 6, 1952.

⁵⁶ For details see *The Nepali Congress and the Prime Minister*, Kathmandu, 1952, p. 89.

⁵⁷ The convention witnessed the falling apart of various factions of the party. A draft constitution, submitted by B. K. Misra's, group, which demanded the postponement of convention for six months, was not only rejected but B. K. Misra himself was expelled from the party by 514 to 400 votes. Likewise, the conference rejected a manifesto submitted by radical socialist group led by Balchand which had demanded radical reforms in land and defence system of the country. On the rejection of its proposal this group also severed its ties with the party.

For details see *Nepali Congress ko Nirmita Loktantrik Samajvadi Ghosanapatra*, Kathmandu, 1952, pp. 13-4.

⁵⁸ Joshi and Rose, *n* 8 p. 136. ⁵⁹ Srivastava, *n* 2, p. 217.

⁶⁰ Joshi and Rose, *n* 8, p. 36.

⁶¹ *Gorkhapatra*, August 15, 1952.

⁶² For details see Appendix No. 1.

⁶³ It was provided in the Act that the Councillors were to hold office during the pleasure of the King and were responsible to him directly and individually. The Councillors were to attend their departments at Singhdarbar till noon and then assemble *en bloc* at Narayanhetti darbar to a meeting under the chairmanship of the King. Moreover, all important decisions were to be put before such meetings for the approval of the King. The decision taken by the Council in the absence of the King could not, however, be executed till approved by the King. A report of the implementation of the decision was to be submitted to the King and to the Advisory Council. The Secretaries were to submit all matters that were earlier submitted to the Council of

Ministers, policy matters and all other matters that involved important decisions to the King and to the Advisory Council regularly. The reorganization of various departments and the programme to be launched by them was to be decided by the King. For details see, *Nepal Gazette*, Bhadra 10, 2009, VS.

⁶⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, September 10, 1952.

⁶⁵ For details see, *Nepal Gazette*, Bhadra 24, 2009, V.S.

⁶⁶ Devkota, *n* 24, p. 202.

⁶⁷ *Nepal Pukar*, October 3, 1956.

⁶⁸ *The Statesman*, March 28, 1953.

⁶⁹ Joshi and Rose, *n* 8, p. 107.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁷¹ *Gorkhapatra*, June 17, 1953.

⁷² Though with the exception of Mahavir Shamsheer all members of the Cabinet belonged to the newly formed Rashtriya Prajatantric Party, the King had made it a rule that the ministers would serve in their individual capacity. *Gorkhapatra*, June 15, 1953. ⁷³ *Gorkhapatra*, June 15, 1953.

⁷⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, June 22, 1953.

⁷⁵ The terms of the Nepali Congress were:

(a) the party be allotted the same number of seats in the Cabinet as the Rashtriya Prajatantric Party;

(b) the party's programme be accepted by the government; and

(c) the government should be dissolved on the resignation of any one group. Devkota, *n* 24, p. 218.

⁷⁶ *Nepal Pukar*, October 3, 1956. ⁷⁷ Jain, *n* 49, p. 39.

⁷⁸ *The Hindustan Times*, August 24, 1953.

⁷⁹ Chatterji, *n* 15, pp. 154-5.

⁸⁰ For details of the manifesto of the League of Democrats, see *The Hindu*, September 25, 1953.

⁸¹ *The Statesman*, October 18, 1953.

⁸² Gupta, *n* 26, p. 82.

⁸³ *The Hindu*, February 14, 1954.

⁸⁴ *Nepal Gazette*, Magh 25, 2011, V.S.

⁸⁵ *Resolution of the Politbureau of the Nepal Communist Party*, issued on February 20, 1954. Nepal Communist Party Central Office, Kathmandu, 1954.

⁸⁶ The points included: (a) restoration of law and order; (b) protection of civil liberties and the formation of an independent

judiciary: (c) holding of general elections; (d) disbursement of rice and other foodgrains at cheap rate; (e) stabilization of currency; and (f) preservation of national territorial integrity. *Nepal Pukar*, January 10, 1955.

⁸⁷ *The Hindustan Times*, January 13, 1955.

⁸⁸ *Nepal Pukar*, January 17, 1955.

⁸⁹ *The Statesman*, August 5, 1954.

⁹⁰ *The Times of India*, August 20, 1954.

⁹¹ *The Hindusthan Standard*, September 29, 1954.

⁹² Joshi and Rose, *n* 8, p. 146.

⁹³ *cf.* G.L. Jain's observation: "Corruption and nepotism had acquired a magnitude never known before in the history of Nepal. Corruption was open and everyone in the government was believed to be involved in one racket or other. In any case, the reputation of no government servant up to the Prime Minister was unsullied. The people had lost faith in the administration. There was unrestricted traffic in arms. The people were afraid to be out at night even in Kathmandu." *n* 49, p. 41. ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ The situation of the whole period under review was summed up by two politicians in their letter to Prime Minister M. P. Koirala that stated: "The independence of the judiciary is lost. All over the country anarchy, famine, corruption, bribery, unemployment and inflation are rampant. The peasants are exploited more than ever, facilities for communication irregular, education and public health are almost non-existent. The lawful right of students, labour, women and merchants have been ruthlessly suppressed. Reactionary elements are receiving full encouragement. . . . Big landlords and capitalists are having field day in exploiting people and the source of production." Devkota, *n* 24, pp. 273-4.

CHAPTER 3

Monarchy Versus People: 1955-59

PRINCE MAHENDRA, who succeeded King Tribhuvan as the head of State following the latter's death, made it clear from the very beginning that he meant business and had no intention to soft-pedal with the fast deteriorating politico-economic situation in the country. Having accepted the resignation of the "National Government" headed by M. P. Koirala on March 2, 1955, the Prince embarked upon the task of cleaning the "mess" which, Nepal has got into as a result of four years' experiment with the "democratic system and institutions". At the very first meeting after assuming effective reins of government he, with an unconcealed contempt for democracy, observed: "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 in its infancy, we have seen such qualities as selfishness, greed and jealousy which are not found in an infant. If we say it has matured, we do not see it flourishing anywhere, and, I presume, this is not hidden from anyone in the country."¹

It was, therefore, not surprising that King Mahendra did not seek the cooperation of political parties, which, however, were waiting expectantly for such a move on his part. Completely ignoring their existence, he announced on April 14 the formation of a Council of Royal Advisers, consisting of five members who had been associated with the old Rana order, to assist him in the discharge of his administrative functions.² Thus he also demonstrated his dislike for the politicians. Addressing a political conference on May 8 he commented: "We have had all types of governments in that period (1951-54)—Cabinets or one party rule, coalitions and councillors' regime. The progress that the country made is

well known to you. The Cabinets generally got into stride within three months of their appointment. The next three months they spent in mutual bickering and in the last three months of their existence they collapsed because of these bickerings.”³

King Mahendra entertained the belief that the people were tired of the wranglings of political parties and what they were looking for, he thought was an efficient administration and economic development. He, therefore, ignored the political parties and took a number of steps to tone up the administration.⁴ To placate the feelings of the people and to charm them about his concern for their well-being, he announced a number of reforms in the judicial and the socio-economic set-up of the country. Thus, he restored the 1951 High Court Act which his father had abrogated in February 1954, and announced that steps would be taken to separate the judiciary from the executive. He enacted the Land Reforms Act, prohibiting the landlords from realizing more than 50 per cent of their share. The money-lenders, under the new Act, could not charge interest of more than 10 per cent. The abolition of forced labour and imposition of graduated tax on land income of Rs. 3,000 and more was also announced. The King prepared a development plan for the nation involving a capital outlay of Rs. 21 crores. He also attempted to stabilize the Nepali currency by enacting a State Bank Act which sought to establish the State Bank of Nepal to facilitate the circulation of Nepali currency in all parts of the kingdom, to fix rates of exchange, to float agricultural and other loans for the development of projects and to provide foreign exchange to business men.⁵

Besides adopting the above reformatory measures, King Mahendra also followed a policy of keeping direct contact with the people, ignoring political parties completely. He undertook extensive tours of the country, not leaving even those hostile terrains where no former reigning monarch had ever dared to go and personally listened to the problems of the people taking into confidence the chiefs of various areas and acquainting them with the reforms he had introduced to redress their problems.⁶

While King Mahendra was vigorously engaged in the task of building up his own image and personality in order to emerge as the champion of the common man, the political parties and other

elements representing anti-feudal interests were growingly becoming chary of the fact that their existence was so completely being undermined.⁷ Not only this; King Mahendra seemed to be determined to crush any opposition to his personal rule and to this end he equipped Bada Hakims, Magistrates and Commissioners with the emergency powers to arrest, detain, extern or intern any person on grounds of internal security.⁸ Moreover, he encouraged and helped those sections which he thought would rally behind the monarchy for the preservation of its interests. His chief advisers belonged to the old Rana order who had a belief in the feudal set-up. They could serve him as willing instruments in his hands for the implementation of his programmes.⁹ In the wake of the administrative reforms at the district level, which he had introduced, 16 Magistrates were dismissed whose "replacements were mostly Ranas and the Shahs—drawn from the same old-line groups as were the persons whom the King had selected for his Council of Advisers".¹⁰ Likewise in the Central Secretariat he placed those whom he liked in key positions.¹¹ All those reforms which in any way hit the interests of the landlords and money-lenders remained on paper. King Mahendra, thus, attempted to consolidate his position by developing around him a class of vested interests which had a stake in the institution of monarchy and which were mortally afraid of radical political parties representing the forces of modernization.

King Mahendra, however, seemed to have over-played his cards in assuming that the people were completely disillusioned with the political parties and the democratic institutions. While it was true that there was a popular disgust at the opportunistic and unprincipled politics indulged in by almost all political parties, it was indeed erroneous to conclude that the people longed for a dictatorship. And when it became evident that the King was rearing under his protection those very forces—the feudal lords and the reactionaries, which had exploited the people for a century and had let loose a reign of terror before the revolution—the people could not remain content any more with empty promises. The minimum that they wanted was an end to their exploitation at the hands of the vested interests and an efficient and honest administration. While the King appeared to encourage the exploiting classes, the administration, despite claims to

the contrary, became more corrupt and inefficient.¹² There was scarcity of food in many parts of the country, and the government's failure to provide the people with even the bare necessities of life created a critical situation. Thousands of semi-starved miserable people started pouring into the capital from the country-side,¹³ giving a testimony to the fact that the highly personalized rule of the King, instead of extricating the people from the socio-economic and political mess created by the unprincipled functioning of democracy, had landed them into the quagmire of utter exploitation, misery and starvation. The organized political forces which were already becoming restive were once again being looked upon as the saviours. Political parties gained courage and confidence to challenge the dictatorial rule of the King and as a first step they endeavoured to close their ranks in order to put up a united fight to win back the democratic right of the people.

For the first time since the revolution of 1950, all major political parties, with the exception of the Gorkha Parishad, directed their bitter criticism against the "undemocratic and reactionary" policies pursued by the new King. M. P. Koirala, President of the Rashtriya Praja Party, cautioned the people that the old order was being revived and warned that Nepali politics had reached a crossroad. T. P. Acharya, leader of the Praja Parishad, alleged that the Royal rule was against the wishes of the late King Tribhuvan and was opposed to democratic norms.¹⁴ Criticizing vehemently the direct rule of the King, B. P. Koirala, the President of the Nepali Congress, observed: "The direct rule of the Crown is undemocratic, reactionary and shameful. It will ensue serious consequences. . . . The King must be responsible for his actions. I am obliged to conclude that the autocracy (of the King) has created deep hatred (against the Crown). . . . What people want is a constitutional monarchy and not autocracy."¹⁵

Three political parties, *viz.*, the Nepali Congress, Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Praja Parishad, in a joint statement warned the King of the consequences if he did not give up his direct rule over the administration of the country. They said: "... the direct rule is against democracy and antithetic to progressivism. . . . It is in the interest of the Kingship that the King restrain from indulging in day-to-day business of the government."¹⁶

Demands for Popular Government

King Mahendra, however, continued to delude himself with the impression that the people, by and large, still supported his personal supervision of the administrative affairs and that it were the political parties alone which were raising a hue and cry against him, deprived as they were of the plums of the office. He, therefore, persisted in his policy of disregarding their claims of being the exclusive representatives of the people. He brought a number of professional, social and religious organizations and associations at par with the political parties and announced that he would call a conference of all of them to consider the political situation in the country on May 8, 1955. He called this conference in which 129 clubs and associations ranging from the Halwais (Sweet-makers), Dhobis (Washermen) and Naees (Barbers) unions to purely political organizations participated. Four leading political parties—the Nepali Congress, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, the Praja Parishad and the Rashtriya Praja Party—however, boycotted the conference¹⁷ and charged that the King was not genuinely interested in finding out a solution of the political crisis besetting the country and that a conference of barbers and butchers could not provide an answer to the instability that had been plaguing the political atmosphere. King Mahendra, however, ridiculed the superior attitude of political parties exhibited by their unwillingness to participate on equal footing with other social and religious associations. He poured scorn on political parties and accused them of being responsible for “making a laughing stock of the country”. He declared that he would not allow politicians to ruin the country in the name of democracy.¹⁸ In spite of the fact that major political parties were absent and despite the attempts King Mahendra made to ostracize them, the conference did not behave, however, entirely to his likings. Though composed of the so-called “independents” whose only “common platform was their detestation of political parties and their leaders,”¹⁹ the conference, in the words of the King himself, demanded: (1) the direct rule of the King should be terminated; (2) the Advisory Assembly be dissolved; (3) the democratic system should be followed; and (4) the general elections should be held as early as possible.²⁰

The King could ignore these demands only at the expense of his own prestige and was, therefore, left with no alternative but to accept the recommendations of the conference. He, however, remarked that caution and patience were required to promote the growth of true democracy and it would take some time to think over and implement the recommendations in the best possible manner. He also announced that general elections would be held on the full moon day of October 1957.²¹ Thus, the conference, despite the hostile attitude adopted by the political parties towards it, did prove to be a turning point in the history of political development of Nepal. As it were, the tide of popular opinion was again swinging towards democracy and democratic institutions. Political parties, therefore, could no longer be ignored by the King.

The King entered into negotiations with the political parties ostensibly to make interim arrangements to run the government pending general elections. He placed in August 1955, a seven-point questionnaire before the leaders of the major political parties seeking their opinion regarding the nature and scope of their participation in the government.²² Three political parties—the Nepali Congress, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Praja Parishad—showing a sense of unity, submitted a joint memorandum to the King on August 31, to the effect that singly or collectively they might be allowed to form the government on the basis of a minimum programme.²³

Sensing that the political parties were over-eager to share power, King Mahendra decided not to play his cards all at once, but to follow the strategy of gradual exposition of his tactics. The first step which he took was the most tempting wherein he offered to take two representatives from each contracting parties and two to four independent candidates into the proposed Cabinet. The political parties promptly accepted the Royal offer. The King then suggested that he himself should preside over the meetings of the Cabinet and serve as Prime Minister of the government. This too was accepted by the political parties. The contracting political parties also drew up a joint minimum programme at the behest of the King to serve as the basis of the new government. At this stage, the King played his last card and asked the political parties to leave the choice of their nominees

for inclusion in the government to him. He sent a panel of three members of the respective Working Committees of political parties to them, which virtually excluded all top leaders, and asked them to pick up two names from this panel.²⁴ This was too much for the political parties to swallow. They now realized that the King indeed played a trick on them. He appeared interested only in involving the political parties in fruitless negotiations in order to give an impression of showing deference to the wishes of his people. The political parties saw through the game of the King, and asserted that the Prime Minister should hail from a political party rather than from the Royal palace.

The King found himself in a dilemma. While on the one hand he could not acquiesce in the demands of the political parties, for that would have undermined his personal rule, on the other he found it impossible to ignore the popular clamour for a democratic system of government. It was necessary for him to give at least a facade of democracy to satisfy his people and for this he needed a political party which would agree to play chores to him. He knew it was not difficult in Nepal to find such a sycophant political group and indeed he found one in the Praja Parishad whose leader T. P. Acharya agreed to form the government under the Royal hegemony. The King, thus, announced on January 27, 1956, the formation of a Cabinet under T. P. Acharya, to the great annoyance and disgust of other major political parties and the people as a whole.

The formation of Praja Parishad government had wide repercussions. First, it blocked the entry of the United Front of major political parties, which was dominated by the Nepali Congress, to power. Secondly, it wrecked the polarization of the party system, and it further confirmed that the King was not going to hand over the reins of power to that party which might assert itself against the monarchy.

King Mahendra emerged out of the political crisis preceding the formation of the T. P. Acharya Cabinet as a shrewd politician and out-manoeuvred the political parties as well as the people. While ostensibly he had handed over the power to a government manned by a political party, in reality, he continued to exercise uninhibited control over its functioning. His ways were subtle. He had ensured his supreme position by

entrusting power to a weak, segmented and a faction-ridden political group with little following, which had no confidence in its own ability to run the administration. Consequently, it was completely dependent upon the King and his advice. The King had seen to it that the ministers in the Cabinet could not form a harmonious group imbued with the team-spirit to work. He had made the choice of ministers in such a way that they came from the warring factions of the party and were always at loggerheads with each other.²⁵ The survival of the Cabinet thus hanged precariously in the balance at whose fulcrum was the King to manage. King Mahendra also nominated to the Cabinet his own men who were assigned key portfolios, *viz.*, Defence, Finance and Parliamentary Affairs,²⁶ which reduced the Praja Parishad government to the status of a mere appendage of the King.

T. P. Acharya, as an individual, was known for his radical views despite the fact that he and his party both had a soft corner for the institution of monarchy. And since the people in general did not comprehend, in the beginning, the subtle manner in which the King was now controlling the levers of real power, they started expecting radical changes in the social-economic and political situation of the country. Their expectations seemed to be at the verge of realization when T. P. Acharya, after becoming the Prime Minister, declared on January 30, 1955, that Nepal would pursue "equal friendship with all the countries" and would not maintain "special relations" with any country. He also indicated that Nepal would accept financial assistance from any quarters if it was "without string".²⁷ This was a new and bold step in the field of foreign relations of a country that had maintained a century-old isolation and had later on maintained "special relations" with India. The Prime Minister also promised to usher in a "new social order" by "annihilating feudalistic institutions" and bringing industrialization to the country.²⁸ Accordingly, the government concluded a treaty on Tibet with China on September 20, 1956, and an aid agreement on October 7. It also established diplomatic relations with the USSR, Japan, Egypt and Ceylon. With a view to reforming the administration a Reorganization Commission under the Prime Minister's chairmanship was established.²⁹ The Supreme Court Act, 1956, was enacted whereby the High Court

was transformed into the Supreme Court of Nepal.³⁰ In the field of economic development, Acharya's government prepared a Draft Five Year Plan with an outlay of Rs. 35 crores.³¹ Finally, the government lifted the four-year-old ban on the Communist Party. The Communist Party gave an assurance that it would confine its activities within the constitutional framework.³²

The above measures, if implemented, would certainly have provided the much needed relief to the people and consolidated T. P. Acharya's position as Prime Minister. But while he could make promises, their realization appeared to be beyond his and his government's competence. The administration, instead of becoming efficient and honest, deteriorated more and more. The Prime Minister's attempt to screen the services of all gazetted and non-gazetted officers proved abortive since "nothing was done subsequently to apply the results of the screening, and officers who had failed were often retained and even promoted, while others who had passed were dismissed from service for essentially political reasons."³³ The Public Service Commission remained largely a defunct institution.³⁴

Similarly, despite the establishment of a Supreme Court the control of the monarch over the judiciary did not wane in any way. Article 24 of the Supreme Court Act, 1956, extended the Royal authority over the courts by upholding that the King could, in his discretion, enlarge or reduce its scope of process and provisions. Through the same Article the Supreme Court was forbidden to abrogate or limit or disregard the powers of the Crown. Likewise, the lifting of the ban on the Communist Party did not mean that the Acharya Government was adopting a liberal policy towards political parties or that it was motivated by genuine concern for civil and political liberties. T. P. Acharya had, instead, lifted the ban since he "entertained the hope that the Communists, with whom he had worked at one time, would give him support to meet the challenge of his opponents especially that of the Nepali Congress".³⁵

Apart from the failure of the Acharya Government to implement the promised socio-economic and administrative reforms, what gave the people a rude shock was the Acharya's open avowal of the institution of monarchy. Addressing a public meeting at Birganj, he declared that he would not tolerate any

attack aimed at lowering the status of the monarchy in Nepal.³⁶ To the frequent demands of the political parties for holding general elections for the supreme constituent assembly, the Prime Minister's reply was: "It has not been decided whether the forthcoming elections would be for the constituent assembly or for a parliament. This question directly deals with the power and position of the King in the country . . . the formation either of constituent assembly or parliament involves the position of the supreme head of the State—the King . . . the very existence of the country is at stake."³⁷

T. P. Acharya was in fact willing to legitimize the existing political set-up in the country by holding elections to the so-called parliament operating within a constitution granted by the monarch. He argued that there could not be two sovereigns in the country.³⁸ He was merely repeating the royalist argument when he declared that the people were not fit for the full-fledged democracy and the welfare of the people lies in the constitution granted by the King.³⁹

The traditional elements supporting the institution of monarchy got a new lease of life under Acharya's government. Orthodox religious associations as the Karmavir Mahamandal, religious and ethical organization like Kirati League and the reactionary feudal class became so bold as to demand the scrapping of election provision from the Interim Constitution and the revival of the ancient Hindu monarchical system in the country. They claimed that Western democracy, being alien to the Nepalese culture and tradition, had failed completely and, so had the political parties in managing the affairs of the State.⁴⁰ All leading political parties, however, bitterly opposed the Acharya's pronouncements. B. P. Koirala, the President of the Nepali Congress, even filed a case against the Acharya for making a public statement contrary to the provisions of the Interim Constitution.⁴¹

The stand of the Praja Parishad with regard to the general elections and the institution of monarchy did considerable damage to the prestige of the Praja Parishad. Intra-party wranglings further complicated the situation. The party was not unanimous about the government's policy towards China. One faction was opposed to the views of the Prime Minister regarding the holding of general elections and resented his dependence

on the independent members of the Cabinet who had been nominated by the King. Moreover, the party's programme was being ignored by the ministry under the impact and because of the obstructing attitude of the nominated members. The Working Committee of the party, taking cognizance of this state of affairs directed the Prime Minister in February 1957 to take steps for the implementation of his party's programme.⁴² When T. P. Acharya attempted to implement the party's programme, differences between him and the nominated members cropped up. The heterogeneity of the Cabinet was not conducive to the carrying out of the party's programme, and this was realized by the Prime Minister who expressed a desire to reconstitute the Cabinet to make it more homogeneous.⁴³ The King, instead of granting the Prime Minister's wishes, expanded the Cabinet by appointing his brother-in-law, Arun Shamsher, and the former Commander-in-Chief, Kiran Shamsher, as ministers. The Praja Parishad's Working Committee felt outraged by this action of the King. It lamented: "We want to know why such a step (the extension of the Cabinet by including nominated members) has been taken. We do not want to have reactionaries riding gay over the sweat and blood of the martyrs."⁴⁴

But the King did not pay heed to these protestations. The Prime Minister found himself utterly helpless in the face of the King's nominees in the Cabinet whom he could not afford to ignore. In such a situation, on July 5, 1957, he requested the King either to allow him "to form a homogeneous Cabinet" or to accept his resignation.⁴⁵ The King accepted the resignation on July 14 but claimed that he was doing so in view of the government's "inability to hold the general elections" in time and its "inability to shoulder the responsibility of the government further".⁴⁶ This obviously was not the reason which had led T. P. Acharya to tender his resignation. He had resigned because the King had not permitted him to reconstitute the Cabinet. The King was putting words into his mouth, and this was too much to swallow even for a person like T. P. Acharya, who had always shown deference to the monarch. His party, therefore, refuted the King's version of the circumstances leading to the government's resignation. The King's action, according to it, came as a "great surprise and a rude shock to all lovers of democracy".⁴⁷

K. I. Singh as Prime Minister

With the fall of T. P. Acharya's Cabinet, hopes were again entertained in political circles that the King now would invite the Nepali Congress to form the government. These hopes were, however, belied when the King invited K. I. Singh, the President of the United Democratic Party, on July 14, 1957, to open negotiations with other parties to form a coalition government. The vesting of power on this mysterious political leader—K. I. Singh—took the people and other political parties by surprise. There was a lurking suspicion in political circles that the King had permitted K. I. Singh to come back to Nepal from China because he wanted to entrust him with the task of forming a political party absolutely loyal to the monarch.⁴⁸ This suspicion appeared to be confirmed now that the King had appointed K. I. Singh as the Prime Minister. The new Premier, so as to justify the trust reposed in him by the King, immediately launched a steam-roller campaign against the Nepali Congress and supported the monarchy in the most unequivocal words. In his public statements after his return from China, he had emphasized the importance of monarchy in the country which, according to him, was serving as a cementing force in a heterogeneous society like the Nepalese. He had advocated, like his predecessor, the holding of the general elections for parliament rather than for supreme constituent assembly. "Where," he questioned, "in the present time, elections for constituent assembly in kingdoms have taken place?" In a kingdom, he asserted, "the constituent assembly has no meaning." The proclamation of the late King Tribhuvan regarding elections for a constituent assembly, in his opinion, should be thrown in a "waste-paper basket". He alleged that the Koiralas (B. P. Koirala and M. P. Koirala) were demanding the convening of a constituent assembly with the ulterior motive to undermine the prestige and status of the monarchy in the country.⁴⁹

K. I. Singh, like the King, had a strong contempt for the Nepali Congress. There was apprehension among various political circles, therefore, that the King might use K. I. Singh in destroying the only national organization—the Nepali Congress, and thereby causing disintegration of democratic forces in the

country. In this background, it was not surprising that major political parties declined to associate themselves with K. I. Singh and his government. This boycott of the new Premier, by major political parties, however, failed to create any impact on the King. On July 26, 1957, through a proclamation, he vested K. I. Singh with an authority to form a ministry ostensibly again to lay "strong foundations of a democratic system in the country".⁵⁰ The installation of K. I. Singh as Prime Minister was vehemently criticized by other political parties. The Politbureau of the Communist Party of Nepal gave a call for holding an all-party conference to devise ways and means to defeat the "reactionary conspiracy".⁵¹ The Praja Parishad came forward to join hands with other political parties to "defend democracy in the country". B. P. Koirala regarded the Royal step as a "danger signal for democrats and the forerunner of dictatorship".⁵² Once again all democratic forces as represented by major political parties appeared to be determined to defeat the King's manoeuvres to perpetuate his dictatorship. The possibilities of a final showdown between the democratic forces and their opponents—the King and the reactionary group—seemed to be imminent.

The new government, soon after assuming office, followed a vindictive policy against its political opponents. It arrested many political leaders on the charge of maligning the monarchy and creating lawlessness in the country.⁵³ The Prime Minister did not spare even the Press. He warned it to refrain from publishing "anti-monarch and anti-national articles". Within a fortnight of the assumption of office by K. I. Singh the "repressive hand of the government" fell upon five dailies and two weeklies.⁵⁴ On the political front he acted with swiftness and on October 4, in a broadcast to the nation, he announced the postponement of general elections for an indefinite period.⁵⁵ Without any attempt to conceal his contempt for his opponents he was reported to have remarked—"I shall smear like *papad* all those who demand elections for constituent assembly".⁵⁶ Feudal and religious associations like Karmavir Mahamandal and Jan Rajya Parishad, and reactionary leaders who had, for personal gains, formed parallel organizations like Parallel Nepali Congress, Parallel Nepali Rashtriya Congress and Parallel Praja Parishad, immediately lent support to K. I. Singh's government and his policy to crush all democratic forces in the country.⁵⁷

With the unquenched ambition to emerge as the unrivalled leader (playing, of course, second fiddle to the King) running amuck, K. I. Singh embarked recklessly on a path of self-deception. On September 2, he announced that he would put all ex-Prime Ministers on trial on the charge of wasting more than 38 million Nepali rupees and 57 million Indian rupees.⁵⁸ He boasted that he would retrieve the "lost national wealth" even "at the cost of my life".⁵⁹ He threatened to take penal action against the business community of Kathmandu for profiteering and declared that he would break up their monopoly over business by distributing agencies on a regional basis.⁶⁰

These grandiose words with little substance failed to have the desired effect. The people refused to be taken in by K. I. Singh's verbosity. They were convinced now that the demagoguery indulged in by the K. I. Singh group was only a cover behind which the King was busy in consolidating the institution of monarchy in the country.⁶¹ The opposition political parties—the Nepali Congress in particular—seemed to be aware more than ever before to take cudgels in the interest of democracy and to this end they started making serious efforts to strengthen their organization and mobilize people's support. Instead of beating the shadow it now attacked the real bastion of reaction—the monarchy—and demanded immediate elections for the constituent assembly to frame a new constitution for the country.

The Nepali Congress, for the first time in its history, formulated its objectives in clear-cut words. At its Sixth National Conference held at Birganj from January 24 to January 26, 1956, it approved a draft defining its objectives as the achievement of socialism by peaceful and democratic methods; maintaining of constitutional monarchy in the country on the British model; government by a Cabinet responsible to the wishes of the people's representatives; unicameral legislature elected by universal adult franchise; independent judiciary; recruitment of civil servants by an independent Public Service Commission on the basis of merit; a foreign policy based on neutrality and co-existence; the industrialization of the country, either through its own resources or in collaboration with foreign and friendly countries; the reorganization of agriculture on socialist lines by means of "legislation and persuasion;" State planning of national

economy; and the establishment of agricultural and industrial enterprises by the State.⁶²

With a view to consolidating the position of the party, the leading members of the Nepali Congress made extensive tours of the country in order to acquaint the people with its ideology and objectives. B. P. Koirala issued an appeal to the dissident groups to rejoin the party. The response to the call was encouraging. The Rashtriya Praja Party of M. P. Koirala and a group of members of the Praja Parishad and many followers of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress joined the Nepali Congress.⁶³ The Nepali Congress confidently asserted: "A struggle is going on between the people and the crown for power. . . . Who is the repository of power—the crown or the people? The reactionaries claim that it is the crown, but the Nepali Congress claims the people as sovereign. Without crown, a State can survive but not without the people."⁶⁴

The party repudiated the dictum that the "King can do no wrong". This principle, according to it, applied only when the King did not indulge in the politics of the State, "but the saying has no meaning when the King associates himself with day-to-day business of the country".⁶⁵ Consequently, the party asserted that "the individual acts of the King can never be above democratic criticism, particularly when the King acts without any relevance to the democratic and constitutional practices".⁶⁶ It questioned the very necessity to keep the institution of monarchy if the people had no need of it. It observed: ". . . if the representatives of the people genuinely do not want the kingship, then to give it a place in the constitution would not only be undemocratic but would be a big political mistake."⁶⁷

At the most the party was prepared to accept the monarch as a mere constitutional head of the State: . . . "Maharajadhiraj shall be accepted as 'King democrat' and he shall have to remain within the bonds of the government approved by the people."⁶⁸

Having realized that the ramparts of reaction would not be demolished unless all democratic forces joined hands together, other political parties, besides the Nepali Congress, decided to forge a united front. Even the Praja Parishad joined others to fight against the dictatorship of the King and the K. I. Singh

clique. Consequently, three political parties, *viz.*, the Nepali Congress, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Praja Parishad formed the Democratic Front with a view to:

- (a) strengthening democratic forces and to meet the impending threat to democracy; and
- (b) safeguarding the fundamental rights of the people.⁶⁹

The Communist Party, the Nepal Terai Congress and other small organizations supported the amalgamation of democratic forces. The Front launched a vigorous campaign against the policies of the King whom it regarded as the real threat to democracy. The Front charged the King with trying to build his position through “force and undemocratic practices” and warned that “the monarchy will lose its popularity and eventually political basis” if it persisted in its policy of self-aggrandisement.⁷⁰

The Democratic Front launched a powerful movement against the government’s decision to postpone the elections for an indefinite period. Strikes, processions and demonstrations were organized in Kathmandu and other important areas of the country. “Black Day” was observed on October 8, and all political parties co-operated with the students’ organizations in organizing black-flag demonstrations and in observing a two-hour black-out in the evening. On the same day the Democratic Front decided at its conference at Birganj to launch a country-wide civil disobedience movement starting from December 12, 1957. The Presidents of the constituent parties of the Front formed an Action Committee to lead the movement. Public meetings, processions and signature campaigns were organized. Volunteers in every district of Nepal were recruited to carry on the struggle.⁷¹

As noted, the Front of the political parties had mainly directed its criticism against the King. It tended to ignore the K. I. Singh government whom it considered as merely a puppet in the hands of the King. K. I. Singh, clever as he was, did not miss this point. He had also realized by now that the fruit of real power were indeed forbidden till the monarchy remained at the helm of affairs. He, therefore, changed his earlier policy of silencing the criticism against the monarchy and adopted an attitude of indifference towards the anti-King movement launched by the Democratic Front.⁷² At the same time, he embarked upon a

concealed policy of undermining the position of the King. He told the King that corruption was rampant in the administration and in order to weed it out suggested to introduce reforms from the top. He sought to replace two of the four Principal Private Secretaries to the King and other high officials by "honest men" whose number ran into 117.⁷³ These "honest men" were in fact his own proteges. He also attempted to make certain changes in the armed forces.⁷⁴ King Mahendra was greatly alarmed at the activities of his Prime Minister. When K. I. Singh established an ex-army association, the King became more suspicious about his intentions. It is interesting to note that it was with the help of ex-armymen that he had staged an abortive coup in the capital five years ago. He also formed a Special Police Organization ostensibly to maintain law and order and suppress illegal activities in the country. The organization was placed under a Special Superintendent of Police and was to be stationed at the strategic points of the valley. This police organization had an Intelligence Department which was directly under the charge of the Prime Minister. These steps of K. I. Singh were indeed aimed at augmenting his own position *vis-a-vis* the King and his opponents. It was, however, naive on K. I. Singh's part to think that he would out-manoeuvre the King in a struggle for power. The King had always been perfectly clear in his mind about the use that he wanted to make of K. I. Singh. As soon as he realized that K. I. Singh was over-stepping the limits set for him, the King decided to act. He appointed a National Council under the chairmanship of his younger brother to keep a watch on K. I. Singh's activities.⁷⁵ On November 14, 1957, the King ultimately dismissed the K. I. Singh ministry and took over the charge of administration himself by declaring that he had been "compelled, in spite of his reluctance, to conduct the administration of the affairs of the country for a few days".⁷⁶

Popular Demand for Immediate Elections

Although no tears were shed at the fall of the K. I. Singh government, yet there was a feeling that instead of inviting major political parties either singly or collectively to form the new government, the King had assumed all powers unto himself.

The Democratic Front made a scathing criticism of the manner in which the King was handling the affairs of the country wherein it was said: "Today the King of Nepal has become so autocratic that the people pale into insignificance before him. He sets up Cabinets favourable to him and dissolves them according to his wishes. This has affected the administrative stability and progress of the country. Disorder has been let loose in the country."⁷⁷

The leaders of the Front—B. P. Koirala and T. P. Acharya—told the King in the first week of December that if he failed to announce the date of election the projected *satyagraha* would commence on its scheduled date, *i.e.*, December 8. Astutely, the King invited a variety of political organizations at his palace on December 6 to consider the political situation including the question of election. "The composition of the conference was such as to place the Democratic Front in a conspicuous minority."⁷⁸ After acquainting the leaders of the participating parties with the steps taken by the Election Commission to hold the election, the King, presiding over the conference, declared that he was more seriously concerned about holding the elections than any other, and asked the participants to consider the following:

- (a) timing and the purpose of the elections;
- (b) interim arrangement of the government; and
- (c) the projected movement of the Democratic Front at the time when the country was confronted with acute problems of food scarcity, draught and famine and other natural calamities.⁷⁹

B. P. Koirala, the representative of the Nepali Congress, however, posing the real issue before the country stated: "In our opinion the problem of election is most important than any other, as all others are related to it. His Majesty the King took many steps—the forming of various ministries and experimenting with other methods with a view to having a stable government—to which he may not agree, but, we, the people, certainly feel that none of the steps succeeded in its aim. Unless there is a strong government having full confidence (of the people) we can assert that the country cannot resolve the problems and pitfalls it is facing with. And only through the elections a strong government can be formed. Regarding holding the elections the Front is confident that within a period of six months it can be done."⁸⁰

Since there was no consensus as regards the timing of the elections, the King advised the parties to agree among themselves about any date for holding the elections after consulting the Election Commission.⁸¹ The King was obviously trying to side-track the question of holding the elections once again by mixing it up with a number of issues he placed before the conference. His advice to the Democratic Front to desist from organizing the *satyagraha* was indeed a clever trick to put off a threat to his own power. The Front, however, was vigilant this time and refused to fall a prey to the King's dubious promises. It launched its historic *satyagraha* on December 8, as scheduled. The King appeared to be prepared for a showdown, since he fortified the government with more powers to deal with the situation.⁸²

The *satyagraha* soon gained momentum involving more and more people as it proceeded.⁸³ The government seemed determined to crush the movement. Repressive measures were adopted to handle the new development. The police resorted to lathi-charge and tear-gas on the picketing students at the gates of the Central Secretariat and the Supreme Court. This incident threw the student community of Kathmandu into the movement. The Communist Party came in on its own accord.

The movement not only succeeded in paralysing the administrative machinery but gave an impression inside and outside the country that the King was deliberately denying the people their rights granted under the Interim Constitution to elect a constituent assembly. The impact of the movement was so great that the King was compelled to realize the futility of his policy. He clearly foresaw that the "demand for popular rule had reached a stage when only a dictatorship armed with all the means of suppression and oppression could stifle it indefinitely."⁸⁴ Consequently, on December 15, 1957, he announced February 18, 1959, as the date for holding the elections.⁸⁵ In political quarters the Royal proclamation was regarded as the victory of democratic forces. The Action Committee of the Front, while calling off its *satyagraha*, stated: "... although the Front's entire demands have not been fulfilled, the declaration of a date for conducting the elections shows that the people have been victorious."⁸⁶

Constituent Assembly or Parliament?

It was, however, not clear whether the elections were to be held for the constituent assembly or for the parliament. The Royal proclamation was conspicuously silent on this issue. There was no unanimity even in the Democratic Front on this question. While the Nepali Congress, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Communist Party favoured elections to the constituent assembly, the Gorkha Parishad, the Praja Parishad and the United Democratic Party wanted that the elections should be for a supreme parliament. When some 500 political delegates of the Front on February 1, 1958, assembled at Birganj for its political conference, a Royal proclamation on the controversial issue was issued. It declared:

(a) the formation of a Constitution Drafting Commission in order to prepare a constitution incorporating the idea of a bi-cameral legislature;

(b) the setting up of a nominated Advisory Assembly in the interim period; and

(c) a government without a Prime Minister, consisting of independents as well as representatives of political parties during interim period.⁸⁷

Once again the King by his shrewed move sought to disrupt the unity of the democratic forces. He succeeded in involving the constituent parties of the Democratic Front into a controversy about the constituent assembly versus the parliament. The Democratic Front was split. The Praja Parishad hailed the Royal proclamation, the Nepali Congress hesitated to accept the offer though it did not reject it outright and the Rashtriya Nepali Congress adopted a policy of wait-and-see. Ultimately, all political parties, after generating much heat, more or less, agreed to the Royal proclamation.

That all political parties, including the Nepali Congress and the Communists, accepted the Royal proclamation which ignored the Nepalese people's right to elect a constituent assembly, was perhaps owing to the fact that the people in general were not yet sufficiently enthused about the political developments in their country. When all other political parties accepted the King's offer, the Nepali Congress and the Communists were left

with no alternative in this context except to fall in with others. Moreover, the Nepali Congress appeared to be confident of itself and hoped to win a majority in the elections. The Communists too did not want to be left behind and despite criticism by one of its own factions, decided to participate in the elections.

On May 15, 1958, an interim coalition government was formed with the task to implement development projects; to assist in the preparation of the constitution; to conduct the daily administration; and to hold the general elections. It included the representatives of the Nepali Congress, the Rashtriya Congress, the Gorkha Parishad and the Praja Parishad.⁸⁸

Once the political parties had agreed to participate in the elections for a parliament and gave up the demand for holding elections for a constituent assembly it had become clear that the constitution would be framed by a commission appointed by the King.

Consequently, on March 16, 1958, King Mahendra appointed a commission to frame the constitution for the kingdom. The Commission was headed by Bhagwati Prasad Singh, the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, who was a staunch royalist. The other members of the Commission were Ram Raj Panth, the Principal of the Law College; Hora Prasad Joshi and S. P. Upadhyaya, members of the Nepali Congress; and Randhir Subba, a leader of the rightist Gorkha Parishad.

As was evident from the composition of the Commission only one party—the Nepali Congress—was represented in it which was opposed to any move aimed at strengthening the traditional forces through constitutional means. But due to its minor representation its opposition was a futile attempt. Though it was provided that the constitution framed by the Commission was first to be approved by the Council of Ministers of the interim coalition government, yet owing to the heterogeneous composition of the government it was hardly expected to substantially differ from the Commission's draft. Moreover, the final approval of the constitution depended on the positive consent of the King. The constitution, as it finally emerged, could not therefore be considered as fully democratic.

Preparations for Elections

But the political parties took the elections seriously. The Nepali Congress adopted several measures to streamline its organization.⁸⁹ It also held an Annual Convention with the purpose to boost the morale of its workers and to prepare an election manifesto. The manifesto claimed that the Nepali Congress Government would strive to form a democratic socialist State under constitutional monarchy; develop villages; nationalize forests; abolish *Birta* system and zamindari and would pay due compensation in case of land acquisitions. It would set up agriculture banks; bring stability of currency value; establish key industries under public sector; adopt a Labour Act; and would maintain friendly relations with all nations.⁹⁰

The Communist Party concentrated its activities in the valley and the Terai. It promised in its manifesto that it would liquidate the feudal system and introduce agrarian reforms; give incentive to labourers and pursue a foreign policy aimed at the abrogation of treaty with Britain that authorized her to recruit the Gorkhas from Nepal. It would amend the Trade Treaty of 1950 with India that adversely affected Nepalese trade, and resist "American infiltration" in the country.⁹¹

The Gorkha Parishad claimed that unlike all other parties, it was the only nationalist party devoted to national development and the maintaining of sovereignty and integrity of the country. It promised immediate administrative reforms; decentralization of administration; judicial reforms; development of Terai region; and agrarian reforms. In the field of economy it advocated a mixed economic system, allowing both private and public sectors to flourish side by side. In the field of foreign affairs the party promised independent policy.⁹² K. I. Singh, the President of the United Democratic Party, announced that if his party came to power it would ban religious proselytization and cow slaughter. He also advocated the establishment of a "real monarchical democracy" in the country.⁹³ The Nepali Rashtriya Congress of D. R. Regmi promised the development of national and other languages. T. P. Acharya's group of the Praja Parishad stressed the need of the protection of the middle class because only it could function as a vanguard of the country. B. K. Misra's

group of the Praja Parishad advocated the maintaining of constitutional monarchy in which sovereignty should be vested with the people.⁹⁴ The Terai Congress advocated the formation of a federal union with autonomous regions.⁹⁵ The Prajatantrik Mahasabha stressed the need of protecting "traditional religion" of the country.⁹⁶

The Election

The elections were held for 109 seats of the House of Representatives. Only nine political parties—The Nepali Congress, the Gorkha Parishad the Nepal Communist Party, the Samyukta Prajatantra Party, the Praja Parishad (T. P. Acharya's group), the Praja Parishad (B. K. Misra's group), the Terai Congress, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha—could secure recognition under the rules framed by the Election Commission. There were, in all, 786 candidates contesting the elections, of whom 268 were independents and the remaining belonged to the political parties.⁹⁷ The elections began as scheduled on February 18, 1959, and were almost over by April 3. The last result however, came on May 10. The polling was approximately 42 per cent, the highest turnout was in the valley—53 per cent—and the lowest at Dailekh—a hilly place in the western part.⁹⁸ The party position in the first general elections was:

<i>Name of the parties</i>	<i>Seats contested</i>	<i>Seats won</i>	<i>No. of votes polled</i>	<i>Percentage to total votes</i>
1. Nepali Congress	108	74	666,898	37.2
2. Gorkha Parishad	86	19	305,118	17.3
3. Samyukta Prajatantra Party	86	5	177,508	9.9
4. Nepal Communist Party	47	4	129,142	7.2
5. Praja Parishad (Acharya's)	46	2	53,083	2.2
6. Praja Parishad (Misra's)	36	1	59,820	3.3
7. Nepal Terai Congress	21	0	36,107	2.1
8. Nepali Rashtriya Congress	20	0	12,707	0.7
9. Prajatantrik Mahasabha	68		59,896	3.3
10. Independents	268	4	291,149	16.7 ⁹⁹

The election results gave an overwhelming majority to the Nepali Congress. The fear that no party would be able to secure an absolute majority—which was made one of the causes to delay the elections—proved unfounded. The electorate eliminated the personality-oriented parties like the Samyukta Prajatantrik Party, Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Praja Parishad. The parties of the extreme ideology, *viz.*, the Gorkha Parishad representing the extreme rightist views and the Nepal Communist Party holding the extreme “left” views, were pushed into the background, while the party of “moderates”, the Nepali Congress was preferred, and the regional party like the Terai Congress and independents were largely ignored by the voters.

The general elections eliminated factional parties and paved the way for further crystallization of political groups, thereby creating a healthy atmosphere for the working of political parties. For the first time, two antagonistic forces—the traditional represented by the monarch and the modernizing forces spearheaded by the Nepali Congress—came face to face with each other in the real sense of the term. Now power had been transferred to a government elected by the people and, therefore, it was supposed to work with confidence and without being subservient to the King. As to how the two—the King and the government elected by the people—were to co-exist was indeed a crucial problem which continued to beset the Nepalese politics even after the elections.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Devkota, G.B., *Rajnitik Darpan*, Benaras, 1959.
- ² See Appendix No. 1. ³ *The Times of India*, May 10, 1955.
- ⁴ These steps included the reorganization of district and Central Secretariat; the revision of pay scales of the government employees; the enactment of Police Act whereby the duties, powers and jurisdiction of the police force were laid down; and the division of the country into three zones—the Western, the Central and the Eastern—with their headquarters at Biratnagar, Kathmandu and Birganj respectively with a view to streamline the administration and to improve law and order situation.
- ⁵ Jain, G.L., *India Meets China in Nepal*, Bombay, 1959, pp. 47-8.
- ⁶ As a part of his drive for mass contact he took a number of steps. On April 18, 1955, nine *daurahas* composed of pro-monarch independents were despatched to various parts of the country to investigate on the spot the grievances of local people, to survey public opinion about his direct rule and the strength of various political parties, and to suggest means for improving the lot of the people and to develop the concerned areas. *Gorkhapatra*, August 18, 1955.
- ⁷ Gupta, A., *Politics in Nepal*, Bombay, 1964, p. 97.
- ⁸ *The Hindustan Times*, August 18, 1955.
- ⁹ Commenting on the nature and composition of Royal Advisers, Joshi and Rose observe: "This use of royal advisers was a throwback to the days of Rana autocracy, under which all of them had been schooled, trained and rewarded. It was clearly a group that could never incline to question authority, since by training and inclination, its members represented the mentality of an earlier generation. . . . The group was not only reactionary but lacked any approach, talent or special skill to command itself to the public. The only conceivable reason for the selection of these persons was the King's confidence in them as instruments through whom he could implement his own programme." Joshi,

B.L., and Rose, Leo E., *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, Berkeley, 1967, p. 182.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹¹ Jain, *n* 5, p. 47.

¹² In many political circles it was regarded that the measures taken by the King to streamline the administration of the country virtually gave rise to corruption and favouritism on a wider scale, since "there had been no impartiality in awarding appointments, promotion and there had been unnecessary wastage of money in the administration," *Nepal Pukar*, June 24, 1955.

¹³ *The Statesman*, April 1 and April 25, 1955.

¹⁴ Devkota, *n* 1, p. 299.

¹⁵ *Nepal Pukar*, May 2, 1955.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1955.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, May 10, 1955.

¹⁸ Devkota, *n* 1, p. 299.

¹⁹ Joshi and Rose, *n* 9, p. 184.

²⁰ *Gorkhapatra*, May 18, 1955.

²¹ *Ibid.*, August 10, 1955.

²² The following queries were asked to be fulfilled by the leaders of major political parties by the King:

(a) Without repeating past mistakes, what democratic procedure should be followed to form an Interim Government?

(b) What proportion of representation is to be given to the parties in such a Cabinet?

(c) Whether the government should be formed by one party or more, or on a non-party basis?

(d) What criteria should be followed to select the Prime Minister?

(e) What should be the programme of the Interim Government?

(f) What are the obstacles in the way of an efficient and smooth administration?

(g) What duties and responsibilities should be shared by all political parties concerned to work for the well being of the country through democratic means?

Shahi, D.K., *Sat Sal Pachi Sat Sal*, Patna, 1957, p. 26.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁴ *The Statesman*, October 30, 1955.

²⁵ In his Cabinet only C. P. Sharma had unquestionable loyalty towards him while Balchand Sharma and Pashupati Ghosh belonged to the other faction of the organization.

²⁶ *Gorkhapatra*, January 30, 1956.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ He reorganized civil service under nine main categories—

the Education, Judiciary, Health, Administrative, Engineering, Forest, Agriculture, Foreign and Royal Palace. He also formed two screening committees to review the competence of some 600 gazetted and some 21,000 non-gazetted officers before confirming them in their services. Joshi and Rose, *n* 9, p. 229.

- ³⁰ In addition to the powers already enjoyed by the High Court, the Supreme Court was vested with the authority to frame rules and regulations for quick disposal of cases by the lower courts. Its advice in appointing the judges of the lower courts was also sought. The Supreme Court was to work as a court of record and was empowered to take action on matters amounting to contempt against itself, and to issue writs of *Habeas Corpus* and *Mandamus*, prohibiting orders and to institute *Quo Warranto* proceedings. For details see *Sarbochcha Adalat Ain*, Kathmandu, 1956.
- ³¹ The draft plan was based on an estimated foreign aid of Rs. 100 million from India and 60 million from the USA. About 33 per cent of total expenditure was earmarked for developing transportation and communication, 25 per cent for agriculture, 17 per cent for hydro-electricity, 16 per cent for health, education, and 6 per cent for cottage industries. *The Statesman*, August 15, 1956.
- ³² *Gorkhapatra*, June 16, 1956.
- ³³ Joshi and Rose, *n* 9, p. 229.
- ³⁴ The government overlooked the Public Service Commission in the following ways:
- (a) the government exerted some time for making appointment;
 - (b) for the appointment of high posts the Commission was ignored;
 - (c) a section of the Civil Service Rules that demanded the consultation of the Commission in the appointment of personnel was not enforced; and
 - (d) the government did not incorporate any member of the Commission in the Screening Committee constituted to examine the competence of the civil servants.
- See *Halkhabar*, January 15, March 7 and June 6, 1957.
- ³⁵ Gupta, *n* 7, p. 106.

- ³⁶ *The Hindustan Times*, June 19, 1957.
- ³⁷ *Gorkhapatra*, June 8, 1956. ³⁸ *Lokvarta*, September 13, 1956.
- ³⁹ *Halkhabar*, May 26, 1957. ⁴⁰ Joshi and Rose, *n* 9, p. 90-1.
- ⁴¹ The Supreme Court, however, dismissed the case on the ground that under Section 6 of the Civil Rights Act, 1955, citizens could hold independent political opinion. The ministers of the government could exercise that right as individuals. *Nepal Pukar*, June 30, 1956.
- ⁴² See text of T. P. Acharya's resignation published in the *Commoner*, July 16, 1957.
- ⁴³ *Commoner*, February 7, 1957. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, February 8, 1957.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, July 16, 1957. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, July 10, 1957.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, July 15, 1957.
- ⁴⁸ Cf. G.L. Jain's comments: "The king had allowed Dr. Singh to return to Nepal to enable him to head a King's Party."
- ⁴⁹ *Halkhabar*, January 19, 1957.
- ⁵⁰ *Nepal Gazette*, Saman 11, 2014.
- ⁵¹ *Commoner*, July 17, 1957. ⁵² *Ibid.*, July 19, 1957.
- ⁵³ See *Halkhabar*, July 29, August 6 and September 9, 1957.
- ⁵⁴ *Commoner*, September 11, 1957. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, October 5, 1957.
- ⁵⁶ Singh, Hikmat, *Party Sadarsh-haruko Nama Chetti No. 2*. (Letter no. two in the name of party members), Communist Party Office, Kathmandu, p. 6.
- ⁵⁷ *The Karamvir*, an organ of staunchly royalist Karamvir Mahamandal, suggested to the King not to hold the election since "the political party leaders would even sell them to become ministers," and asked the King to concentrate power in his hands and use it for introducing an organized democracy in the future under improved conditions of employment opportunities and educational level. *Karamvir*, October 10, 1957.
- ⁵⁸ *Halkhabar*, September 3, 1957.
- ⁵⁹ *Commoner*, September 30, 1957. ⁶⁰ Gupta, *n* 7, p. 114.
- ⁶¹ Exposing the aim of royalty, B. P. Koirala, the President of the Nepali Congress, stated: "The acts of the King are responsible for the prevailing uncertainty. . . . The misleading propaganda launched by the Court's parties . . . against the democratic parties clearly indicates that the King's hand is behind the statement that the election declaration (for the

constituent assembly) should be 'thrown into waste-paper basket'. By installing K. I. Singh to power the King wants to put off general elections." *Nepal Pukar*, September 30, 1957.

⁶² *Manifesto Adopted at the Sixth National Convention of the Nepali Congress*, Birganj, 1956.

⁶³ See *Nepal Pukar*, March 30, April 6 and April 14, 1956.

⁶⁴ Thapa, V. B., "Sri 5 ra Nepali Congress", *Nepal Pukar*, February 26, 1956.

⁶⁵ *Nepal Pukar*, June 5, 1956. ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Koirala, B.P., "Election and Political Parties", *Nepal Pukar*, June 30, 1957. Cf. also D. R. Regmi's observation: "Whether the King is active or inactive in the politics every citizen has a right to criticize him . . . he is not an incarnation of God. In the vast administrative machinery of the country the King is only an important cog." *Nepal Pukar*, September 30, 1957.

⁶⁸ *Commoner*, April 3, 1957. ⁶⁹ *Commoner*, August 10, 1957.

⁷⁰ *Nepal Pukar*, August 21, 1957. ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, October 14, 1957.

⁷² For details see Jain, *n* 5, pp. 57-65.

⁷³ *The Statesman*, November 28, 1957. ⁷⁴ Jain, *n* 5, p. 60.

⁷⁵ For details see *Nepal Rashtriya Parishad Aim*, 2014 Holg, Kathmandu, 1957.

⁷⁶ *Nepal Gazette*, Kartik 29, 2014, pp. 31-2.

⁷⁷ *Nepal Pukar*, September 10, 1957.

⁷⁸ Joshi and Rose, *n* 9.

⁷⁹ See *Rajnitik Sammelan*, Kathmandu, 1957, pp. 2-9.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-3. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.

⁸² To meet the situation, the government enacted an Essential Service Act whereby it empowered the Commissioners, Magistrates and Bada Hakims to sentence anyone found guilty of spreading hatred against the crown or royalty or raising contempt against them, up to three years of imprisonment and fine up to Rs. 3,000. It further empowered the government to sentence anyone found guilty of provoking hatred against the legally established government of the land, up to two years of imprisonment and a fine up to Rs. 2,000. *Commoner*, December 9, 1957.

⁸³ The areas where the movement assumed notable proportions

were, apart from the valley, Kalaya, Bhojpur, Nuwakot, Sindhuli, Upardang, Garhi, Hitaunda and Biratnagar.

⁸⁴ Jain, *n* 5, p. 67. ⁸⁵ *Commoner*, December 15, 1957.

⁸⁶ *Naya Samaj*, December 16, 1957.

⁸⁷ *Gorkhapatra*, February 3, 1958. ⁸⁸ See Appendix No. 1.

⁸⁹ The party took the following steps:

(a) it formed a committee to collect and raise money for the election campaign; (b) it established an *ad hoc* committee to direct party's units for intensifying tours; (c) formed another committee to prepare election literature; (d) set up a booth committee in each constituency; (e) formed a central parliamentary board to screen the names of party's candidates for elections; and f) send a delegation to India to study the election campaign of the Indian political parties.

⁹⁰ *Commoner*, November 7, 1958.

⁹¹ See *Election Manifesto of the Communist Party of Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1959.

⁹² See *Nepal Rashtriyavadi Gurkha ka Chunao Ghosanaptra*, Kathmandu, 1959.

⁹³ See *Samyukta Prajatantra Party ka Chunao Ghosanaptra*, Kathmandu, 1959.

⁹⁴ See *Nepal Praja Parishad ko Chunao Ghosanaptra*, Kathmandu, 1959.

⁹⁵ See *Nepal Terai Congress ko Chunao Ghosanaptra*, Kathmandu, 1959.

⁹⁶ See *Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha ko Chunao Ghosanaptra*, Kathmandu, 1959.

⁹⁷ *The Election Commission Report*, Kathmandu, 1960.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 4

Popular Government: Trials and Tribulations

AFTER EIGHT years of sustained struggle against the traditional forces since the revolution of 1950, the first popular elections gave the Nepali Congress an overwhelming majority, and the monarch, for the first time in the history of Nepal, had to hand over the reins of power to an elected political party. Formally, it was done on May 27, 1959, when King Mahendra convened the first parliament and asked the Nepali Congress to form the government. A study of the constitutional framework, within which the ruling party had to operate; the attitudes of the monarch, those of the political parties and the people at large towards the new setup and the ruling party; as well as the outstanding problems—internal and external—the elected government had to tackle, may help one in understanding the working of parliamentary institutions in their proper perspective.

The monarchy, under the new constitution of 1959, maintained supreme and sovereign power over the rest of the institutions. The constitution itself was a gift of the monarch who promulgated it “in exercise of sovereign powers and prerogatives” vested in him. The importance of the monarchy was further underlined by the fact that the constitution put stress on the establishment of an efficient monarchical form of government and did not mention, in its objectives, the formation of a democratic system.¹

The King in this “monarchical form of government” continued to enjoy enormous powers, thus, inhibiting the process of democratization of the country’s political system for which the people and political parties had been struggling for so long. The institution of monarchy endowed with overriding influence posed before the Nepali Congress leadership a serious problem. The implementation of the party’s

programme for socio-economic and political reforms hinged on the attitude of the King and the relationship between him and the party. It is, therefore, necessary first to debate upon the King's powers under the new constitution in various spheres.

The executive power of the State was vested in the King and he was empowered to exercise it "either directly or through ministers or other officers subordinate to him".² The King had prerogatives to choose his own Prime Minister. The only condition that had limited his choice was a stipulation that the person chosen by the King as Prime Minister should control the majority in the *Pratinidhi Sabha*.³ If no leader was able to muster a parliamentary majority to secure the office of the Prime Minister, the King could suspend the operation of the government by setting aside the provisions of Articles 12 to 16 that dealt with the Cabinet and ministerial government, and could assume unto himself the functions of the Prime Minister, Cabinet and ministers after consulting the Council of State.⁴ The King was further vested with the right to remove the Prime Minister, if acting in his discretion, he was satisfied, after consulting the Council of State, that the Prime Minister had lost the confidence of the House,⁵ or had "persisted in acting contrary to the constitution". The ministers were also appointed by the King on the recommendation of his Prime Minister. The ministers, however, were held responsible to the King as well as to the Cabinet.⁶ The only limitation imposed on the administrative authority of the King was that whereas he was not specifically empowered to act in his discretion or on the recommendations of other instrumentalities of the government, the constitution provided that he would act "on the recommendation of the Cabinet conveyed by the Prime Minister, or on the recommendation of the Ministers of Crown authorized by the Prime Minister".⁷ However, the Prime Minister could not make any recommendation to the King unless he first informally consulted him in this matter.⁸ Moreover, the King could refer any recommendation for the consideration of his Cabinet, whether or not that was already considered by it.⁹ Another limitation of the Cabinet's power was that the matter of recommendation and advice to the Crown was not subject to review or decision by any court.¹⁰ The King had absolute discretion, since a decision on any subject, whether

it fell within his discretion or not, could not be questioned on the ground of the abuse or lack of discretion.¹¹

Besides the above devices, the constitution equipped the King with other provisions through which he could maintain his control over the ministry. The Prime Minister was required to keep the King informed on all proposals, conclusions and actions which had been taken both inside and outside the Cabinet and also to furnish the information that the King could require of him from time to time. Moreover, the King was empowered to frame the rules, in his discretion, for the conduct of government's business, specifying the distribution of functions and the manner in which he proposed to exercise his functions, the relations that could subsist among the King, the Cabinet, the ministers and other servants of the Crown.¹² Another power that made the King supreme was that he could, acting in his discretion, reject the recommendation of the Cabinet to dissolve the House of Representatives if, in his opinion, such a recommendation was an abuse of the power of dissolution given to the Cabinet.¹³ Under such a situation the ministry was left with no option save to resign, thereby leaving the King to assume unto himself the functions of the Cabinet.

The constitution also endowed the King with an absolute power over the army. The supreme command of the army was vested in him and the exercise thereof was regulated by *Ain*, and that power was exercised by the King in his discretion. Until an *Ain* made provision in that behalf, the King had the power to raise and maintain armed forces, to grant commission, to appoint the Commander-in-Chief and to determine his powers, duties and remunerations.¹⁴ No Bill that sought to bring changes in the armed forces could be initiated in either House of Parliament unless recommended by the King.

The King's legislative powers were overwhelming. The King was empowered not only to summon the parliament but to reject, as noted earlier, the recommendation of the Prime Minister to dissolve it. He could, from time to time, adjourn the session of parliament by his prerogative, but it was provided that six months should not have elapsed between the adjournment of one session and the beginning of the next. During the recess, if the King was of the opinion that an early meeting of parliament

or of either House was desirable, he could, by a proclamation, fix a date for such a meeting and the parliament or the House as the case could be, would meet accordingly. He could, in his discretion, address either House of the parliament or both Houses assembled together, and for that purpose, could command the attendance of members.¹⁶ He could send a message to either House of Parliament and the House, to which the message was sent, was bound to consider the matter required by the Royal message.¹⁷ If the parliament was not in session and the King was satisfied that circumstances existed which rendered it necessary for him to take immediate action, he could promulgate such ordinances as the circumstances suggested to him. Such ordinances, thus promulgated, had the same force and effect as that of the law of the land.¹⁸ But what virtually put the parliament under the control of the King was the Article 42 according to which no Bill could become law unless it secured the royal assent. The King could, in turn, either give his assent, or withhold it, or return the Bill to the House of the Parliament, in which it had originated, with his observation, as many times as he wished.

Though the King had no direct access over the process of the judiciary, yet his control over the appointment and dismissal of the judges of the Supreme Court remained intact.¹⁹

What equipped the King with autocratic powers and thereby posed a constant threat to the working of democratic institutions in Nepal were the provisions of emergency powers under Articles 55 and 56. Article 55 stated that if the King was satisfied, in his discretion, that a grave emergency had threatened the security and economic life of the country, or, if it was threatened by external aggression or internal violence, the King could assume the control over the operation of the executive and legislative departments or any other governmental body and could suspend in whole or in part any provision of the constitution.²⁰

Even without declaring the existence of an emergency situation in the country, the King could assume the control of the State power. If the King was satisfied, after consultation with the Council of State, that the parliamentary government had broken down, he could suspend the constitutional provisions dealing with the fundamental rights and the executive and the parliamentary branches of the government. The King could also

make temporary provisions for governing the country as he deemed fit. He could suspend either or both the Houses of the Parliament. Should he suspend one House of the Parliament, he and the remaining House could enact legislation. ²¹

The above study of the provisions of the constitution reveals that the entire government rested on monarchy. Moreover, by traditions, usages and law of the land, the King was the ruler of the nation, holder of sovereign power, patron of all State institutions and symbol of national unity and integrity. To him the constitution was nothing but a token of his pleasure to the people, and, being so, he could revoke or reverse the constitution at his displeasure or discretion and could rule the country in the way he liked. He was above law, could make and unmake law, whether the parliament was in or out of session, whether there existed a legal document generally known as a constitution in a casket or not.

Though the King had no hand in the day-to-day business of the administration, his very right to have a final say in every decision of the State brought the entire transaction of the government under his bounds. His central position became crucial owing to the fact that there was no constitutional check, no democratic tradition, and no solid and united popular force to circumscribe his discretionary powers.

After reviewing the position of the monarchy, one may now turn to those institutions that had popular representation, *viz.*, the Council of Ministers and the legislature.

The Council of Ministers, under the new constitution, was not a privileged and powerful body as generally its counterparts are in a parliamentary system. Its size was limited to fourteen members, which it could not enlarge.²² It included the Prime Minister and other ministers as appointed by the King. Ministers, as noted earlier, were responsible to the King as well as to the Prime Minister.²³ Though constitutionally the King could not flout the advice rendered by the Council of Ministers, yet he was so heavily equipped and well entrenched in the politics of the country that the Council of Ministers could not afford to overlook the King and at the same time carry out its administrative work. It had to take the King into confidence, seek his advice, render him proper service and respect; then, and then alone, it could function.

The legislature, under the new constitution, suffered from three limitations: (a) it could not discuss the behaviour of the royalty;²⁴ (b) no Bill regarding the army and money could be introduced unless recommended by the King;²⁵ and (c) the King had the veto power which he could use as many times as he wished.²⁶

From the above discussion of the constitution, it becomes clear that the King was not merely a royal spectator but a referee who could pass any decision in his discretion and against which no appeal could be entertained. Two diverse opinions have been expressed regarding the nature of this constitution. It is argued by some that in a politically unstable country like Nepal it was absolutely necessary to vest ultimate power in a stable institution—the monarchy²⁷—while, according to others, vesting of so much authority in the institution of monarchy was not conducive to democracy and posed a constant threat to the democratic government. In such circumstances, it was claimed that the government, howsoever popular, could not function to the satisfaction of the people, because “a government which is not sure of its own future and has to manoeuvre continuously to secure a parliamentary majority will be in no position to carry out either agrarian or administrative reforms.”²⁸

Notwithstanding the differences among *pundits* of constitution with regard to its nature, there was no doubt that (a) the monarchy was vested with enormous power that posed a constant threat to the free working of parliamentary institutions; (b) though the initiative of decision lay in the hands of representative institutions, yet it could not be implemented till the monarch agreed to it; and that (c) the parliament could not amend the constitution till royal assent was available.²⁹

In the context of such an inhibitive constitution putting the monarch above the elected representatives in the government, it was indeed a herculean task for the leadership of the Nepali Congress to translate its programme into concrete achievements to satisfy the common man. The circumstances which preceded the formation of the first ever popularly elected government added to the difficulties, since they gave an inkling of the attitude which the King and other interests opposed to the Nepali Congress were going to adopt towards the government set up

by it. A perusal of those circumstances would facilitate the evaluation of the working of the Nepali Congress Government in a proper perspective.

The Preceding Events and their Shadows

The hostility with which King Mahendra had treated the Nepali Congress was well known. That this party received an overwhelming popular support in the elections, was, therefore, a hard nut for to him to crack. It took him time to reconcile with the facts, and before he could do so he indulged in quite a lot of dilly-dallying in inviting the leader of the Nepali Congress to form the government, according to the provision of the constitution.³⁰ The hesitation of the monarch in calling upon the leader of the Nepali Congress to form the government appears to have stemmed from two factors—both unpalatable to him. The people had voted for a party that had never concealed its animosity against the monarchy. B. P. Koirala had clearly expressed his party's view with regard to the irrelevance of the monarchy in the politics of Nepal when he had reportedly remarked: "If I come to power I will put two things in the Nepalese museum—the Crown and the idol of Pashupatinath."³¹ Likewise, when the party had accepted the elections for the parliament, it had openly remarked: "We have decided to accept the elections for a parliament because we want to transfer the reins of administration from one man's hand to those of people."³²

Thus, the attitude of the monarch towards the elected government was full of apathy, if not of hostility. It was clear that the popular government was not going to have the blessings of the royalty.

The elections had also exposed the claims of those parties which had been associated with power by King Mahendra in the pre-election period. Depressed by their dim prospects in the new parliament, the routed parties—the Praja Parishad, the United Democratic Party, and the Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha—resolved to show their strength outside the legislature so that they might not be altogether obliterated from the Nepalese politics. Immediately after the results of the elections were

known, all the above parties issued a joint statement whereby they asserted that "the elections had been held in an undesirable manner and with the help of foreign finance". They accused the Nepali Congress of collusion with foreign countries and expressed their fear that under its government Nepal would not remain neutral in foreign affairs.³³ K. I. Singh, the President of the United Democratic Party, alleged that the Nepali Congress was "anti-national" and advocated all kinds of legal actions, public demonstrations and agitations to show to the "anti-nationalist Nepali Congress. . . and its foreign supporters that the people of Nepal will never allow the anti-national elements to pawn the independence and sovereignty of the country and the designs of expansionist powers over Nepal".³⁴ Thus, one observes that the political groups which had once enjoyed power and claimed themselves as major parties but were ignominiously defeated at the polls, joined hands and did not make it a secret that they would make all-out efforts to dislodge the Nepali Congress from power so that their days of ruling the roost might come back.³⁵

With a hostile King endowed with enormous powers by the constitution, the angered and frustrated opposition political parties ranged against it and the Nepali Congress Government could count only upon the people and the capacity of its own leadership to steer clear the course of democratic processes in the country. The people were indeed greatly enthused at the prospects of their deliverance from the age-old reactionary feudal stranglehold and looked with great expectations and hope towards the new government. In their enthusiasm they were, however, prone to ignore the difficulties created by the constitutional provisions, the King and other political parties and the existing conditions which the new government was going to encounter. In spite of moral boosting which the Nepali Congress had received through its triumph in the electoral battle, and despite the tremendous amount of sympathy and goodwill of democratic elements in other countries, the new government was faced with a herculean task in fighting the forces of reaction in Nepal.

The new government of Nepal, although aware of the hostile and obstructive attitude of the King, believed that the people

would rally to its support if their grievances were immediately attended to. Popular support, it was thought, would neutralize the King's antipathy towards the government. The government, therefore, decided to carry out such reforms in the administrative and other spheres which would provide immediate relief to the common man.

Administrative Reforms

Since a corrupt and inefficient administration, which characterized the earlier regimes, had caused untold sufferings to the people, the government drew up a plan to reorganize the administrative set-up in such a way that it could become not merely an instrument of maintaining law and order efficiently but also to be able to perform new tasks of development and democracy. As a measure, the government reorganized the administration from the Royal palace to the village panchayat.³⁶ Merit was recognized as the sole criterion for appointments and promotions. With this end in view, the country's Public Service Commission was reorganized to make it an effective institution of recruitment. Those who were already serving and to whom appointment had been given for extra-meritorious considerations were asked to appear before the Public Service Commission for screening and confirmation. New incentives were provided for increasing the efficiency of the civil service by way of increasing the emoluments and providing for liberal pensions and gratuity.³⁷ Several Department Committees were formed to assist and advise the Cabinet ministers and to facilitate precise and quick decisions. Provision was made to include non-official members also in such committees.³⁸ The Prime Minister took upon himself the responsibility to hold weekly meetings with the departmental secretaries to keep himself informed of their activities and to see that the Cabinet decisions were properly implemented.³⁹ To keep vigilance and root out corruption from the administration, a five-member Anti-corruption Committee was also formed.⁴⁰

For improving administration at the district level and to assist the Bada Hakim in the implementation of developmental schemes, the government appointed development officers in each district.⁴¹

A committee was also formed under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister himself to review the progress of the implementation of various development projects in the districts.⁴² The government also drew up a scheme to decentralize the administration by establishing about 4,000 village panchayats (one in each village) and allotted a sum of rupees 1.7 million for setting up a training centre at Kathmandu to train the panchayat secretaries.⁴³

Besides toning up the personnel system and the civil administration, the government also undertook to streamline the police, educational,⁴⁴ judicial and fiscal administration of the country.⁴⁵ Arrangements were made to modernize the police department.⁴⁶ The judiciary was so organized as to dispense justice cheaper and quicker for the common man.⁴⁷ The honorary courts held by the feudal lords and nobles were abolished.

Land and Economic Reforms

Side by side with the reforms in the administration, the government launched upon a programme of land reforms with a view to delivering the country out of the grip of feudalism. The main remnant of the feudalistic society—the *birta* system—was abolished.⁴⁸ A pragmatic approach was adopted to abolish the zamindari system. The measure did not affect the small landowners but only the big landlords. The affected landlords were provided with due compensation. Tenancy right was preserved and arrangements were made for the distribution of land to the landless people. By June 1960, about 10,000 bighas of land were distributed to the landless peasants,⁴⁹ 3,026 families were settled down over 14,508 bighas of land in the Rapti valley.⁵⁰ Forests were nationalized.

In the economic field the government took many radical steps. The objectives of its economic policy were laid down as: (a) to increase the national income of the country; (b) to bring about fundamental changes in agriculture; (c) to provide adequate social welfare programme for the people; (d) to solve the problems of unemployment; and (e) to reduce inequalities in income levels and the distribution of wealth.⁵¹ In order to augment the internal resources for the realization of these policy-objectives,

the government announced the taxes on assets. During the financial year 1959-60, taxes were imposed on *birta* land, urban property, foreign investments, trade profits, houses, water taps and radio-sets. Rates of import and export duties were revised. The total estimated yield, due to these measures, was rupees 2,500,000 (NC). Outlining the main objectives of the taxation policy, the Finance Minister, Suvarna Shamsher, said: "The government had adopted a fair taxation policy in order to remove the unequal distribution of wealth in the country. The removal of such inequalities is not only conducive to the social justice but is also an important factor in economic development."⁵²

The government also embarked upon a number of development projects both of long-term and short-term nature. The long-term projects were taken directly by the Central government and the short-term projects were assigned to the District Development Boards. The government allotted over 140 million rupees for development for the year 1959-60 and some 250 million rupees for the year 1960-61.⁵³ It invited foreign enterprisers to invest capital in Nepal, and for this purpose offered liberal concessions. It entered into negotiations with foreign countries for the establishment of specific industries and an agreement with the USSR about the setting up of a hydro-electric plant, a sugar factory, and a cigarette factory was finalized.⁵⁴ The government took steps to utilize 100 million rupees Chinese aid for the development of industries for which technical assistance also came from China. The House of Birlas was approached for the setting up of a textile mill in Nepal. In the field of power and irrigation, the government concluded an agreement with India over the controversial Gandak Project. The project was to be constructed and completed within 10 years at Valmiki Nagar, at a cost of 500 million Indian rupees, borne solely by India. Nepal was to get, free of cost, water to irrigate about 150,000 acres of land in the Terai and electricity at the actual cost of production and transmission.⁵⁵ In order to provide better medical facilities to the people, the government entered into an agreement with the Soviet Union to establish a 50 bed hospital at Kathmandu.⁵⁶

In the field of trade and commerce, it was realized that as long as the Trade Treaty of 1950 with India was not rectified, it was not possible to diversify the country's trade. Under the

Trade Treaty of 1950 with India, Nepal's foreign trade was intermixed with that of India and the Nepalese could not either import or export their commodities to other countries without India's consent. The Nepalese Government was also not empowered to maintain its separate account of foreign exchange under this treaty. This trade treaty was, therefore, replaced by the Treaty of Trade and Transit on September 11, 1960, according to which Nepal became free to import and export goods from and to other countries apart from India, without the prior consent of India, and, could maintain its independent foreign exchange account. Nepal also obtained port facilities at two points.⁵⁷

To bring about proper co-ordination in the implementation of development projects, a high level committee was formed under S. P. Upadhyaya and Suvarna Shamsher.⁵⁸ Steps were taken to standardize and stabilize the Nepalese currency. Nepal till then had a dual currency system; both the Indian and the Nepalese rupee could be accepted as legal tender throughout the kingdom. The government fixed the rate of 100 Indian rupees to 160 Nepali rupees, and made the latter the sole legal tender throughout the country.⁵⁹ For financial transactions, branches of Nepal Rashtriya Bank were established at many places.⁶⁰

Normally such an impressive record of the government in all spheres could have generated popular enthusiasm for itself and the ruling party. But what one witnessed in Nepal was contrary to this normal expectation. The people appeared to be apathetic towards the various measures being taken by the government and certain sections in the society were becoming growingly hostile to it. How was it that a government which seemed to be dedicated to the task of ameliorating the conditions of the down-trodden, became the butt of criticism? Was it because of its own inefficiency in translating its promises into practice which was responsible for this? Or, was it owing to the injured feelings of those sections of the society which had been affected by the radical measures of the government? An answer to this question would emerge if one studies the impact of these measures on various strata of the society.

Reforms and its Impact

Since the Nepalese society was a confirmed traditional one ir

which some classes enjoyed age-old privileges and flourished on the sweat and toil of the downtrodden, the impact of reforms, enunciated by the new government, was bound to be disturbing to the entrenched vested interests. It is worthwhile, therefore, to study it *vis-a-vis* the affected interests in the Nepalese society.

The monarchy, in spite of the fact that it had gained the most in the wake of the overthrow of the Rana regime, had now become zealous of its privileges and resented all such steps which could in any way undermine them. In the background of the known hostility between the King and the Nepali Congress, it was expected that the former would obstruct the implementation of the reform measures since they were likely to hit the position of the Royalty. Even though the privy purse of the King had been fixed earlier, yet no one knew how much money was actually being spent on the Royal palace by the earlier hand-picked and subservient governments. The new government strictly adhered to the privy purse fixed by it and exercised utmost vigilance on its utilization. The jurisdiction of the Royal Palace Secretariat was defined and the staff regularized. It was done with a view to preventing the King from encroaching upon the jurisdiction of the Central Secretariat. The ministers and the secretaries were prohibited from seeing the monarch unless they got the written permission from the Prime Minister, or unless the King himself wanted them to meet.⁶¹ Some members of the Royal family were in possession of forests but, with the nationalization of forests, their income was curtailed. Thus, in matters of power, position and income the royalty was adversely affected.

The feudal lords who also enjoyed judicial powers under the system of Rajya Courts were deprived of this privilege in the wake of the reforms in judicial system.⁶²

The Ranas and their yes-men who had accumulated the most fertile land which they held tax-free under the *birta* system lost heavily in the wake of land reforms instituted by the new government. The serfdom, under which the *birta* landholders had been exploiting the landless labourers for the last one century, came to an end.

The socio-economic reforms undertaken by the Nepali Congress Government led to varied reactions in the opposition political parties. The two among them—the Gorkha Parishad and the Communist Party, occupying the place of importance in the

Nepalese political scene—attacked the government for diametrically opposite reasons. While the Gorkha Parishad representing vested interests was naturally resentful of progressive measures, the Communists found the wind was being taken out of their sails by the Nepali Congress and, therefore, out of frustration they arrayed themselves against the government. These parties seemed to be bent upon utilizing any stick to beat the government. The vested interest had enough grouse against the government. The common man, too, was growing gradually restive owing to slow pace of reforms whose implementation was halting and half-hearted, being obstructed as it was, at every stage by the supporters of the vested interests in the administration. Other parties, like the Communists, instead of trying to understand the inherent nature of the Nepalese society wherein concerted efforts were needed to root out the vested interests, and in which they could have helped by educating the people about the difficulties and privations involved in the process of democratic and economic development, embarked upon the destructive course of agitational opposition to the government and exploited the popular resentment against the inevitable taxes which the government had imposed to augment the nation's financial resources. This opportunistic role of the progressive political parties like the Communists made them virtual allies of the vested interests represented by the Gorkha Parishad.

The Opposition

Thus, true to the traditions of Nepalese politics, the routed, scuttled and frustrated political leaders, who were till then flying at each other's throat, started rubbing their shoulders together to maintain their personalities in the politics, and, if possible, to wreck the elected government and share the booty. Their first attempt, however, was to get the elections declared invalid on the ground of corrupt practices, involvement of foreign money and unconstitutional practices adopted by the elected party.⁶³ On the rejection of their plea by the Supreme Court, the Presidents of the three parties—the United Democratic Party, Praja Parishad and Prajatantrik Mahasabha—announced on June 1, 1959, the formation of a National Democratic Front with the declared

objective of acting as an "opposition both inside and outside the parliament".⁶⁴ In political circles, however, it was apprehended that the Front would indulge in destructive activities.⁶⁵ Similarly within a month of the formation of the Nepali Congress Government, the Communist Party at its plenum at Janakpur declared to wage relentless struggle for, what it called, the solution of immediate problems.⁶⁶

In order to comprehend fully the nature of the opposition to the government and its impact on the future political development, it is necessary to know on what grounds the political parties took up their crusade against the government of the Nepali Congress.

The opposition parties, particularly the Front, charged the Nepali Congress Government with corrupt and inefficient administration. It claimed that the whole administrative reorganization had been done at the discretion of one Cabinet Minister—S. P. Upadhyaya.⁶⁷ Only relatives or the followers of the party, according to it, were given jobs while able and experienced men were passed by.⁶⁸ The Front also accused the government of creating new posts, and of appointing its own men without consulting the Public Service Commission. The General Secretary of the Communist Party castigated that "people of Nepal were daily becoming disillusioned with the way the government is working. In the name of reorganization, the administration is being Congressized".⁶⁹

The opposition parties, apparently taking cudgels on behalf of the downtrodden, came out sharply against the government's economic and land policy. It was, however, difficult for the opposition political parties calling themselves radical to oppose the scheme of various socio-economic reforms introduced by the government. They could not come out against the abolition of the *birta* system, nor could they oppose in principle the programme of industrialization. They, therefore, attacked the manner in which the government was formulating its economic and agrarian policies calling them unscientific. Criticizing the government's taxation policy, the Front commented: "... new taxes have been imposed in an unscientific manner. They inflict a blow on middle class and affect lower classes also. It is clear that the government is completely devoid of practical knowledge and

has no target with regard to the economic policy of the country.”⁷⁰

Similar views were also expressed by the Communist Party. The Central Committee of the party called these reforms as mere “eye-wash” which had been taken “half-heartedly”.⁷¹ The Gorkha Parishad, representing the vested interests, criticized the abolition of *birta* system and the taxation policy of the government. Bharat Shamsher, the General Secretary of the party, doubted whether such steps would end the feudal system and improve the lot of the peasants. According to him, the Bill that abolished the *birta* was not guided by any scientific policy and was just an attempt to throw dust into the eyes of the people.⁷²

It was in the field of foreign relations that serious allegations were levelled against the ruling party by the opposition. Accusing the government of playing chores to a foreign power, the National Democratic Front of the opposition parties launched upon a campaign of vilification and brought in the name of India in this connexion. It called the government a “stooge” of the Indian Government, which had come to power with the assistance of India.⁷³ Without naming India, T. P. Acharya, the President of the Front, alleged that the Nepali Congress had usurped power with the support of a foreign country. Hence, he declared, the government could not maintain neutrality in foreign affairs and take steps for the welfare of the people at home.⁷⁴ The Front maintained that the government was serving the interests of India, thereby subverting the national interest. It criticized the government for delaying the revision of Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty of 1950, by virtue of which Nepal had become the monopoly market for India. The working committee of the Front demanded withdrawal of Indian Commercial Attaches from several towns in the country and turning out of Indian personnel from the checkposts on the northern border.⁷⁵ The Communist Party of Nepal outdid the Front in its attempt to establish the government’s subservience to India. It accused the Indian Press of trying to malign relations existing between Nepal and China. Criticizing the opinion of some PSP leaders that India should take over the responsibility of defence of Nepal in view of the threat from China, it claimed that “such opinions have only hurt the nationalistic feelings of the Nepalese and prove their vulture-like eyes fixed at Nepal.”⁷⁶ That India was able to interfere in the in-

ternal affairs of Nepal was enough proof of the fact, according to the Nepalese Communists, that the Nepali Congress Government owed its existence to the sustenance received from across the southern border.⁷⁷ Instead of preserving national interest, the party alleged, the government concluded the Gandak Agreement with India which totally ignored the interest of Nepal. By committing to the Gandak Project, the government, according to it, had compromised Nepal's territorial integrity and overlooked agricultural and industrial advantages of Nepal.⁷⁸ The Communist Party also accused India of acting like the East India Company by making Nepal to agree on the Gandak Project.⁷⁹ The Front leader, T. P. Acharya, alleged that the Gandak Agreement was nothing less than a surrender of territory to India, and if the Nepali Congress Government was allowed to continue in power, he warned the people, it would handover "all our streams and rivers and the areas around them to others".⁸⁰ While asking the government to revise the Indo-Nepalese Trade Treaty of 1950, the Communists expressed their apprehension about the government's capacity of negotiating with India, dependent, as it was, on the Indian Government for its own survival.⁸¹

While the Front parties and the Communist Party criticized the government for being subservient to India and neglecting relations with her northern neighbour—China, the rightist Gorkha Parishad blamed it for being soft to the Chinese. It particularly referred to the events in Tibet and demanded from the Nepalese Government to take up the issue of Tibetan autonomy with the Chinese Government.⁸² When China challenged the validity of the McMahon Line and the Nepalese Government adopted a neutral stand by declaring that it was an issue between India and China and that Nepal had nothing to do with it, the Parishad denounced the stand taken by the government in the following words: "McMahon Line should be accepted as a fact. The Prime Minister B. P. Koirala's statement is regrettable. If we subscribe to such an attitude of indifference towards our neighbouring countries, they may also adopt similar policy towards us when we are in trouble."⁸³

The Parishad alleged that China was steadily encroaching upon the Nepalese territory and that the government should, instead of appeasing her, face her boldly by forming a joint command of all

South-East Asian countries.⁸⁴ The Parishad demanded that the government should repudiate the Chinese claim over Mount Everest and reciprocate the feeling of the Indian Prime Minister by declaring that an aggression on India would be regarded as an aggression on Nepal.⁸⁵ The Mustang incident further confirmed the views of the Parishad that China was out for “treacherous aggression”.⁸⁶

Thus, being buffeted with criticism from both—the right and the left parties—the new government in Nepal found it extremely difficult to carry out successfully its socio-economic programme. Whether the charges being levelled against it, were based on facts or not was a different matter. Suffice it to say that the opposition was able to kick up enough dust in which the facts lay buried, enabling the detractors of the Nepali Congress to further confuse the situation. But before dealing with the political repercussions of the criticisms, it is necessary to attempt an appraisal of the opposition’s charges against the government.

There is no denying the fact that corruption had burrowed deeply into the administrative set-up in Nepal and no government in the past could be absolved of its responsibility for abetting its growth. To this extent the new government could also not present a spotless record. Instances were not lacking when the government attempted to ignore the decisions of the Public Service Commission. The issue of 17 Bada Hakims, who had been rejected by the Commission, but were sought to be reinstated by the Prime Minister on the ground that the Public Service Commission had no right to reject them,⁸⁷ led to a great stir in the public. There were also instances which supported the opposition’s charge that the government was “Congressizing” administration. It was observed in many quarters that in the District Development Offices and Panchayat Offices some workers of the party were appointed.⁸⁸ Moreover; there were reports that the “officials in this new cadre (District Development Officers) were entitled to special treatment since they were not subject to the usual administrative rules. They could function in a more or less semi-official capacity, with authority to spend government funds on local development projects without close government supervision and without completely losing their party identification”.⁸⁹

But, despite the fact that corruption did continue to holdsway over the administration, it must be conceded that the new government made serious efforts to check it as far as possible under the circumstances. While at the district level it continued to flourish, the administration at the centre was comparatively neat and clean. Structurally, the administration had now been organized on more scientific basis, and there was better coordination between various wings of the government. Further, a sense of confidence had been created in the civil service which felt more devoted to the task assigned to it by the government.

The economic policy pursued by the Nepali Congress Government could hardly be regarded as "unscientific". While it attempted to abolish feudal privileges on the one hand, it introduced taxation that did not put much strain on any particular section of the society, on the other. The rich had to pay on non-rent paying holding, profits and their palatial buildings; the poor had to pay taxes on houses, water and radios. The taxes were so light that they expected to yield only rupees 25,000,00 for the year 1959-60. Similarly, while the *birta* abolition Bill attempted to have a ceiling on holding of big landlords, it preserved the tenancy right of the tillers. The government demonstrated a pragmatic approach towards the land problems when it refused to heed to the demands of the Communist Party that the affected landlords should not be given compensation. Though the process of abolition was slow, yet owing to the administrative machinery being what it was, and under democratic order it could not be hastened. Above all, the government was not given enough time to show the results of the economic reforms.

It was in the field of foreign relations that wild charges were hurled at by the opposition. The government was accused, as noted earlier, of being both pro-Indian and pro-Chinese. At least in the opinion of the opposition, the government had failed to adopt independent, neutral and nationalistic foreign policy. It should, however, be remembered that when the Nepali Congress had been hoisted into power, the cold war was raging across the Himalayas. The Chinese army, while quelling the Tibetan rebellion, had been posing a threat along the Nepalese border and appeared to disturb the peace along the Sino-Indian border. Cautiously, the government moved in such a way as not to involve

itself in its neighbours' disputes and at the same time, not to evoke the displeasure of either side. As one commentator observed at that time: "Neutrality has entered into a new phase because of these developments, but we should not be panicky. We shall be committing blunder if we side with any particular bloc in a fit of sentiments. We have to mould our relations with friendly countries in the light of new awakening that is dawning on Asia."⁹⁰

On the issue of McMahon Line, a sensitive point between her two neighbours, the Prime Minister maintained that it was an issue between India and China about which he had nothing to say and nothing to offer.⁹¹ Since China appeared in a bellicose mood and Nepal could not afford to antagonize her, the government thought it prudent to maintain strict neutrality in the Sino-Indian conflict. That it supported China's entry into the United Nations was no reflection on its neutrality.⁹² Even India, despite her dispute with China, had continued to support the latter's claim in the United Nations. When pressure and tension mounted on its northern border, the opposition raised a demand for either making its own adequate defence arrangements or to conclude a military alliance with India to protect the country from any possible attack. The Prime Minister refused to enter into any military alliance and assured that there was no threat from China to Nepal's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but, in case, "China attacks we shall resist such aggression to the last". But the Prime Minister knew that the morale boosting slogans would not suffice unless matched by concrete steps to safeguard the national independence. Since it was not possible for Nepal to arm so heavily as to match the Chinese might and the government wanted not to enter into any military alliance, the Nepali Congress Government decided to use diplomacy to achieve the end. In March 1960, leaving India alone to settle her dispute with China on the border question, B. P. Koirala visited China and negotiated an agreement for non-aggression, border demarcation, a 20-mile demilitarized zone along the border and a 110 (N.C.) million financial aid programme with her.⁹³ That there was no surrender involved in these agreements was evident from the Prime Minister's observation which he made while still in China. Warning against

any possible attempt by any nation to commit aggression he asserted: "Notwithstanding its size or might, if any power attempts to occupy or control even an inch of the territory of any Asian country, such attempt will definitely jeopardize the peace of the world. History should teach the lesson that if peace is again disrupted in Asia the Dark Age will once more cast its shadow over the continent. It will, therefore, be wise for Asia today to firmly adhere to the Five Principles of peaceful co-existence among all countries—big or small."⁹⁴

The Nepalese Government's independent foreign policy and her concern for Nepal's sovereignty were further revealed when it stoutly refused to entertain the Chinese claim over Mount Everest.⁹⁵ Likewise, when the Chinese army, in violation of the agreement, crossed the Nepalese border and killed a Nepalese guard, the Prime Minister did not only repudiate the Chinese stand that the incident had occurred in the Chinese territory, but demanded compensation from China for killing a guard. It was regarded as a victory of the government's policy when China agreed to pay a sum of rupees 10,000 as compensation for the loss of a Nepali life.⁹⁶ Moreover, when China offered to link Kathmandu with Lhasa by road, the government declined the offer on the ground that the road would not give much impetus to the dwindling trade between Nepal and Tibet region of China.⁹⁷

With India, the Nepali Congress Government maintained cordial and close relations. B. P. Koirala emphasized the "identity of interests" on all general issues between India and Nepal.⁹⁸ The government defended the implementation of Joint Indo-Nepal Gandak and Kosi projects. It was indeed fallacious to suggest, Koirala pointed out, that these projects undermined Nepalese sovereignty and made Nepal subservient to India. When Nehru remarked in the Indian Parliament that an attack on Nepal would be considered as an attack on India, B. P. Koirala only reciprocated the national sentiments when he observed that Nehru's remark was nothing but a "friendly gesture", and Nepal was always an independent nation and Nehru had no confusion about it. He asserted that though Nehru's statement was based on the Treaty of Friendship 1950, it could not be implemented unilaterally.⁹⁹ Besides, the government succeeded in revising the unequal Trade and Transit Treaty with India.

B. P. Koirala wanted to pursue independent policy to such an extent that he turned down the idea of having a joint military command with India to meet the Chinese menace and maintained that Nepal did not fear any threat from China.¹⁰⁰

From the study of the above relations which the Nepali Congress Government sought to maintain with its two neighbours, it is clear that the foreign policy of the government was essentially independent and in conformity with the country's situation and needs. It appears that the opposition's main aim was to whip up the sentiments of the people against the government. The policies of the government, both foreign and domestic, were used merely as scapegoats. The opposition parties and other affected vested interests, therefore, embarked upon an agitational course.

Continuing to build up their case against the government, the opposition parties and the vested interests organized protest demonstrations in order to mobilize public opinion in favour of their stand. They opposed not only the Gandak Project, but went even to the extent of protesting against the import of hydrogenated oil from India.¹⁰¹ K. I. Singh, now a prominent leader of the Front, organized a non-tax campaign in Terai.¹⁰² The Gorkha Parishad called upon the people to revolt against the government.¹⁰³

Visualizing that their interests were at stake because of egalitarian measures adopted by the government, the vested interests like wealthy Ranas, landlords, rajas, money-lenders and *mahants* started financing some newspapers and formed some associations like Karmavir Mahamandal to oppose the government. In April 1960, this class formed another association—Jan Hit Sangh. Its basic purpose was to fight and frustrate the land reform measures and taxation policy of the government. Within a short span of time there was noted a phenomenal growth and the influence of the Sangh in the valley. It successfully staged hartals and demonstrations in Kathmandu against the government and appealed to the King to repeal the land reform and taxation Bill.¹⁰⁴ Successful hartals by the Sangh created confusion among the people and lowered the prestige of the government on the one hand, and on the other gave credence to the view that these anti-government moves had the support of the King,¹⁰⁵ who was thus preparing the ground to dismiss the government from office.

King Mahendra's Attitude

That the King should have been involved in the anti-government agitations was indeed a peculiar phenomenon which characterized political developments in Nepal. Opposition by the political parties and demonstrations by the people at their behest, however ill-timed, unfortunate, and opportunistic, were inherent characteristics of a democratic set-up and, therefore, they had to be tolerated and dealt with according to the due process of law. But the King, being the supreme constitutional head, was supposed to be above party politics, and was expected to support the government in power so long as it enjoyed the majority in the legislature. This at least was the demand of the spirit in which democracy should have been allowed to function under the constitution. But the King, disregarding democratic practices, had all along been undermining the position of the duly constituted government. He had not given up his earlier practice of hearing petitions of the people directly and redeeming them.¹⁰⁶ This practice lowered the status of the government in the eyes of the people, who, tradition-bound as they still were, considered him the real ruler. He also distributed rupees 32,800 for relief measures from the government's treasury,¹⁰⁷ although the impression was assiduously maintained that he personally was providing succour to the grief-stricken people. He, thus, was consistently building up his own image at the expense of the popularly elected government. The opportunistic agitations launched by the opposition parties and feudal elements with the sole aim to dislodge the government from power gave the King the much needed opportunity to invoke his constitutional prerogatives. Using the stick of slander and vilification provided to him by the opposition parties, he lashed out at the government, of which, technically speaking, he still was the head. Posing himself as the champion of the people he bemoaned: "Democracy is of no use if it brings harm to the people, discourages industrialization, makes justice costly, encourages bribery and corruption, increases unemployment and gives anti-national elements an opportunity to take undue advantage of the situation. . . . I, too, have some obligation to safeguard the sovereignty of the country and its independence, and ensure national progress."¹⁰⁸

The King did not stop here. At a public function, held to observe the National Day, he asserted: "If, discarding anarchism and narrow-mindedness, the government gives priority to the welfare of the country—only then can the people understand the policies of the government."¹⁰⁹

Obviously, in his opinion, the government did not have this "royal sense" of priorities. He, therefore, was obliged to find out whether there was a lack of understanding between the government and the people, and whether the government had given itself up to development without any scientific planning. He stated: "All must have realized that those who are actively engaged in nation building tasks must understand the situation in the country. If we work without understanding this, all our labour will be fruitless and both the people and the government will be blamed. Therefore, it has become essential that responsible persons should think twice before starting any work. Without resources, no work can be started. It is the duty of the government to start a planned economy and it is also the duty of the people to take part in the national development programme."¹¹⁰

Instead of acting as a sobering influence, the King, was adding fuel to the fire lit up by the opposition parties and other reactionary elements. He did not use his influence and power to put down the unlawful activities. He, on the other hand, held the government responsible for such a situation and scoffed at it. Referring to the situation in some hilly areas where the feudal elements had created conditions of lawlessness, he said: "If true (the incidents at West No. 1), it is highly disturbing, but I hope that with one year of experience in running the administration, the government have paid proper attention to the situation."¹¹¹

It was expected that the traditional forces would not sit idly when their interests were being threatened by the progressive measures of the government. Although highly improper, and, constitutionally speaking disgraceful, the King's behaviour, too, was not altogether unnatural. After all he was the main bastion of feudalism and retrogressive social forces. But what was surprising was the fact that some progressive forces had joined hands with the traditional forces in their short-sighted enthusiasm to oppose the government. The joining of hands by the

Communists against the progressive Nepali Congress appeared opportunistic. It was also alleged in some quarters that the Communist Party was seeking the co-operation of some birtaholders and other feudal elements, who were dead set against the government, because of its egalitarian reforms, to launch a movement against the government's policy of importing hydrogenated oil from India, Gandak Agreement and the dissolution of Lalitpur Municipality, with a view to weakening the Congress Government.¹¹² When the feudal elements created trouble and the government was forced to resort to firing, the Communists, strangely enough, put the whole blame on the government and absolved the feudal elements.¹¹³

The government was, thus, left alone in the whirlpool of hostility. The reactionary forces, the King and even the so-called progressive elements were all arrayed against it.

The consequence of the hostile attitude of the opposition political parties, feudal elements and the King had been that the vested interests started taking law in their own hands and sought to create conditions of lawlessness in the country. A few instances would bring out the point.

The Bajhang Revolt

In accordance with the abolition of the feudal privileges, the court of Bajhang Raja was abolished and a zonal court was set up in the area. Om Jang, son of Bajhang's Raja, Ram Jang, refused to submit papers of the "family court" to the zonal court. He raised the slogan "Bajhang is ours", and asked the zonal court judge to submit all papers to the "family court" and even threatened to arrest him. According to reports, Om Jang and his followers tried to set up an independent government and refused to accept the writ issued from Kathmandu. Although the defiance by Om Jang was brought to an end, yet there was no denying the fact that the feudal elements had become bold enough to challenge the constitutional authority.

Such incidents took place with increasing frequency. In West No. 1—a hilly place about 20 miles west of Kathmandu—which had been the abode of militant Gorkha nationalists and feudal lords who had strong ties of loyalty to the Shah dynasty and the

Ranas, a serious situation developed, when Karmavir Mahamandal and Gorkha Parishad launched an anti-government movement. The disturbances started in the first week of November 1959 as a result of quarrels between money-lenders and their debtors. The interested political parties, particularly the Gorkha Parishad, supported the former and made the situation worse. Soon robbery, loot and plunder broke out and consequently the life of the people was dislocated in the area. The government reacted by banning processions and meetings. Army had to be called to deal with the fast deteriorating situation.

Gorkha Uprising

The conflict between landlords and landless, between creditors and debtors soon spread in Gorkha—the ancestral home of Shah kings. Here Karmavir Mahamandal, the mouthpiece of the feudal elements, took initiative in inciting the people “not to pay taxes, not to let the forests be nationalized by the government, and to overthrow the government by violent and terrorist methods”. The leader of the Mahamandal, Yogi Narharinath and his followers, also began to spread rumours among the people that the Congress Government intended to confiscate their property, impose taxes on women’s pigtaileds, cattleheads and so on. On October 25, 1969, 3,000 persons, armed with Khukari, lathi and swords, attacked the office of the Bada Hakim. The police had to resort to firing in which seven persons were killed and six injured.

Now the question arises how the feudal elements succeeded in creating trouble at many places and why the elected government failed to mobilize the people in its support. It was due to two main reasons: (a) the weakening of the ruling party; and (b) the existence and the active participation of monarchy in the Nepalese politics.

The Nepali Congress found itself incapable of effectively dealing with the situation owing to more than one reason. As in 1951, so in 1959, there appeared a tendency among high ranking party leaders to go for government jobs rather than to stand for party’s activities. It was suggested by many veteran politicians that out of “four big” leaders at least one must remain out of

the ministerial rank and organize the party.¹¹⁴ The suggestion, however, went unheeded and most of the leaders who were providing succour and sustenance to the party against various pulls and strains switched over to the government. The organizational wing of the party suffered as a consequence.

In a big, heterogeneous party like the Nepali Congress, intra-party conflict was inevitable, particularly when it became the ruling party and had to introduce measures of far-reaching consequences. But the open conflict in the leadership was bound to impede the work of the government and shake the confidence of the rank and file of the party in its leadership. Even among the "big four" there appeared some cracks. Suvarna Shamsher and S. P. Upadhyaya differed on some issues with B. P. Koirala and Ganeshman Singh. Though the differences between them were not of serious nature as that of the other party leaders who openly came out to oppose the leadership and the policies of the government. Among such leaders were Tulsi Giri, M. P. Koirala and to some extent V. B. Thapa. Tulsi Giri resigned from the party on vague reasons and resorted to opposing the government bitterly.¹¹⁵ M. P. Koirala did not resign from the party but contributed articles in newspapers enlisting the failures of the government and the situation brought by its faulty working. He reminded the King of his ultimate responsibility to check the government from working in arbitrary manners.¹¹⁶ Though V. B. Thapa never openly came out to slur his own party's government, yet he aired his dissatisfaction over some of the "unrealistic" policies adopted by it.

There were differences in the party over the external and domestic policies of the government. Many senior members of the party were not in agreement with the ministerial members with regard to their policy towards China and India. The General Secretary of the party, for instance, declared that the Tibetan event had rudely shocked those who believed in Panch Sheel.¹¹⁷ With India the party had advocated close and cordial relations. On the eve of the formation of the government, the *Kalpana* had suggested that the government should see that the "relations with India are not unfriendly" and "anti-Indian policy should not be followed with regard to Sino-Indian conflict".¹¹⁸ But the government did not stick to the suggestions made

by its party's rank and file with regard to relations with the neighbouring countries. This created a hiatus between the party's rank and file and the government.

Moreover, there persisted differences in the party over internal policy like the industrialization of the country;¹¹⁹ abolition of *birta* system;¹²⁰ "receipt movement",¹²¹ and the amendment of the constitution.¹²²

There was noted a lack of understanding and co-ordination between the ministers and the members of parliament; between the members of parliament and the party members; between the ministers and the rank and file of the party. As early as August 1959, in a meeting of the members of the parliament held at the central office of the party, several of them expressed dissatisfaction over the official policies and the relations between ministers and the party members in the parliament. The Working Committee of the party had repeatedly asked the government to formulate such plans that might elicit maximum co-operation from the people on the one hand and deliver the goods to the people in the minimum period on the other. But the government failed to act upon the party's suggestion. Likewise, when the ministerial members urged the party members in the Seventh Annual Conference of the party at Kathmandu to educate the people about the welfare steps taken by the Nepali Congress Government, their appeal fell flat. During the plenary session, the central committee had to observe: ". . . the reforms have not made much impact upon the people. . . . The reasons are that: (1) we have forgotten to build the base camp before reaching the summit of socialist society; and (2) we have also forgotten that unless there was a clear theoretical understanding, forward march against adverse circumstances cannot be possible."

We must admit that we have been unable to explain the significance of the reforms to the people, and also that the people have not derived much benefit from these reforms.¹²³

There was steady decline of power, popularity and influence of the party among the people, for which there were many reasons. Some of them are as follows:

(a) There was a struggle for power in the party, and those who could not get any position in the office of the government aspired for higher positions in the party. Those who could not

secure either, broke away from the party or remained as inactive members;

(b) There lacked a good, purposeful and stubborn leadership at the top of the party. Though B. P. Koirala retained the Presidentship of the party, yet he had to devote most of his time to the governmental activities, and as a result the party workers could not get proper guidance;

(c) The Working Committee could not formulate specific and concrete programme and policy for the party to embark upon. In the absence of this, the pretext to launch a movement easily slipped into the hands of the opposition;

(d) Since top leaders devoted much of their time in the governmental activities the party's programmes like organizing meetings, educating the workers, assigning of work to them, coining of new slogans, enlarging of mass contact, campaign for government's achievements, etc., were ignored; and

(e) The rift among the leaders and their inability to deliver the goods to the people disgusted the workers to such an extent that many of them crossed over to other parties.

Thus, with dissensions eating into the vitals of the party organization and the government rendered crippled because of disharmonious relations within the ministry, it was not easy for the ruling party to hold on the fort against the combined onslaught of the opposition parties, feudal elements and the King.

The institution of monarchy in Nepal, which became a decisive force after the revolution of 1950 proved to be a constant threat to democracy in the country. If the people became discontented with the working of a government, which was possible due to the traditional nature of the society where every dominant section had its own interest, they could approach the monarchy for making alternative arrangement for the administration. This practice of the people was against the established canons of democratic process. In other democratic countries if the people became discontented with the ruling party, they were left with no choice save to hoist another party or parties to power for better administration, and thus, democratic institutions and processes were kept intact. But owing to the existence and participation of monarchy in the politics of Nepal, the people were encouraged to ask the King to intervene directly in the affairs of

the government even though they were managed by an elected regime. Such instances became frequent during the Nepali Congress Government. On December 3, 1960, for instance, a large crowd of people assembled at the gates of the royal palace to protest against the imposition of taxes on urban land, water taps and houses.¹²⁴ The imposition of such taxes were justified for the development of the society and any democratic government would have done so without any fear of direct intervention by any authority. But in Nepal "this direct demonstration, which was not the work of political parties, set the pattern for subsequent non-party political agitations which sought King Mahendra's direct intervention in the affairs of government."¹²⁵ If there had been no active institution of monarchy and the elected government had been granted sufficient time, the measures introduced by the government would have started bearing fruits and ultimately the ruling party would have won over.

Thus, owing to the breakout of lawlessness instigated by the affected vested interests, irresponsible opposition by political parties, frequent intervention in the affairs of the government by the King and the prevailing dissensions in the ruling party made the position of the Nepali Congress Government shaky. But the party in power was not unaware of the deteriorating conditions of the organization and the impact of the disorder on the attitude of the people towards the government. With a view to strengthening its position and meeting the challenge effectively, the party drew up an elaborate programme which included launching of educational training camps for party workers, making governmental measures popular by intensive propaganda and constructive work such as obtaining legal rights for the peasant, opening rural voluntary and credit societies, activating and expanding the youth and peasant organizations under the banner of the party, and to publish and propagate socialist literature.¹²⁶ To curb lawlessness the government sent instructions to local authorities to deal with the miscreants strictly. The army was also despatched to help the authorities in restoring peace and order in the affected areas. But before the ruling party's efforts could start bearing fruits, the royal scourge fell on the popular government on December 16, 1960. The King dismissed the elected government, scrapped the constitution and assumed all powers unto himself.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ In the preamble of the constitution the King stated, “. . . we resolve to help our subjects attain all-round progress . . . through the establishment of an efficient monarchical government. . .”
See *The King and his Constitution*, New Delhi, 1959, p. 1.
- ² Article 10 (1).
- ³ In the absence of such a leader in the *Pratinidhi Sabha*—a situation the likelihood of which was always there owing to the fluctuating political situation, the King could, in his discretion, appoint as Prime Minister a person who was not a member of that House. But in such a case, he could not hold office for more than four months unless he became a member of *Rajya Sabha* or of the *Pratinidhi Sabha*. Article 13 (3).
- ⁴ The proclamation suspending the Cabinet government, however, was revocable by the King if he was satisfied that it was possible to find a Prime Minister who could command a majority in the *Pratinidhi Sabha*, but if not sooner evoked, the proclamation ceased to have an effect at the first meeting of Parliament after the next general elections or on the expiry of a period of twelve months from the issue of the proclamation, whichever was earlier. Article 17 (1) and (2).
- ⁵ Article 13.5 (a). ⁶ Article 13 (4).
- ⁷ Article 10 (2). ⁸ Article 10 (3).
- ⁹ *Ibid.* ¹⁰ Article 10 (4).
- ¹¹ Article 10 (5). ¹² Article 16 (2).
- ¹³ Article 26 (2).
- ¹⁴ Article 64 (2).
- ¹⁵ Article 63. ¹⁶ Article 27 (3).
- ¹⁷ Article 32 (2).
- ¹⁸ Such ordinances ceased to operate, when (a) both the Houses passed a resolution disapproving them; (b) withdrawn by the King himself; and (c) forty-five days after the opening of the parliament, Article 32.

- ¹⁹ For details see Article 57.
- ²⁰ The King was, however, not entitled to assume the power of the Supreme Court or to suspend that part of the Constitution which dealt with the powers of judiciary. Such suspension of the constitution was restricted to a period of twelve months, but could be renewed for similar periods without any limitation, until the King was satisfied that the emergency no longer existed.
- ²¹ The proclamation suspending the constitutional government was effective for an unlimited number of 12-month periods until the King was satisfied that the parliamentary government could be fully restored. Article 56.
- ²² Article 12 (1). ²³ Article '13 (4).
- ²⁴ Article 34 (1). ²⁵ Articles 40 (3) and 64 (3).
- ²⁶ See Article 41.
- ²⁷ *cf.* the observation: "... in a country where democracy is still in its infancy and politics have tended to be in dangerous flux, constitutional safeguards, vesting emergency powers in the King are understandable, even essential, until such time at any rate when parliamentary government is assured of smooth sailing." *Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay, February 14, 1959. ²⁸ *The Times of India*, February 16, 1959.
- ²⁹ See Article 53.
- ³⁰ *Commoner*, Kathmandu, April 17, 1959.
The hesitation of King Mahendra in calling the voted party to form the government gave rise to apprehension that the parliamentary system may not be installed at all on any excuse. "It is the usual democratic practice to usher in the new government as soon as possible after elections are complete. The interregnum is utilized for intrigues by political adventurists." *Ibid.*, April 18, 1959.
- ³¹ Information supplied by Nepalese political leaders: It is interesting to note King Mahendra's own views with regard to the power and relevance of monarchy in Nepal. In his own opinion, the monarchy had right to rule for "it had not led the revolution to hand over the reins of power to others." Information given by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, formed after the royal take-over of the administration in December 1960.

- ²³ *Deshseva*, January 17, 1959.
- ²³ *Swatantra Samachar*, June 17, 1959.
- ²⁴ *Samyukta Prayas*, May 7, 1959.
- ²⁵ K. I. Singh, the President of the United Democratic Party, even filed a petition in the Supreme Court requesting to declare the general elections null and void since they were not fair and foreign money was invested. For this purpose he also demanded a judicial inquiry.
- ²⁶ The government fixed up the privy purse of the royal family at Rs. 854,000 (N.C.) and 25 single and 25 double gold sharfies. It also determined the service of royal staff. *Nepal Gazette*, June 8, 1959.
- ²⁷ The minimum salary was raised from Rs. 30 to Rs. 45 per month, while the salary of first class gazetted officers was up to Rs. 700 p.m. *Gorkhapatra*, March 16, 1960.
- ²⁸ *Nepal Samachar*, June 5, 1960.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, February 15, 1960. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, August 6, 1959.
- ⁴¹ *Swatantra Samachar*, February 18, 1960.
- ⁴² *Kalpna*, May 25, 1959.
- ⁴³ *Philingo*, November 11, 1960.
- ⁴⁴ For details see *Gorkhapatra*, October 12, 1960.
- ⁴⁵ For details see *Nepal Gazette*, January 4, 1960.
- ⁴⁶ For details see *Nepal Samachar*, June 1, 1960.
- ⁴⁷ For this purpose the government established three High Courts in Eastern, Western and Central zones. It also introduced "floating courts".
For details see *Nepal Gazette*, January 4, 1960, and *Gorkhapatra*, August 26, 1960.
- ⁴⁸ The Bill abolishing the *birta* system was approved by the *Pratinidhi Sabha* on September 17, 1959, became law on October 7 and came into operation on January 3, 1960, owing to lack of efficient administrative machinery and opposition to the measure by the vested interests the process of abolition of *birta* was, however, slow. For instance, only 14,000 out of 67,000 *birta* owners of Kathmandu had got registered their holdings up to August, 1960. *Nepal Samachar*, September 8, 1960.
- ⁴⁹ *Kalpna*, June 23, 1960. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Budget Speech, 1960, p. 4.

- ⁵² *Motherland*, Kathmandu, August 11, 1959.
- ⁵³ Budget Speech, 1960-61, Kathmandu, p. 26.
- ⁵⁴ *Naya Samaj*, Kathmandu, April 24, 1959.
- ⁵⁵ *The Statesman*, December 5, 1959.
- ⁵⁶ *Naya Samaj*, April 24, 1959.
- ⁵⁷ *The Hindustan Times*, September 12, 1960.
- ⁵⁸ *Swatantra Samachar*, June 9, 1959.
- ⁵⁹ *Nepal Samachar*, January 19, 1960.
- ⁶⁰ *Kalpana*, June 9, 1959.
- ⁶¹ Joshi, B.L., and Rose, Leo E., *Democratic Innovations In Nepal*, Berkeley, 1967, p. 316.
- ⁶² The Rajya Courts system was prevalent in a few principalities in Western Nepal, and had given the feudal lords the power to dispense justice and maintain law and order in their regions. Needless to say that the feudals were utilizing their privilege to their own advantage in disregard to their obligations to the people.
- ⁶³ *Samyukta Prayas*, May 7, 1959.
- ⁶⁴ *Halkhabar*, Kathmandu, March 30, 1959.
- ⁶⁵ cf. The observation: "... the joint statement (issued by the corresponding parties) tended to injure the democratic foundation of the country. It is clear that the Front is nourished by the reactionary elements who may indulge in destructive opposition." *Swatantra Samachar*, June 2, 1959.
- ⁶⁶ *Kalpana*, July, 6, 1959. ⁶⁷ *Halkhabar*, August, 27, 1960.
- ⁶⁸ cf. It was alleged that "fresh personnel of tender age have been assigned high responsible posts, while old and experienced officials have been demoted. People feel frustrated and think that they are suffering because they are not related to any minister." *Samaj*, August 24, 1959.
- ⁶⁹ *Navayug*, Kathmandu, June 9, 1960.
- ⁷⁰ *Halkhabar*, August 21, 1959. ⁷¹ *Navayug*, April 25, 1960.
- ⁷² *Commoner*, September 30, 1959,
- ⁷³ *Halkhabar*, March 14, 1959. ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, July 12, 1959.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1959. ⁷⁶ *Commoner*, June 6, 1959.
- ⁷⁷ Giving various instances of such an interference the Communist Party particularly referred to the assistance the Indian Embassy was giving to the Tibetan refugees in Nepal. It regarded Prime Minister Nehru's statement that any attack

on Nepal would be considered an attack on India, as an illustration of gross interference with the sovereign right of Nepal. It asserted, "It is nothing but clear violation of Nepal's sovereignty. To send an army into another nation in the name of maintaining one's security is nothing but an expansion of an empire." *Halkhabar*, November 30, 1959.

⁷⁸ *Samaj*, April 16, 1960. ⁷⁹ *Halkhabar*, February 14, 1960.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, December 8, 1959. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, February 9, 1960.

⁸² In a resolution the Parishad demanded: (a) the government should start peaceful negotiations with China for restoring autonomy in Tibet; (b) the government should exchange views with other countries of South Asia to reach consensus on the Tibetan issue; (c) the government should take initiative for restoring goodwill between India and China; and (d) the government should take steps for strengthening national defence and Asian peace. *Halkhabar*, May 13, 1959.

⁸³ *Commoner*, September 19, 1959.

⁸⁴ In a statement the Parishad said: "... Chinese have taken over a part of our Limi area in Jumla and are building roads to cut off this projection from our territory. They have entered with a survey party in our Lipu area north of Tinker in Baitadi district and they have also taken over an area from our territory beyond a river north of Olangchong Gola . . . Prime Minister should discuss all matters of common defence with the Government of India and jointly prepare a move for joint defence talks between all South-East Asian countries against Chinese aggression." *Commoner*, January 18, 1960.

⁸⁵ *Nepali*, Kathmandu, April 8, 1960.

⁸⁶ Following Mustang incident, the Parishad demanded:
 (a) the border agreement with China be abrogated;
 (b) a state of national emergency be declared;
 (c) military resources should be mobilized to defend the northern border; and
 (d) joint action should be taken with other South-East Asian countries to resist Chinese aggression against Nepal. *Nepal Samachar*, July 1, 1960.

⁸⁷ Joshi and Rose, *n* 61, p. 320.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Kalpana*, September 5, 1959.

⁹¹ *Janta*, Kathmandu, September 13, 1959.

- ⁹² *Commoner*, July 16, 1959. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, March 27, 1960.
- ⁹⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, March 16, 1960. ⁹⁵ *Kalpana*, April 4, 1960.
- ⁹⁶ *The Times of India*, July 23, 1960.
- ⁹⁷ *Halkhabar*, April 27, 1960. ⁹⁸ *Kalpana*, June 20, 1959.
- ⁹⁹ *Samaj*, November 29, 1959.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Commoner*, February 1, 1960.
- ¹⁰¹ Those parties which engaged in such campaign were the National Democratic Front and the Communist Party.
- ¹⁰² *Kalpana*, May 26, 1966.
- ¹⁰³ According to some authors, "the Gorkha Parishad was more interested in revolts in certain hill districts than taking such steps as could strengthen the parliamentary system." Joshi and Rose, *n.* 61, p. 338.
- ¹⁰⁴ Joshi and Rose, *n.* 61, p. 338.
- ¹⁰⁵ A comment was made on the situation as: "Coming just two weeks before the dismissal of the Nepali Congress Government, these strikes have raised questions as to whether their timing was merely coincidental. Certainly there is reason for suspecting that the inspiration behind the strikes came from more authoritative sources than the few middle class merchants and landowners who were the nominal leaders of the Sangh." *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁶ In his 52 days tour of Western Nepal King Mahendra disposed of 2,418 petitions of executive nature and 1,439 of judicial nature. *Kalpana*, January 4, 1960.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁸ *Dainik Nepal*, February 6, 1960.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, February 19, 1960.
- ¹¹⁰ *Naya Samaj*, March 12, 1960. ¹¹¹ *Dainik Nepal*, July 27, 1960.
- ¹¹² *Nepali Mamta*, March 4, 1960.
- ¹¹³ For details see *Sahibato*, September 24, 1960 and *Philingo*, October 9, 1960.
- ¹¹⁴ It was suggested to B. P. Koirala, the President of the party, by many politicians close to Nepalese politics that he should step down from the Prime Minister's office and take over the care of the party.
- ¹¹⁵ Tulsi Giri accused the government of its failure to fulfil its election pledges and thereby forfeiting the people's trust. He also accused the government for not bringing any relief to

the people and creating stagnation in the field of economic development. For details see *Commoner* of November 25 and 27, 1960.

¹¹⁶ *Naya Samaj*, April 12, 1960; and *Nepal Samachar*, September 19, 1960.

¹¹⁷ *Nepal Pukar*, May 2, 1959.

¹¹⁸ *Kalpana*, April 25, 1959.

¹¹⁹ For details see *Dainik Nepal*, May 12, 1960.

¹²⁰ For details see *Ibid.*, October 26, 1960.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, August 29, 1960. ¹²³ *Nepal Pukar*, April 27, 1960.

¹²⁴ *Halkhabar*, December 3, 1960.

¹²⁵ Joshi and Rose, *n* 61, p. 328. ¹²⁶ *Nepal Pukar*, April 20, 1960.

CHAPTER 5

End of Parliamentary Democracy

ON December 15, 1960, when the Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala, along with some of his Cabinet colleagues, was attending a Congress Youth Rally, Royal guards accompanied by a Royal Aide, came to the meeting and escorted him and his colleagues to Singha Darbar (the Central Secretariat) and kept them in detention under the Royal order. Immediately, in a broadcast to the nation, King Mahendra proclaimed that his hopes of bringing stability and progress to the country through the elected government had been belied. In spite of warnings issued to the ruling party from time to time, the King added, the party had failed to mend its ways. He dwelt at length in his proclamation on the sad state of affairs brought about by what he called the Nepali Congress "misrule". Asserting that it was his ultimate responsibility to maintain law and order and uphold the integrity and sovereignty of the country, he invoked Article 55 of the constitution and dissolved the Cabinet along with both the Houses of parliament, and assumed unto himself the entire responsibility to administer the country till such time as might be required for the installation of an alternative arrangement.¹

Before reviewing the political order that the King brought into vogue after the dismissal of the elected government, it would be worthwhile to probe into the causes which led King Mahendra to scrap the parliamentary system from the country. Such an analysis of the causes would provide a better perspective to evaluate the new political set-up installed by the King to replace the parliamentary institutions.

Broadly speaking, the King delivered a two-pronged attack on the established political order in the country. First, he levelled against the Nepali Congress serious charges of mal-

administration, misrule and corruption. Secondly, he launched a tirade against the parliamentary institutions claiming that they were unsuitable to the infra-structural conditions in Nepal and the genius of the Nepalese people.

Taking up the charges against the government first, one finds that they were both extensive and varied. They covered the entire range of politics—both domestic and external—and included not only the official conduct of the elected ministry as such but also the personal behaviour of the individual ministers. On the domestic front, according to the King, the government had singularly failed to discharge its responsibility and instead of making all-out efforts to promote the progress and well-being of the nation, it was taking “shelter behind the democratic system, (and had) set aside the interest of the country and the people.”³ As a consequence, so claimed the King, the hardships and difficulties of the people remained unmitigated. The elected government turned deaf ears to the demands of the misery-stricken people.³ The Royal proclamation, dismissing the government, also alleged that in defiance of the laws of the realm, the Council of Ministers made an attempt “to dislocate and paralyse the administrative machinery in the name of investing it with speed, smartness and competence”.⁴ As a consequence, the proclamation declared, the government became “wholly incapable of maintaining law and order in the country”.⁵ In the same breath, justifying his action, the King said that those who were at the highest level of the government were found involved in bribery and corruption.⁶ The government, in the King’s opinion, had indulged in fanning and fomenting anti-social and anti-national elements, which ultimately threatened the national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁷

Blaming the government for lacking in an over-all perspective of the needs and requirements of the nation, the King vehemently criticized its economic policies. He branded them as unreal, unscientific and defective, and claimed that “instead of producing desirable changes in the social set-up”, they left the people in “a disturbed and vitiated atmosphere”.⁸ The government, according to the King, completely disregarded the “existing conditions, necessary resources, technical personnel and practicability”⁹ while planning for economic development and

failed to formulate its schemes properly. Projects were launched in a haphazard manner, due to which neither the target could be achieved nor the resources which, limited as they were, could be utilized properly.¹⁰

The King found fault with the government's taxation policy and characterized it as "unrealistic" since it did not take into consideration the "existing conditions". The result was that it led to a feeling of uncertainty among the people. The land tax, the King alleged, "was imposed with a view to bringing about distribution of land among the cultivators . . . but it produced just the opposite result. As there was no record of land tillers' right, even those who could have acquired the right of protected tenants were evicted. . . creating a serious problem." While, thus, the tiller could not get the coveted land, the landlords owing to the imposition of the land tax stopped all credit for food, and cultivation which they earlier used to advance to the cultivators. Even those tenants whose rights were protected found themselves in a helpless condition.¹¹ The land reform policy of the government, according to the King, neither helped the tiller of the soil nor the landlord.

The King also accused the government of working against the "popular will and aspiration".¹² The ruling party, the King blamed, "wielded authority in a manner to fulfil the party's interest only".¹³ The Nepali Congress Government, the King alleged, "flouted the interests and aspirations of the people and did not even hesitate to imperil national unity, solidarity and sovereignty".¹⁴ It was further alleged that the Congress Government did not hesitate to adopt anti-national steps in order to further its narrow and parochial objectives. In the words of the King: "The ruling party encouraged the setting up of diverse communal organizations in the hope of utilizing their parochial slogans for its own interests in the next elections. Even the slogans threatening the vital unity of the country began to be heard."¹⁵

Charging the Koirala Government for indulging in the game of self-aggrandisement at the expense of the interests of the people, the King scornfully ridiculed the Nepali Congress leaders for unashamedly hankering after position, prestige and status,¹⁶ at the same time neglecting their duties and responsibilities.

The Nepali Congress Government was blamed for making the Crown a scapegoat in order to hide its own failure and incompetence to deliver the goods. In a "highly irresponsible manner and against the feelings and sentiments of the people," bemoaned the King, "the ruling party dragged and involved the Crown and the constitution in political controversy".¹⁷ Consequently, a very "dangerous situation came into existence", according to the King, "which seemed to threaten the future of the nation and besmear its reputation for ever".¹⁸ The ruling party was also held guilty of discrediting and defaming the monarchy.¹⁹

In the field of foreign affairs the Congress Government was accused of pursuing a weak, vacillating and even anti-national policy. It was charged with allowing foreign nations to further their interests in Nepal at the cost of vital interests of the Nepalese.²⁰ It was further alleged that the government had planned to create civil war conditions in Nepal to promote narrow and selfish party interests, and for this purpose was negotiating with Israel for arms deal at the back of the King.²¹

With such an exhaustive charge-sheet against the government, which had jeopardized the "very existence of the country", there was no alternative left with the King, he claimed, except to exercise his "ultimate responsibility for protecting national unity, nationality and sovereignty, maintaining of law and order and safeguarding the country from deterioration",²² by invoking his emergency powers conferred on him by the constitution.

To sum up, therefore, the ruling party, according to the King, had:

- (a) "misused power and encouraged corrupt practices;"
- (b) "dislocated and paralysed the administrative machinery;"
- (c) "encouraged anti-national elements" and thereby a situation developed that "threatened the national unity;"
- (d) proved "wholly incapable of maintaining law and order in the country;"
- (e) adopted "unscientific economic policy;"
- (f) attempted to violate the sanctity of the constitution and the Crown of the country; and
- (g) pursued such a foreign policy that was detrimental to national sovereignty and independence.

And, therefore, it had to be dismissed.

After dismissing a duly elected government on the above charges, the King launched a steam-roller campaign against the parliamentary system itself. This, in fact, was the revival of his old dislike for the parliamentary system of government. As mentioned earlier, King Mahendra, on his coming to the throne, had made his dislike for the parliamentary institutions abundantly clear. After dismissing the elected government he declared in even more unequivocal terms his abhorrence of these institutions. According to him, the experiment with the parliamentary system in the country had not only failed but had brought "devastation" in its trail. The operation of the system, in his opinion, gave rise to "schism and dissension among the citizens;" created a "stumbling bloc in the path of progress;" and "brought the country to the brink of disintegration".²³ Enumerating the reasons behind the utter failure of the system in Nepal, the King emphasized two factors—(a) absence of necessary prerequisites for the successful working of parliamentary institutions; and (b) wrong handling of institutions by the political leaders.

Explaining the prerequisites of a democratic system, King Mahendra declared that to rule themselves, the people must be "enlightened and financially content and have a tradition of free institutions".²⁴ In Nepal, according to him, the existing conditions told the story of "illiteracy, poverty and political immaturity". Owing to this, the "blind imitation of Western type of parliamentary democracy", in his opinion, could not fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the Nepalese people.

Even with these obvious limitations inherent in the situation in Nepal, the system could have been worked out had there been competent and devoted political leadership. The politicians, who came at the helm in the wake of parliamentary democracy, according to the King, were singularly incompetent and irresponsible, and they, more than the infra-structural weaknesses, were responsible for bringing the parliamentary system into disrepute. No political party, the King declared, in spite of its roaring slogans and claims, could succeed in bringing stability to the conflict-torn kingdom.²⁵ The political parties, according to the King, were wasting their energy in in-fights and in their attempts to liquidate each other.²⁶ The common man, thus,

became the victim of political rivalries.²⁷ Instead of uniting people, the parliamentary system, according to the King, raised barriers between them and divided them into various hostile camps based on factions and ideologies.²⁸ Besides, “none of the leaders of the various political parties in the country proved to be in a position to give proper guidance to the people of Nepal,”²⁹ interested as they were, more in self-aggrandisement than in the people’s welfare.³⁰ Moreover, the parliamentary system expected high regards for sovereignty and popular will from the political parties, but in Nepal, the King alleged that the “predominance of factional and individual interests remained the ruling feature of their policies”.³¹ These evils got perpetuated in the wake of the system and threatened the very existence of the country.

To sum up, the parliamentary system needed to be scrapped because:

(a) Nepalese conditions and traditions were unsuitable to the successful working of the system;

(b) it was not conducive to progress, unity, sovereignty and independence of the country;

(c) political parties were immature and they did more harm than render any service to the nation; and

(d) political parties had behaved in the “most undemocratic manner”.

The Charges: Myth and Reality

The charges levelled against the Nepali Congress Government were neither brought before the court nor the accused party was given an opportunity to defend itself. The charges, as such, remained vague, and it would be difficult either to accept or to refute them. On the basis of subsequent events, observations and inquiry, it is, however, possible to attempt their evaluations.

As discussed earlier, the elected government had sincerely attempted to streamline the administration so that it could cope with the new responsibilities ensuing from the ushering in of parliamentary institutions in the country. The Congress Government was not, however, immune to corrupt practices that had always been in the Nepalese administration, at least from the time

of the Ranas. It was too much, therefore, to expect an absolutely clean and efficient administration in the prevailing conditions in Nepal. There were only a few trained personnel to man the administration. Pay scales were low. There was no tradition of free institutions. In such circumstances it needed time to clean the administrative set-up and the fact that the elected government was taking steps to remedy the situation was indeed creditable.

During the Nepali Congress Government law and order situation did assume serious proportions, but it was never so alarming as to jeopardize the existence of the constitutional government. At Bhajang and Gorkha, the government had immediately brought the situation under control. In the case of Bhajang the police did not have to fire even a single shot. After some resistance the Prince of the vassal state, Om Jang, fled to Lucknow (India) and Raja Ram Jang trekked down to Kathmandu to plead his case. At Gorkha, the uprising was fairly violent. Some 3,000 persons armed with *khukaris* had attacked government offices and seven lives were lost in police firing, yet within a few days normalcy was restored and the government machinery remained as effective, both at Gorkha and at Bhajang, as it was earlier. It was only at West No. 1 that sporadic incidents continued to occur even after the government had reinforced armed constabulary. In view of the fact that in this region the terrain was difficult and the government could not deploy the army owing to the Chinese concentration in the north, the continuance of such incidents should not have been taken as constituting an alarming situation. It was only a matter of time, and the government would have brought the situation under control had it not been dismissed by the King. It is interesting to note that throughout the period of trouble in this region only one person had been killed. There was enough evidence to show that if the government had been allowed more time, the situation in West No. 1 too would have been brought under effective control. If the government had failed to curb all lawless activities in an isolated difficult terrain, *viz.*, West No. 1, for some time, it did not deserve so harsh a punishment. The government that followed the dismissal of the elected government and was headed by the King himself had also to

face similar situation. During 1961-62, the King's government failed to curb activities of "anti-social elements" and in many parts, for some time, the administrative machinery was dislocated and paralysed.

The King had laid a grave charge of "encouraging anti-national elements" at the doors of the Nepali Congress and made it as one of the reasons to dismiss the government. It was, however, not clear as to who exactly were the anti-national elements and how they were being encouraged by the government so as to threaten national unity. Perhaps, in the opinion of the King, the various agitations launched by the opposition parties and other reactionary elements constituted "anti-national activities" and if that was so, the Royal wrath should have fallen upon those responsible for them, rather than upon the government which was taking effective steps to control the situation. The King, in fact, had not appreciated many egalitarian measures which the government had taken to ameliorate the conditions of the poor and which naturally had affected adversely the vested interests. In a way, therefore, the King himself was responsible for encouraging these "anti-national" elements, for, he failed to support the government effectively in the implementation of its progressive policies. The government was, however, guilty of not being able to keep pace with the rising expectations of the common man for relief and well being and, this, to an extent, was exploited by certain opposition parties. The people at their behest took the law in their own hands, and attempted to dispossess their exploiters—the money-lenders and feudal lords—thus creating a law and order situation. The rank and file of the ruling party itself could not keep aloof from these movements. As a government the Nepali Congress, however, did act to restore order, but before it could complete the task, it was dismissed by the King. The charge of encouraging the "anti-national elements", therefore, did not appear to be tenable. Neither the various agitations launched by the opposition parties and even by the feudal lords could be called "anti-national" nor they were unusual phenomena in a democratic country. They, therefore, should not have been used as a pretext to dismiss the constitutionally elected government.

Coming to the charge that the government's economic policies were unscientific, it is necessary to remember that in a

society wherein the vested interests had been entrenched, any egalitarian measure aimed at bridging the gulf between the "haves" and "have-nots" would certainly evoke strong opposition of the affected ones. Therefore, merely because the economic policies of the Nepali Congress Government were not unanimously accepted by all sections of the society, they cannot be called "unscientific". It was this government which had, for the first time, scientifically analysed the economic situation in the country and launched a five-year plan of economic development. The elected government had utilized Rs. 20.50 crores of the total Rs. 33 crores plan outlay during the financial year 1960-61, under the head "development".³² Furthermore, the government, for the first time, formulated a taxation policy which could yield rupees 25,00,000 during the financial year 1959-60.³³ Another sound step the government had taken in this direction was to make the Nepalese currency the sole legal tender in the country. It had also fixed the rate of Indian currency in relation to Nepalese currency which had been fluctuating since the revolution. The ruling party was cautious in its approach to socialism and was prepared to wait to introduce drastic measures till the opportune time.³⁴ It was encouraging foreign capital investment in Nepal.³⁵ Finally, the government had successfully made agreements with foreign countries for the establishment of sugar, cigarette, leather and hydro-electric plants.³⁶

If these measures, in the sphere of economic development, were "unscientific" in the opinion of the King, it is not worthwhile to refute the allegation. Suffice it to say that the King himself followed almost similar taxation, land and industrial policies after taking over the administration.

As to the allegation that the Nepali Congress Government had violated the "sanctity" of the Crown and the constitution, it must be asserted that the leaders of the ruling party during its reign had never dragged the Crown in the political controversy. When it was reported in the Press that there existed differences between the King and the Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala contradicted the report and affirmed that there was complete harmony between them.³⁷ Even when it was reported that some rebels at Gorkha were claiming that they had the support of the monarch in their

revolt against the government, the Prime Minister magnanimously brushed aside the matter, declaring that the claims by the trouble-makers were "funny".³⁸ With regard to the constitution, the party leaders had declared that "the constitution under which his (B. P. Koirala's) government worked could not be called completely democratic, but was best under the circumstances,"³⁹ although B. P. Koirala had also remarked that the limitations imposed by the constitution and the problems created by the country's poverty had "made the position of the government extremely vulnerable".⁴⁰ Thus, one observes that the ruling party did not attempt to drag the Crown into political controversy. Instead, its efforts were directed, at least publicly, to keep it above politics, and the government never tried either to violate the constitution or to amend it though it had expressed that it was "undemocratic" and had feared that it might prove fatal to the working of the democratic system. This charge too was, therefore, baseless and had, perhaps, been made to buttress the premeditated nature of the King's action to dismiss the government.

In the domain of foreign policy, the record of the Nepali Congress Government was quite impressive, and yet the King had branded it as "detrimental to the national interest". It could have been due to King Mahendra's inadequate understanding of the foreign policy followed by the Koirala ministry. In this connexion it is noteworthy that, till 1950, the sphere of foreign relations of Nepal was extremely limited, confined as it was, more or less, to India. During T. P. Acharya's ministry a shift towards China was noted when the government concluded, for the first time, a financial and technical agreement, and surrendered its territorial rights which it had been enjoying in Tibet since 1856. It supported China's case for admission to the United Nations. With the coming of K. I. Singh to power in 1957 there was a shift towards India in the Nepalese foreign policy when the Prime Minister declared in most unequivocal terms that Kashmir was an integral part of India.⁴¹ After K. I. Singh's dismissal, the elected government came to power. This government did not attempt either to shift towards India or towards China but tried to strike a balance not only between her two giant neighbours but also between the two Super Powers. How could this be detrimental to the national interests of Nepal is beyond

one's comprehension? It may, however, be admitted that in the matters of foreign policy, there cannot be any uniform standards and much depends on one's own subjective inclinations. Thus, for the King perhaps, the foreign policy of non-involvement and neutrality did not serve Nepal's national interests, while the Nepali Congress Government regarded this as inevitable in the then prevailing international situation. That the King himself did not deviate much from the foreign policy course charted by the Nepali Congress Government showed that, perhaps, there was not much difference between the two with regard to Nepal's national interests. In this context, therefore, the King's allegations against the Nepali Congress Government, on the question of foreign policy, were groundless and appeared to have been made solely with the purpose to swell the list of pretexts to dismiss the government.

After evaluating the charges levelled against the policies of the elected government, one may now turn to the arguments advanced by the King as regards the non-suitability of the parliamentary system of government to the conditions in Nepal.

Political thinkers have generally tried to find out the conditions necessary for creating the ideal political culture in which parliamentary institutions can flourish by examining what they call the "in-put" and "out-put" and determining the nature of this relationship. "In-put" basically involves infra-social structure of the society, while "out-put" includes super-political structure and its working. Thus, roughly, "in-put" will include essentials, *viz.*, some sort of ideological foundations of liberalism, records of the struggle for democratic set-up, tradition of parliamentary institutions, civic culture, feeling of oneness, political parties of requisite maturity and stature, organized opposition, and socio-economic equity in the society. "Out-put" will embrace the outcome of the government in the field of unity and integrity, leadership, law and order, stability, security, delivery of goods to the people, honest and efficient bureaucracy, subordination of the army to the civil authority, responsiveness to the desire and demands of the people, rule of law, and pursuance of welfare policy.

The expectation to find all these prerequisites in newly independent and developing countries which have taken to the

parliamentary system would be utopian. Certain prerequisites, however, are necessary for the germination and growth of democratic processes in the country. They may include some tradition of free institutions, political consciousness, leadership, mature political parties of national stature, minimum economic standards and equity in distribution of wealth, subordination of the army to the civil rule and responsible and responsive government. Under these conditions, if sincere attempts to implant democratic set-up are made, chances of its growth may be regarded as good.

In Nepal, prior to the revolution of 1950, there was no tradition of free institutions. Instead, the country was ruled by an autocratic regime which had not only discouraged the emergence of democratic institutions but had banned all political activities aimed at the institution of a popular set-up. This attitude of the Rana rulers did not allow the emergence of free institutions but it did trigger off a movement which fulfilled two prerequisites of democracy—consciousness among the people for their right to struggle against the autocratic rule and apprenticeship for the leaders and the people to manage their own affairs. Moreover, as noted in Chapter I, the Indian freedom movement had provided an opportunity to the Nepalese leaders to learn and attain maturity. Leaders like B. P. Koirala, M. P. Koirala, S. P. Upadhyaya, D. R. Regmi and Suvarna Shamsher belonged to that generation which had made sacrifices for liberty and free institutions. After the 1950 revolution many more political parties with various ideologies had come into existence. The Nepali Congress had achieved a national status with its mature dynamic leadership and progressive programmes.

Nepal's was an agrarian economy. It could provide two square meals to its people. Though there existed an appalling economic inequality among the various sections of the society, with careful measures like the abolition of *birta system* it was not difficult to bridge the gulf between them. Thus, even in the given infra-structural "in-puts" in Nepal, it was possible to work parliamentary institutions satisfactorily.

It was, therefore, neither the fault of the parliamentary institutions nor that of the infra-structure, that democracy in Nepal proved a failure. Notwithstanding the Royal views regarding the

so-called absence of the prerequisites, it is safe to argue that democratic parliamentary system foundered on the bed-rock of monarchy itself which had been given a place of supremacy in the country's political set-up. The monarchy, as noted earlier, had tried to frustrate the working of democracy and obstructed all such measures which, if implemented, would have strengthened the foundations of a democratic system in the country. It must be said to the credit of the Nepali Congress that, barring few leaders, it never extolled the institution of monarchy, and wanted it to be retained only as a constitutional figurehead. It was the opportunism of other political parties and elements which frustrated its attempts to circumscribe the Royal tentacles which proved fatal to democracy itself. But even within the framework of these limitations, the government was heading towards unleashing a new spirit conducive to the growth of democratic traditions.

The King, however, was nearer the truth when he charged the opportunist political parties for the failure of democracy in the country. But could he absolve himself of the responsibility of encouraging opportunism among the political parties to meet his own personal ends? It was his political strategy to pitch one political party against the other, to create acrimonious relations between them and to encourage one political faction against the other in intra-party wrangles. The system according to which the individual ministers in the pre-election period were responsible directly to the King and not to their respective parties, further encouraged him to play the game of political corruption and opportunism. That, he was blaming the same opportunism as not being conducive to the parliamentary system of government could only be regarded as a camouflage to hide his own record of political manoeuvring. He obviously wanted now to throw the baby along with the dirty bath-water in his attempt to justify the imposition of his personal rule.

The above review of the allegations made against the elected government and the parliamentary system indicates that the Koirala Government had not committed such a gross crime as to warrant its dismissal. On the other hand, it had attempted to charter the course of the State on right lines. Likewise, neither the political parties were so incurably corrupt and immature nor

the prerequisites for democracy conspicuously lacking in Nepal as to demand the scrapping of the parliamentary institutions. As a matter of fact, the monarchy never made sincere measures to make the free institutions successful. Had the King taken full interest and devoted himself to the cause of democracy, as he had proclaimed so many times, democratic institutions would not have come to such a pass in Nepal.

That the King had made the various allegations against the elected government with a view to using them as expedients to gain personal power can further be illustrated by a study of the available facts of the situation right from the promulgation of the 1959 constitution to the overthrow of the parliamentary institutions in December, 1960.

To begin with, it should be noted that neither the traditional forces represented by the feudal class and other vested interests, nor the forces of modernization finding expression through certain political parties, had been able to vanquish each other despite a grim struggle of attrition between them which characterized the Nepalese political scene following the 1950 revolution. The King, whose ultimate interests lay with the traditional forces, had all along been striving to emerge as their chief controller and abhorred the idea of being merely a puppet in their hands as his ancestors had been during the rule of the Rana oligarchy. King Mahendra, being an astute politician, had also realized that the traditional forces would accept him as their leader more and more if they remained fearful of the forces of progress, modernization and democracy. It was in his interest, therefore, to allow some sort of democratic institutions to function. The constitution of 1959, which he bestowed upon the country, therefore, did not mean that the King had turned democratic; it only meant that democratic pretensions were necessary to keep the traditional forces under his thumb on the one hand and to assuage the feelings of the common man on the other. The political parties opposing the traditional forces were, at the same time, finding it difficult, in the prevailing conditions, to strike a decisive blow at the vested interests and the reactioneries. They could not afford to prolong the struggle because, among other things, they found that the King was consolidating his position as the main bastion of traditional forces and if they did not step into the administration,

in howsoever a limited fashion, they would lose the battle for a long time to come. They knew that, with the King emerging as their champion and head, the traditional forces would fortify their position and make it even more difficult for progressive forces to demolish their stranglehold over the Nepalese people. In this context the political parties thought it prudent to accept the constitution of 1959. The Nepali Congress, for instance, had said in a statement at that time: "We have decided to accept the elections for a parliament because we want to transfer the reins of administration from one man's hand to those of the people."⁴⁸

Thus, by accepting the constitution, political parties thought that they would be able to clip the monarchical power on the one hand and would get an opportunity on the other to transform the traditional society into a progressive one. This, at least, was the motive which moved the Nepali Congress to accept the constitution. The Communist Party, too, had accepted it, while making it clear that it would have preferred a republic instead of a monarchical form of government.⁴⁹ Thus, behind the acceptance of 1959 constitution, different motives were at work. In fact, it did not put an end to the clash between the traditional forces and the forces of modernization. Having been accepted by the opposing elements with different motives, it marked only a stage in the long-drawn struggle between them. That the King could utilize this constitution to his own advantage more than the progressive forces could, was owing to the nature of its parentage. After all, it was the King who had given the constitution unto his people. He, shrewdly enough, had kept enormous powers unto himself.

But, as was its wont, the constitution and the parliamentary democratic system which came in its wake, despite inherent limitations, opened new vistas for political articulation. The Nepali Congress became the ruling party, and although the Gorkha Parishad representing the traditional forces also became quite powerful, certain left-wing groups too, despite occasional opportunism, started strengthening their roots. The Communists were increasingly becoming a force to reckon with. It was possible that in the long run, if the democratic institutions were allowed to function, the progressive forces might have joined hands

together in their common struggle against the forces of reaction. In a democracy such instances are not infrequent when such joint fronts have been forged against a powerful common enemy. The King seemed to be aware of this possibility. He, therefore, did not consider it in his interest to allow the democratic institutions to function and dispensed with them before they could undermine his position. It should be noted that both the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party were basically against monarchy and both were gaining strength. Had they joined hands together, the position of the King would have been threatened. The King, therefore, abrogated the constitution and banned all political parties.

The personality of the Prime Minister of the elected government, B. P. Koirala, had always been like a thorn in the flesh of the ambitious King Mahendra.⁴⁴ As stated elsewhere, it was with the utmost reluctance that the King had invited B. P. Koirala to form the government following the general elections. Imbued with the spirit of modernization and anxious to take the society out of the stranglehold of feudalism and out-moded traditions, the Prime Minister had embarked upon a course which severely undermined the position of the King himself, besides proving dangerous to the vested interests. Not only this, the Prime Minister had obstructed the King from creating dissensions among his ministerial colleagues. The King, therefore, was not in a position to meddle with the ministry's work, as he had been doing before the general elections. The Prime Minister, disregarding the known views of the King, chose to be a real executive.⁴⁵ He, however, was oblivious of the fact that the King had kept unto himself enormous powers and the "conditions in Nepal were not propitious for the functioning of an independent and assertive Prime Minister."⁴⁶ Before the Prime Minister could effectively assert himself, the King struck and removed him from office along with the parliamentary system itself, thus guarding against any possibility of his re-emergence as a serious threat to the institution of monarchy.

In this context, it is worthwhile to note that the new government had already taken a number of radical steps to transform the infra-structure of the Nepalese society.⁴⁷ The Prime Minister's stature in the international domain was steadily rising,⁴⁸ causing consternations in the mind of King Mahendra, who himself had

entertained the ambition to play a prominent role in world affairs. The King could not relish the idea of playing a second fiddle⁴⁹ to the Prime Minister whom he thoroughly disliked. He himself wanted to go down in history as the chief architect of modern Nepal⁵⁰ and abhorred the spectacle of seeing someone else getting the sole credit. The King feared the consequences of various reforms initiated by the government, particularly in the sphere of land tenure⁵¹ and civil administration,⁵² and shuddered at the prospect of the proposed reforms in the defence set-up.⁵³ Although opposed to the government, the rising influence of the Communists also, as stated earlier, was not to the liking of the King,⁵⁴ who, perhaps, thought that the growth of radical politics, if not checked in time, would sound the death-knell of the traditional forces of whom he had now become the effective leader. He knew that, if allowed to function, the government in the wake of radicalism would strive to amend the constitution stripping him of the enormous powers the had bestowed upon himself. Quite often he had given vent to his feelings *vis-a-vis* the prospects of amending the constitution.

Whatever, therefore, be the allegations levelled by the King against the constitutionally elected government, and arguments regarding the rationale of parliamentary institutions in the then prevailing conditions of Nepal, the fact remains that the traditional forces in the country headed by the King himself had reached a point when the continuation of democratic system was not conducive to their superior position. They knew that the progressive implementation of radical policies initiated by the government would ultimately lead to dissensions in their own ranks. They had already sensed the growing frustration which was engulfing the mood of active politicians supporting their cause. The Gorkha Parishad, the main organization representing their interests, found a section within, which advocated co-operation with the government. The King, conscious as he was of his own "preordained" role as a "man of destiny", could not allow a situation to develop wherein his political foes would create a dent into his own domain—the Gorkha Parishad.⁵⁵ He, therefore, struck the final blow and brought to an end the constitutional structure which he himself had erected under certain circumstances.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ For details see *Pages of History* (Series I), Kathmandu, 1963, pp. 1-5. ² *Ibid.*, p. 2. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 9. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3 ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-2. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2. ¹³ *Ibid.* ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21
- ¹⁵ *Pages of History* (Series II), pp. 169-70.
- ¹⁶ cf. the King's observation: "The political leaders of the days past have failed to discharge their duties and responsibilities because their master motive was to win fame through trite experiments." *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* (Series I), p. 10. ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ *The Times of India*, December 18, 1960.
- ²⁰ *Pages of History* (Series II), p. 201.
- ²¹ *The Times of India*, December 18, 1960.
- ²² *Pages of History* (Series I), p. 3
- ²³ *Ibid.* (Series II), p. 68. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- ²⁵ cf. the King's statement "... various political parties with their slogans and processions and even the general elections for parliament could not give political stability to the country." *Ibid.*, p. 171. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168. ²⁷ *Ibid.* 168.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167. ²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 170
- ³⁰ cf. the King's observation: "As soon as a political leader was summoned to join the government all his attempts were directed to perpetuate his place in the government and bolster up his party with the result that he had very little time left for nation building. He became dead-weight on the administration." *Ibid.*, p. 168. ³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 168-9.
- ³² *The Statesman*, July 7, 1960.
- ³³ *The Times of India*, July 7, 1960.
- ³⁴ *Dainik Nepal*, July 12, 1960.
- ³⁵ The Koirala Government, for instance, concluded investment guarantee agreement with the United States of America. *New York Times*, May 18, 1960. ³⁶ *Naya Samaj*, April 24, 1959.
- ³⁷ In May, 1960, it was, however, widely talked in public that

there existed differences between the King and the Premier over the question of some change in the constitution. Information based on the personal observation (of the author).

³⁸ *The Times of India*, October 29, 1960.

³⁹ *Halkhabar*, May 12, 1960.

⁴⁰ *The Statesman*, May 9, 1960.

⁴¹ For details see *Gorkhapatra*, Aswani 11, 2014, and Aswani 6, 2015. ⁴² *Deshsewa*, January 17, 1959.

⁴³ For details see Hikmat Singh. *Party Sadarshharu Ko Namma Chitthi No. 2.*, Kathmandu, 1960.

⁴⁴ King Mahendra's ambition for absolute power can be illustrated by referring to the events following his succession to throne. As noted earlier, he started with imposing personal the rule and dismissing party government. When the opposition to his rule had increased he had entrusted minor parties with the administration but had successfully kept real power in his own hands. Moreover, he had always insisted to become the Prime Minister of his own Cabinet formed by one or many political parties. He had conceded the demand for elections because a situation had developed wherein he could continue his personal rule only through a military dictatorship. The fact that he had not reconciled with the parliamentary system became clear when he, within six months of the working of the new system, embarked upon anti-parliamentary system campaign.

⁴⁵ *cf.* the following observation: "When he (B. P. Koirala) became the Prime Minister the choice for him lay between contentment over the position of an innocuous and obedient 'Divan' on one hand, and a search for status as the effective head of a democratic administration, on the other. Had he chosen the former, he would have not only lost face with the electorate but he would have also been untrue to the real purpose of his office." Prem Bhatia, "Mystery Play in Kathmandu." *The Times of India*, December 20, 1960. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ See Chapter IV.

⁴⁸ *cf.* observation: "...it would be impossible to deny him (B. P. Koirala) credit for giving Nepal a certain stature in the world council. It was after the advent of his ministry that Kathmandu agreed to direct diplomatic representation for the

Soviet Union, China, France, Pakistan and the USA and several other countries. It was Koirala who, through his visits abroad, brought democratic Nepal into contact with other countries. His personal charm and intelligence were in no small measure responsible for building up the impression that a valuable member has been added to Asian family of awakened nations." *The Times of India*, December 20, 1960.

- ⁴⁹ *cf.* observation: "...one of the most vital considerations leading to the abrogation of parliamentary institutions was King Mahendra's dissatisfaction with the relegation of the Crown to a comparative minor role in the government structure after the installation of the Nepali Congress Government." Joshi and Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 386.
- ⁵⁰ *cf.* the comment: "...King Mahendra saw in himself the architect of modern Nepal and apparently was swept off his feet by the imagined glory in going down into history as the maker of modern Nepal. And obviously King Mahendra did not want any rival to share with him the glory and place in the hall of fame." *Nepal Today*.
- ⁵¹ For the impact of land reform on the traditional forces see details in Chapter IV.
- ⁵² Prior to the revolution, the Newar community had monopoly over the bureaucracy in Nepal. This community had supported the rulers, whosoever they might be, to maintain *status quo*. Even after the ushering of democratic institutions, their position in bureaucracy remained the same and for this they supported the monarchy. But with the coming of Nepali Congress to power, three main developments were noted in the civil service—(a) increasing representation of Terai people who were neglected so far; (b) recruitment of young and educated cadre; and (c) vesting of responsibility in such recruits. These developments gave rise to two tendencies—(a) dissatisfaction among the Newar community against the Nepali Congress; and (b) introduction of those elements who had no faith in monarchy and feudal system. Thus, the hold of the King over the bureaucracy had started to decline.
- ⁵³ Prior to the revolution of 1950, the army was the main support base of the reactionary feudal's regime of the Ranas

who never allowed the command to pass over to any non-Rana element. After the restoration of monarchy to its power, the King brought the army under his personal control and maintained his supremacy. It is noteworthy that the top brass of the Nepalese army consisted of feudal elements. Apart from introducing land reforms which ultimately hurt the interests of high ranking military officers, the Nepali Congress Government through its proposed reforms intended to curb the domain of the army and to make it an instrument for maintaining law and order and to safeguard national security. The government was more interested to organize a militia rather than to maintain a big army because it considered it un-economical and unnecessary in view of its geographical proximity and friendly relations with its neighbours.

⁵⁴ *cf.* the following: "It is known here that King Mahendra had been restive at the increasing Communist influence in the country during the past one year. This, along with the knowledge that a militant group of the Nepalese Communists who toe with the Chinese line had been lately advocating a fight with the King, had upset the monarch. The King was not satisfied with the steps taken by the Nepali Congress Government to contain Communist expansion."

⁵⁵ *cf.* the observation: "Another factor that might have precipitated the King's intervention was his reading of political changes . . . in the country in 1960. There was wide expectation at the time that the Gorkha Parishad leadership would attempt to rally all the anti-Nepali Congress political elements and present a strong opposition to the government. This, however, failed to materialize; instead the Gorkha Parishad was moving closer to a coalition between these two parties." Joshi and Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, Berkeley, 1967, p. 387.

CHAPTER 6

Consolidation of the King's Power

KING MAHENDRA'S action in overthrowing the parliamentary system of government aroused strong reactions not only in Nepal but also in other parts of the world. First to react sharply against the King's step was the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who, within twenty-four hours of the overthrow of the democratic order in Nepal, told the *Lok Sabha* (House of People) that it was "obviously a matter of regret" that democracy had suffered a set-back in the neighbouring kingdom of Nepal.¹ While initiating the foreign affairs debate in the *Rajya Sabha* (Council of States) on December 20, 1960, he observed: "Now, the basic fact remains that this is not a question of pushing out a government even though it has a majority. This is a complete reversal of democracy, of democratic process, and it is clear to me that there may not be a return to democratic process in the foreseeable future. That is the main thing and naturally one views such a development with considerable regret."²

Similarly, voicing his discontent at the overthrow of democratic system in Nepal, Asoka Mehta, the then President of the Praja Socialist Party of India, observed on December 16, 1960: "The recent developments in Nepal surprise and shock friends of Nepal in India. Destruction of parliamentary democracy cannot help the people of Nepal, whomsoever else it might help. Destruction of democracy anywhere makes India distressed, but its strangulation in Nepal leaves us dismayed."³

In the overthrow of democratic system and the assumption of power by the King, the Communist Party of India saw the coming of feudalistic and reactionary forces to hegemony. A resolution adopted by the National Council of the party at Bombay on January 1, 1961, expressed "grave con-

cern” at the developments in Nepal, which, it stated, “not only deals heavy blow to the consolidation and development of the democratic regime in that country, but constitutes a danger to India and other countries of Asia”. The resolution added, “it was at the behest of reactionary elements in Nepal and outside and to protect the interests of his own feudal class in Nepal that King Mahendra violently subverted the democratic regime.”⁴

The British Labour Party’s National Executive, in an official statement on January 11, 1961, urged the British Government to use all its influence with the King of Nepal to restore the democratic form of government and release the popularly elected leaders now in detention. The statement said: “The decision of King Mahendra to dismiss the country’s first elected government, to dissolve both Houses of Parliament and to ban political parties presents a further serious threat to the development of democratic institutions in Asia.”⁵

Apart from protests by the government and political parties of foreign countries against his action, the King also faced a new crisis of wide dimension precipitated by the Nepalese political parties, particularly by the Nepali Congress, a section of the Gorkha Parishad, and, to some extent, by the Communist Party of Nepal also. Political leaders belonging to these political parties and factions who had evaded the arrest, assembled at the Indian border towns to decide the course of action necessary for the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Nepal. On January 26, 1961, at a meeting of 39 out of 101 members of the dissolved *Pratinidhi Sabha* (House of Representatives) held at Patna (Bihar) the chairman of the meeting, Suvarna Shamsheer, declared that “the people of Nepal should not rest without restoring democracy whatever the consequences and however great the sacrifice needed”. The resolution passed by the meeting requested the King to reconvene the parliament and release all political prisoners. If the request was not met with, the resolution warned “the people of Nepal would be forced to take necessary steps for upholding the sovereignty of parliament”. The resolution concluded with the remark that “what the King enjoys in Nepal is not original sovereignty but one derived from the people as a formal head of the State,” and that “any attempt

to convert it into an original sovereignty must mean a rebellion against the real sovereignty that still resides with the people and their elected parliament".⁶ Likewise, the leader of the "extremist" section of the Communist Party of Nepal, Pushpa Lal, who had slipped into India, denounced, on December 24, 1960, the Royal regime as full of "military terror" and called upon all democratic parties to find out a way for the restoration of earlier order in the country.⁷

Quite undeterred by the criticism of his action, King Mahendra embarked upon the course charted by him to replace parliamentary system by a system of his own liking. In this he drew encouragement from the fact that not all political parties were opposed to his drive against the parliamentary institutions. Some political leaders saw in the King's action an opportunity to climb the ladder of power and self-aggrandisement and they outdid even the King in denouncing the earlier government and justifying the Royal take-over. T. P. Acharya, for instance, while regarding the King's action as timely, went to the extent of accusing the Koirala Government of collusion with India.⁸ A number of leaders belonging to the Gorkha Parishad, like Magendra Shamsheer, supported the Royal step. The Prajatantrik Mahasabha, United Democratic Party and the right wing of the Communist Party of Nepal all showered praises on the King for his action against the popularly elected government.⁹

Whatever be the extent of popular support these political elements enjoyed in Nepal, their acclamation of the Royal take-over provided a certain leeway to King Mahendra to manoeuvre and launch upon the formulation of an alternative to the parliamentary institutions. The first step which he took was to release a number of political leaders whom he considered to be the political supporters of his course of action and associated some of them with his new government.¹⁰ Tulsi Giri, V. B. Thapa, R. K. Shah and A. P. Singh, in fact, belonged to the Nepali Congress who defected from it and joined the King's government. The second step which he took was to formulate a scheme of an alternative political set-up in the country. Within three weeks of his assumption of power, he made a declaration that the country would henceforth be governed by a system of Panchayat Democracy. Obviously, he was loath to give the impression that

he was opposed to all kinds of democratic institutions. In order to allay the fears of many critics of his actions against the parliamentary system of government he came forward with the axiom that that government was the best which suited the genius of the people the most. He appointed a high level committee, consisting of prominent civil servants, and entrusted it with the task of reviewing the working of political institutions in Pakistan, Indonesia, the UAR and Yugoslavia¹¹ where according to their respective helmsmen, democratic institutions were being evolved in conformity with the locale of their operation and the genius of the peoples concerned.

At the same time the King was not prepared to tolerate a situation which might threaten his position at any time. While he did not care to take into account the strong reaction of democratic political parties against his undemocratic actions, he was not unaware of the serious consequences of this reaction if it was allowed to go unabated. He knew that a situation was in the offing which, if not nipped in the bud, would pose a serious threat to the Royal regime. The opposition of three large political parties—the Nepali Congress, a section of the Gorkha Parishad and the strong left wing of the Communist Party,—the stationing of a large number of leaders of banned Nepalese political parties in Indian towns bordering Nepal and their clamour to take immediate steps to force the King to restore the parliamentary system; assuming of leadership by such a leader as Suvarna Shamsher, who was known for his sound financial position, and the capacity to organize volunteer force as he had done to overthrow the Rana regime in 1950-51; and the proclaimed dissatisfaction of the Indian Government and political parties over the Royal action, were enough to make the King uneasy about his future. He, therefore, seemed to be determined to thwart any opposition to his plan of introducing a new political order in the country.

It is against this backdrop that one might review the interaction of two antagonistic forces—the traditional and modernizing—during the period following the Royal take-over. The King launched a policy of mending the fences of his new order. He took certain steps to consolidate his own position *vis-a-vis* the administration. He summoned the Nepalese ambassadors, com-

commissioners, directors of various departments, and chief secretaries and other high civil officers at his Narayanhetti Darbar to acquaint himself with the nature of functions and duties the officers were discharging and to instruct them about their responsibilities in the new set-up. The King wanted to have a close control and supervision over the administration of the country. With this end in view, on December 26, 1960, he formed a Council of Ministers to assist and advise him in the administration under his own chairmanship. The ministry was formed under the *Executive Arrangement During the Extraordinary Situation Act*, 1960, enacted by the King himself in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Article 55 of the 1959 constitution. The important provision of the Act was that the ministers of the Council were collectively responsible to the King for the advice submitted and measures taken in the discharge of their duties. This stipulation authorized the King to have a final say in almost all the affairs connected with the administration of the country. Moreover, as the ministers were picked up by the King in his discretion and were responsible to him for the actions taken in the discharge of their duties, the scope of their taking independent initiative became very much limited. Further, the acceptance of their advice depended upon the discretion of the King.

Tulsi Giri, V. B. Thapa, R. K. Shah, S. B. Thapa and A. P. Singh became ministers in the new government. Assistant ministers were N. P. Singh, K. J. Gurung, K. M. Limbu and B. L. Pradhan. Tulsi Giri had been the Assistant Foreign Minister in the dissolved Koirala ministry and was regarded, for some time, as the right hand man of the Prime Minister B. P. Koirala, but with the cropping up of some differences with the latter he had not only resigned from the ministry but had turned into a vociferous critic. V. B. Thapa, once a bitter critic of the monarchy, and the chief whip of the parliamentary committee in the deposed government, at a later stage became dissatisfied with some of his party's policies and gave vent to his feelings openly. R. K. Shah, though once a secretary of the Nepali National Congress, was never a critic of the monarchy. On the other hand, he had always emphasized the need of monarchy in the given conditions of the country. N. P. Singh and K. J. Gurung

were senior members of the Nepali Congress but their loyalty to the King was never in question. Thus, the King's choice indicated three things:

(a) that the members were experienced and were of high calibre;

(b) that as they were rebels from the Nepali Congress, it could be expected of them to lash out criticism at their own party and justify the King's action; and

(c) that being responsible and senior members of the deposed party, their crossing over to the side of the monarchy could expose the "opportunism" prevailing in the leadership of the Nepali Congress and buttress the King's action against it.

Another significant feature of the ministry was the creation of a new portfolio—the Palace Affairs. The significance of the portfolio lay in the fact that the minister in charge of this portfolio acted as the liaison between the King and the new administration.

The King also sought to patch up the differences with India. Tulsi Giri, the Foreign Minister in the new government, reached Delhi on January 19, 1961, "with a special message" from the King to the Indian Prime Minister.¹² It appears that Tulsi Giri failed to convince Nehru about the new developments in Nepal, since on his return from Delhi on January 23, he reported to the King that Nehru was "still not reconciled to the King's action though he has more understanding".¹³ Having failed to convince Nehru, the Royal regime, on January 30, 1961, directly appealed to all Nepalese political workers living in India and demanding the restoration of democracy in Nepal, to return to their homeland and "engage themselves in nation building activities". Home Minister V. B. Thapa assured them the right of entry and freedom of movement. But he made it clear that they would not be permitted to engage in political activities. In a statement, Thapa said that nothing would be gained by indulging in political activities directed against Nepal from foreign soil, and warned that revolt of the sort launched in 1950-51 was neither possible nor desirable. It would not serve the interest of Indo-Nepalese friendship, he observed, and asserted that "any violent action at the moment may mean playing into the hands of anti-national and anti-democratic ele-

ments”; and would be “detrimental to the interest of Nepal”.¹⁴

Administrative Reforms

Since the response of the political leaders stationed in India to the Royal threats and counsel was not encouraging, the King took several measures to strengthen, protect and popularize his regime. He promised the people that unlike the earlier government his regime would root out corruption by bringing about “such administrative reforms as will make the machinery efficient and able to redress the grievances of the people quickly”.¹⁵ Consequently, on February 8, 1961, a major reorganization of administrative machinery was announced involving the services of 44 top-ranking civil officers. It is notable that in the reorganization of civil services, an army officer was appointed as the Home Secretary while another became the Defence Secretary.¹⁶ New Commissioners were appointed on political considerations in the Anchals (Provinces). Such measures were also extended to districts. Only six Bada Hakims of the old regime were retained and for the remaining posts, new appointments were made. In the official statement, it was clearly pointed out that in the appointment of Bada Hakims the principle of “political appointment has been adhered to”.¹⁷ Many old Magistrates were replaced by the new ones on the same basis. On February 15, 25 new District Development Officers were appointed. The Bada Hakims were asked, apart from maintaining law and order in the district, to furnish reports about the political situation in the district and the list of suspected “anti-national” elements.¹⁸ The above reorganization, mainly based on political considerations, amounted to a “purge” of those civil servants whose loyalty towards the new regime was considered “dubious”. Those persons were appointed in the key posts on whom the new rulers could rely. A new Civil Service Act, 1961, was passed and the services were regulated according to it. The significant feature of the Act was that the King could remove the disqualification of any civil servant, and no disciplinary action against any gazetted servant could be taken without the prior approval of the King. All civil servants were required, by the new Act, to take an oath of loyalty to the King and the country.¹⁹

Another interesting aspect of the reorganized administration was the direct association of the Royalty, army and the police with it. Either a member of the Royal House or a big army or police officer was generally made to head each one of the committees and commissions which the King established in the wake of the reorganization of administration.²⁰ This showed that the King had greater reliance on the Royal elements, the army and the police than on civil servants.

Another measure to meet the situation was the formation of fourteen Inspection Committees—one for each *Anchal*. The members of these committees were generally drawn from the defence, police and judicial services.²¹ These committees were headed by fourteen former middle ranking politicians who had pledged full support and co-operation to the King. It appeared that the main purpose behind the formation of these committees was to reprimand those persons who were engaged in dislocating the administration and mobilizing the people to protest against the King's action against the parliamentary system. These committees enjoyed high status of special courts with special powers to detain, arrest and award imprisonment to those defaulters interned under Anti-Corruption Act, 1960, and also to those who were found hindering the administration and creating trouble in the society.²² These committees were also vested with the executive power. Their basic purpose, however, was to weed out "anti-social elements who were engaged in bullying people, causing panic, spreading hatred against the established government and splitting the ranks of the people", to speed up the development activities; to streamline the administration, and to spread the ideas of the Panchayats. They were also assigned the duty to report back in detail about the people's reaction and attitudes *vis-a-vis* the Royal take-over. The duration of these committees was fixed at four and a half months.²³ Another committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Tarak Bahadur Shah to "act as the central point to these fourteen committees and get work done expeditiously in the centre itself".²⁴

Like Inspection Committees in *Anchals*, fourteen Special Courts were established with a view to touring all districts and deciding cases involving those persons who were charged to have incited the people against the government.²⁵ In a word, its basic purpose

was to mop up all those political workers who were harassing the government by mobilizing the people against it. The regime also formed Tour Commissions to establish efficient administration; to impart "cheap, impartial and quick justice"; to expedite development works; to establish Panchayats in every district; to punish the criminals and "anti-nationals"; to establish close relations between the people and the government to propagate government policy and views and report back to the government about the situation. Its tenure was of three months.²⁶

The above measures in the sphere of administration ensured three things:

- (a) it created a sense of emergency and speed in the administration that had slackened after the dismissal of the elected government;²⁷
- (b) it provided close supervision and control not only over the Central Secretariat but over the *Anchal* and District administration; and
- (c) it equipped the administration with the power to suppress any revolt against the government within the country.

The King, however, was not satisfied merely with the reorganization of the administration. He wanted to exercise maximum power himself. He, therefore, reshuffled the portfolios of all his five ministers and himself took over the Defence portfolio and created a new one—the Ministry of National Guidance—the purpose of which was to organize peasants, youths and students on "non-political" lines.

Apart from taking measures to tighten the administrative machinery and extending personal control over it, the King took a number of other steps intended to give relief to the people. It was announced on February 9, 1961, that the government had abolished *Jhagira* system.²⁸ The vassal system was abolished on April 9, 1961. Certain changes were made in the penal code;²⁹ women were granted freedom to travel throughout the kingdom.³⁰ Labour Act was amended to ensure that no employer could dismiss a worker arbitrarily and without obtaining the sanction from the government. Also he could not withhold the salary of an employee without the government's prior sanction. It also provided better working conditions, health benefits and compensation for injuries received while on duty.³¹ The government

established a Royal Commission to study the abolition of the *birta system* and the imposition of taxes on “scientific lines”.³²

The Royal regime also paid attention to economic development. It took initiative for the construction of the East-West Highway.³³ It concluded an agreement with the Birla House for the setting up of a textile mill—the biggest in the country—at a cost of Rs. 2.19 crores.³⁴ A trade agreement with Pakistan was concluded.³⁵ Cheap Chinese goods were imported to raise money to meet the local cost of the Chinese aided projects, and to satisfy the immediate demands of the people. The goods imported were of the worth of Rs. 24,00,000.³⁶ Likewise, the regime signed a protocol under which the Soviet Union agreed to supply equipment for development projects and consumer goods of the total value of 29,61,000 roubles.³⁷

Foreign investors, besides other concessions, were promised tax holiday for ten years and were permitted to take away 10 per cent of their profit and 25 per cent of their capital each year.³⁸ Agreement with China was concluded for a highway linking Kathmandu with China’s Tibet.³⁹ The government gave concession to export jute to earn foreign exchange. It also set up a Board consisting of Directors of Customs, Commerce and Industries Department with a view to recommending measures to boost exports.⁴⁰ The King announced the setting up of the National Planning Council under his own chairmanship. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs assisted the Council in the study and the assessment of the plan as well as in achieving the objectives. The Council could also ask the Ministry or the Departments of the government to prepare plans on the instructions given by it, and the responsibility for their implementation devolved on them. The Council was also empowered to sanction funds including foreign exchange for the execution of projects.⁴¹ On May 22, 1962, the government announced the establishment of the *Sajha*. It was a co-operative effort to carry on trade and commerce on large scale. The government contributed Rs. 400,000 to the organization. It was provided that it would enrol 100,000 members each buying a share of Rs. 10. This capital was intended to be used to assist industrial and commercial undertakings run on co-operative principles. It was further provided that the *Sajha* would subscribe up to 60 per cent of the

share capital of the enterprises undertaken or provided for by it, leaving 40 per cent for the public subscribers. Such enterprises were classified mainly in three categories. Under the head "industrial undertakings", were rice and sugar mills, woollen factories, dairies and fruit farms sponsored by petty indigenous capitalists. Under "commerce" were import and export trade and co-operative sale depots. Finally, in the "transport sector" it was proposed to organize a fleet of trucks to operate on Tribhuvan Rajpath. King Mahendra became the Chief Patron of the *Sajha*. The Royal palace was reported to have purchased shares worth Rs. 100,000.⁴²

These measures, however, could yield little benefits. A study of the budget of the year 1961-62 would indicate that the government expenditure was rising without a corresponding increase in the revenue. The rise in the expenditure was due mostly to the spending on modernizing the army, opening of new embassies and introducing new social welfare projects. Obviously, the King's emphasis was more on projecting his own image and to galvanize the army to protect it. Whatever steps the government had announced for the amelioration of the common man were of secondary importance, although they had to be whipped up to give the impression that the Royal regime was deeply concerned with the problems of the people. The people, however, were soon to realize the real intention of their new rulers. It was beyond doubt that the elements who had not reconciled with the dissolution of the parliamentary system and the assumption of more and more powers by the King, were becoming active. Certain vested interests, which felt hit by the abolition of the vassal estates and other socio-economic measures taken by the new regime, were also adopting a hostile attitude. Besides, there was a general resentment against the repressive measures which the government was resorting to in the name of security and stability.

The record of the new government in the spheres of administration and development was not to the expectation of the people. It made them aggrieved and frustrated. The situation was, thus, becoming grave for the government. On March 29, 1961, according to the government report, the army took the charge of law and order situation in the district of West No. 1. The disturbances were attributed to the endemic peasant trou-

ble in the area taking a political turn. Groups of agitators spread over large areas had been shouting pro-Nepali Congress and anti-government slogans. In the struggle between the troops and the agitators five persons were killed including two policemen. According to the report of the Home Ministry, the "anti-social and irresponsible elements" which had been indulging in loot, plunder and "terrorist activities" for the past one year had again become active.⁴³ The Nepali Congress, although banned and many of its leaders either in jail or abroad, was attempting to mobilize the people against the Royal regime. The regime was thus facing a tough challenge from its opponents.

By December 1961, the Nepalese Government faced raids by rebels and uprising in many parts of Western Nepal. The militant group of the Gorkha Parishad, under the leadership of Bharat Shamsher, announced its merger with the Nepali Congress on December 29, 1961. Before defecting to India, Bharat Shamsher had reportedly established his agents in key areas of western hill areas of Nepal and had given them his plan of action. Shashi Shamsher was made in-charge of operation in the western Nepal, Bharat Shamsher of Eastern Nepal, while Suvarna Shamsher held over-all command of the operation.⁴⁴ Soon raids on the police posts, government treasuries, sabotaging of railway tracks, bridges, telephone lines, burning of government buildings and mills were reported.⁴⁵ On January 22, 1962, even an abortive attempt on the life of the King was made at Janakpur.

Repressive Measures

To meet the challenge of the outlawed political parties and other dissatisfied elements the regime depended more and more on police and the army. Two additional battalions were raised and the strength of the police and intelligence forces was increased. How much the new government depended on the police and the army became clear from the number of national awards which were given to the men of various national services for the "honest discharge of duties".⁴⁶ A Special Police Organization was established whose main purpose was to investigate the cases covered under the jurisdiction of Security Act, Anti-Corruption Act, and Special Situation Act. Even civil officers could be made

Special Police Officers if the government wanted to do so. An officer was empowered:

(a) to investigate into the cases of such persons who violated or attempted to violate the above acts;

(b) to collect evidence, make search of persons and places, to take possession of objectionable materials recovered therefrom, to record the statements of prosecuted persons and arrest and release them on bail; and

(c) to detain persons prosecuted under the Police Act.⁴⁷

The Royal Palace Intelligence Department was also strengthened. Its main functions were to report to the King about the political development, bring secrets of, and to keep watch over, the political leaders and their activities and arrange secret meetings between the King and important persons.⁴⁸

The Special Situation Act, 1960, had empowered the government to control the activities of citizens in general or of any particular group or person by serving him with a notice in writing. Under this Act the government was authorized to ask any of its citizens:

(a) to present himself in the territory of the kingdom and settle down in a specific area within the given time;

(b) not to keep any sort of relations with specific parties, sects or persons;

(c) not to engage himself in specific activity;

(d) not to keep any specific matter; and

(e) to mend his activities according to specific instructions.

On being served with such a notice, if any citizen failed to enter and settle down in the required area of the kingdom within the specified period, the government could forfeit or freeze his property in Nepal and could sentence him for one year's imprisonment or a fine up to rupees 500 or both in absentia.⁴⁹

By this Act the Nepalese citizens were also prohibited to form associations or to encourage any one to form one with the motive of political gain. They were further debarred from maintaining relations with any such associations, raising slogans, staging demonstrations, taking out processions, giving any statement or publicizing such things that might run counter to the government or calling meeting against the government.⁵⁰

Evoking Special Situation Act, the government served notice on 159 self-exiled politicians to appear before the Kathmandu

Magistrate within three weeks after receiving the notice. The response from the politicians had been, more or less, blank. Consequently, on March 2, 1962, the property of the Communist Party leaders was confiscated. On April 1, the government seized the movable and unmovable property of the Nepali Congress leaders on whom such notices had been served and who did not care to respond. Most of the leaders were awarded six years of imprisonment and fine of rupees 5,000 *in absentia* for committing, what the indictment called, "loot and murder of innocent Nepalese". Such politicians included Suvarna Shamsher (Nepali Congress), Bharat Shamsher (Gorkha Parishad), Pushpa Lal and Shambhuram (both of the Communist Party).⁵¹

The government enacted the General Security Act, 1961, by virtue of which it authorized itself to check any sort of opposition to it and any activity of its people that might "endanger the security of the kingdom, disturb peace and orderly arrangements, adversely affect good relations with foreign countries and create dissensions among various sects". Violation of this Act, it was stated, could land one into detention camp, or, if the government became lenient, his movement could be confined to a certain area, or he could be asked to quit a specific place. Persons rounded up under this Act were liable to be imprisoned from six months to one and a half year. But if the government still considered that his detention was necessary in the interest of the country, it could institute an Advisory Committee composed of three members including one nominee of the government who presided over it. If the committee, thus constituted, reached the conclusion that his further detention was in public interest, the government could extend the period of detention up to three years. Appeal against such detention could not be entertained by any court of law.⁵²

On March 6, 1961, under the Security Act, the government promulgated a decree by which it ordered *Talukdars*, *Zamindars*, *Zimmawalas*, *Keeptiyas* and *Patwaris* (government officers and traditional village heads who managed affairs of local areas) all over the country to hand over all those persons who instigated trouble against the government to the nearest *Thana* (police post) and render all possible help to the people in mopping up all suspected characters. The discharge of such duties on their part

would bring "special appreciation" of the government, it was stated, and the dereliction of such duty meant the loss not only of their lands and jobs but also punishment in accordance with the law. It was also laid down that every servant of the government must keep away his or her dependents from anti-social activities, and if he or she could not control them, they must hand them over to the police. Deviation from it would mean the loss of the job and punishment as permissible under the law. Even the government-aided institutions were asked to perform duties of spying and in case of failure, the head of the institution was liable to be removed from his office, the sanction of aid could be withdrawn and the institution could be closed down. Besides, legal action could also be taken against them for negligence of duty. This decree also asked the civil and Service pensioners to keep their dependents and those under their supervision away from anti-government activities. It made it clear that ex-Servicemen drawing pension from the Governments of India and Britain were also covered under the decree.⁵³

The students activities were sought to be curbed by the institution of a Direction Committee for schools which was empowered to recommend measures to control the students activities and to curb what it called students indiscipline.⁵⁴

The ban on political activities of the people was rigorously implemented. Apart from indiscriminate arrests of the political leaders and workers, particularly those who were suspected of being involved in protesting against the direct rule of the King, were severely dealt with. Persons who were arrested in connexion with "antinational" activities were put to severe torture.⁵⁵ On August, 20 1961, when the three top leaders of the Praja Parishad (the party had earlier supported the Royal take-over) demanded the restoration of fundamental rights, they were arrested.⁵⁶ Similarly, when a bulletin of the Gandak region branch of the Communist Party appeared at Lalitpur urging upon the people to ask for civil liberties, the police swooped over the Communists of the locality.⁵⁷ Moreover, when in the beginning of March, 1962, six politicians, under the leadership of T. P. Acharya, submitted a memorandum to the government seeking permission to set up a democratic non-political organization to fight "anti-national elements and to criticize the government officials in a constructive way", the

Ministry of National Guidance said in a statement that the proposed organization could not be permitted as it appeared to be political in character. It added that all political activities were banned within Nepal and direct or indirect indulgence in it was punishable under the law.⁵⁸

When on June 6, 1962, King Mahendra inaugurated the "Intellectual Conference" to deliberate on problems confronting the country "with impartial vision and from national perspective," a resolution backed by politicians was moved for the formation of an organization—the National Front—to mobilize the support of the people for national development. It was the only resolution that was put to vote and was carried by a big majority—60 for and 36 against.⁵⁹ But the government did not accept the demand even of this officially-sponsored conference of "Intellectuals".

Immediately after the installation of the new regime on December 26, 1960, V. B. Thapa, the Home Minister, struck a note of warning to the Press that criticism made with any ulterior motive or aimed at obstructing national progress by encouraging instability in the country, would not be tolerated. "We want responsible and constructive criticism," he asserted.⁶⁰ Likewise, Tulsi Giri, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers in the new government, lashed out at the Press and asked it to "refrain from criticizing government policies". He was, however, prepared to tolerate, what he called, "constructive criticism".⁶¹

But soon the government found that the Press was going "beyond constructive criticism", and consequently, the Home Ministry passed an order by which all local newspapers were subjected to scanning by a Kathmandu Magistrate before their release for sale. But such restrictions were applicable only to the local papers. The Indian newspapers continued to flow into Nepal causing concern to the government. Something had to be done to curb their influence. King Mahendra, therefore, warning the Indian Press, said: "The kingdom of Nepal would . . . like to request all friendly nations not to give expression to comment on Nepalese affairs in an unfriendly tone and language without properly understanding them."⁶² So, he suggested: "Let us all make a habit of being blind to one another's short-comings and kind to one another's excellences because this is the key to the realization of international peace and co-operation."⁶³

The Indian Press, however, refused to be "blind" and continued to give coverage to political developments in Nepal but without being prejudicial to any party. On November 16, 1961, the government, therefore, imposed censorship on all newspapers coming into Nepal. Under the order the Kathmandu Magistrate could scrutinize all foreign papers—mostly the Indian newspapers—and then he could, in his discretion, confiscate or release any or all of them. Under this order, one issue each of the Calcutta daily—*Amrita Bazar Patrika*—and the *Aryavarta* of Patna were seized. Not content with this measure, the government, on April 3, 1962, placed all correspondents in Nepal under an obligation not to publish or send out any despatch on political activities in Nepal without official confirmation.⁶⁴

Any newspaper, which dared to differ from the government or even slightly criticized it, was immediately banned. Within a short period the entry of five Indian newspapers and periodicals—the *Searchlight*, *Aryavarta*, *Janta*, *Himalaya Sandesh* and *Udyog Bhumi*—was forbidden. On February 6, 1961, the *Kalpana* and *Nepal* were banned. This was done under Clause 36 of the Press Act which empowered the government to ban any publication without assigning any reason thereof.⁶⁵ On March 7, 1961, *Dainik Nepal* was banned. The order came within 36 hours of its criticism of the National Guidance Minister, V. B. Thapa whom it had asked to confine his activities within the limits set by the King and refrain from making speeches which would only tease India. It had also accused Thapa of having cast aspersions on the Nepalese Head of the State, who was none other than King himself, by suggesting that a Cabinet in the pre-Royal take-over era was changed overnight in Nepal at the instance of Indian Embassy officials because it was the King who always appointed the Cabinet.⁶⁶ Another paper that roused the ire of the establishment was the *Philingo*. The paper had criticized Tulsi Giri for his alleged implication in the release of Bharat Shamsheer who afterwards crossed over to India and merged his group with the Nepali Congress. The paper had, therefore, charged Tulsi Giri of playing a double role in the country's affairs and had called upon the King to end this "hypocrisy". On May 31, 1961, the Communist weekly, *Sameeksha* was banned. The order followed the publication of an article in it criticizing the working of American

Ropeway Company which was constructing the linkway between Kathmandu and Hathaura.⁶⁷ On August 26, 1961, *Samaj* was asked to stop its publication for three months.⁶⁸ On November 19, 1961, the *Halkhabar* was ordered to cease its publication for six months. Its immediate offence, perhaps, was that it had made a remark in its "Humour" column against some ministers.⁶⁹ The *Swatantra Samachar*, another language paper, was put out of publication by an order of the government.

The government while putting out of publication such a large number of newspapers and periodicals on one pretext or the other also fell heavily upon leading journalists of the country. Fatha Bahadur, the editor of *Nepal Bhasha Patrika* was arrested on December 22, 1960.⁷⁰ Similarly, Maniraj Upadhyaya, the publisher and the editor of the *Samaj*, was arrested on September 13, 1961, under the Security Act.⁷¹ Madan Sharma, the editor of *Gorkhapatra*, a government daily newspaper, was removed from his post because some of his writings in the *Swatantra Samachar* before he had joined the government press, had been critical of the Royal regime. The correspondents of the *The Times of India* and the *The Hindustan Times* were asked to leave the country on the charge of carrying a hostile propaganda against the Royal government.⁷²

To crown its Draconian measures against the Press, the King's government enacted *Rashtriya Sambad Samiti (RSS) Act, 1962*, thereby putting an end to whatever little freedom the Press still enjoyed. Article 32 of the Act made it imperative that: "... no other news agency (save the government controlled RSS) shall be allowed to operate, collect and sell news in Nepal and about Nepal."⁷³

Prior to the enactment of the above Act, Nepal had two independent news agencies—*Nepal Sambad Samiti* and *Sagarmatha Sambad Samiti*. This provision sounded the death-knell to these independent news agencies. Foreign newspaper agencies were, however, exempted from this rule but they could not sell their news to the local Press save through the RSS.

The Act made RSS an autonomous and integrated organization. The government held 60 per cent of its shares. For control, arrangement and direction there was formed a Board of Directors of seven members out of whom four were nominated by the government and three chosen from among the rest

of the shareholders. Only a nominated member could be the Chairman of the Board. Besides thus controlling the Board, it was further provided in the Act that in the interest of the nation the government would give directions to the Board which could not be flouted in any case. The government could also audit the accounts of the RSS. Article 23 of the Act empowered the government to dissolve the organization if it considered that it was not working in accordance with its constitution, objectives and according to its direction. The government could also institute another organization in its place. The decision of the government was final and binding. It is interesting to note that since very few persons had turned up to purchase the shares of the RSS, the entire Board was constituted of the nominated members. Ranu Lal Singh, the Press Secretary of the Royal Palace, became its Chairman. With this the government acquired complete control over this important medium of mass information.

Having equipped himself and his government with tremendous power to deal with the opposition to his helmsmanship, the King embarked upon the task of popularizing what he called the "Panchayat Democracy", which he wanted to establish in Nepal. And in order to bring into bold relief the suitability of his system *vis-a-vis* the local conditions and the people, the King found it necessary to denounce the parliamentary system. He, at the same time, did not want to give the impression that he was against democracy, and had to do quite a bit of tight rope walking in order to justify his actions and his brand of democracy. He declared that democracy was the best form of government,⁷⁴ and in Nepal no one was more serious in establishing democratic processes than the monarch himself. He claimed that the late King Tribhuvan had spearheaded the revolution, even at the risk of losing the crown, for the cause of democracy.⁷⁵ He further asserted that if monarchy wanted to assume absolute power, it could have done easily since the conditions were fluid. Instead, the King added, the monarchy took every step for the striking of democratic roots in the country. He said: "Since the revolution of 1951 the nation had to strive like Bhagirath to make success of democratic system. Though, during the interim period, we ourselves could have assumed the reins of administration, we wished the Cabinets of that time to have representative character

and, thus, gave an opportunity to the prominent leaders of almost all the well-known parties to carry on the administration in a democratic manner.”⁷⁶

But in spite of the dismal failure of these Cabinets to bring about any reform and relief to the people, the King asserted, that he took every step to make democracy successful. He held elections for the parliament in the hope that things would improve. But the “parliamentary democracy . . . instead of developing the country, almost ruined it, and instead of opening up avenues for the service of the nation, caused sinister schism among the people.”⁷⁷

Panchayat Democracy

Now, when political parties had failed to bring stability and development and to uphold national independence and sovereignty of the country, who else could uphold them? Obviously the one who had not to appease this or that country for maintaining his stand, and who had no political or financial or local interest or any other ambition to gain at the polls. In Nepal it could only be the King who had no axe of his own to grind. Thus, for the preservation of sovereignty, independence and stability and for the development of the country, the leadership of the monarch was imperative. The King, thus, sought to project himself as the only alternative and the people were asked to support his system of “Panchayat Democracy”.

The people, however, had to be aroused in support of the King and his programme. To this end, the King adopted a two-pronged policy. On the one hand he claimed that his system was rooted into the traditions of the country and was, therefore, indigenous as against the Western parliamentary system. On the other hand, he tried to mobilize the people against what he called “foreign interference” into the domestic affairs of the country which undermined its sovereignty and independence.

Emphasizing the alien nature of the overthrown parliamentary system, the King proclaimed the virtues of his own concept of democracy and asserted: “In special conditions prevailing in Nepal we have to sell the idea of democracy to the people through institutions that are known rather than through that

are unknown. There are two institutions in Nepal, namely, kingship and panchayat, that are commonly known and understood by the people, and that work for unity and stability and peaceful progress, and it is through these institutions that the edifice of Nepal's progress has to be built."⁷⁸

Turning to the unlawful and anti-national activities indulged in mostly by the Nepali Congress and some Gorkha Parishad leaders, it was argued that the parliamentary system in Nepal was the extension of Indian political values. It was advocated and brought in by those Nepalese leaders who had got their political training in India. The Nepali Congress, it was further argued, succeeded in capturing power with the assistance of India. With the fall of the Congress Government and the scrapping of parliamentary system that sustained it, both India and the Nepali Congress, so it was claimed, were at a loss, and had, consequently joined hands to topple the Royal regime which alone represented the genuine interests of Nepal and was against furthering foreign interests in the country. The King observed: "Now it has become imperative for all of us to act in unison and root out all such anti-national elements. Basing themselves on foreign soil, these elements are still bent upon deceiving their own country and countrymen . . . they are prepared to make deal with foreign elements in the fond hope of usurping once more the authority to exploit the people. Under the circumstances, therefore, every true son of Nepal has got to be on guard against these elements; otherwise sovereignty, independence and prosperity of our country will become mere pawn for the promotion of their evil designs; otherwise the country will break into pieces and Nepal will cease to be even a geographical unit."⁷⁹

Reminding the people of the danger of foreign intervention, the King pleaded that the people should be ready to make sacrifices to maintain the independence of the country. Warning India against her interference in Nepal, King Mahendra said: "Nepal has ever been an independent and peace loving nation. . . always desirous of friendly relations with friendly country, India as well, but Nepal is never prepared to play a second fiddle to any country and will never lag behind in thinking out ways and means for her own welfare."⁸⁰

But when armed raids carried out by the rebels, which the Nepalese Government asserted were launched from the Indian

territory, did not stop, the King affirmed before the people: "Now, we are determined not to become a play-thing in the hands of any foreign power. We will undergo any trouble for the welfare and defence of our country, we will never bargain our country from fear of anybody's threat of whatever nature and dimension the threat may be. This is our tradition . . . I have full faith that every self-respecting Nepali cherishes the same feeling towards motherland Nepal. Nepalese people are ever-ready to face up any situation, as in fact they have to be."⁸¹

Since the resistance against the Royal regime came from those political leaders who were stationed in India, the King attempted to impress upon the people that they were "anti-national elements" out to further the cause of a foreign country, where they had made their sanctuary. He alleged that their espousal of democracy was a hoax since many of them had been associated with the old Rana family which could hardly be called democratic.⁸²

The King declared that while the "anti-national elements" were destroying the lives and property of innocent Nepalese "from their haven in a foreign country", he had resolved "to build this pleasant land of ours with the co-operation of the entire population under the conviction that the good of the country and the people is the most sacred task." "I have no selfish desire to assume the leadership as an end in itself," he declared, "or any interest in netting the votes by telling lies."⁸³

The impact of the drive to arouse the sense of nationalism was that the people in general and the educated class in particular did not respond enthusiastically to the opposition's call to overthrow the Royal regime. But the opposition was gradually gaining popular support and the King could ill-afford to ignore this fact. The opposition activities had created four big problems:

(a) the propaganda launched by them had depicted the King as a dictator and sworn enemy of democracy in the country who was out to crush his opponents;

(b) the opposition attacks on the government had encouraged dissatisfied elements to defy the central authority. The uprising at Okheldunga, Bhajang and Trisuli were such instances;

(c) the government had to spend a good deal of money on the army and the police to curb lawlessness, armed raids and other

sabotage activities, with the result that there was left very little to devote to welfare activities and complete those developmental projects which the government had undertaken; and

(d) its pledge that unlike the earlier government it would deliver the goods to the people at their doors was proving a big flop, and due to increasing harassment by the rebels, the government machinery appeared to be paralysed.

While, the King had succeeded in thwarting the opposition's attempt to bring about a popular upsurge against his regime, he at the same time did not feel absolutely secure. Despite the lack of popular support, the opposition operating from India was proving a big drain on his government's capacity and resources. The King, therefore, thought it prudent to make attempts to normalize relations with India. As noted earlier, the King had, after the assumption of power, declared that his regime would maintain cordial relations with all countries including India. When the Indian Prime Minister Nehru had demonstrated his displeasure against the King's action publicly, the King had sent his Foreign Minister, Tulsī Giri, to explain the situation under which he had taken the steps. These explanations did not create much impression on New Delhi. The Government of India, however, never accepted the Nepalese charge that it was helping in any way the rebel movement against the Government of Nepal. The mutual relations deteriorated to a considerable extent in the wake of the propaganda that the King himself had unleashed against India in order to arouse the people in a nationalistic upsurge in support of his regime and political ideal—the Panchayat Democracy. Now the same King was trying to soft-pedal the anti-Indian drive. His attempts, therefore, were not likely to produce much impact upon the Government of India. But something happened in the meanwhile which changed the entire perspective. The Chinese attack on India on October 20, 1962, was a significant event which brought about a change in the attitude of the Nepalese opposition elements operating from India against the Royal regime. Suvarna Shamsher, the President of the deposed and banned Nepali Congress, issued a statement from Calcutta suspending the movement, as he feared that a situation had arisen that might endanger Nepal's sovereignty. He stated: "Nepal is very much in the area of conflict, and a

false step at this juncture might jeopardize the future of our country. We do not want the people's democratic movement in Nepal to be an excuse for the King to compromise our country's independence, sovereignty or territorial integrity.'"⁸⁴

He expressed the fear that the continuance of the movement against the Royal regime might encourage the Chinese to move into Nepal, in accordance with Chen Yi's promise of armed assistance to King Mahendra.

With the cessation of the movement, however, hopes for the restoration of fundamental rights, revival of political parties and democratic process in Nepal were set at rest. Instead, the monarch emerged as the unchallenged leader heading the traditional forces of the country. Now he was free to institute another political order in which the progressive forces might not be allowed to emerge and challenge his hegemony. On December 16, 1962, exactly after two years of the overthrow of the democratic institutions and the suppression of progressive elements, the Panchayat constitution was promulgated by the King. Only a study of the constitution would reveal the nature of the system the monarch wanted to introduce in place of the parliamentary system which he had overthrown.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ *The Times of India*, December 17, 1960.
- ² *Ibid.*, December 21, 1960.
- ³ *The Hindustan Times*, December 17, 1960.
- ⁴ *The Times of India*, January 2, 1961.
- ⁵ *The Statesman*, January 13, 1961. * *Ibid.*, January 27, 1961.
- ⁷ Robert A. Scalapino (ed.), *The Communist Revolution in Asia*, New Jersey, 1965, p. 354.
- ⁸ *The Hindustan Times*, January 15, 1961.
- ⁹ It was reported in Kathmandu on March 20, 1961, that the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Keshar Jung Raimoghi, resigned from the party. Raimoghi's resignation followed a stormy meeting of the party's central committee held at Darbhanga (Bihar) where he clashed with the extreme "left" wing of the party. Raimoghi took the stand that the party must "whole-heartedly" support King Mahendra's leadership. *The Statesman*, August 22, 1961.
- ¹⁰ Those political leaders who were released after short detention were D. R. Regmi, the President of the Rashtriya Congress, K. I. Singh, President of the United Democratic Party, T. P. Acharya, President of the Praja Parishad, Rangnath Sharma, President, Rashtriya Mahasabha. Besides, Tulsi Giri and V. B. Thapa, both of the Nepali Congress, were released. Except D. R. Regmi all other leaders were offered high positions by the King.
- ¹¹ Joshi and Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, Berkeley, 1967, p. 396.
- ¹² *The Hindustan Times*, January 20, 1961.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, January 24, 1961.
- ¹⁴ *The Times of India*, January 31, 1961.
- ¹⁵ *Pages of History*, p. 10.
- ¹⁶ On March 3, 1961, 54 officers were relieved from their duties. Sixty-seven civil personnel of third class gazetted category were dismissed in the process of reorientation of the administration. *The Statesman*, March 4, 1961.

- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, February 16, 1961. ¹⁸ *Nepal Gazette*, Paush 25, 2018.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Paush 18, 2018.
- ²⁰ For instance, a publicity commission was organized under *Sri 5 Mahila Adhirajya*. The other members of the commission included an army officer and a police officer. Similarly, a Development Committee was formed under the aegis of *Sri 5 Adhiraj Kumar Himalaya Bir Bikram*. The Committee also included the Field-Marshal of the Royal Army, Private Secretary of the King, Inspector-General of Police and some others. When the Welcome Committee was formed to accord honour to the visiting Queen Elizabeth, it included persons as mentioned above. See *Halkhabar*, December 21, 1960, and March 6, 1962; and *Swatantra Samachar*, Paush 9, 2017.
- ²¹ *Nepal Gazette*, Magh 25, 2018.
- ²² *Ibid.*, Magh 17, 2018. ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *The Commoner*, February 15, 1961.
- ²⁵ *Nepal Gazette*, Fagun 8, 2017. ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ It was reported in Kathmandu that after the Royal take-over of the administration the Central administration came near to standstill. For such development, Tulsi Giri, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, blamed the officers "who still nurture the false notion that the Council (of Ministers) is not to stay for long." The officers, however, reported that the general slackness was due to "absence of any clear direction from the Council of Ministers". *The Hindustan Times*, January 28, 1961.
- ²⁸ The *Jhagira* system had introduced a class of civil servants who were not required to do any work but just sign the attendance register and draw their pay. This "specific institution" grew immediately after the change over of a regime of which there was no dearth in Nepal. A group loyal to the old regime used to be put away as "jhagiras". The new regime would go on appointing its own people, continuing to pay the ousted civil servants. According to an estimate, there were 100 "jhagiras" from Section Officer to Secretaries. *The Statesman*, February 10, 1961.
- ²⁹ As a result of the change in the penal code a person was not required to remain in custody along with a thief against whom he had brought a complaint as he was required to

until the disposal of the case, nor could a person who had brought forward a case of dacoity against another had to suffer a three-year jail if he was not able to prove the charge. *The Statesman*, April 13, 1961.

- ³⁰ According to an old regulation imposed by the former Rana ruler, people could not travel from one district to another without official permits. In case of men these restrictions were, however, abolished soon after the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951. *The Times of India*, April 26, 1961.
- ³¹ *The Hindustan Times*, June 2, 1961.
- ³² *Ibid.*, February 6, 1961.
- ³³ *The Statesman*, July 24, 1961.
- ³⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, February 15, 1961.
- ³⁵ *Pakistan Times*, October 20, 1962.
- ³⁶ The commodities imported from China included textiles, ready-made garments, silk, newsprint, cotton yarn, chemicals, galvanized wire, sheets, electric motors, radios, fountain pens, castings, machines, paints and varnishes. *The Times of India*, October 4, 1961.
- ³⁷ The imported goods from the Soviet Union included cement, roofing sheets and watches. *Ibid.*, February 7, 1962.
- ³⁸ *The Hindustan Times*, June 2, 1961.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, October 6, 1961. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, October 3, 1961.
- ⁴¹ *Pages of History* (Series 1), p. 17.
- ⁴² Figure based on the interviews with many Nepalese leaders.
- ⁴³ *The Times of India*, March 30, 1961.
- ⁴⁴ *The Statesman*, January 11, 1962.
- ⁴⁵ The areas most affected by these raids and uprising were the districts of Ilam, Dhankuta, Okheldunga, Dailikh, Sallyan, Bharatnagar, Taplegung, Lamjung, Bojhang, Dang, Penthan, Gulmi, Rantohat and Bharatpur.
- ⁴⁶ Out of 117 awards given in 1961 by King Mahendra, 76 went to the army officers of commissioned ranks; nine to army officers of non-commissioned ranks; 27 to police personnel and only five to civil servants which included a Private Secretary to the King, a Commissioner and Magistrates. *Nepal Gazette*, Magh 17, 2017. ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Chaitra 27, 2017.
- ⁴⁸ Information based on the interview of an employee of the above department. ⁴⁹ *Nepal Gazette*, Fagun 27, 2017.

- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Magh 25, 2018. ⁵¹ *The Times of India*, April 2, 1962.
⁵² *Nepal Gazette*, Bhadra 9, 2018.
⁵³ *Swatantra Samachar*, Fagun 23, 2017.
⁵⁴ *Nepal Gazette*, Bhadra 18, 2019.
⁵⁵ Finding based on the interviews of those persons who were imprisoned. ⁵⁶ *The Times of India*, August 21, 1961.
⁵⁷ *Ibid.* ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, March 26, 1962.
⁵⁹ *The Hindustan Times*, June 6, 1962.
⁶⁰ *The Commoner*, January 31, 1962.
⁶¹ *The Hindustan Times*, March 31, 1961.
⁶² *Pages of History* (Series II), p. 136. ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.
⁶⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, April 4, 1961.
⁶⁵ *The Commoner*, February 7, 1961.
⁶⁶ *The Hindustan Times*, May 8, 1961. ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1961.
⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, August 27, 1961. ⁶⁹ *The Commoner*, November 20, 1961
⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, December 23, 1961. ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, September 14, 1961.
⁷² See *Nepal Sandesh* (Patna), March 31 and April 12, 1962.
⁷³ *Nepal Gazette*, Magh 29, 2019.
⁷⁴ *Pages of History* (Series II), p. 151 ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, (Series 1), p. 20
⁷⁶ *Ibid.* ⁷⁷ *Ibid.* ⁷⁸ *Ibid.* (Series II), pp. 156-7.
⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21. ⁸⁰ *Ibid.* ⁸¹ *Ibid.* ⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 74.
⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 72. ⁸⁴ *The Statesman*, October 25, 1962.

CHAPTER 7

Panchayat Democracy— A Study in Motivations

WITH THE scrapping of parliamentary institutions and suppression of one of its key sub-systems, *viz.*, political parties, there was left no institution of strength that could restrain King Mahendra from adopting another political framework in consonance with his political axioms and aspirations. Ever since his advent to power in 1956 he had been anxious to consolidate his power and concretize his political philosophy. Consequently, the constitution of Panchayat Democracy was adopted on December 16, 1962—exactly on the second anniversary of the overthrow of parliamentary system in the country. The possible motivations behind establishing Panchayat system can be understood by delineating its concepts, and the constitution.

Panchayat Democracy has been a peculiar product of internal tensions and interactions of various divergent political forces in Nepal since the overthrow of Rana oligarchy. In the dismissal of parliamentary system lay the defeat of progressive forces at the hands of traditional ones. Hence, it was assumed that the superseding system would uphold the ascendancy of traditional forces in controlling its mechanism. Despite his firm grip on the Nepalese political situation, the monarch, who spearheaded the traditional forces, had to take into account, in the formulation of new political system, the existing geo-political realities of the kingdom—increasing politicization of the hitherto inert masses and their demand for the participation in the decision-making processes. Paradoxically, therefore, the new system, designed primarily to strengthen the monarchy and the traditional forces behind it, had also to make room for people's aspirations. As a result, the ideological framework designed to cover these contradictions became confusing and even misleading. However, an attempt

is being made here to piece together a coherent and systematic concept of Panchayat Democracy from the various interpretations made mostly by the government sponsored agencies and appointed individuals.

Nepal was not mature enough, thus argued the supporters of Panchayat Democracy, for implanting a sophisticated political system like parliamentary democracy that demands, for its satisfactory operation, the presence of certain basic requirements, *viz.*, a tradition of liberal institutions, a viable middle class of educated, articulate persons, sound leadership, socio-economic balance among various sections, and a developed system of communication. It was pointed out that in Nepal there had been a continuous autocratic and one-man rule over poverty-stricken, illiterate and inarticulate people for a long time. The prevailing pattern of race, religion and caste—divided and sub-divided into various segments—and the absence of line of communication across the difficult terrain of the country, strengthened the social barriers and created watertight compartments in the society. Could one expect from such region religion, tradition, caste and community bounded persons to understand the basic values and adopt overnight the culture of a highly developed political system? What meaning had the system of political parties before them? Could they derive any sensible conclusion from the manifestoes of political parties presented before them for the first time in their lives? The proponents of Panchayat Democracy clearly assumed all these questions in the negative and maintained that to think of working out parliamentary system successfully in such a situation would only be a pipe-dream and the obstinacy to carry the experimentation with the system further could only prove fatal to national independence and integrity. The operational records of earlier governments, it was asserted, bore the testimony.¹

Thus, to stave off the country from the grave crisis generated by the working of parliamentary system it had become essential, according to Panchayat protagonists, to establish a new polity which the Nepalese, with their existing socio-political backdrop, could easily assimilate and appreciate and which could also be economic and efficient in handling and fruitful in operation. Panchayat Democracy, emanated from the local habitat, it was claimed, had fulfilled the above propositions.

Moreover, this system ensured true representation to the people of Nepal. A Village Panchayat, for instance, with a population of nearly 3,000 provided a viable economic and administrative unit. Within such a small constituency it was possible for the people to know each other intimately. This close contact among the people in a Village Panchayat was more conducive to making a proper choice of the representative for an elected body than a bigger assembly or parliamentary constituency. Another advantage, according to the advocates of Panchayat Democracy, in making the Village Panchayat the basic unit of the political system was that within a small area of the Panchayat it was more feasible to grapple with the problems efficiently ensuring quick results.³

The possibility of Panchayat Democracy becoming popular and effective was rated very high by official sources. In their opinion, the system had its roots and branches in the Nepalese history, and was in conformity with the basic nature of the society. The basic nature of the Nepalese society, several scholars and statesmen argued, was “communitarian”, *i.e.*, a society in which the individual *qua* individual did not play a vital role inasmuch as it was the groups, based on caste, community and lineage, which mattered in the society.³

Thus, it is argued, that in Nepal a “self-determined pattern of village life and government” has been in existence for a long time in which the central government’s presence was felt only by “the payment of land tax or in the sanctions, often belated, against high crimes like murder”.⁴ In such a society, according to the advocates of Panchayat Democracy, the new political order must emerge from and conform, in theory and practice, to the “democracy of native land”.

Since the purpose of democracy, it was asserted, was not just to maintain mechanical rule of a numerical majority but to create an atmosphere wherein everybody could participate in the process of evolution of society and in the development thereof, it was decided to “build democracy gradually layer by layer from the bottom upward”.⁵ The Panchayat Democracy, it was claimed, envisaged a “method of bringing the administration to the doors of the people where they could take persistent and active interest in the working of various bodies of the Panchayats”.

The people, in general, it was emphasized, “will gain much experience and knowledge in association with the working of Panchayat system”, since the system involved the delegation of power layer by layer in order to make “every unit of Panchayat properly responsible and responsive within the area of its own field”.⁶ The basic purpose of the scheme was to give to the people “first lesson” in the democratic system and thereby to enable them to handle their own affairs without over-dependence on the centre and this direct participation of the people in manning their own affairs was designed to identify them with the system.⁷

The advocates of Panchayat Democracy explicitly doubted the role of political parties in Nepalese society and put forward the view that the values and the goals of Panchayat Democracy would be obscured if the fatal mistake of the past—operation of political parties in the kingdom—was repeated under the new political system. Parliamentary system in Nepal, according to Panchayat supporters, owed its failures to the ills that had crept in the political parties since their inception in the kingdom. The advocates of Panchayat Democracy argued that the political parties were expected to undertake seriously the task of political mobilization and political modernization involving a whole range of socio-economic and political changes but they had acted in a reckless and irresponsible manner.⁸ Seized by the motive of power and patronage, the political parties, it was asserted, indulged in acrimonious in-fights and nurtured divisive and retrograde forces based on region, religion and caste. Soon after coming to power they exploited the people mercilessly, set aside all democratic norms brazenly and let the terror loose in the country. Thus, when there was an acute demand for national development, the national energy and financial resources were wasted by political parties on party squabbles and jobbery. To make the situation worse, political parties, for the sake of their survival in the kingdom, did not hesitate to take assistance and advice from foreign elements thereby endangering national independence and integrity. The Panchayat Democracy, it was argued, would safeguard the country from experiencing a repetition of history by firmly eliminating the political parties from the locus of political power.

If the people were deprived of their right to express and organize themselves, then, what place and position did an individual hold in the system? An individual had no place in the Panchayat polity. It refused to reduce the social organism into its minute fraction—the individual. “It does not want to identify the State with a 51 per cent majority. It does not view politics as a see-saw between conflicting interest groups which are simply and solely out to capture and control the machinery of the State”.⁹ Although the individuals were important for the success of the polity, it deemed the village and neighbourhood communities as more significant decision-formulating units. It was with this intention that the Panchayat system advocated a pyramidal structure where individuals were merged with the village, villages with district and so on upward, tier upon tier, thus blending the little community into the great community of the nation.¹⁰

The Panchayat Democracy did not accept the Westernized concepts of liberty, freedom and equality. On the other hand, it felt “the need to reorient the concept of rights and duties, of liberty and equality, to the socio-economic realities of Nepalese society”.¹¹ The Panchayat Democracy postulated that only by fulfilling one’s duty, could one enjoy true freedom. On the basis of this logic, the advocates of Panchayat Democracy asserted that fundamental rights should not be considered as “synonyms for licentious action or speaking”, but, on the other hand, “our fundamental rights depend to the advancement of our national and social welfare”.¹² Thus, the right of an individual did not “spring from slogans”; it formed “rather an integral part of one’s duty and discipline”.¹³ And the duty and discipline did “not mean servility or serfdom”; they were, on the other hand, “the gateway to the realm of freedom and liberty”. Freedom as such can never mean indiscipline, licentiousness or vandalism”, according to the tenets of Panchayat Democracy.¹⁴ The people might freely participate in discussion and criticism, “provided they are animated by patriotic feelings and altruistic motives”.¹⁵ If such a concept of freedom was accepted and worked out, it was argued, it would become part of people’s life and would result in the advancement of the society.¹⁶

The advancement of society, however, requires capable leadership that could keep the national interest uppermost in the

formulation and execution of national policy. But in the absence of political parties who could provide leadership, direction and aspiration to the people for the attainment of Panchayat ideas? The answer was simple and categorical: only that person can provide leadership who in the given conditions of Nepal “transcends the barriers of caste and creed, language and culture, and geography and ethnology”—and in the context of contemporary Nepal, it could only be the monarch who had been traditionally above “personal jealousy and ambitions”—and who, for maintaining his position, had neither to give false promises to the people for catching votes nor had he to crush the opposition to safeguard his interests. The institutional legitimacy of the Nepalese monarchy was also cited as an argument in favour of treating the King as the focal level of the Panchayat Democracy.¹⁷ Besides, under the Panchayat system there could only be one leader because “multiplicity of leaders was not calculated to deliver the goods and the country’s future became dark”.¹⁸ The sole leadership, therefore, could be vested in the monarch because he was above party politics and personal interests and the symbol of national unity which was the crying need of the kingdom.

By adopting the Panchayat Democracy, it was argued, the national unity could further be strengthened in terms of insulating Nepal from the political cross-currents emanating from its neighbours like India and China. As Nepal was wedged between two giant countries with different political systems, the adoption of the political system practised by either of her neighbours might result in the loss of her independent political entity. Moreover, as a corollary to the pursuance of a neutral and equidistant policy towards her neighbours, that had been a cardinal principle of her foreign policy, the theoreticians of Panchayat Democracy argued, that it had become pertinent to evolve her own indigenous institutions. Since Panchayats were indigenous products and were known to the people for generations, it was concluded, the acceptance of their framework for Nepal’s entity, her own international personality and her cultural heritage had become essential.

The official dictum of Panchayat Democracy, however, conceals more than it reveals, the motivating idea that underlines the supersession of Parliamentary Democracy by Panchayat Demo-

crazy. To supplant the full understanding of the objectives, a study of structural mechanism of the system would be worthwhile.

Structural Pattern

In the background of the basic tenets of Panchayat Democracy as enunciated and enumerated in the official pronouncements and publications, it is now possible to describe the structural pattern of the system which has come into vogue after 1962.

Panchayat Democracy in Nepal envisages a four-tier structure. At the bottom is *Gaun Panchayat* (GP) and at the apex the *Rashtriya Panchayat*. In between are the *Zila Panchayat* and *Anchal Panchayat* respectively.

The underlying idea behind the establishment of GP is to provide the rural people an occasion to "participate in greater measures in local administration" and thereby to attain "economic, social and cultural development. . . and thus maintain peace and stability by enabling them to adjust themselves to a truly democratic system and modern circumstances."¹⁹ Popular base of the GP is Gaun Sabha (GS). The Zila Panchayat (ZP) declares any *gaun*, *mauza* or group of gauns and mauzas as GS. ZP may increase or decrease the areas of GS under its jurisdiction subject to the approval of His Majesty's Government.²⁰

All persons who have been residing within the area of Gaun Sabha for one year and attained the age of twenty-one years become the members of the Gaun Sabha. The ordinary meeting of Gaun Sabha may be held twice a year, once after the winter and once after the monsoon harvest.²¹ But in case ten per cent of the members of Gaun Sabha demand in writing or the Gaun Panchayat decides to call an extraordinary meeting to consider any specific matter, the *Gaun Sabhapati* may summon such a meeting within a week after such a decision has taken place. The quorum for an ordinary meeting of Gaun Sabha is ten per cent of its total members and for an extraordinary meeting twenty per cent.²²

The main function of Gaun Sabha is to scrutinize and approve the accounts of the previous year and of the current year, and,

to finalize the estimates, income and expenditure for the coming year as prepared by the Gaun Panchayat. It has also been authorized to discuss the reformatory and welfare activities undertaken by Gaun Panchayat.²³

Its main sources of income are from proceeds of taxes, fees and levy permitted under the Act, assistance by His Majesty's Government, Zila Panchayat and *Nagar Panchayat*, etc.²⁴

Gaun Panchayat which is the executive of the Gaun Sabha is elected by its members and is composed of nine members, who, in turn, elect *Sabhapati* and *Upsabhapati* among themselves. The tenure of the office of *Sabhapati* and *Upsabhapati* is of two years and that of members six years subject to the retiring of one-third members every two years.²⁵

A member of Gaun Panchayat, including *Sabhapati* and *Upsabhapati*, may be removed by the Zila Panchayat if it considers that he is incapable of working or is of bad character, or the Gaun Sabha by its two-thirds majority may pass a vote of no-confidence against him.²⁶

For the purpose of election to the Gaun Panchayat, it is the Zila Panchayat that divides the area into required number of wards. Members are elected by secret ballot. In case Gaun Sabha fails to elect all or any number of members for Gaun Panchayat, the Zila Panchayat may nominate such members from among members of Gaun Sabha.²⁷

The *Sabhapati* of Gaun Panchayat has been empowered to summon meetings of Gaun Panchayat from time to time, but not less than once every month, and to introduce reports and proposals and in case of tie on any issue to use his casting vote. He is to implement the resolution passed by the Gaun Panchayat and to supervise over the working of the employees of Gaun Sabha. He has to keep watch over the property of Gaun Panchayat and Gaun Sabha. He has also to submit periodical reports in the desired form to the Zila Panchayat. He is also the keeper of all records, documents, etc. He is empowered to sanction up to rupees three hundred at a time out of any approved item included in the budget of Gaun Panchayat. But in the next meeting of Gaun Panchayat all such sanctions made by him in his discretion are to be placed before it. In the absence of *Sabhapati*, the *Upsabhapati* may carry on his functions.²⁸

It has been provided that all the functions, powers and duties of the Gaun Sabha shall be executed, discharged and exercised by the Gaun Panchayat. The Gaun Panchayat, subject to the general control of the Zila Panchayat, shall discharge the following main functions:

(a) to construct and maintain rural, fairweather roads, small forts, and bridges and implant trees on either side of the road;

(b) to establish and maintain at least one primary school in a Panchayat;

(c) to construct, demarcate, repair and maintain common water sources, wells, spring waters, taps, ponds and other water sources;

(d) to arrange for cattle ponds and pastures;

(e) to preserve and distribute good seeds, manure and agricultural implements;

(f) to establish co-operative societies and arrange for the supply of credit to the peasantry;

(g) to make arrangements for volunteer labour for the welfare activities of people;

(h) to construct minor irrigation canals;

(i) to maintain libraries and reading rooms;

(j) to review licences for muzzle-loading gun and radio;

(k) to perform any other work entrusted by the His Majesty's Government or Zila Panchayat;

(l) to extend its services in the field of health and in checking the spread of diseases, etc. etc.²⁹

Besides the above, it has been emphatically mentioned that the Gaun Panchayat shall provide all possible assistance to any government official or any other person deputed for any government business in connexion with any work that fall within its jurisdiction. Again, in case a written order is received from His Majesty's Government to collect government arrears or any other dues, the Gaun Panchayat may do so on a payment of a fee of ten per cent of the amount.³⁰

His Majesty's Government may, by notification in the Nepal Gazette, vest any or all Gaun Panchayats with the authority to take original action on and dispose of any or all of the following cases in the area under its jurisdiction, irrespective of the amount of fines or term of imprisonment involved. In the

event of such investiture of authority, the powers enjoyed by the district court shall be vested in the *Gaun Panchayat*: (a) Encroachment on roads; (b) Field boundaries; (c) Wages; (d) Forced labour; (e) Trespass or attempt to trespass on compound of other persons; (f) source of water; (g) pasture lands; (h) boundaries, irrigation channels of water and common land wholly within the area of its jurisdiction.³¹

The government has wide powers over Gaun Panchayat. His Majesty's Government may take action as follows:

(a) to inspect movable and immovable property belonging to the Gaun Sabha which is in possession of the Gaun Panchayat or the Joint Committee, or to arrange for inspection or examination of any work being performed under the orders of Gaun Panchayat or the Joint Committee;

(b) to demand, by means of an order, the account-books or other documents in the possession or custody of the Gaun Panchayat or the Joint Committee.

(c) to order the Gaun Panchayat or the Joint Committee to submit reports or statements on the action performed by the Gaun Panchayat or any Committee, as well as copies of the concerned documents.

(d) to make the Gaun Panchayat or the Joint Committee act according to law, if any, of its actions appear to be irregular.

(e) to conduct necessary inquiries about the Gaun Panchayat or Gaun Sabha or any work performed by it.

(f) to issue orders to stop the Gaun Sabha, the Gaun Panchayat, the Joint Committee or any Committee from doing any work which is expected to harm the general public, endanger the life of any person or result in riot.

(g) If in certain circumstances, any work which the Gaun Panchayat is liable to perform under this Act is deemed necessary to be performed immediately for the improvement and security of the health of the general public, the Zila Panchayat may order the Gaun Panchayat to perform it within the time prescribed by it. If the Gaun Panchayat fails to do so within such period, it may get it done by some other person and recover from the village fund a portion or the whole of the expenses incurred in the work, including a reasonable remuneration for such person.³²

(1) In case any Gaun Panchayat misuses its powers or fails to discharge its duties under this Act or the rules framed thereunder, His Majesty's Government, in consideration of the offence committed, may take against such Gaun Panchayat any of the actions mentioned hereunder in consultation with the District Panchayat: (a) to dissolve such Gaun Panchayat and elect new member; (b) to suspend the Gaun Panchayat for a certain period of time.

(2) In case any member of Committee or the Joint Committee commits any offence as mentioned above, His Majesty's Government may dismiss or suspend, for a certain period of time, any such member or Committee or Joint Committee.

(3) In case any Gaun Panchayat is dissolved or suspended: (a) a provisional Panchayat shall be formed consisting of persons nominated from time to time by His Majesty's Government, in order to exercise all the powers and functions of the Gaun Panchayat which is dissolved or suspended and the provisional Panchayat formed in this way may exercise and discharge all the powers and duties vested in a Gaun Panchayat, (b) all the movable and immovable property in the possession of a dissolved or suspended Gaun Panchayat shall, during such suspension or dissolution, remain under the custody of His Majesty's Government or of the provisional Gaun Panchayat.³³

All the seventy-five development districts have been regarded as the areas under the jurisdiction of Zila Sabha (ZS). Its jurisdiction may be altered by His Majesty's Government. The following persons are the members of the Sabha: (a) one person chosen in the prescribed manner by each Gaun Panchayat from among its members; (b) One-third of the members to be chosen in the prescribed manner by each *Nagar Panchayat* from among its members.³⁴

Members of the Zila Sabha continue to be its members as long as they retain the membership of their respective Gaun or Nagar Panchayat.

The general meeting of the Zila Sabha shall be held twice a year, but the intervening period shall not exceed more than six months. The chairman, elected by and from among the members of the Zila Sabha shall convene subject to the approval of Zila Panchayat the meeting of the Zila Sabha. But in case at least

twenty per cent of the members of the Zila Sabha submit an application to the chairman, demanding a meeting on sufficient grounds to discuss any specific matter, the chairman shall convene a meeting of the Zila Sabha within thirty days after the application is submitted. The quorum fixed at for such meeting is fifty per cent of the total members.³⁵

The following functions shall be discharged at a general meeting of the Zila Sabha:

(a) The general meeting held after the monsoon harvest shall scrutinize and approve the accounts of income and expenditure of the previous year prepared by the Zila Panchayat, discuss and finalize the estimates of income and expenditure for the coming year presented by the Zila Panchayat and discuss, and if necessary, take decisions upon the progress report for the previous year.

(b) The general meeting held after the winter harvest shall discuss the reform measures undertaken by the Zila Panchayat within its area, as well as other measures for the welfare of the rural people, formulate proposals and, if necessary, discuss and finalize a supplementary budget and also discuss and, if necessary, decide upon the progress report for the previous year presented by the Zila Panchayat.

(c) The general meeting of Zila Sabha shall evaluate and analyse the development schemes carried out throughout the district, such as sanitation and construction and repair of roads, irrigation channels, ponds, drainages, etc., and approve schemes for the coming year.³⁶

The Zila Sabha shall elect its executive committee consisting of a Sabhapati, an Upsabhapati and other nine members. It shall have also a Secretary appointed by His Majesty's Government. The term of office of Sabhapati and the Upsabhapati is of two years and that of either members for six years. But three members out of nine, who are elected for the first time, shall have a term of two years, the other three members of four years and the remaining three for six years.³⁷

The Sabhapati would summon at least one meeting every month. In case more than half of the members of the Zila Panchayat submit an application to the Sabhapati demanding thereby a meeting, he shall call such a meeting within a week of

the receipt of such application. The quorum required for ordinary meeting is fifty per cent of the total members.³⁸

The Zila Sabha may remove the Sabhapati or Upsabhapati or any member of Zila Panchayat by passing a no-confidence motion against him by two-thirds majority. In case such motion fails to muster two-thirds majority, no such move shall be mooted against the same person until the expiry of six months. Moreover, no member of Zila Sabha shall move a no-confidence motion until six months have lapsed from the date of the formation of Zila Panchayat.³⁹

The Zila Panchayat has been entrusted with the discharge of following functions within its area:

- (a) to work for improving agriculture and development of animal husbandry;
- (b) to develop and spread cottage industries;
- (c) to provide for sanitation and health, drainages and drinking water schemes;
- (d) to provide for primary and secondary education;
- (e) to co-operate in the development activities undertaken by the Anchal Panchayat;
- (f) to execute district level irrigation projects, to reclaim water land;
- (g) to arrange for medical treatment against spread of epidemics;
- (h) to construct and repair roads, bridges, drainages, tanks and ponds, etc.;
- (i) to execute all district level development projects undertaken by His Majesty's Government.
- (j) to inspect and supervise the work of Nagar Panchayat and Gaun Panchayat within its area and issue directives to them, if necessary;
- (k) all other development works of district level.⁴⁰

Power and duties of the Sabhapati of Zila Panchayat are more or less the same as that of Sabhapati of Gaun Panchayat at district level.

The Zila Panchayat may impose taxes, fees, levies, rent on the following: on persons or vehicles using roads, bridges, tanks or ferries constructed or controlled by it in the area; on houses that may not exceed Rs. 10 (NC) per annum; water-cess. The

Zila Sabha may appropriate an amount not exceeding 5 per cent out of the revenues obtained by Gaun Panchayat and Nagar Panchayat within its area, from sources other than government grants.⁴¹

His Majesty's Government has the same sort of power of inspection and giving of direction to, and the suspension or dissolution of, Zila Panchayat at it has over the Gaun Panchayat or their committees.⁴²

For all-round development of national life and to provide direction to and maintain co-ordination among Zila Panchayat the Anchal Panchayat (AP) have been established under the Act. His Majesty's Government forms the area of Anchal Sabha (AS) and may increase or decrease it at its discretion.⁴³

All members of the Zila Panchayat within its jurisdiction are its members. Three representatives of Women Organization; four representatives of Peasant Organization; four representatives of Youth Organization; two representatives of Labour Organization; two representatives of ex-soldier Organization at the Anchal level and four persons nominated by Anchal Panchayat from among Shastri or Bachelor's Degree holders residing within the Anchal participate in its convention but they have not been given right to vote. Another feature regarding its composition is that Anchaladesh (Governor) and other Anchal level government officials may participate in the convention as observers. They may also participate in discussion of matters relating to their subject but they cannot cast votes. The duration of Anchal Sabha is equivalent to that of Zila Panchayat.⁴⁴

The convention of the Anchal Sabha is summoned annually. If its twenty per cent members request in writing for its meeting earlier it may be summoned within thirty days of such request. At least forty per cent of members must be present to organize its meetings. Generally annual budget and plans are discussed and approved in meetings.⁴⁵

Members of the Anchal Sabha elect among themselves an executive committee—the Anchal Panchayat—consisting of eleven members, including the Sabhapati and Upsabhapati. While Sabhapati and Upsabhapati hold office for a period of two years, other members stay in office for six years. But out of elected members of first batch one-third retire after two years, another one-third after four years and the remaining after six years.⁴⁶

The meeting of the Anchal Panchayat is summoned by the Secretary, who is appointed by His Majesty's Government, on the instructions from Sabhapati. But six or more members may demand in writing for an earlier meeting, which the Secretary shall arrange within a fortnight of receiving the demand. It is notable that Anchaladesh may also attend the meetings of Anchal Panchayat though he cannot participate in voting process on any matter. It cannot have any meeting unless attended by half of its members. Anchal Sabha may pass vote of no-confidence against any of its members including Sabhapati and Upsabhapati by two-thirds majority.⁴⁷

The Anchal Panchayat have been entrusted to perform the following functions:

- (a) to inject emotional unity at Anchal level;
- (b) to infuse nationalism and democratic consciousness;
- (c) to develop national language and culture and thereby create healthy national character;
- (d) to bring co-ordination between various lower units of Panchayat and activize them to fulfil their targets;
- (e) to organize political, social and academic conferences and bring out newspapers and periodicals to propagate its objectives;
- (f) to publicize the ideas of co-operative movement and to organize movement in this direction;
- (g) to carry out any work entrusted by His Majesty's Government, etc.⁴⁸

The main function of Sabhapati is to grant permission to members to initiate measures, proposals and reports in the meetings, to supervise over works approved by Anchal Sabha and Anchal Panchayat, to control and supervise the activities of the personnel of Anchal Panchayat, to check the property, revenue and records of Anchal Panchayat and remove the discrepancies found therein, and to act according to instructions given by His Majesty's Government.⁴⁹

The prime duty of the Secretary of the Anchal Panchayat is to maintain records regarding the proposals passed by committees and sub-committees of Anchal Panchayat and action taken thereby; to implement the decision of Anchal Panchayat under the supervision of Sabhapati; to advise the Anchal Panchayat in carrying out development work, etc.⁵⁰ His Majesty's Government

may also appoint other servants in Anchal Panchayat to carry out day-to-day business.

The main source of the income of the Anchal Panchayat is what it gets from His Majesty's Government; from any other institution, including from lower units of Panchayat, individuals; from its own property, etc.⁵¹

His Majesty's Government has not only control over the finance but over the procedure the money is spent by the Anchal Panchayat. It does it in many ways. On the whole it is the government that finances it. Secondly, a copy of the budget is sent to His Majesty's Government which in turn may be subject to overall change. Thirdly, government gives instructions regarding the works undertaken and the amount is to be spent on, which Anchal Panchayat cannot afford to flout. Fourthly, Anchal Panchayat cannot sell or purchase property, take loan or engage in any enterprise unless approved by His Majesty's Government. Finally, government audits the accounts of Anchal Panchayat.⁵²

Moreover, His Majesty's Government have assumed control over the affairs of Anchal Panchayat. It may supervise audit and investigate of the use movable and immovable property by the Anchal Panchayat and the work it has undertaken. It may examine the report, statement and records belonging to committee, sub-committee or joint committee of Anchal Panchayat. If government is of opinion that any specific measure taken by Anchal Panchayat may go against public interests, it may ask the Anchal Panchayat to withdraw such measure. If the Anchal Panchayat fails to carry out the instruction of His Majesty's Government that are intended to meet any emergency, it may entrust such work to other individual or institution and expenditure incurred thereon would be met by the Anchal Panchayat. In case of national emergency or when Anchal Panchayat fails to discharge its duties, His Majesty's Government may dissolve it and may itself assume its powers and functions.⁵³

Finally, His Majesty's Government may frame rules for the implementation of Anchal Panchayat objectives. Anchal Panchayat may, however, make sub-rules for its proper functioning, but it has to get such rules approved by His Majesty's Government.⁵⁴

The base of the whole system is monarchy. No institution, howsoever popular and vital it may be, could maintain its entity, exercise its powers and uphold its prestige unless it were blessed by the Crown. Monarchy occupies the central position around which the whole system, all institutions move about.

The country is described as an independent, indivisible and sovereign monarchical State. All Nepalese people constitute the nation due to their common aspirations and common bond of allegiance to the Crown.⁵⁵

Kingship is not institutionalized to the office holder but is limited to a descendant of King Prithvinarayan Shah and to an adherent of the Aryan culture and Hinduism. It has been provided that nothing shall in the constitution affect the law, custom and usage relating the succession to the throne by the descendants of King and King has exclusive power of enacting, amending and repealing the law relating to the succession to the throne by the descendants of the King.⁵⁶

The new constitution, unlike the earlier one, specifically upholds that the sovereignty of Nepal is vested in the Crown, which the King would exercise through constitutional organs and other laws in conformity with the traditions of the Shah dynasty: "The sovereignty of Nepal is vested in His Majesty and all powers, executive, legislative and judicial emanate from him. These powers are exercised by His Majesty through the organs established by or under this constitution."⁵⁷

The central source of all powers is the King. To assist him, there is a Raj Sabha. It consists of ex-officio members and others as appointed by the King. Such appointed members hold office during the pleasure of the King.⁵⁸ The meeting of Raj Sabha is summoned and presided over by the King.⁵⁹ The Raj Sabha has a Standing Committee consisting of fifteen members designated by the King. The Standing Committee, it has been provided, shall be presided over by the King in person or by a person designated by him and the Secretary of the Raj Sabha shall be the Secretary of the Standing Committee. And the Secretary of Raj Sabha owes his appointment to the King.⁶⁰ The rules for the conduct of business of the Standing Committee of Raj Sabha are laid down by the King.⁶¹

Under the new constitution, the King possesses far greater executive powers than he had under the scrapped constitution. The

executive authority of the government may be exercised either by the King directly or through his ministers or other officers subordinate to him.⁶² The process by which their executive decisions are reached and the legal authority to achieve them may not be questioned.

A distinction is made between the action taken by the King personally and his government. It has been provided that orders, decisions and other instruments made and executed in the name of the King or his government shall be authenticated in such a manner as may be specified in rules to be made by the King, and the validity of an order, decision or instrument which is so authenticated shall not be called in question on the ground that it is not an order; decision or instrument made or executed by the King or his government as the case may be.⁶³

To assist and advise the King in the exercise of his functions, there is a Council of Ministers consisting of as many ministers as appointed by him. This Council of Ministers functions under the direct Chairmanship of the King. But he may at his discretion appoint any minister to be the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Such designated minister shall preside over the meetings of the Council. But if the King is present at a meeting of the Council of Ministers, he shall preside over it.⁶⁴

Ministers may be appointed by the King from among the members of the Rashtriya Panchayat (RP) in his discretion. He may also appoint a person who is not a member of Rashtriya Panchayat as a minister for a period of six months. If within this period he becomes its member he may continue as a minister. The concept of collective responsibility of the Cabinet to parliament under Article 12 of the 1959 constitution is replaced by the concept of responsibility of the Council of Ministers to the Crown.⁶⁵ The King may even remove the minister in his discretion.⁶⁶ The King also appoints assistant ministers from among the members of the Rashtriya Panchayat. Remuneration of the ministers and assistant ministers is determined by the rules laid down by the King. Allocation and transaction of the government business are done in accordance with the rules approved by the King.⁶⁷

Apart from his control over Raj Sabha and Council of Ministers, other instruments of State are also under his supervision.

He may appoint Auditor-General in his discretion. He may fix the number of members of Public Service Commission and it is his nominee that shall hold the chairmanship of the Commission. The Commission has been asked to submit its annual report to the King. Attorney-General is also appointed by the King and hold office during his pleasure.⁶⁸

The constitution has invested the King with wide powers over the composition, character, power and life of the national legislative body—Rashtriya Panchayat. The King is empowered to nominate fifteen per cent of the total elected members of the Rashtriya Panchayat to it.⁶⁹ If membership of any member of the Rashtriya Panchayat has been cancelled on the ground of his being absent from the meetings of the Rashtriya Panchayat for a continuous period of three months, the King may waive off such restriction on any member at any time and in any circumstance as he may deem fit.⁷⁰ Whether a member of the Rashtriya Panchayat possesses requisite qualification or not shall be decided by the King. The King may also designate a commission to enlighten him by submitting a report with a finding whether a member of Rashtriya Panchayat has committed a breach of secrecy or not. His approval of the report shall be regarded as final.⁷¹ The Chairman of Rashtriya Panchayat is also appointed by the King on the recommendation of Rashtriya Panchayat from among the members. Pending the appointment of the Chairman of the Rashtriya Panchayat and also when there is no Vice-Chairman of Rashtriya Panchayat, a person designated by the King may act as the Chairman of the Rashtriya Panchayat.⁷²

The King may summon and prorogue the sessions of the Rashtriya Panchayat. If the Rashtriya Panchayat is adjourned and the King thinks it necessary to summon a meeting early, he may convene its meeting.⁷³ The King may address Rashtriya Panchayat, and the Rashtriya Panchayat for that purpose may command the attendance of the members. He may even send the messages to the Rashtriya Panchayat, and the Rashtriya Panchayat after considering it shall submit its opinion to the King.⁷⁴ The Rashtriya Panchayat cannot discuss the behaviour and conduct of the Royalty and the succession to the throne.⁷⁵

On finance and armed forces and on the restriction on the exercise of fundamental rights of citizens for public good, the

King has full control.⁷⁶ No Bill or amendment regarding the above matter by a member other than ministers may be introduced in the Rashtriya Panchayat without the prior sanction of the King.

The King has absolute and wide powers over the decisions of the Rashtriya Panchayat. Over a Bill passed by the Rashtriya Panchayat the King has been empowered to take the following steps:

- (a) he may withhold the Bill for a period of a month;
- (b) he may ask the Rashtriya Panchayat to change the form of the Bill;
- (c) he may get the Bill passed in the form it was introduced in the Rashtriya Panchayat or with amendments;
- (d) he may use his absolute veto power to kill any Bill passed by the Rashtriya Panchayat without showing any reason for its use.⁷⁷

The King possesses a broad ordinance making power. If at any time, except when the Rashtriya Panchayat is in session, he is satisfied that circumstances require the promulgation of such ordinance, he may promulgate them, and ordinances thus promulgated shall have the same force and effect as an Act. But such ordinance must be placed before the Rashtriya Panchayat within seven days after its convening and cease to have effect after forty-five days of its session, unless previously withdrawn by the King.⁷⁸

The King has power to appoint the Chief Justice of Supreme Court after consultation, if he desires so, with such members of the Raj Sabha whom he thinks fit and also after consultation with other judges of the Supreme Court.⁷⁹ The Royal control over the court decision is assured by his power to appoint as many *ad hoc* or additional judges as may be necessary for a specified period with such remuneration and facilities as he deems necessary.⁸⁰ Judges may be removed from office by the King if a commission consisting of persons having the qualification to be judges of the Supreme Court, appointed by him on his own accord, report that the appointee is unable to perform his duties because of incapacity or misbehaviour.⁸¹ While the court may not overrule its own decision, the King may command a revision of a previous decision upon the recommendation of a Judicial

Committee appointed for that purpose where a timely petition for revision has been made.⁸³

Moreover, the King has power to grant pardon and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any judicial authority or special court or any authority appointed in accordance with an Act.⁸³ And he is not amenable to any court for the exercise of the powers or the performance of the duties of his office or any other act done by him.⁸⁴

Of crucial importance in the new constitution is the emergency power vested in the King which expands and refines the provisions of Article 55 of the old constitution. If the King believes that an emergency exists threatening national security by war, external aggression or internal disturbance, he may partially or completely suspend the constitution and may personally assume the power granted to any part of the government. No time limit and no reviewing device exist to limit the exercise of this power except that laws made under this emergency provision have no effect after six months following the emergency if they conflict with the constitution.⁸⁵

The supreme command of the Royal Armed Forces is vested in the King.⁸⁶ As noted earlier, no Bill relating to army can be introduced in Rashtriya Panchayat without prior sanction of the King. Promotion, demotion, confirmation of honour, raising of battalions, manoeuvrability of army, and any important matter cannot be decided unless the King approves them.⁸⁷

It is the King who may amend the constitution after consulting the special committee.⁸⁸ Residuary power of the State is vested in the King.⁸⁹ Titles, honour and decorations are conferred by him and unless he approves, no citizen can accept any honour awarded by a foreign State.⁹⁰ The King may also authorize any person or persons to exercise the day-to-day function of His Majesty during his absence from State.⁹¹

The purpose behind its creation is to make the King's advice available on various political and administrative matters the country is faced with. It is composed of the Chief Justice, Chairmen of Rashtriya Panchayat and Public Service Commission, Mool Purohit, Ministers of the Crown, Bada Gurujyu, the Commander-in-Chief, the Auditor-General and such other members from distinguished walks of national life as the King

may desire to appoint.⁹² The primary function of the Raj Sabha is to proclaim a successor to the throne upon the death, abdication or the inability of the King to perform his duties because of mental or physical infirmity.⁹³

Though Raj Sabha renders advice to the King on political matters too, yet since the King is empowered to promulgate the rules for conducting the business of Raj Sabha as well as to control the members' oaths, it would appear that it has no independent power to offer its views to him. Finally, any advice offered to the King by the Raj Sabha is not binding on him in any way.

The fact that enormous powers have been vested in the King has reduced the importance of the Cabinet to that extent. It has not only been stripped of power but has been made a dependent body on the will of the King. It can neither work independently nor can take any step resolutely. This weakness of the Council of Ministers is due to the following reasons:

(a) Ministers are appointed by the King in their individual capacity. Though they are members of Rashtriya Panchayat, there exists no surety that they are popular leaders or representatives of the masses.

(b) Ministers are responsible to the King and not to the Rashtriya Panchayat.

(c) The King is the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Though he may designate any minister to assume chairmanship, yet when he is present at its meetings he will preside over them.

(d) Ministers may be removed by him in his discretion.

(e) There is no provision that the King shall act on the advice of the Council of Ministers. What is provided is that there shall be a Council of Ministers to aid and advise the King.

(f) Remuneration of ministers and assistant ministers are determined by the King, and

(g) Allocation of transaction of government business is done by the King.

The Rashtriya Panchayat, the national legislative body, is at the apex of the Panchayat pyramid. It is composed of four classes of members, including ninety elected by Anchal Sabhas, fifteen elected from various class and professional organizations, including peasant, youth, women, labour and ex-army men,

four members elected from among citizens who have received at least a Shastri or Bachelor's degree, and members nominated by the King, not exceeding fifteen per cent of all other members.

An analysis of the composition, nature and power of the national legislature leads to the conclusion that it does not possess the inherent freedom and powers of democratic legislative bodies including control over the discipline of its members and conduct of its business. Extensive restrictions have been placed upon Rashtriya Panchayat's freedom of discussion, which may be clear from the following:

(a) while no statutory restriction prevents criticism of His Majesty's Government yet no comment may be made with reference to the King, queen or succession to the throne, to the conduct of the judge in the discharge of his duties except on matters of incapacity or misbehaviour, or with respect to any matter pending in court;

(b) no personal criticism against any member;

(c) work done in private capacity by anyone may not be allowed to be discussed;

(d) no criticism of the working, business and decision of the Rashtriya Panchayat;

(e) no mention of Royal family in the discussion with a view to putting undue pressure on any subject;

(f) no criticism of the Chairman's decision and his conduct;

(g) no member is allowed to hamper the working of the session on the ground of his right to exercise his freedom of expression.⁹⁴

Besides such restrictions on Rashtriya Panchayat's scope for discussion, its affairs are controlled by a Steering Committee and by the King who has unlimited power over the character and duration of the legislative sessions. All legislative proceedings of the Rashtriya Panchayat are held in camera except to hear the King or any distinguished invitee. Members may even be imprisoned for contempt of the Rashtriya Panchayat by a decision of that body for not, however, exceeding the period of the current parliamentary session.

Extensive restrictions have been imposed on the members' freedom of speech and their right to ask such questions in the Rashtriya Panchayat which according to Article 65 of *Rashtriya Panchayat Niyamavali* include:

- (a) questions that may aim at propagating things;
- (b) questions that may seek the views of other members by casting votes;
- (c) questions that may seek information which the constitution or other laws have prohibited to disclose or the working of Council of Ministers, or such information whose disclosure may be against the national interest;
- (d) questions regarding national policy that cannot be explained in a reply of a single question;
- (e) questions that contain the criticism of Rashtriya Panchayat and its decision;
- (f) questions that seek the clarification of a news published in newspaper or a statement of non-official person;
- (g) questions that seek the explanation of the deeds done by a government employee in his private capacity;
- (h) questions asked in the capacity of a member or in the name of any institution with a view to propagating or making capital out of that;
- (i) questions that refer, in any way, to the Royal family; and
- (j) questions whose answer may be available from any other source, etc.⁹⁵

Apart from such limitations, as noted earlier, the passage of any Bill even by absolute majority by the Rashtriya Panchayat does not make it law unless it has secured the assent of the King, which can be withheld in his discretion. Above all, the King can dissolve or even scrap the whole Rashtriya Panchayat while exercising his emergency powers without consulting it.

From the above study of the concept and the constitution of Panchayat system it appears that the objectives of the new political order are:

- (a) to strengthen the traditional pattern of political system and thereby traditionality in the country;
- (b) to vest State power and leadership in the Crown;
- (c) to check the growth of popular institutions; and
- (d) to bring about social and economic development.

In a word, the Panchayat system aims at developing the country through traditional institutions. Only the working of Panchayat system would explain how far this objective has been achieved after experimenting with it over a period of seven years.

In terms of sheer politics, the above study of the concept and the constitution of Panchayat system affirms that the prime objectives in establishing the new polity had been:

(a) to strengthen the traditional pattern of political system and thereby traditionality in the country by vesting State power and leadership in the Crown; and

(b) to check the growth of popular institutions so that they might not pose a serious threat to the hegemony of traditional forces in the Nepalese politics.

Hardcore geo-political realities of the kingdom, however, formed a formidable barrage for implementing and maintaining such a system. Hence, to make the system stable, viable and resilient, there were added postulations in the system to assure:

(a) the participation of the people in the decision-making processes, howsoever limited and insignificant it might be;

(b) quick socio-economic advancement of the society; and

(c) pursuance of a thorough nationalistic policy both in domestic and foreign affairs.

With a firm determination to carry Panchayat Democracy on the above guidelines, King Mahendra inaugurated the first session of the Rashtriya Panchayat on April 23, 1963, and thereby added a new chapter in the complex politics of the kingdom.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Jha, Vedanand, *Basic Characteristics of Panchayat Democracy*, Kathmandu, 1966, p. 4.
- ² *Panchayat Ke Ho ?*, Calcutta, 1967.
- ³ Shamsher, Pashupati, J.B.R. and Mushim, Mohammad, *Panchayat: A Planned Democracy* (Monograph), Kathmandu, 1967.
- ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Pradhan, Bishwa, *Panchayat Democracy in Nepal*, Delhi, 1963, p. 63. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- ⁸ Shah, S. P., "Comparative Study of the Parliamentary Democracy and Panchayat Democracy in Nepal", *Panchayat Parichya*, Kathmandu, 2023 vs, p. 20.
- ⁹ Shamsher, Pashupati, J.B.R., n 3. ¹⁰ *Ibid.* ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² *Pages of History* (Series I), p. 108.
- ¹³ *Ibid.* ¹⁴ *Ibid.* ¹⁵ *Ibid.* ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Panchayat Democracy Under the Leadership of His Majesty King Mahendra*, Calcutta, p. 4. ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Preamble, *Village Panchayat Act*, 1962. ²⁰ Article 3 (1).
- ²¹ Article 9 (1). ²² Article 9 (2) and (3). ²³ Article 11.
- ²⁴ Article 12. ²⁵ Article 18 (1) and (2). ²⁶ Article 18 (7).
- ²⁷ Article 18 (9) and (10). ²⁸ Article 25. ²⁹ Article 29.
- ³⁰ Articles 34, 35, and 36. ³¹ Article 41. ³² Article 61.
- ³³ Article 62. ³⁴ *District Panchayat Act*, 1962, Article 3.
- ³⁵ Article 11. ³⁶ Article 13. ³⁷ Article 15.
- ³⁸ Article 20. ³⁹ Article 22. ⁴⁰ Article 23.
- ⁴¹ Article 33. ⁴² Articles 39 and 40.
- ⁴³ *Anchal Panchayat Act*, 1962, Article 3 (2).
- ⁴⁴ Articles 3 (4) and (5). ⁴⁵ Article 12. ⁴⁶ Article 15.
- ⁴⁷ Articles 16, 17 and 18. ⁴⁸ Article 27. ⁴⁹ Article 31.
- ⁵⁰ Article 33. ⁵¹ Article 36. ⁵² Article 42.
- ⁵³ Article 42 (1). ⁵⁴ Articles 54 and 55.
- ⁵⁵ *Constitution of Nepal*, Article 2. ⁵⁶ Article 21 (1) and (2)
- ⁵⁷ Article 20 (2). ⁵⁸ Article 23 (3). ⁵⁹ Article 23 (4).
- ⁶⁰ Article 23 (10 b). ⁶¹ Article 23 (14). ⁶² Article 24 (1).

- ⁶³ Article 24 (4). ⁶⁴ Article 25 (2). ⁶⁵ Article 26 (1) and (2).
⁶⁶ Article 26 (3e). ⁶⁷ Articles 28 and 29.
⁶⁸ Articles 75 and 77. ⁶⁹ Article 34 (2d). ⁷⁰ Article 35 (e).
⁷¹ Article 38 (2). ⁷² Article 39. ⁷³ Article 42 (4).
⁷⁴ Article 43. ⁷⁵ Article 45 (1). ⁷⁶ Article 55 (a).
⁷⁷ Article 56. ⁷⁸ Article 57. ⁷⁹ Article 69 (1).
⁸⁰ Article 69 (8). ⁸¹ Article 69 (4b). ⁸² Article 72 (b).
⁸³ Article 84. ⁸⁴ Article 87. ⁸⁵ Article 81. ⁸⁶ Article 83.
⁸⁷ Article 55 (iv). ⁸⁸ Article 82. ⁸⁹ Article 90. ⁹⁰ Article 85.
⁹¹ Article 86. ⁹² Article 23 (2). ⁹³ Article 23 (5a) and (5b).
⁹⁴ For details see *Rashtriya Panchayat Niyamavali*, Kathmandu, 1963. ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 8

Rise of Neo-Traditionalism

THE NEW era ushered in by the working of Panchayat Democracy brought in its trail the introduction of many radical reforms, important among them being the abolition of the feudal system, introduction of land reforms, enacting of new social codes prohibiting the age-old practices of polygamy and child marriage, streamlining of the administration and the adoption of measures for economic development of the country. While adopting these measures, ostensibly aiming at the improvement of the lot of the people, the King, however, did not lose sight of his ultimate aim, viz., to strengthen the traditional forces so that the hegemony of the Crown might never be threatened in the kingdom. This aim was sought to be achieved by adopting the following measures: (a) restoration of the monarchy to its traditional position which had been impaired by the working of parliamentary system; (b) expanding and strengthening of bureaucratic structure of the country to such an extent that it would develop stakes in its preservation; (c) strengthening of the army that might, owing to its conservative character, oppose any political development challenging the supremacy of the traditional forces; and (d) practising Panchayat Democracy in the country in such a way as to allow the traditional forces to come to power at various institutional levels on the one hand, and to check the growth of progressive forces on the other.

The monarchy had staged a come-back as a *de facto* factor in the Nepalese politics after the collapse of the Rana autocracy in 1950. But after the installation of parliamentary government in mid-1959 its power and prestige had received a setback. It had become evident that if the parliamentary system was allowed to continue, the monarch would lose his grip over the Nepalese politics and would eventually be

reduced to a status of a titular head of the kingdom. It was primarily to guard against any such eventuality that the King had struck against the parliamentary institutions in December 1960. The King, however, was aware of the possible popular revulsion against the re-emergence of an autocratic rule. He, therefore, immediately gave an assurance that he had no lust for power and he had assumed the administration of the country in order to salvage it from the rot in which it had been placed by the parliamentary system and political parties. And to buttress his assurance the King appointed the first ministry under the Panchayat Democracy which was composed of elected members of the Rashtriya Panchayat. He proclaimed on January 27, 1967, the first amendment of the constitution extending the functions of the Council of Ministers from providing the King with its aid and advice to the exercising of "general supervision and control over the administration of the country in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, other existing Nepalese laws, and directives issued by His Majesty from time to time in the interest of Nepal and the Nepalese people". It was further provided that the King would appoint his Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister from among the Ministers of the Council.¹

Thus camouflaging his real intentions with democratic pretensions, the King embarked upon the road to realize his ambition of being an absolute ruler of the country. That his power was absolute despite "democratic" Panchayat system he introduced to replace parliamentary institutions becomes evident if the pattern of relationship between the King and Panchayat bodies at various levels is critically scrutinized.

Ever since its inception, the Rashtriya Panchayat has neither been a supreme body nor has it established a record of independent working. It owes its existence to the King as he may, while exercising his emergency power, dissolve it, at his discretion. At the same time, it can neither discuss the Royalty, nor can any of its measures become effective unless it secures the Royal approval, which he can withhold at his pleasure.² Moreover, the King can get any measure passed through the Rashtriya Panchayat, because, first, the members have been hopelessly divided in the absence of organized political parties; secondly, most of the members of the Rashtriya Panchayat being non-

committed to any political ideology, their interest appears to be in securing personal gains, which can, under the Panchayat Democracy, be realized only by playing chores to the King; thirdly, in order to facilitate the enactment of measures of his choice the King includes those persons in his Council of Ministers who, besides representing sectional, community and regional interests, also command some influence in the Rashtriya Panchayat; fourthly, the system does not permit any opposition to it because the King symbolizes the system and thus his policies cannot be opposed by the Rashtriya Panchayat members. Moreover, the holding of the session of the Rashtriya Panchayat *in camera* has not encouraged its members to exhibit their wits while opposing the measures introduced by the government. The foregoing built-in weaknesses in the mechanism of the Rashtriya Panchayat have enabled the King to get any measure of his liking passed through it, although in formal theory, this institution is a representative body of the people and not an assembly entirely nominated by the King. For instance, when the King asked the Rashtriya Panchayat whether Panchayat Democracy, which had been introduced on an experimental basis, should finally be accepted or not, the Rashtriya Panchayat requested the King to accept the new political order in view of its suitability to the country.³

The control of the monarch over the Council of Ministers has been full and complete. It was not only owing to inherent weakness in the system but also due to manoeuvrability of the King, who has employed a battery of strategies and stratagems to keep the Council of Ministers supine and impotent. In the first place, the introduction of the Panchayat system has left the members of the Rashtriya Panchayat in such a helpless position that no member, howsoever popular and capable he may be, can be sure of his selection in the Cabinet. Members chosen for the ministry are individually and collectively responsible to the King and not to the Rashtriya Panchayat. Since the continuance of a minister in the Cabinet depends on the pleasure of the King, it is not possible for him to take any independent initiative and assert his position. Moreover, in the selection of the members of his Cabinet the King seems to have adopted certain guidelines:

(a) members of the Rashtriya Panchayat who held high positions in banned political parties were not preferred by the King;⁴

(b) those members of the Rashtriya Panchayat who had supported the King's action of the abolition of parliamentary system have been accommodated in the Cabinet;⁵

(c) those members of the Rashtriya Panchayat get place in the Cabinet whose allegiance to Royalty is assured;⁶

(d) those persons have been conspicuously avoided who have high ambitions or who prefer independent initiatives;⁷

(e) members possessing divergent and heterogeneous outlook, belief and background have been preferred in his Cabinet by the King and;⁸

(f) influential members of major communities who are inclined towards Panchayat Democracy have also been given place in the Council of Ministers.

Besides exercising discretionary choice in the selection of members of his Cabinet, the King controls the Cabinet as a whole in many ways. Constitutionally, it is the function of the Council of Ministers to render aid and advice to the King in the administration of the kingdom. The King, however, has been undermining the status and the position of the Council of Ministers. For instance, he appointed a four-member Special Advisory Council to advise and assist him in discharging his administrative duties. It was assumed in many quarters that such a step was taken to put a check on the independent working of the Council of Ministers. Worse still, generally those members got place in the Special Advisory Council who were known for their differences with the then Prime Minister and his team. When the liberal Prime Minister, S. B. Thapa, resigned he was replaced by his conservative colleague K. N. Bishta. The members whom the King appointed in the Special Advisory Council included the outgoing Prime Minister, S. B. Thapa, Tulsi Giri, another ex-Prime Minister and V. B. Thapa, another minister who had resigned from the Cabinet sometime back. Such persons could hardly render co-operation to the Prime Minister. The hostility between these two bodies immediately became visible which undermined the prestige of the Council of Ministers. A leading paper reported: "These members (belonging to

Special Advisory Council) are organizing groups contrary to the objectives of the system and their own commitment. They are indulging in the baseless propaganda against the Bishta Government.”⁹

Thus, the King has left little scope for his ministers to exercise the power vested in them. When any minister resents the abrogation of his power by the King, differences arise between him and the King and invariably in such a situation the former has to quit. While resigning the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers on January 27, 1965, Tulsi Giri reported that “he had resigned owing to differences with the King over the interpretation of the constitution, particularly its provisions relating to the Chairman’s functions”.¹⁰

It was learnt that the difference between Tulsi Giri and King Mahendra arose when the latter attempted to exercise his control over the decision-making process as well as implementation of the affairs concerning his portfolios.¹¹ Moreover, it was noted that the decisions of the Council were subject to revision by the King. The Ministry of Commerce and Industries, for instance, had reached the conclusion, after much verification and negotiation, that the trade with Pakistan would not be of much value to Nepal and she even could not get those basic commodities she was in acute need of. The King, however, reversed the decision and asked the ministry to go ahead with the plan of diversification of trade with countries other than India.¹² Similarly, the King freely reshuffled the Cabinet whenever there arose public controversy over its working. On July 6, 1964, for instance, the King made sweeping changes in the executive body, following “bitter controversies” created owing to differences in the ministry over the handling of students’ agitation who were demanding the “right to form independent unions”. The King relieved R. K. Shah, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of Raj Sabha, for his alleged support to the students’ movement. Similarly, he relieved Tulsi Giri, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, of his portfolios of Home and Panchayat Affairs and left with him only the Palace Affairs portfolio.¹³ Besides, the King curtailed the power, function and scope of ministers by vesting more power and patronage to the secretaries, from whom more loyalty and sincerity could be expected than from the members

of the Rashtriya Panchayat who were always eager to play with politics. To cite an instance, when Tulsi Giri was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and was holding the portfolios of Foreign and Home Affairs, the King appointed Major Padma Bahadur Khatri as Foreign and Home Secretary, who, in turn, did not allow Tulsi Giri to have a say in foreign and home affairs.¹⁴ When Tulsi Giri succeeded in sending this dominating Major to the U.N. as Nepal's representative, the King immediately appointed the Bagmati Zonal Commissioner, another strong-headed man, on the post vacated by the Major, apparently to check his Chairman of the Council from exercising full control over his own portfolios.

The meetings of the Cabinet are generally held at the Royal Palace under the chairmanship of the King. All important files are put before him and he goes through them and passes necessary orders and instructions for their execution.¹⁵ Similarly, all important national and international policies of the country are announced by the King in public on various occasions well in advance before the ministers are asked to give them a form and put them before him for his final approval.¹⁶ Likewise, the King keeps matters regarding the maintenance of law and order, and defence tightly under his own control and directs the concerned ministers and other high officials in respective matters.¹⁷ In the field of foreign affairs, the King has been the sole architect of national policy. He not only frames and formulates foreign policy of the country but puts such persons in charge of the portfolio of Foreign Affairs who could vindicate his stand on Nepal's relations with other countries. If he has to launch a tirade against India he would make Tulsi Giri the Foreign Minister who will fulfil his task and when he thinks that the country should come close to India, he would elevate R. K. Shah to handle foreign relations particularly with India. He would not hesitate to sack R. K. Shah and put K. N. Bishta in his position if he wants to be more friendly with China. But if he visualizes that his Foreign Minister is going too fast and has made such statement which go against his set policy, he would drop K. N. Bishta from his ministry.¹⁸ He would not allow his Foreign Minister to give directions to the Nepalese ambassadors accredited to foreign countries. Instead, he would recall them and address them in

person if he has to bring any important change in the foreign policy of the country.¹⁹

The King and The Bureaucracy

Besides maintaining control over the decision-making process of the country, the King exercises control over the execution of the decisions by maintaining direct contact with the bureaucrats. He reposes faith more in secretaries than in ministers and deals with them directly, and they, in turn, maintain direct communication with the Royal Palace for the execution of Royal orders. Moreover, the King calls upon the heads of departments, Secretaries, Directors, Commissioners and scrutinizes progress reports, charts and development projects under their supervision. He also issues directives and warnings to them in case he finds that things have not been executed in the way he had ordered them.²⁰ Likewise, the King pays surprise visits to various offices, projects, Secretariat and other undertakings sponsored either by the government or by any foreign agency, and reviews the progress they have registered. Further, the King himself heads some Commissions and directs their working. He had been, for instance, the Chairman of the Planning Commission and with the help of some experts he drafted the plans for the development of the country. Again, with a view to keeping watch and control over the various activities of departments the King formed a Department of Supervision and Inspection, whose main function has been to watch the activities of the administrative departments and their personnel and submit a report to the King, who takes proper steps in that matter. Annual progress reports of all the departments are also submitted to the King. The King has also succeeded in extending his control over day-to-day administration of the country. The day he formed the government under Panchayat system he announced a sweeping change in the administrative set-up. The special ministerial posts of Special Ambassador and Receiver of Petition in the palace were dissolved, and the National Guidance Ministry was amalgamated with the Panchayat Ministry. Again on April 10, 1966, he announced the amalgamation of Home and Panchayat Ministry.²¹ He also ordered for the setting up of a separate administration for north-

ern border.²² In conformity with the Panchayat system, he introduced decentralization of administration in the country.²³ He asked the formation of high-level committees dealing with commerce and trade, industries and transport.²⁴ On September 9, 1966, he commanded his Chairman of the Council of Ministers to introduce drastic innovations in the Rashtriya Panchayat by establishing five committees dealing with the affairs of the Panchayats—economic, social, administrative, agricultural and land reforms.²⁵

In the field of appointment and dismissal of civil and defence personnel, the King has a decisive power. In the key posts, his policy of making political appointments, which he started after dismissing the parliamentary government, more or less, continued in the same manner.²⁶ Moreover, the new amendment of the constitution has empowered him to appoint the Zonal Commissioners directly.²⁷ In exercise of this power the King appointed Commissioner of all the 14 zones comprising the kingdom.²⁸ The King has made it abundantly clear that since he has the power to make any member of the Rashtriya Panchayat a minister, so he also enjoys the privilege of vesting power in the civil service or curtailing it as he wishes.²⁹

The King has formulated many strategies to control the administration of the country. One of his popular practices has been to keep the bureaucracy divided into many groups so that it may not form a solid bloc making his command ineffective. The division of civil officers has been done on the basis of status and the community.³⁰

Another pillar on which the power of monarchy rests in Nepal is the combined force of army and the police. As mentioned earlier, the King attempted to extend his control over these institutions. He has not been satisfied with his acting merely as the supreme Commander-in-Chief of the army but has assumed the portfolio of Defence after scrapping the parliamentary system in December 1960. Even after the installation of Panchayat Democracy he did not give up this important portfolio to any minister.³¹ Moreover, the King maintains few battalions of the army in the Royal Palace itself to meet any emergency. He remains surrounded by high army and police officers, who have, owing to their landlord-aristocratic back-

ground, a vested interest in holding the King to the supreme position in the Nepalese politics. Besides, the King maintains a big Intelligence Department under his direct supervision to keep himself in touch with the political situation of the country and to maintain watch over political leaders.³²

The foregoing study of the Panchayat institutions and their relations with the King indicates that all avenues of power for the people have been blocked by the King, who not only maintains control over them but also gives them direction.

Pillars of Monarchical Power

Earlier the monarchy had derived support for its power from the feudal class, the army and the bureaucracy. Since the institution of feudalism has now become anachronistic and its further continuance in the kingdom would have alienated a large section of the society from the newly established polity, the king thought it prudent to abolish it. But to ensure his supremacy, he strengthened and patronized certain other institutions and sections to such an extent that they developed stakes in the preservation of Panchayat Democracy which had been ushered in to uphold the sovereign power of the Crown. It is worthwhile to make a detailed study of the manner in which these institutions have been expanded and strengthened.

Bureaucracy has recorded a phenomenal growth during the working of Panchayat Democracy. Its growth has been both horizontal and vertical.

Earlier the administrative machinery of the kingdom was concentrated in the Kathmandu valley. Gradually it had expanded to various parts of the country but still there were left some remote areas in the eastern and northern regions of the country that had not been brought under the direct control of the government. The arms of bureaucracy was extended to these areas after the overthrow of parliamentary system. New administrative units were created and the existing ones were expanded. For instance, a new Cabinet Secretariat was established with a view to "bring about more efficiency and coordination in the working of Panchayat system and administrative machinery". Likewise many new cadres were formed in various

branches of administration with the result that the administration became top-heavy. The existing hierarchy of the zonal administration may illustrate the point. At the apex of the pyramid is the Zonal Commissioner and to assist him there exists a zonal committee. Next in the ladder comes the Assistant Zonal Commissioner who is followed by the Chief Zonal Officer and a large number of other officers.

Such an administrative policy resulted in the heavy recruitment of civil personnel. According to an official statement, the number of gazetted employees has gone up from 891 in July 1960 to 2,223 in July, 1967. The corresponding figures for the non-gazetted employees were 26,382 and 29,231. Between July 1963 and July 1967, the number of gazetted employees has increased from 1,296 to 3,223.⁸⁵ For the maintenance of such a huge civil personnel the government had to allocate a major sum in the budget, thus reducing the expenditure on development projects. A study of the annual budget would attest that the expenditure on the establishment (regular) has been on the increase as compared to the expenditure on the development.

Table 8-1

EXPENDITURE ON REGULAR AND DEVELOPMENT (Rs. '000)⁸⁶

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Regular</i>	<i>Development</i>	<i>Its Percentage</i>
1964-65	11,79,43	23,19,10	50.8
1965-66	14,73,30	28,07,76	52.4
1966-67	17,05,95	26,82,40	63.2
1967-68	19,07,89	28,11,83	64.3

Thus it is clear that the regular budget not only outstripped the development budget but a large portion of development expenditure was spent on developmental personnel. The Nepalese Prime Minister himself admitted in the Rashtriya Panchayat that the administration of the kingdom had expanded during the past few years and "a very large percentage of development budget is being spent only on salaries and allowances."⁸⁵

A large portion of the budget was thus sunk in the expansion of administrative machinery not as much for its streamlining or for quickening the developmental process but for creating interest of bureaucracy in the preservation of the system that provided them with handsome salaries.

Its stakes in the Panchayat polity could further be ensured by making it more powerful and authoritative. This was actually done by investing it with more powers and authority. The vital unit in the Panchayat administration had been the district whose over-all responsibility rested with the Chief District Officer. According to a notification of the Ministry of Home and Panchayat, a number of powers were delegated to the Chief District Officer under the 1952 Food Anti-Hoarding Act, the 1960 National Loan Act, the 1960 Entertainment Act, the 1955 Terai District Headquarters Act, the 1952 Kathmandu Valley Commissioner and Magistrate's Regulations, the 1955 Essential Goods Protection Act, the 1957 Radio Act, the 1963 House and Compound Taxation Act, the 1963 Investments in Foreign Countries Taxation Act, the 1963 Income Tax, the 1963 Traffic Act, the 1962 Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, the 1959 Revenue and Tax Court Act and 1965 Civil Service Regulations.³⁶ Power of such proportion was also vested in the Zonal Commissioners who were held responsible of zonal administration.

Finally, in the civil services those elements have been encouraged who are in favour of maintaining the *status quo*. A study of the personnel holding high posts at Central Secretariat as well as at district level indicates that the high caste persons have virtually been dominating the civil service and as such they support the system that has given them status and authority. The Table 8.2 would bear out the above conclusion.

The Army

The army in Nepal, as noted earlier, has always sided with the powerful and has been helping the rulers to perpetuate their domination in the kingdom. With the ushering in of democratic innovations in the country in 1951, it was hoped that the role of the army in politics would be minimized. However, the political instability and personal ambitions of the King made the role of

Table 8-2

CASTE BACKGROUND OF TOP CIVIL SERVANTS¹⁷

<i>Senior Civil Servants</i>	<i>No. of People</i>	<i>Approx. Percentage</i>
Brahmin	61	46
Newar	33	25
Chhetrias	31	23
Terai People (Brahmins and Chhetrias excluded)	4	3
Magar	1	1
Gurung	1	1
Tamang	1	1
	132	100
<i>District Administration (Anchaladish)</i>		
Brahmin	5	37
Chhetrias	2	14
Rai	2	14
Sherpa	1	7
Newar	2	14
Gurung	1	7
Thakali	1	7
	14	100
<i>Bada Hakims and Magistrates</i>		
Chhetrias	7	35
Brahmin	5	25
Newar	3	15
Tharu	1	5
Limbu	1	5
Gurung	1	5
Giri	1	5
Singh (Terai)	1	5
	20	100

the army more dynamic. It was primarily because of the nature of its composition and the infra-structural situation in the kingdom. The army is basically composed of highlanders—commonly known as the Gorkhas—and the high-ranking officials have generally come from the landed aristocracy. Since the Shah king has

been regarded as the head of Gorkha House, the highlanders, who had no respectable position in socio-economic and political sphere of the kingdom, preferred to support and system that supported the supreme position of their head (the Shah king). Moreover, as the highlanders do not have enough fertile land to support their existence, they derive their livelihood from the defence services. They would, therefore, prefer a political system which assures their monopoly in these services. Since a democratic system is liable to open the doors of recruitment in the army to all the sections of the Nepalese society, the highlanders would rather prefer a political system in which the King holds a sovereign position because he could, though in his own interest, not change the existing pattern of recruitment in the army. On the other hand, the King is expected to further strengthen the position of the army in the country's political set-up in order to make the institution of monarchy more secure. The King has, therefore, increased the strength of the army, provided it with more facilities and equipped it with modern weapons. It has become an instrument in his hands for the consolidation of his position and for the elimination of his opponents. For the attainment of this purpose the King has been allocating large sums for the expansion of the army. A comparative study of defence expenditure of Nepal and Ceylon, the two countries in South Asia where the army has the basic purpose of maintaining law and order, would indicate that Nepal had been spending more money than the established international standard see Table 8.3.

As compared to Ceylon, Nepal, whose population is almost equivalent to that of the island, has been maintaining a larger army and incurring a higher expenditure as is clear from the Table 8.4.

Besides the army and the bureaucracy, which have been strengthened as pillars to sustain and perpetuate the institution of monarchy, the King, since the overthrow of parliamentary democracy, has taken steps to win the support of several other social institutions in the country.

(i) *Business Community*: The business community had been feeling a sense of deprivation at the insistence of earlier parliamentary government to give preference to the growth of public sector in the economic field. Capitalizing on this feeling, the King gave

Table 8-3

BUDGET ALLOCATION TO DEFENCE SERVICE IN NEPAL AND CEYLON (Rs. '000)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Total Govt. exp.</i>	<i>Exp. on Defence</i>	<i>Percentage of total Exp.</i>
NEPAL			
1960-61	193.5	16.8	8.7
1961-62	189.7	17.5	9.2
1962-63	219.3	24.7	11.3
1963-64	259.1	27.0	10.8
1964-65	352.2	28.2	8.0
1965-66	434.2	29.2	6.7
CEYLON			
1960-61	1,881	74	3.9
1961-62	1,974	71	3.6
1962-63	2,026	68	3.4
1963-64	2,269	64	2.8
1964-65	2,163	70	3.2
1965-66	2,195	73	3.3

Table 8-4

COMPARATIVE MILITARY STRENGTH OF NEPAL AND CEYLON IN 1963

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population (in thousands)</i>	<i>Total armed forces</i>	<i>Total officers</i>	<i>Army as % of the armed force</i>	<i>Exp. on defence per cent</i>	<i>Level of Exp.</i>
Nepal	9,044	45,000	—	100	30	High
Ceylon	9,612	8,881	548	61	18	Moderate

assurances that under the new political order the interests of the business community would be protected. This assurance had underlined King Mahendra's announcement that "It is the policy of His Majesty's Government to concentrate industrial development primarily in the private sector and provide necessary facilities and assistance for this purpose".³⁸ The King fulfilled

the promise to the business community by taking a number of positive steps. For instance, the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation was established with a view to providing financial assistance to traders and industrialists. The following table shows that the amount of loans which the Corporation has been providing to the business community goes on increasing from year to year.

Table 8-5

Year	<i>Loan given to Industrialists</i>
1964-65	Rs. 5,900,000
1965-66	9,055,000
1966-67	16,000,000

The government amended the Industrial Enterprises Act exempting new industries from payment of income tax for ten years. The existing industries were also exempted if they increased their paid up capital by 50 per cent in the expansion or modernization of their plants.³⁹ Besides, the government reduced the rate of interest from $9\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on loans obtained for financing exports as well as imports meant for operating and expanding industries.⁴⁰ Electricity charges to industrial concerns in Kathmandu Valley, Hitaura, Birganj and Pokhra were reduced by approximately 25 per cent.⁴¹ Moreover, the government reduced the margin of security to be provided by importers for loans to finance imports to 15 per cent for the imports of materials such as chemicals, fertilizers and seeds, 20 per cent for the import of essential commodities such as medicines, wool, kerosene oil, sugar, yarn and stationery goods, and 30 per cent for the imports of other goods.⁴² Similarly, the government reduced the rates of import duties on synthetic yarn from Rs. 44 to Rs. 22 per kilogram. Duties were remitted by 50 per cent in case of rice export to foreign countries.⁴³ To provide further protection to the industrialists, the government, while raising duties on the import of luxury and semi-luxury goods by 25 to 45 per cent, abolished excise duties on commodities exported from Nepal.⁴⁴ The government allowed the traders to retain 50 per cent of foreign exchange

earned by them through export. The business community was given a further impetus when the government framed the rule that no import licence was required for gift parcels valued at less than Rs. 1,000. Taking advantage of this rule the traders started getting goods worth Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 150,000 daily in the form of gift parcels from abroad. It was assumed in many quarters that in many cases the values of these parcels was being understated.⁴⁵ These measures were aimed at encouraging the business community to invest and multiply their capital. Their investment thus amounted to 95 per cent of the total investment of the Three-Year Plan, in the field of economic development.⁴⁶

While these steps increased the pace of economic and industrial development of the kingdom, it was the business community alone which reaped the harvest of the benefits accruing from it.⁴⁷ Consequently, the business community developed stakes in the perpetuation of the new political set-up under the hegemony of the King.

(ii) *The Peasantry*: Another section of the society whose support the King sought was the peasantry which constitutes 90 per cent of the kingdom's total population. It was hoped that if the lot of this overwhelming majority was improved, their surging discontent might turn into the spirit of co-operation to the system. Consequently, the King enforced Lands Act in 1964. It aimed at:

(a) bringing changes in land ownership pattern; (b) increasing agricultural production; and (c) shifting labour and capital to non-farm sector.

Following steps were taken to change the feudal pattern of ownership of land fitting to the changed situation.

Throughout the kingdom no landowner was allowed to possess more than 25 bighas of land. The maximum land an owner could retain was the following in different regions of the country:

Kathmandu Valley	50 Ropnies
Other Hill Areas	80 Ropnies
Terai (Inner and Outer)	25 bighas

The following ceiling on land to construct houses was allowed in different regions:

Kathmandu Valley	8 Ropnies
Other Hill Areas	18 Ropnies
Terai (Inner and Outer)	3 bighas

A tenant was entitled to possess the following areas in different regions:

Kathmandu Valley	10 Ropnies
Other Hill Areas	20 Ropnies
Terai (Inner and Outer)	4 bighas

(a) Security of tenancy rights was ensured; (b) the rent (50 per cent of the production at the maximum) was fixed.

The provisions made under Land Reform to increase agricultural yield were as follows:

(a) Provision of agricultural loan; (b) Provision of agricultural extension services; and (c) Debt determination and redemption provisions.

Compulsory Saving (the scheme aimed at collection of Rs. 50 crores within 5 years) and Loan Interception were designed to finance agricultural loans and ease extension services. Debt determination and redemption measures were taken to free poor tenants from the economic and social bondages of feudals.

The feudal grip on labour and capital in agriculture had been a great obstacle in the process of economic development. The regional balance of economic development could not be realized from the farm sector. The following provisions in the main were expected to be useful to encourage shift of managerial talent, capital and labour to non-agricultural sector:

(a) Ceiling on holdings; (b) Acquiring land above ceiling with due compensation in bonds; and (c) Land distribution and settlement programme.

The Articulate Section of the Society

The only section that had no apparent stakes in the preservation of Panchayat Democracy and that could pose a threat to the colossal powers of the King was the politically-oriented section of the society. To win this group over to the side of the new polity, the King appealed to their nationalist feelings. He declared that during the working of the parliamentary system, the prestige of traditional socio-political structures and the feeling of nationalism had eroded to such an extent that there emerged a danger to Nepal's social and political entity. The King thought that the country would register rapid progress while maintaining

its own personality if the traditional infra-structure and nationalistic policy both in domestic and foreign fronts were adopted. The prevailing internal and external milieu favoured the King to adopt measures aiming at inculcating the feeling of national pride. Consequently, priority was given to such steps as the declaration of the Nepali currency as the sole legal tender in the country, establishing a separate department for encouraging and synthesizing the Nepalese culture, forming Royal Nepal Academy for the development of Nepalese art and literature, declaring Nepali as the official language of the kingdom, inclusion of Nepali words in the commands of Royal Nepal Army, discarding the broadcasting of news in Hindi and Newari language from the radio stations of the country, taking over schools and boarding houses managed by foreigners, replacing foreign teachers in schools and colleges by the Nepalese teachers, the distribution of badges bearing national flag and the portraits of the King, naming national highways after national heroes, the renovation of temples, appointing the head of the priest class in a high constitutional body, making the kingdom as a Hindu State and a sanctuary for Hinduism, etc. Finally, an attempt was made to make the student community familiar with the spirit of Panchayat Democracy—the new bastion of traditionalism in Nepal.

Another field in which the King could secure the co-operation of the activists in public life was the pattern of Nepal's relations with other countries. There had been a feeling among the Nepalese that the kingdom was under overwhelming influence of India and unless it was firmly discarded the country could hardly adopt a posture of an independent nation. Nepal's relations with the rest of the world had been through India. Even to reach some parts of the country the Nepalese had to cross the Indian territory. Her trade was, more or less, restricted to India. For her security and national development the kingdom was heavily depending on India. It was believed in Nepal that India was taking full advantage of such a position by maintaining and openly claiming "special relations" with her. Earlier, Nepal made many attempts to maintain her relations with India on parity but with no fruitful result. His determined will and the changed international situation made it possible for the King to

acquire a more independent status for Nepal. She settled her border with China, permitted her to link Peking with Kathmandu and thereby secured another route for her relations with other countries. The construction of national highways was undertaken to avoid passing through the Indian territory and diplomatic relations with more than sixty countries were established. Foreign trade was diversified, membership of many international agencies acquired and independent stands were taken at many international meetings. The Indian Military Liaison Group and Indian personnel manning check-posts at the northern border were wound up. Transit facilities for foreign trade were acquired from India and a new trade and transit treaty was negotiated discarding the earlier one that was regarded as injurious to the economic development of the kingdom. This made Nepal to assert that no country, including India, had special position in the kingdom. Such a policy was bound to instil a sense of pride for which the credit naturally went to the Panchayat Democracy.

As discussed in the earlier chapter, an attempt was made to include such vital sections of society, *i.e.*, youth, labour, ex-Servicemen and women in the fold of Panchayat Democracy by organizing separate class organizations for their welfare as well as for eliciting their co-operation for the development of the nation. To instil a sense of involvement in the processes of the system these various class organizations were accorded due representation in the Rashtriya Panchayat. More privileges were conferred on them to make them loyal to the new system.

Despite these steps, taken to provide sustenance to Panchayat Democracy, a threat to its survival from the politically conscious sections of the society could not be ruled out. It was therefore necessary to take such steps which could check the participation of those sections in the working of Panchayat institutions. Consequently, the King's aim was to entrust the Panchayat in the hands of those people who had stakes in the perpetuation of traditionalism and the *status quo* in the Nepalese politics. An analysis of the elections to Panchayat institutions at various levels and their functions would illustrate the point.

Panchayat Elections

One of the cardinal features of any system of free elections is full and frank political debates on all matters concerning the lives and aspirations of the people. In the Nepalese Panchayat elections, however, full and frank electoral debates are ruled out by the absence of political parties and issuance of restrictive orders which prohibit all political activities. Since the term "political activities" is loose and ambiguous, the government can curb almost any election activity of the candidates. Further, in view of the stern orders that any opposition or criticism of the Panchayat system will not be tolerated, the Panchayat elections cannot be regarded as being held in an open atmosphere.⁴⁸

In the initial stage the elections at grass root levels were held in the most undemocratic manner. In most cases the elections at Village Panchayats were conducted by show of hands rather than secret balloting and the government officials conducting the elections actively interfered with the selection of candidates. At some places when more than one candidate was in the field, the Returning Officer tried to avoid contests and in a majority of cases they were able to stifle political competition in the name of unanimity.⁴⁹ In fact, some Returning Officers went to the extent of proposing a bunch of names after consulting the Mukhia of the village, leaving the voters with the Hobson's choice of agreeing or disagreeing with the list.⁵⁰ Moreover, it was alleged that in some District Panchayats elections were held through lots.⁵¹ From some quarters it was complained that in some District Panchayats elections for chairmanship were held without the knowledge of the majority of the voters. It was further alleged that government officials were themselves electioneering in favour of some candidates in District Panchayat elections.⁵²

These undemocratic practices indulged in by the government in the conduct of Panchayat elections with a view to checking the entry of progressive elements in Panchayat bodies, however, aroused resentment among the people. It was demanded from various quarters that an independent Election Commission be established and elections be conducted in a "free and fair" manner.

Though this development made the government somewhat cautious, yet it could not deter the establishment from taking such steps as to keep the "undesirable" elements at bay from the Panchayat system. Interference and terror are now two major methods which are applied frequently by the government in getting its favourites elected to various Panchayat units. For instance, during recent elections of District Panchayat of Nawal-Parasi, it was complained that elections were so hastily arranged there that several voters were unable to exercise their franchise and that the names of several Panchayat members were deliberately omitted from the list of District Assembly members. Two ballot papers used in the elections from the newly constructed Narsahi Village Panchayat were written by hand, while the other nine were printed, because "a senior District Officer wanted to identify the votes".⁵³ Similar reports also came from Sindhu-palchok where it was alleged that election from certain Village Panchayats to the District Panchayat were first suspended on the ground that the Polling Officer had fallen ill, and when majority of the Village Panchayat members had left the polling booth, certain candidates were declared elected unopposed.⁵⁴ According to a report of recent elections it was complained that the administration of Jhapa district had committed widespread irregularities in the Village Panchayat and the District Assembly elections in that area. "As a result of open interference by the local administration in the election with the connivance of officials of the Election Commission several nationalist and progressive elements were defeated".⁵⁵ Reports regarding the misuse of power and authority by local Chief District Officer, Land Reforms Officer and Judge of District Court in elections of Village and District Panchayats came from many sources.⁵⁶ At the higher level, it was alleged, that "Zonal Commissioners do not hesitate to exercise their power indiscriminately in order to have their favourites elected".⁵⁷

Such practices of high-handedness in Panchayat elections by government officials convinced many that "no election to any tier of Panchayat in any area was ever held without administrative interference and bungling. There is no point in blaming any particular Zonal Commissioner for this situation, because if any Zonal Commissioner is unable to secure the victory of a

particular candidate in accordance with the desire of persons occupying positions of authority, it would be difficult for him to retain his post".⁵⁸

Another method adopted by the government in frustrating the attempts of progressive elements to infiltrate into Panchayat bodies was the use of terror and intimidation. For instance, on the eve of recent elections to District Panchayats of Dhanusa and Mahottari several arrests were made in Janakpur Zone under the Public Security Act and the Treason (Crime and Punishment) Act, allegedly in order "to facilitate the victory of persons favoured by it, create an atmosphere of panic and thus influence the results of elections".⁵⁹ Similarly, at several other places "candidates were arrested on the eve of elections. In certain cases, Election Officers even helped candidates defeated in one Village Panchayat to get elected to the District Assembly from another Village Panchayat without any contest. Some candidates were not provided with copies of voters' lists. The voters were kidnapped at several places or attempts were made to influence their choice through allurements or intimidation".⁶⁰

The atmosphere in which Panchayat elections were held was, thus, permeated with fear and apprehension and the people were genuinely afraid of incurring the wrath of government officials. Moreover, the partisan attitude of the government convinced the people that: "... no person not favoured by the administration will be allowed to be elected to even the lowest tier of Panchayat and Class Organization."⁶¹

Panchayat Leadership

Such persons "not favoured by the administration" could only be progressive elements from whom support to one-man dominated system could hardly be expected. The elections were conducted in such a manner as to provide a new lease of life to traditional elements in the Nepalese society by catapulting into positions of power such persons who have been age-old custodians of *status quo* in villages and districts. Electoral politics, if it is really effective and genuinely democratic, must give rise to politically conscious leadership, but under the Nepalese Panchayat system only the traditionally privileged people have been

successful in Panchayat elections. These leaders belong to the upper strata of society and represent the traditional well-entrenched sections of society who were never enthusiastic for radical political change. Below an attempt is made to study the various socio-economic characteristics of the emergent Panchayat leadership in Nepal.

(i) *Age*: Most of the elective offices in the Village Panchayats have been monopolized by elderly people who cannot be expected to welcome the winds of change blowing away the traditional socio-economic framework of the society. The following table, pertaining to 80 Village Panchayats, shows that most of the Pradhan Panchas and Uppradhan Panchas are middle-aged and new blood is not being infused into the Panchayat system.

Table 8-6

AGE OF VILLAGE PANCHAYAT LEADERSHIP

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>No. of Pradhan Panchas</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>	<i>No. of Up-Pradhan Panchas</i>	<i>Their approx. Percentage</i>
20 to 30	4	5	20	25
31 to 40	24	30	20	25
41 to 50	28	35	31	40
51 to 60	20	25	8	9.9
61 and above	4	5	1	1.1

(ii) *Caste*: An overwhelmingly large proportion of village leaders belong to the high-ranking castes, viz., Chhetrias, Brahmins and Newars and as far as traditionally under-privileged castes are concerned the electoral mechanism has not served to give them adequate representation in accordance with their numerical strength. This can be seen from the Table 8.7 caste-wise figures relating to 80 Village Panchayats.

(iii) *Education*: A survey of the educational qualifications of the Village Panchayat leaders in 80 Panchayats revealed that well-educated persons constituted a diminutive minority and most of the elected office-holders are persons with little or no

Table 8-7

CASTE BACKGROUND OF VILLAGE PANCHAYAT LEADERSHIP

<i>Caste</i>	<i>Pradhans</i>	<i>Their percentage to the total leadership of the Panchayat surveyed</i>	<i>Uppradhans</i>	<i>Their total Percentage</i>
Chhetrias	25	App. 31	17	App. 21
Brahmins	15	„ 19	30	„ 37
Newars	12	„ 15	9	„ 11
Buddhists	4	„ 5	3	„ 4
Rais	8	„ 10	9	„ 11
Thapas	9	„ 11	7	„ 9
Gurungs	3	„ 4	2	„ 3
Others	4	„ 5	3	„ 4
Total	80	100	80	100

acquaintance with modern education. This can be seen from the Table 8.8.

Table 8-8

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF VILLAGE PANCHAYAT LEADERSHIP

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>Pradhan Panch</i>		<i>Uppradhan Panch</i>	
	<i>Their No.</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>	<i>Their No.</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>
Literate	71	App. 89	62	App. 77
Middle Class	7	„ 9	13	„ 16
Matric (S.L.C.)	2	„ 2	5	„ 7

(iv) *Profession:* At Village Panchayat level, those professions have been represented in majority which are favourably disposed towards traditionalism, viz., agriculture and petty business. The Table 8.9 would illustrate the point.

Table 8-9

PROFESSION-WISE BREAK-UP OF VILLAGE LEADERSHIP

<i>Profession</i>	<i>No. of Leaders (Pradhans and Uppradhans)</i>	<i>Their percentage to total leadership</i>
Agriculture	59	App. 37
Agriculture + Business	40	„ 25
Agriculture+Social Service	14	„ 9
Priesthood	9	„ 5
Business+Priest	13	„ 8
Social Services	14	„ 9
Military Services	11	„ 11
Total	160	100

District Panchayat Leadership

The overall socio-economic traits of District Panchayat leaders were similar to those of the Village Panchayat leaders and even at this level the age-old privilege-holders dominated the scene. Of course, the district leaders were slightly younger and significantly better educated than their Village Panchayat counterparts but their social background and political orientations were in no way different and they could not be expected to act as catalysts for modernization. This general analysis may be illustrated by the following detailed study of the characteristics of the District Panchayat leaders in 14 districts.

(i) *Age*: At the district level a large majority of the leadership fell into the age-group 31-40 showing that on a crude average, it was nearly a decade younger than its village counterparts, the actual distribution of pattern of age of 14 Sabhapatis and Upsabhapatis being shown in Table 8.10.

(ii) *Caste*: The traditionally high-ranking castes, viz., Chhetrias, Brahmins and Newars dominated at the District Panchayat level also as the figures in Table 8.11 would show.

(iii) *Education*: The District Panchayat leaders were, on the whole, better educated than the Village Panchayat leaders, the main reason for this being their urban background. (Table 8.12)

Table 8-10

AGE OF DISTRICT PANCHAYAT LEADERS

<i>Age-group</i>	<i>No. of Sabhapatis</i>	<i>Their approx. Percentage</i>	<i>No. of Up-sabhapatis</i>	<i>Their approx. Percentage</i>
20 to 30 years	5	36	4	29
31 to 40 years	8	57	8	57
41 to 50 years	1	7	2	14

Table 8-11

CASTE BACKGROUND OF DISTRICT PANCHAYAT LEADERSHIP

<i>Caste</i>	<i>No. of Sabhapatis</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>	<i>No. of Up-sabhapatis</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>
Brahmins	5	36	3	App. 21
Newars	4	29	3	„ 21
Chettrias	2	14	3	„ 21
Yadavas	1	7	3	„ 21
Gurungs	2	14	—	—
Limbus	—	—	—	„ 7
Tamangs	—	—	1	„ 7

Table 8-12

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF DISTRICT PANCHAYAT LEADERS

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Sabhapati</i>		<i>Upsabhapati</i>	
	<i>Their No.</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>	<i>Their No.</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>
Literate	3	22	7	50
I.A.	7	50	5	36
B.A.	4	28	2	14

(iv) *Profession*: Tradition-oriented profession like agriculture coupled with the petty business came to forefront in the District Panchayat leadership, while articulate persons representing social, political and intellectual activities were meagrely represented. Given below is the table that would prove the above point.

Table 8-13

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF DISTRICT
PANCHAYAT LEADERSHIP

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Sabhapati</i>		<i>Upsabhapati</i>	
	<i>Their No.</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>	<i>Their No.</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>
Government Service				
Ex-Officers	4	29	3	22
Business+ Agriculture	4	29	5	36
Business	3	21	2	14
Students	1	7	—	—
Ex-Servicemen	1	7	2	14
Social Service+				
Political Activities	1	7	2	14

After a review of the main characteristics of the Panchayat leadership one may discuss general traits of the emergent Panchayat leadership at various levels that may lead one to understand the spectrum of the system.

An analysis of the pattern of leadership in Panchayats indicates that the dominant factor in determining leadership and prestige more than either age or caste is essentially economic power and this economic power in Nepal is mostly enjoyed by virtue of the ownership of land. According to a study of the Panchayat leadership conducted by the Government of Nepal in 1967, it was found that out of total respondents 56 per cent were landowners and 38.7 per cent owner-cultivators. Only 0.8 per cent and 0.4 per cent of the total respondents were tenants and wage labourers respectively. Non-agricultural occupation, *i.e.*, service, business or teaching account for only 2 per

cent, 1.2 per cent and 0.9 per cent respectively.⁶³ In size 42.4 per cent had holdings over 50 Ropnies, 16.4 per cent between 20 and 50 Ropnies and 15.3 per cent between 15 and 30 Ropnies. Only 20.7 registered themselves on having holdings below 5 Ropnies.⁶³ Likewise, those who admitted an income over Rs. 5,000 per annum constituted 37 per cent of the total respondents. Another 24.6 per cent registered an income between Rs. 3,000 and Rs. 5,000 per annum. And those claiming an income between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 2,999 constituted 15.2 per cent. Only 7.8 per cent had income falling below Rs. 1,000.⁶⁴

Apart from the landed aristocracy assuming power at village and district levels, it was found out recently that "the business community is envisaging deep interest in the elections of Panchayats in the Narayani, Koshi and Baghmatti Zones."⁶⁵ Thus, one finds that with the abolition of political parties and political leaders the leadership of Panchayats slipped into the hands of old feudals, landowners, money-lenders and the business community who form the core of traditionalism in the kingdom and are dead set against the introduction of any radical political innovation.

By its nature such leadership is more interested in maintaining *status quo* in the society rather than becoming Panchayat objective and programme-oriented. A study of the level of the understanding of Panchayat objectives and programme of Panchayat leaders revealed that "24.7 per cent of our respondents registered total incomprehension about the objectives of Panchayat and 59.3 per cent seemed deeply confused. Only 10.4 per cent had an even rudimentary understanding of the objectives. And satisfactory knowledge of the main slogans of the system, *i.e.*, say that it aims at "the exploitation-less society by means of class co-ordination and through a partyless democracy" was forthcoming from only 2 per cent.⁶⁶

The protection and privileges conferred by the government on this leadership made it regard itself a new class—the sole defender of the Panchayat system, vested with the responsibility to suppress all those elements which do not toe the official policy. At the lower levels of Panchayat this new class acted as a boss and fulfilled their vested interest. At the higher level, taking full advantage of their position, they attempted to amass wealth:

“Persons who became ministers after the changes of 1960 seemed to have amassed much wealth all of a sudden. A new class, consisting of such persons, has emerged in the country today, replacing the *Sardars* and nobility of the Rana period. These persons enjoyed different privileges. Since their special influence continues on the administration after they no longer occupy the position of minister, they are deriving financial benefit accordingly.”⁶⁷

The King, however, could not feel sure and secure of his supreme power only by associating major sections of the society with the processes of the Panchayat Democracy and by vesting Panchayat leadership in the hands of traditional forces. Unless the common man felt benefited by the system he could hardly associate and defend it. The King, therefore, took steps to improve the administrative and economic conditions under the heavy burden of which people were smarting since long.

Reforming Administration

With a firm determination the King moved to improve the administrative conditions of the country and for this purpose he took many measures which may broadly be classified under the following categories:

Owing to difficult terrain and hazardous conditions in the northern border there had been since long no administration in actual terms. On July 18, 1965, the formation of regional administrative centres in the northern border areas of Humla, Mustang, Namche and Olangchung was announced.⁶⁸ It was done to “ensure the proper administration of those inaccessible areas, maintain law and order, instil a sense of security among the local people and raise their standard of life”. Each centre was put under an administrator whose powers, duties and position were the same as those of the district Bada Hakim.⁶⁹ The government also introduced a plan in the area to develop pastures, forest-erization, and the creation of conditions suitable for poultry farming, beekeeping and animal husbandry.⁷⁰ An 11-member Inaccessible Regions Development Board was formed with the objective of accelerating the pace of development of these regions.⁷¹ To put the financial administration on a sound footing,

three divisions of the Auditor-General's Department were created, one each in the eastern, western and central sector with their offices in Janakpur, Nepalganj and Kathmandu respectively. The Government Funds Expenditure (Procedure) Rules, 1959, were enforced in fourteen zones where zonal officers of these divisions were created. In addition, new accounting system was introduced in the case of all these divisions and zonal offices.⁷³ Moreover, District Land Tax Offices under the Revenue Department in all districts where the 1967 Land Administration Act was enforced were opened.⁷³ A separate Department of Minor Irrigation was created under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Likewise, Revenue Offices, Courts, Police Stations and Health Centres were reorganized on the basis of development districts. To make justice cheap and quick, zonal courts were formed in all the fourteen zones of the kingdom under the 1964 Judicial Administration (Amendment) Act. The existing Regional Courts were replaced by 66 District Courts for the 75 development districts. A high-level Judicial Reform Commission was established to submit recommendations for the quick disposal of cases.⁷⁴ With a view to extending the postal services, the government signed an agreement with China under which the Nepalese Government was authorized to maintain post offices at Kodari (Tibet).⁷⁵ For the development of zonal and district administration in accordance with the spirit of Panchayat system King Mahendra, on December 16, 1965, promulgated the Local Administration Ordinance which introduced far-reaching changes in zonal and district administrative set-up. The newly created zones and development districts were adopted as administrative units, and the old administrative boundaries, as well as district Bada Hakims and Magistrates, were abolished.⁷⁶

The corruption in the administration had been chronic in Nepal. One of the reasons attributed for dismissing the elected government was that it had given rise to all-round corruption. The King, had, therefore, emphasized that under his tutelage corruption would be weeded out. For this purpose, on December 23, 1965, the King promulgated the Anti-Corruption (Amendment) Ordinance, which brought employees of Public Corporation also within the purview of anti-corruption legislation. Employees charged with corruption could be liable to pay damage to the

extent of the gain derived by them, or of the loss caused by others, through such corruption, and persons who instigated them to commit corruption were liable to half the punishment prescribed for the offence. The ordinance empowered the government to delegate the powers of the Special (Anti-Corruption) Police Department to Zonal Commissioners, or to assign on a permanent basis the powers and duties of a Special Police Officer to any government employees.⁷⁷ The government dismissed many government officials on the charge of inefficiency and corruption and threatened to take "summary trial" of derelict officials and prompt action against those officers who indulged in delays, wasteful expenditure and misappropriation of public funds and failure to carry out their duties towards the people.⁷⁸ During the fiscal year 1969-70, the Special (Anti-Corruption) Police Department dismissed one gazetted and 19 non-gazetted officers on charges of corruption and recovered a sum of Rs. 1,28,714 from them. Cases were filed in the court for the recovery of misappropriation sum amounting to Rs. 1,30,880 from 39 employees, including one each of gazetted class I and II and two of gazetted class III rank.⁷⁹ The government plugged a major source of corruption in government offices when it enacted Public Service Commission (Working Procedure) (Amendment) Bill which asserted that permanent appointment could not be made, nor pensions granted without the recommendations of the Public Service Commission, irrespective of the amount of salary obtained by any employee.

Red-tapism, general apathy and negligence were the chronic diseases that had beset the administration. To remove these defects and to increase efficiency many steps were taken. The government kept a "Complaint Book" in the Central Secretariat and other departments and sent "strong" directives to the officers concerned to take urgent action on the complaints registered therein.⁸⁰ The government further directed all officials up to gazetted class III rank to maintain diaries containing particulars of the work done by them every day. It was stated that "such diaries must be handed over to the officers' immediate superior at the end of every day. Particulars of telephone calls made by gazetted officers and the time spent by them in attending to personal matters while in office must also be recorded in these diaries". It was also decided that the government employ-

ees would be promoted on the basis of the evaluation of the work done by them everyday as recorded in these diaries.⁸¹ Moreover, the government framed Administrative Functions (Disposal) Rules that prescribed the time-limit for the disposal of official functions of different categories. Provision was made for warning or punishment in different forms to any employee who failed to dispose of official functioning during such time-limits and of rewards to those who discharged their obligations properly.⁸² Besides, the Civil Service Regulations of 1965, which laid the basic criteria of promotion as the length of service, was amended. According to this, the promotion of an official depended on his efficiency which was to be measured in terms of seniority, experience, educational qualifications and departmental reports.⁸³ For this purpose, committees headed by local Chief District Officers were formed in each district to compile particulars of permanent government employees whose names were not entered in the Civil Service Register.⁸⁴ A code of conduct for civil servants was formulated which prescribed that civil servants should always remain loyal to the King and the nation and always observe a pure conduct and be mindful to their duties and honesty.⁸⁵ With the accent on developmental programmes, many administrative problems such as categorization of posts, fixing the number of permanent employees on pay rolls emerged. Arrangements were made to classify posts into different categories on the basis of duties, responsibilities and minimum essential qualifications. In May, 1969, it was reported that out of a total 14,418 employees of both technical and administrative categories working under the development budget 10,697 were being incorporated into the general administrative machinery. Nearly 4,798 posts were made permanent. It was decided to retain 4,198 posts after the development projects were completed.⁸⁶ While such a step instilled a sense of security among the employees the government increased the allowances and provided other amenities including rise in the pension and medical allowances with the impression that it would divert undivided attention of the employees to the official work.

There was a noted lack of co-ordination among various administrative units and proper guidelines for their functioning. To fill his gap the government adopted various measures. For instance,

the Ministry of Economic Planning opened Zonal Planning Offices in the Koshi, Narayani and Beri zones in order to help Panchayats in the formulation of development projects and advise them in their implementation. These offices were also expected to ensure co-ordination between central and district level development projects, to acquaint the government with the progress achieved in regional development projects and to remove obstacles in their implementation.⁸⁷ Moreover, the government announced the formation of the Ministers' Council to ensure the implementation of its policies and decisions, and to establish co-ordination at the ministerial and secretarial levels.⁸⁸ Apart from forming new administrative units to bring about co-ordination and render advice in the execution of policies of various departments, the government issued from time to time various circulars, called many meetings of high officials and gave them instructions to achieve efficiency and co-ordination in the administration.⁸⁹

Earlier the administrative machinery was concentrated in Kathmandu Valley but later on many steps were taken to extend its arms to various areas. The civil servants, however, took every effort to flock together in and around Kathmandu Valley. Owing to such a trend administration was neglected in remote areas. The government decided to improve and strengthen management in far remote areas by framing new regulations. Under these rules, the 75 districts of the kingdom were divided into 5 groups—(1) 18 districts in outlying areas, including Taplejung, Khetang, Dolpa and Rukum, (2) 19 districts, including Ranchthar, Terhathum and Okhaldhunga, Gulmi and Myagdi, (3) 15 districts, including Ilam, Dhankuta, Kanchanpur and Kailai, (4) 21 districts, including Jhapa, Kaski, Sunkhet and Banke, (5) Kathmandu, Bhaktpur and Lalitpur districts. Newly appointed gazetted class III officers, it was laid down, would be required to work at Ministries or Departments for a period ranging from 2 to 3 years. Thereafter, they might be transferred to any district in group 1, 2, 3 and 4. No gazetted class III officers could be promoted to class II unless he had served for 15 months in any district of group 1 or 18 months in any district of group 2 or 21 months in any district of group 3 or 24 months in any district of group 4. Gazetted class II employees could be

transferred for 18 months in any district belonging to group 1, or two years in any district belonging to group 2, or 30 months in any district belonging to group 3 or three years in any district belonging to group 4. Until then they could not be considered qualified for promotion.⁹⁰

The same principle was applied to the services of doctors. It was asserted that newly appointed doctors will first be posted in hill districts, if any vacancy is available. Otherwise, they will be posted in the Terai. Only if there is no vacancy in Terai also they will be appointed in Kathmandu. For 2 months after the appointment, doctors will be posted in Kathmandu for training. They will be transferred from the hills to the Terai, from Terai to Kathmandu and from Kathmandu to the hills. Transfers will be made from very inaccessible areas to inaccessible areas, from inaccessible areas to areas where facilities are inadequate and from areas where facilities are inadequate to areas where they are adequate. In case a transferred employee does not go to the prescribed place, departmental action will be taken against him. Specialists will be transferred only to hospitals from where the services can be made available to elsewhere also. Otherwise, they can remain on the same post for 8 years. It was further provided that no doctor will be sent abroad for higher training unless he worked for two years in a very inaccessible district. Nor any doctor was to be considered qualified for promotion unless he worked for 2 years either in the Terai or in the hills during each promotion period.⁹¹

These major steps were expected to bring a significant change in the administrative conditions of the kingdom.

Economic Conditions

The government made concerted efforts to improve the economic conditions of the country. These efforts may be divided into the following categories:

After assuming direct control of the administration, the King announced the Three-Year Plans. According to official claims the Plan targets had reached 57 per cent in 1962-63 and 73 per cent in 1963-64. It was also hoped in government circles that by 1964-65, 100 per cent target would be achieved.⁹² Outlines of

new Five-Year Plan commencing from July 1966 involved a total outlay of Rs. 2,000 million, inclusive of Rs. 500 million to be contributed by the government from budget surpluses and internal loans. Rs. 1,150 million was proposed to be obtained from foreign aid, and Rs. 350 million from internal or foreign investments in the private sector. Allocation included Rs. 755 million (36.3 per cent) on power, transport and communications, Rs. 540 million (27 per cent) on agriculture, Rs. 415 million (20 per cent) on industry, and Rs. 280 million (14 per cent) on social services. The Plan envisaged 17 per cent increase in the national income which was estimated at Rs. 2,670 million in 1961-62.⁹³ Moreover, to give impetus to industries, the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation within a period of six years starting from 1961, distributed loans totalling Rs. 26,80,708 to different industrial concerns.⁹⁴ To encourage cottage industries, the concerning government departments purchased goods worth Rs. 100,000 from private cottage industries during the first three months of the fiscal year 1964-65.⁹⁵ Between 1960 and 1964 the government had issued licences for the establishment of 1,836 factories of different categories.⁹⁶

In the field of industrial development, the Himalayan Iron and Steel Company of Parwanipur started manufacturing 16 tons of iron rods daily from August 23, 1964.⁹⁷ Six factories, including the Nepal Cane and Bamboo Industries, the Balaju Machine Shop, the Nepal Footwear Products, an wood factory, an woollen mill and a printing press, started production at Balaju Industrial Estate in Kathmandu since December, 1964.⁹⁸ Likewise, six factories, with a total investment of Rs. 400,000 started manufacturing batteries, transformers, wooden and metal furniture, curios and objects of art at Lalitpur Industrial Estate.⁹⁹ On January 12, 1965, the Rs. 41.7 million Soviet-aided cigarette factory at Janakpur was inaugurated.¹⁰⁰ On January 31, 1965, another Soviet-aided project—a sugar factory—at Birganj at the cost of Rs. 6,50,00,000 with a capacity of crushing 1,000 tons of sugarcane and producing 100 tons of sugar daily was inaugurated.¹⁰¹ In January, 1965, a power house with a capacity of 1,600 kw of electricity was completed at Lalitpur.¹⁰² On February 24, 1967, the Indian-aided Trishuli Hydro-electric Project was inaugurated. On March 21, 1967, the Rs. 5 million

Warehouse Complex constructed with Chinese aid at Birganj was inaugurated. Apart from the establishment of above projects the government concluded many agreements for the further economic development of the country. On February 25, 1965, an agreement between Nepal and the USA was signed under which the latter undertook to provide Rs. 3.1 million for the development of civil aviation in Nepal.¹⁰³ On May 1, 1964, under an agreement, India undertook to provide additional assistance totalling Rs. 12,435,000 for the expansion of a maternity home, child welfare centre, a bridge over the Bagmati river on the Kathmandu-Lalitpur road, improvement of the Balaju-Lainchaur road, irrigation, water supply, drainage and power projects and development of airports in different parts of the country.¹⁰⁴ On October 4, a protocol was signed between Nepal and China on the construction of the canal headworks and the Western Main Canal of the Kamla Irrigation Project in Nepal.¹⁰⁵ In June, 1965, the Chinese-aided leather and shoe factory at Maharajganj, was inaugurated. It was built at the cost of Rs. 72,25,000 and was expected to manufacture 60,000 pairs of shoes and 20,000 pieces of leather yearly.¹⁰⁶

In mid-1970 the government formulated the Fourth Five Year Plan the total outlay of which is Rs. 3,540 million, including Rs. 2,540 million in governmental sector, Rs. 130 million in the Panchayat sector and Rs. 870 million in the private sector. Thirty-five per cent of the total outlay in the government sector will be spent on transport and communication, 32.9 per cent on agriculture, forest, irrigation and land reform, 20.4 per cent on industry and commerce, electricity and mining, and 10.8 per cent on health, education, water supply and other social services. Fifty-four per cent of the total outlay of Rs. 870 million in the private sector will be spent on agriculture and irrigation, 28.3 per cent on industry and commerce and 17.3 per cent on transport.

The Plan aimed at an annual increase of 4 per cent in national production. It was estimated that the production of foodgrains would increase by 16 per cent, of cash crops by 40 per cent, of meat by 16 per cent, of milk by 23 per cent and of eggs by 26 per cent. An additional 25,000 hectares of land was expected to be reclaimed. Irrigation facilities were hoped to be available for 183,632 hectares of land. It was decided that the Agricultural

Development Bank and the Saving Corporation would supply agricultural credit exceeding Rs. 470 million.¹⁰⁷

The above allocation of funds reveals how the Plan has emphasized the economic development of the country. During past years also the government registered a steady increase in Gross National Product which the following table would bear out.

Table 8-14

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT (Based on 1964-65 prices)¹⁰⁸

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount</i>
1966-67	Rs. 5,869 million
1967-68	„ 6,282 „
1968-69	„ 6,420 „
1969-70	„ 6,561 „
1974-75 (estimated)	„ 7,873 „

In the field of transport and communication the government took many steps to make these services available to the people. The National Transport Corporation was formed under the 1964 Corporation Act with the objective of operation of the ropeways, railways and other transport services on commercial lines in a systematic and co-ordinated manner.¹⁰⁹ An agreement for the establishment of a telecommunication link with New Delhi and telephone link with Calcutta from Kathmandu was signed between Nepal and India on June 25, 1964. Similarly, another agreement with India on September 8, 1964, empowered the Nepalese Government to handle insured mail and parcel service with other countries which was till then handled by the Indian Embassy Post Office at Kathmandu.¹¹⁰ On May 26, 1967, the 104-kilometre Kathmandu-Kodari highway was inaugurated. Work on the Mahendra Highway (East-West highway covering about 600 miles) had been in progress. Prithvi Highway (Kathmandu-Pokhara road) constructed with Chinese aid, and Sinauli-Pokhara road constructed by the Indian Government added further mileage in the development of communication in the country.¹¹¹ It

was decided to construct suspension bridges at a cost of Rs. 50,000 each at 11 places.¹¹²

Historically, Nepal's trade was more or less restricted with India and Tibet. King Mahendra attempted to diversify the country's trade as well as to increase its volume. The kingdom succeeded not only in increasing her trade but in its diversion also. The following table of imports and exports would indicate the gradual decline in deficit balance of her foreign trade.

Table 8-15

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

<i>Year</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Exports</i>	<i>Deficit</i>
	(In Rupees)		
1965-66	78,20,00,000	37,51,00,000	40,69,00,000
1966-67	49,96,00,000	42,64,00,000	7,32,00,000
1967-68	44,48,00,000	39,51,00,000	4,97,00,000
1968-69	11,15,60,000	9,28,00,000	1,40,00,000
(for first quarter)			

Agriculture Development

On November 16, 1964, the Land Reform (Amendment and Consolidation) Bill was promulgated. The Act provided for accrument of tenancy rights to all existing cultivators as well as those who cultivated the main annual crop at least once on any land in the capacity of a tenant. Eviction was permitted through legal action only in the event of non-payment of rents, wilful damage to the land or non-cultivation for a period exceeding one year. Landowners were permitted to resume land within specified limits for purposes of personal residence on payment of one-fourth of the value of the land to the tenant. Resumption for purposes of personal cultivation was permitted only if the landowner was working in the army, or was a minor or a chronic invalid or a lunatic. Rent were fixed at one-half of the annual produce in the Terai and the hill districts, while in Kathmandu

Valley specific rates amounting to approximately one-third of the estimated yield of the land according to the grade were prescribed. The exaction of additional payments and unpaid labour from tenants was prohibited. Tenancy rights were declared non-transferable and non-inheritable. As noted earlier, the Act provided that no person or his family should own land in excess of 25 bighas in the Terai, 50 Ropnies in Kathmandu Valley and 80 Ropnies in the hill districts.

The Zamindari system of tax collection with its numerous variations all over the country was abolished. The Act also made provisions for compulsory scaling down of agricultural indebtedness. Money-lenders were prohibited from extracting repayment of their loans from the debtors and committees were formed for obtaining such payments and handing over the proceeds to them. Landowners were prohibited from withdrawing oxen and other agricultural resources from their tenants. The Act also empowered the government to direct peasants to grow several crops in the prescribed manner in selected areas.

According to a report published by the Department of Land Reforms, the total area found in excess of ceiling on land-holding was 91,480 of which 40,977 bighas had been acquired and 23,958 bighas distributed. 5,943 bighas of land was confiscated. The area in excess of the prescribed ceiling on tenancy holdings was 25,811 bighas. The provisional tillers' certificates were issued to 1,530,609 peasants and permanent tenancy certificates to 23,091 peasants. Cadastral survey operation was completed in 1,216,979 bighas of land in 906 Panchayats. The number of pending cases relating to land reforms, which was 1,602,690 on July 16, 1969, had come down to 323,134 on June 14, 1969. The money collected under Compulsory Saving Scheme up to April 13, 1970, amounted to Rs. 2,64,16,000.

For the increase of agricultural production the government arranged irrigation facilities, fertilizers, improved seeds, electricity, tractors and other new agricultural equipment. It opened Agricultural Development Bank and Land Reform Savings Corporation to give loans to farmers. During the period from its establishment to January 28, 1970, the Agricultural Development Bank provided loans totalling Rs. 23.9 million for increasing agricultural production and establishing industries based

on agriculture. During the period from June 15, 1969, to January 13, 1970, the Land Reform Savings Corporation supplied loans totalling Rs. 67,08,432 for purchasing improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and agricultural tools as well as for development of irrigation facilities and setting up of agro-industries. The total amount of loans supplied during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year was Rs. 15,07,277. The Corporation deposited Rs. 8 million with the Agricultural Development Bank for the purchase of 200 tractors and 1,000 pumping sets.¹¹³ These steps kept up the pace of agricultural development in the kingdom. The following table is revealing in this context.

Table 8-16

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN NEPAL
(in 000 metric tons)¹¹⁴

<i>Foodgrains</i>	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968-69
Paddy	2102	2161	2125	2201	2207	2207	2217	2322
Wheat	137	141	139	152	176	187	216	254
Maize	834	847	849	855	856	824	875	905
Millet	63	63	61	63	120	120	112	112

Thus, the King considered that these socio-economic measures would not only make the Panchayat Democracy a viable system but also make the people involved in it. In this way the traditional forces have been attempting to get legitimized in Nepal's polity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ *Gorkhapatra*, January 28, 1967. ² Article 56.
- ³ *Gorkhapatra*, September 28, 1967.
- ⁴ Tulsi Giri and V. B. Thapa may be cited as an instance who had been Foreign Ministers and the chief whip respectively in the deposed ministry of the Nepali Congress, but were associated with the Cabinet formed under the Panchayat system on account of the fact that these persons had deserted the party and had helped the King during his days of crisis. Vedanand Jha may be quoted as another example who was earlier the President of the Nepal Terai Congress but was included in the Cabinet, according to his critics, just because he was all along a Royalist and had, on the direction of the Royal Palace, formed the party just to divide the votes of the Nepali Congress and to create further confusion in the political situation of the country.
- S. K. Upadhyaya, another member of the ministry, was a member of the politbureau of the Communist Party who was taken in the ministry. The main purpose of keeping Upadhyaya, it was argued by political circles, was to elicit support of local Communists in favour of the King. The ministry constituted since May 29, 1967, did not include any member of the old political party.
- ⁵ Important figures like Tulsi Giri, V. B. Thapa, R. K. Shah, K. N. Vyathit and Vedanand Jha had given full support to the King's action.
- ⁶ S. B. Thapa, K. N. Bishta, G. P. Budathoki, Rajeshwar Devkota did not belong to any party and had given ample demonstration of their loyalty to Royalty.
- ⁷ Apart from the members of the Cabinet quoted in the above footnote, S. B. Basnet, G. B. Rajbhandari and T. P. Pradhan had never been popular and influential persons before entering the ministry and never exhibited a sense of independent initiative.
- ⁸ Since the beginning of his assumption of power the King brought different personalities with different view together. For

instance, R. K. Shah and Tulsi Giri were put to face each other. Another time Tulsi Giri and Negeshwar Singh were pitched against S. B. Thapa, K. N. Bishta and Vedanand Jha on the one hand and S. K. Upadhyaya and Khadga Bahadur, on the other. After the exit of Tulsi Giri and Nageshwar Prasad Singh from the ministry, S. B. Thapa and K. N. Bishta had to settle with S. K. Upadhyaya, K. B. Singh and B. L. Pradhan alliance.

- ⁹ *Jagriti*, August 8, 1969. ¹⁰ *Commoner*, January 28, 1965.
- ¹¹ Reportedly, Tulsi Giri, while resigning from the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers, contended that if he had to serve as a “yes-boy” he would have not deserted his Nepali Congress Party and served the King. On the other hand, the King’s were, reportedly, that if he had to act upon the advice of the Chairman of his Cabinet, he would not have dismissed the popular government and scrapped the parliamentary system. (Views gathered during the interviews with various political leaders during 1965-66.)
- ¹² Information based on interview.
- ¹³ *Gorkhapatra*, July 7, 1964.
- ¹⁴ Major Padma Bahadur Khatri dominated over the administrative affairs so much that in a private talk he boasted that in Nepal there had been two and a half kingdoms—one Royalty ruled by the King, second the administration ruled by him and the remaining half consisted of the Council of Ministers ruled by Tulsi Giri, the Chairman.
- ¹⁵ Information supplied by concerned officers during interviews.
- ¹⁶ Important domestic decisions relating to the introduction of new political system, decentralization of administration, “code of conduct for the ministers and officials”, “back to village” campaigns were announced by the King. Likewise, he enunciated the basic principles of Nepal’s foreign policy in public.
- ¹⁷ Information based on the interviews with concerning officials.
- ¹⁸ The statement of K. N. Bishta, the Foreign Minister, in People’s Republic of China that commune system may also prove a success in Nepal created a public controversy. He was dropped out in a major reshuffle of the Cabinet on September 25, 1968. *The Times of India*, September 26, 1968.

- ¹⁹ Information based on the interviews of some of Nepalese ambassadors accredited to India.
- ²⁰ On June 3, 1965, for instance, the King told the officers that co-ordination between different undertakings was vital. He also struck a note of caution when he said that he would review the work after three months. He ordered Secretaries to make monthly review of the progress achieved in different projects and remove bottlenecks faced in their smooth implementation. *Commoner*, June 4, 1965.
- ²¹ *Commoner*, April 11, 1966. ²² *Ibid.*, November 9, 1965.
- ²³ *Rising Nepal*, December 16, 1965.
- ²⁴ *Commoner*, August 11 and 12, 1965.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, September 10, 1966.
- ²⁶ Speaking before the Rashtriya Panchayat on July 24, 1967, the Nepalese Prime Minister stated that the practice of political appointment had continued though their number that stood at 293 in the year 1963 dropped down to 183 in the year 1967. *Gorkhapatra*, July 24, 1967.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, January 28, 1967. ²⁸ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1967.
- ²⁹ By a promulgation, the King empowered Zonal Commissioners to exercise the authority enjoyed by Special Police Department under Section 31 of the Anti-Corruption Act. He also approved the delegation of powers exerciseable under Public Safety Act to the Commissioners of Rapti, Lumbini, Gandaki, Janakpur, Sagarmatha and Koshi Anchals. See *Commoner*, December 25, 1965 and of November 30, 1965.
- ³⁰ Such a policy became apparent when many officials of one community were demoted and several others were asked to take leave. Reacting to such a development a paper remarked: "... the leave recently granted to Foreign Secretary Yadunath Khanal to teach at Harvard University in the USA, the demotion of Acting Joint Secretary Bishweshar Prasad Rimal as Under-Secretary and the promotion of a certain officer of the Foreign Ministry who had worked as First Secretary of the Royal Nepali Embassy in Washington was motivated by similar communal considerations. Moreover, a conspiracy was being organized by communal minded persons to compel three or four Special Class Officers to resign or take leave in the same manner as Yadunath Khanal". *Arati*, July 1, 1970.

- ³¹ The King, however, gave up the Defence portfolio to G. P. Burathoke on June 16, 1965.
- ³² The King's strict vigilance over the political situation may be assessed by a remark of an ex-Prime Minister made during the interview that "after every four persons in Kathmandu, there is a man of Intelligence Department".
- ³³ *Gorkhapatra*, July 24, 1967.
- ³⁴ See Nepalese Budget of the corresponding year.
- ³⁵ *Gorkhapatra*, March 2, 1968.
- ³⁶ *Nepal Gazette*, December 26, 1966.
- ³⁷ *Research Report*, USAID Community Development Division, Kathmandu, 1963. ³⁸ *Gorkhapatra*, May 31, 1965.
- ³⁹ *Nepal Gazette*, September 9, 1966.
- ⁴⁰ *Gorkhapatra*, January 5, 1967, ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, July 16, 1968.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, August 25, 1968. ⁴³ *Nepal Gazette*, December 23, 1968.
- ⁴⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, June 16, 1966. ⁴⁵ *Nepal Times*, March 27, 1968.
- ⁴⁶ *Gorkhapatra*, May 31, 1965.
- ⁴⁷ This economic phenomenon was admitted by the Prime Minister in the Rashtriya Panchayat when he remarked: "The general public has little faith today in the sincerity of traders, which is natural because they have taken care only to make profit for themselves instead of paying attention of the people". *Gorkhapatra*, December 30, 1965.
- ⁴⁸ The potency of this prohibition was exhibited in the May 1967 elections to the Rashtriya Panchayat when certain candidates from the Graduates constituencies were severely dealt with for indulging in criticism of the existing political system. Three of these contestants—Shanker Ghimire, Nirmal Lama and Ram Raja Prasad Singh—were arrested and imprisoned for three months and their names were struck off the rolls.
- ⁴⁹ Observations made during the field survey of Panchayats in the year 1965-66. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Gorkhapatra*, March 31, 1967.
- ⁵² *Swatantra Samachar*, March 12, 1967.
- ⁵³ *New Herald*, April 20, 1970.
- ⁵⁴ *Dainik Nepal*, February 26, 1970.
- ⁵⁵ *Matribhumi*, February 3, 1970.
- ⁵⁶ see *Hemali Bela*, April 29, 1970 and *Jagriti*, April 23, 1970.

- ⁵⁷ *Naya Samaj*, January 27, 1969. ⁵⁸ *Dainik Nepal*, May 11, 1970.
⁵⁹ *Matribhumi*, April 3, 1970. ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, February 28, 1970.
⁶¹ *Swatantra Samachar*, March 24, 1970.
⁶² Pashupati Shamsher J. B. R. and Mohammad Mohsin, "A Study Report on The Pattern of Emerging Leadership in Panchayats" (Memograph), Kathmandu, 1967, 8.
⁶³ *Ibid.* ⁶⁴ *Ibid.* ⁶⁵ *Matribhumi*, April 7, 1970.
⁶⁶ Shamsher and Mohsin, *n.* 62. ⁶⁷ *Arpan*, August 14, 1970.
⁶⁸ *Gorkhapatra*, July 19, 1965.
⁶⁹ *Nepal Gazette*, November 8, 1965.
⁷⁰ *Gorkhapatra*, March 7, 1969. ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, July 28, 1970.
⁷² *Nepal Gazette*, January 6, 1965. ⁷³ *Ibid.*, May 4, 1970.
⁷⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, August 13, 1970. ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, January 22, 1965.
⁷⁶ *Nepal Gazette*, December 16, 1965.
⁷⁷ *Nepal Gazette*, December 23, 1965.
⁷⁸ *Commoner*, April 11, 1966. ⁷⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, July 26, 1970.
⁸⁰ *Motherland*, December 29, 1964.
⁸¹ *Gorkhapatra*, May 15, 1970. ⁸² *Nepal Gazette*, March 31, 1970.
⁸³ *Gorkhapatra*, March 14, 1969.
⁸⁴ *Rising Nepal*, March 12, 1969.
⁸⁵ *Gorkhapatra*, September 17, 1969.
⁸⁶ *New Herald*, August 19, 1969.
⁸⁷ *Matribhumi*, November 18, 1964.
⁸⁸ *Gorkhapatra*, April 11, 1966.
⁸⁹ On February 3, 1965, for instance, the Home Minister issued a circular to all zonal commissioners, Bada Hakims, magistrates, directing them to hold frequent meetings and exchange views with the government officials in the area under their jurisdiction. *Gorkhapatra*, February 4, 1965.
⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, September 1, 1970. ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, September 2, 1970.
⁹² *Ibid.*, July 28, 1964. ⁹³ *Nepal Samachar*, March 21, 1964.
⁹⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, April 28, 1966. ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, December 23, 1964.
⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, July 31, 1964. ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, September 2, 1964.
⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, December 8, 1964. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, January 3, 1965.
¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, January 13, 1965. ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, February 1, 1965.
¹⁰² *Ibid.*, January 7, 1965. ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1965.
¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, May 2, 1964. ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, October 5, 1964.
¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, June 3, 1965. ¹⁰⁷ *Gorkhapatra*, May 16, 1970.
¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1970.

- 109 *Nepal Gazette*, February 1, 1965.
- 110 *Gorkhapatra*, September 10, 1964.
- 111 The total length of motorable roads in the kingdom was reported to be 1,050 miles, 215 miles of which were metalled. *Gorkhapatra*, July 4, 1967.
- 112 *Matribhumi*, January 6, 1970.
- 113 *Gorkhapatra*, January 26, 1970.
- 114 Quoted from "Scope for Agricultural Processing in Nepal", by *Nepal News*, December 5, 1969.

CHAPTER 9

Resurgence of Progressive Forces

AS HAS been discussed earlier, the King seemed to be determined and even ruthless in giving the traditional forces a firm footing in the country and this he sought to realize by implementing the socio-economic measures he had undertaken to win the confidence of the people. He had adopted the system of Panchayat Democracy as an instrument to achieve his aim, but the success of this system as an effective instrument depended, to a large extent, on its functioning at various levels and on the role and attitude of officials working under it. It is, therefore, worthwhile here to analyse the working of the Panchayat system in order to have an understanding of the people's attitude and reaction towards it.

The Panchayat superstructure rests on its lower tiers, i.e., the Village and District Panchayats. Intended to play a vital role in creating a corporate life among the people and enabling them to participate in politico-economic development of the country, these Panchayat bodies however have hardly achieved the declared objectives of the Panchayat system. It has been so because of the government's interference inhibiting the growth of these Panchayat bodies to develop into autonomous or semi-autonomous units. Consequently they have also failed to get the people's involvement and participation in their activities. A perusal of the working of Panchayat units at the grass root levels would illustrate the point.

It has been the forte of the supporters of Panchayat Democracy that since political parties represent sectional interests and create rivalry and tension in the elected bodies, their absence in Panchayat units would result in class coordination and generate a spirit of team-work. Quite contrary to this assertion, the local Panchayat bodies have been beset with groupism and mutual rivalry emanating from such

parochial considerations as caste and religion. Consequently, the Panchayat leaders have been busy in petty and personal affairs at the cost of development work. The prestige of the Panchayat institutions has suffered a great deal as a result, and the people have become generally apathetic towards them. There is no dearth of instances to show as to how have the developmental activities been adversely affected owing to groupism and parochial factionalism with which the Panchayat bodies have been inflicted. To point a few of them, it was reported that in Nuwakot district groupism among the District Panchayat members adversely affected a number of development programmes, including the Batter Irrigation Project. The pace of progress in the execution of different programmes under the Trisuli Watershed Development Project was hampered due to petty quarrel among the local leaders.¹ Kathmandu District Panchayat and Biratnagar and Bhaktapur Town Panchayats provide instances to show how even such resourceful and potential Panchayat bodies could be reduced to ineffectiveness due to strong factionalism and hatred among their leaders. Many Class Organizations particularly the Peasant and Youth Organizations, and recently the Women Organization, have been rendered defunct by deep-seated hostility among the high echelons of leadership. The following observation made by a leading paper provides a telling commentary: "We have spent the past seven years in boasting of the achievements which we made during the period from 1960 to 1963. During the past 7-year period, slackness appeared in the implementation of our policies, Panchayats became unable to win the confidence of the people and the Class Organizations became defunct. In fact, the period from 1964 to 1970 has been characterized only by rivalry among Panchayat members for the fulfilment of selfish interests."²

Groupism and factionalism in Panchayat bodies have given rise to the lust for power among Panchayat leaders who, devoid of any ideological commitment and discipline and lacking the missionary zeal, have been found active only when they see some personal gain. The fact is that "the Panchayat system has not yet produced a cadre of dynamic, active and dedicated Panchayat workers. There has only been an increase in the number of Panchayat members paying lip service to the system

and interested only in collecting remunerations, exercising special powers and acquiring privileges. They lack the capacity to represent the feelings of the people".³

Such a leadership cannot be credited with honesty. There have been allegations of misappropriation of public money. It was reported that as many as Rs. 1.8 million were misappropriated by the Panchayat leaders and other government officials from the Compulsory Savings.⁴ Such practice became so rampant that many Panchayat leaders were arrested⁵ and suspended for defalcating money from public funds.⁶ Moreover, reports were not lacking when the Panchayat leaders fanned communalism, appointed and dismissed employees of Panchayats in an arbitrary manner, misused their office for personal gains, caused obstructions in the normal functioning of the Panchayats and indulged in factionalism.⁷ With such a corrupt and irresponsible leadership Panchayat bodies cannot be expected to arouse popular enthusiasm and confidence, and if they are endowed with judicial powers, it is natural to look at them with suspicion: ". . . vested groups who are strongly entrenched in Panchayats all over the country will make a mockery of justice, if they are to be vested with judicial powers at this stage."⁸ The people have been demanding that the government should "put an end to efforts being made by certain privileged persons to utilize the Panchayat system for personal advantage."⁹

Many Panchayat leaders regard these local bodies not as means for rendering national service but as stepping stones for the fulfilment of their personal ambitions. For this they can even go to the extent of subverting the norms of Panchayat system itself. The basic motive behind the support to partyless character of Panchayat Democracy by the present leaders has been to maintain their monopoly in the management of national affairs. They fear political parties because they know that in the context of competitive politics democratic elements would seriously challenge their hegemony. Hence they have been fiercely opposing the re-emergence of political parties and manipulate the functioning of Panchayat institutions in such a manner that the ex-politicians and ideologically committed persons find it very difficult to have a say. The country now stands sharply divided into two camps. In one camp there are a handful of persons who

have joined hands only to safeguard their privileges, which only the system like the existing Panchayat could vest in them, and are dead set against any democratic change. On the other side there are those progressive and conscious people who intend to democratize the present political system and thereby transfer national power from few persons in whose hands now it is concentrated to the people.

The scrapping of parliamentary system and the introduction of Panchayat system was the victory of the few over the many. The present system has concentrated all political as well as economic power in the hands of a small group of people—members of Royal family, Royal palace secretariat, military top brass, few business men and high ranking Panchayat leaders. The dominance of the coterie in every walk of life has made the people apathetic towards the working of Panchayat institutions. There have been protests even by those who are wedded to the existing system at this state of affairs. According to a paper: “The goals of democracy . . . had not been realized because of the evils of activities of opportunist politicians. The country is now stepping into the 20th year of the establishment of democracy. But complaints are still heard that democratic organs or institutions are not being allowed to develop. Democracy should not be developed merely as an instrument for the realization of the political ambitions of a handful of individuals.”¹⁰

The suppression of opposition, patronizing of high-ranking Panchayat leaders by the government and the concentration of powers in the hands of few have encouraged the leaders of Village and District Panchayats to overlook the hardship and grievances of the people and the need for the development of their areas. Reports from many quarters would reveal that Panchayat leaders have harassed and exploited the people and turned the local Panchayat units into centres of exploitation. This trends in Panchayat politics has convinced the people that the system has been established with a view to maintain the privileges of certain groups.¹¹

Panchayat bodies at the local level have become the hot-bed of violence and intimidation. There have been instances of government's direct involvement in such activities. Elections to

these bodies are held in an atmosphere wrent with government's direct interference, violence and factionalism with the result that honest people find it very difficult to participate in them. Kidnapping and confinement¹³ of candidates, the use of money¹³ and unfair practices¹⁴ have reduced these elections to a mockery adversely affecting the prestige of Panchayat Democracy.

The government not only interferes in the elections, but also in the day-to-day functioning of Panchayat bodies. It has been reported that, particularly at village level, government officials, even of very low status, can dictate to the elected members of Village Panchayats and they have to obey the orders if they want to survive. Moreover, whenever any high official from district or zone visits Panchayats the local leaders have to accord him a red-carpet treatment and to remain in his attendant.¹⁵ Such an attitude of government officials towards Panchayat bodies not only has resulted in the erosion of prestige of the system but made many local leaders to disassociate themselves from it. For example, members of the Chitauun District Panchayat resigned *en masse* on the ground of interference by the government officials. Again, members of the Banke District Panchayat, including the Chairman, resigned *en masse* in protest against the "unnecessary pressure exercised on the Panchayat by the local Zonal Commissioner". Such a trend gives the impression that the local Panchayat bodies have been reduced to the status of developing units of the government. It is therefore legitimately asked that "unless Panchayats are permitted to work freely, how can they form a strong foundation for the system?"¹⁶

Where the government officials do not interfere, they remain indifferent and apathetic towards Panchayats. There are several instances to illustrate this point. The Amppial Village Assembly in Gorkha district passed a resolution pointing out that "no system can function smoothly only because it is adopted. His Majesty's Government has never paid adequate attention to this Village Assembly, which can hardly function solely through the insubstantial efforts of local people. The powers and economic resources of the Village Panchayat have not been properly defined, so that it exists only on paper".¹⁷ Similarly, all the members of the Lalitpur District Executive Committee of Nepal Peasants' Organization tendered resignation due to lack of interest evinced by persons "occupying responsible status".¹⁸

Instances are not lacking when government officials demonstrated no attention towards the demands of the Panchayats. During his field survey of Panchayats the leaders of a Village Panchayat in Janakpur zone told the author that a bridge over a river was almost completed by local labour and skill and money, and the Panchayat requested the government for the supply of some explosives to blast some rocks to give a final shape to the bridge before the monsoon. The requisite explosive, however, did not reach and floods came and washed away the bridge setting at nought the villagers' efforts. Similarly, in Jadukuva Village Panchayat the members complained to the author that the police adopted non-co-operative attitude towards Panchayats and remained passive to its requests and complaints. They even alleged that when some trouble erupted in the village and the Panchayat complained to the police it took the side with anti-social elements and reprimanded Panchayat members. Again, in the sphere of procuring essential supply of wood, seeds, fertilizers, pipes and other material for Village Panchayats, it was generally complained, the government neglected their demands. Moreover, in the areas outside the capital, a tendency among government officials was that they always looked towards Singh Darbar (the Central Secretariat) and paid little attention towards local Panchayat's affairs. Since many government high officials have political appointments and their main function is the maintenance of law and order, the Panchayat could not get proper instructions, supervision or attention from the government.

Despite the fact that the basis of Panchayat Democracy is the decentralization of administration, the government has made Panchayat institutions dependent on it. The most glaring index of this is to be found in the fact that in the entire Panchayat system the government officials dominate the local (Panchayat) officials as well as elected non-officials. Many members of the Panchayats complained to the author that the government officials ill-treated them. The system of distribution of authority in the Panchayat system was such that even a non-gazetted district government employee, they pointed out, could afford to neglect, and even insult the elected leaders of the Panchayats. Many Panchayat leaders alleged that the government officials regarded themselves superior to the Panchayat members and expected from

them V.I.P. treatment. Thus, on July 7, 1967, Shamsheer Bahadur Khatri, a member of Chitwan District Panchayat, stated that the government employees who visit Village Panchayats "regard themselves as guests and put unnecessary financial burden on Village Panchayat members".¹⁹ While the government wants to control the Panchayats and the government officials pose as bosses of Panchayat leaders, the latter, in turn, regard themselves as the representatives of the people and as such hold that they should wield the power and get recognition from the State. They, therefore, decline to carry out the orders of the government officials, or, when they obey them, they do so with great reluctance. The net result is that there arises conflict and tension between Panchayat leaders and government officials.

Besides depriving Panchayat bodies of the exercise of actual power, the government takes severe action against those Panchayat leaders who do not toe the official lines. Such an action is generally in the form of their arrest either without assigning any reason or under certain security or treason act. For instance Babu Kazi Basukala, Chairman of the Bhaktapur Town Panchayat, was arrested without mentioning any reason for it.²⁰ Similarly, Bishnu Bahadur Madan, Chairman of the Taplejung District Panchayat,²¹ M. P. Singh, a member of the Janakpur Town Panchayat and of the Dhanusa District Assembly,²² D.V. Pradhan, Chairman of Dhankuta Village Panchayat, were arrested under the Public Security Act.²³ Such instances can be multiplied.

Before one may analyse the reaction of the people against such working of local Panchayat bodies it would be worthwhile to discuss the working of other institutions under Panchayat Democracy.

The Rashtriya Panchayat

It was asserted by the Panchayat supporters that the Rashtriya Panchayat would not only wield and demonstrate the power and prestige which the Parliament upholds in a democratic setup, but its partyless character would make it also a well co-ordinated, harmonious and effective governing body, a characteristic which the parliamentary system generally lacks. But such a

supreme task could hardly be achieved by the Rashtriya Panchayat in the existing situation. No representative institution can assume power and maintain sanctity if the people are stripped of their fundamental rights, and no institution can work freely and impartially in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Since the Panchayat institutions have to work under such stress and strain they have not only missed the exalted aim but their functioning has given rise to such undemocratic tendencies that have badly distorted the image of the system.

In fact, the Panchayat leadership is exercised not by the elected popular leaders but by the hereditary monarch. Still worse, it is being noted that whenever any Panchayat leader assumes certain amount of popularity and influence he is, anyhow, removed by the King from the political scene.³⁴ However, the way such leaders are removed not merely cost them their high positions which they hold but it dooms their future political career in the kingdom. The King generally entrusts those members of the Rashtriya Panchayat with the ministerial and other high offices who were in top echelons in the outlawed political parties. Such leaders are allowed, even sometimes tempted, to indulge in corrupt practices including the misuse of office and amassing of wealth, and by the time such activities earn public scorn they are dropped out. Such an action on the part of the King first eludes the leaders to reactionary and corrupt practices and later on they are left to be the sardonic object of the people. This Royal strategy may assure the King his undisputed leadership in the kingdom but it certainly lowers the prestige of the system in the eyes of conscious section of Nepal.

Another trend that undermines the Panchayat polity is the powerlessness of the elected members of the national executive body. The ministers are regarded not more than dummies who possess "a car, a flag and a bangalow". They neither initiate policy nor execute them. All important decisions are taken and even announced by the King. The ministers only play a part of "His Master's Voice". When, for instance, the Prime Minister K. N. Bishta attempted to specify his policy in public he was bluntly told that: "We do not regard the Prime Minister's speech as a statement of the policies of His Majesty's Government. Policies in respect to every problem have been and will be

formulated by His Majesty. The function of the Council of Ministers is only to implement those policies honestly and effectively.”²⁵

Such a drab image of the system is further damaged by the prevailing tension, rivalry and suspicion that have inflicted both the Council of Ministers and the Rashtriya Panchayat. At times ministers are conspicuously marked out for working against their colleagues behind the scene. Moreover, contrary to the proclaimed principle and spirit of Panchayat Democracy, members of the Rashtriya Panchayat are found acting in a most unruly manner outside and inside the House by “thumping the table, threatening others with blows and defying the rules of procedure”,²⁶ and by displaying the same “evil spirit of parliamentary system”, for the avoidance of which the system was banished from the kingdom.

But, the worst contribution the Panchayat system is making to the Nepalese politics is the succour it is providing to sycophants. The system has built-in limitations in turning out dedicated leaders partly owing to lack of political ideology and partly due to strict control of all the levers of State powers by the monarch. This initial flaw in the system and the absence of an effective public opinion have made the country fertile for the mushroom growth of toadies. Such Panchayat leaders act as its bigots till they receive candy and once deprive of it they besiege the polity, creating confusion about and chaos in the system.

The manner in which the Panchayat system is being operated has aroused public criticism. The government, however, bent upon as it is, to perpetuate the system would not tolerate any criticism against it. Prime Minister S. B. Thapa declared: “Nobody will be permitted to criticize the present constitution and oppose the Panchayat People who want to take undue advantage of the democratic and tolerant attitude of his Majesty’s Government will be severely dealt with.”²⁷

Any one who dares to criticize the Panchayat system and its functioning is either arrested or his movements are confined to certain areas. On August 25, 1964, three persons, including the Chairman of the Chitau District Panchayat were arrested under the Public Security Act on the charge of “indulging in activities hostile to the Panchayat system”. Likewise, on Novem-

ber 22, 1965, 23 persons, including the Chairman of the Morang District Panchayat, were arrested on the same charge. When in May 1967, during the election campaign from the Graduate constituency, the contesting members demanded the revival of political parties and the release of political prisoners, the police went on arresting persons who had been suspected of being involved in such campaign. Several important leaders were arrested for voicing their criticism against the arrest and against the Panchayat system.²⁸ Similarly, when R. K. Shah, an influential member of the Rashtriya Panchayat, criticized the speech of the Prime Minister, he was arrested and imprisoned for six months. Furthermore, when at a students conference, held on July 12, 1969, some students put certain political demands, they were arrested and others severely beaten up. Likewise, at Biratnagar when the students demonstrated before a local authority demanding the institution of an impartial inquiry commission to probe into an alleged misappropriation of money by the Town Panchayat, they were lathi-charged and, later on, lodged in jail. It was not only the political leaders and students on whom fell the ire of the establishment, even the Panchayat members and government officials became the victim of the regime's arbitrary action at the slightest opposition. Sitaram Bhattarai, Chairman of the Dhulabari Village Panchayat in Jhapa district and Nandraj Dotel, former Chairman of the Peasants' Organization, were arrested for their criticism of governmental policies. Among the persons arrested at Biratnagar in connexion with their anti-government demonstrations, were Bharat Mohan Adhikari, a member of the Economic Committee of the National Planning Commission, and the Vice-Principal, Mohan Pokharel of Dhankuta College.

The government does not allow the Press to criticize the management and the system. The Kathmandu Magistrate banned the publication of the *Swatantra Samachar* and the *Dainik Nepal* for an indefinite period, reportedly for publishing an article written by R.K. Shah supporting the demands of the students for the formation of an independent union.²⁹ The *Naya Sandesh* was banned for an indefinite period on the charge of publishing misleading reports.³⁰ Ramesh Nath Pande, the editor of the *Naya Sandesh*, was arrested later on.³¹ The daily *Nirnaya* was banned by the Gandaki Zonal Commissioner because of the

publication of an "objectionable" report relating to the Bhai-rahawa office of the Royal Airlines Corporation.³² Similarly, ban was imposed on *Motherland* as it had failed to enlarge its size in accordance with the new Press Act promulgated on December 13, 1965. The *Samiksha* was banned "in the public interest under Section 30 of the Press and Publication Act".³³ Likewise, a ban was imposed on the *Lumbini*.³⁴ In the year 1968 ban was imposed on the *Dainik Nirvana*, *Pratidhwani* and *Mazdoor* as they had pointed out certain holes in the system. In July, 1969, alone three newspapers—*Nepal Times*, *Dainik Nepal* and the *Samaya*—were put out of publication by the administration on account of their criticism of the government. A ban on the entry of *Blitz* (an Indian weekly) was imposed for their alleged "derogatory remark" against the marriage of Crown Prince Birendra.³⁵ Similarly, the *Jan Akansha* was prohibited from publishing the weekly by the Janakpur Zonal Commissioner.³⁶ When the *Nepal Times* (August 31, 1970) mustered courage to criticize the government for the mass retrenchment of officials it was charged by the government with having incited the dismissed employees and fomented hatred against the establishment. It was asked to furnish a security deposit of Rs. 1,000 under Section 4 of the 1963 Press and Publication Act.³⁷ And when "good sense" did not prevail on the paper as it further criticized the government for demonstrating overenthusiasm towards the entry of Communist China to the U.N., it was banned, and later on its editor was arrested under the Public Security Act. Likewise when the *Vasudha* published an article that criticized the basic principles and procedures of the Panchayat system, its publication was banned.³⁸ For similar reasons the *Arati* weekly was asked to furnish security deposits.³⁹ The licence of two weeklies—the *Goreto* and *Chetana*—was cancelled for publishing "objectionable reports".⁴⁰

Such control and censorship on the Press has created resentment among the educated class which is feeling restive due to the autocratic nature of the regime. Before one may deal with the reaction of the conscious class against the prevailing conditions, it would be worthwhile to analyse the consequences of the administrative and economic measures taken by the King under the Panchayat system.

Administrative Quagmire

The King while abrogating the parliamentary system has assured the people that he would make concerted efforts to provide them with an efficient administrative machinery. The reforms, introduced accordingly could not, however, invigorate the inert administration and while the old practices of corruption, red-tapism and misuse of office continued unabated, the vast expansion of bureaucratic structure, fabricated to cope up with the new responsibilities, gave rise to many new administrative problems. The major grounds on which the administrative system has been put to severe public criticism are the following:

It is being alleged that in the appointment, promotion and transfer, the principle of merit is not adhered to. According to a report, "even employees who are not graduates and do not have a record of long service have been promoted. . . thus proving that nepotism and favouritism have not been eradicated under the present system".⁴¹ Similarly, when in October 1966, the government granted promotion to over 300 gazetted officers, it was alleged that the basic criterion of promotion—seniority—was flouted with impunity by the Promotion Committee.⁴² It was pointed out that "efforts are being made to provide jobs to one's favourites and persons appointed by former ministers are removed by their successors".⁴³ But the most serious charge in this regard is that no person is considered favourable to a post higher than a Section Officer unless his loyalties to the Crown and to the Panchayat system is proved beyond doubt.

As with the appointments of high officials so also with the dismissal and demotion of personnel of high ranks, political considerations play a significant part. For instance, civil services are purged of "unwanted officials" from time to time on flimsy grounds. During the first quarter of the year 1970, 37 gazetted officers were dismissed, 10 officers were retired compulsorily and many demoted and transferred on the plea of "making the administration stronger and more efficient and capable of serving the people".⁴⁴ Such a mass dismissal of government employees without assigning specific defaults and without providing them the opportunity to defend themselves naturally has given rise to doubts about the motive behind it. A leading paper expressing this

doubt wrote: "We are not interested in advocating the cause of those who have been dismissed. But we demand His Majesty's Government should at least tell them on what ground they have been dismissed. Otherwise, one will see little difference between the Kot massacre organized by Jang Bahadur in 1846 on the pretext of wiping out the assassins of Gagan Singh and the present retrenchment of employees."⁴⁵

While it is difficult to say whether the government has succeeded in eliminating anti-Panchayat elements from the administration or not, there is no doubt that the policy has created suspicion and rivalry among the officials. As a result, undue delay and slackness have set in, seriously affecting the efficiency of the administration and many departments have not been functioning properly. According to the Administrative Reforms Report, such a vital department as the National Planning Commission "is not being able to function effectively because of the growing rivalry among top-level officials".⁴⁶ This has given rise to yet another trend—the evasion of responsibility by the officials. There are few officials who are willing to undertake initiative and execute the policies. It is a general impression among the people, and even admitted by an official organ, that the officials, by and large, "continue to spend their time idly",⁴⁷ and "no government employee wants to take decisions. Everybody only says that he is waiting for orders from above".⁴⁸ However, nobody knows where this "above" is located. Such a lapse in the administration is generally attributed to the indulgence of the official only towards their personal gains.⁴⁹

This desire for personal gains leads to a tendency to misuse public funds. It has been alleged that "several ministers and top officials of His Majesty's Government have constructed palatial buildings which they let out on rent while themselves obtaining house allowances from the government. Some of them have acquired several motor cars, lands, etc. . . the general feeling is that they have taken undue advantage of their official position."⁵⁰ Such corrupt practices, however, are not limited to higher circles only. "Village, Town and District Panchayats have become den of corruption", a newspaper reports "and administration too is entangled in the cobweb of corruption. It is open secret that government employees do not pay attention to the grievances of the people unless they are bribed".⁵¹

Thus, while the entire administration stands exposed to public criticism, the government in its enthusiasm ostensibly to cope with the developmental projects has embarked upon the expansion of administrative machinery. There is, however, no attempt to improve the quality. This has made the administrative machinery top-heavy and expensive on the one hand and lethargic on the other. The Eighth Annual Report of the Public Service Commission has pointed out that large number of employees were appointed "on the pretext that the burden of work has increased". According to it "thousands of employees were appointed for the implementation of Land Reform Programme. It was proposed to appoint 800 persons to check smuggling", and that "the number of government employees was being increased everywhere without any scientific basis".⁵³ It seems that "instead of appointing employees to do a particular work, we create work and posts for particular persons".⁵³

In such a situation of administrative inefficiency it has become increasingly difficult to maintain coordination between various administrative branches at the centre, between the centre and the zones, between zones and districts on the one hand and between these administrative units and Panchayat bodies on the other.⁵⁴

The provincial (Anchal) administration too is not in a good shape. Besides those evils that beset the central administration some other forms of irregularities and corrupt practices have emerged in local administration. The members of the Rashtriya Panchayat have repeatedly asserted that local authorities have been exercising power vested in them under Public Security Act for personal jealousy or anger.⁵⁵ It has been alleged that innocent persons who do not dance to their (officials) tune are branded as "anti-national elements" and punished under the Act.⁵⁶ The arbitrary steps of local authorities have often given rise to panic and discontentment among the people. "Top level government officials violate judicial decisions. They are running the administration arbitrarily. Such practices have poisoned the entire atmosphere of the districts."⁵⁷

The local authorities, it is alleged, are out to suppress the emerging local leadership in order to eliminate totally any threat to their supremacy, and since "Zonal Commissions enjoy powers,

authority and other resources, it is not possible for persons, who could assume local leadership, to stand in the face of such organized force".⁵⁸ The zonal administrators regard themselves not as a "part of the local administration" but as "representatives of central authority" in the provinces to supervise the local administration.⁵⁹

Such a state of affairs is the direct consequence of arbitrary rule which has replaced the parliamentary democratic system. The administrative inefficiency and rampant corruption have eroded whatever faith the people had in Panchayat Democracy.

Shape of Economy

The Panchayat system of King Mahendra has exposed its inability to bring about economic development in the country as was promised. The government in face made a serious bid to ameliorate the lot of the people and for this purpose it introduced many measures. As a result, industrial growth marked upward trend; foreign trade was diversified and it touched a new high mark; the Gross National Product and per capita income increased; conditions of transport improved and developed and agricultural yield stepped up. But along with it also increased the rate of population, prices of essential commodities and labour trouble, outpacing the growth of production. The inability of the government to mobilize local resources, to check inflation and to execute the economic policies efficiently worsened the situation seriously, damaging the image of Panchayat Democracy in the kingdom. A perusal of King Mahendra's economic policies and of the manner in which they were implemented will bear out the point.

After scrapping the parliamentary system, the King had launched a Three-Year Plan to salvage the kingdom from the rut of economy in which, according to him, the earlier government had plunged the country. The Plan, however, could not achieve its target and it was alleged that "there was no evidence to indicate that the Three-Year Plan of his Majesty's Government had definitely been successful. Mere spending of an allocated amount of money of a Plan does not necessarily mean that its targets have been achieved."⁶⁰ The Three-Year Plan was followed by the

Five-Year Plan whose broad details have already been discussed elsewhere in this book. In spite of heavy investment and the mobilization of resources only a very meagre increase in the national income could be achieved.⁶¹ The Plan also failed to make headway in the spheres of economic development, increase in production, investment and employment and improvement in the standards of living of the people. During the Plan period the population increased at the rate of 2.2 per cent every year. Prices increased by 20 per cent. The objective of increasing production at the rate of 14 per cent was only half-realized. Before the commencement of the Plan, 92.1 per cent of the people depended on agriculture for their livelihood. This percentage has now increased to 93.8 per cent.⁶² Thus, one finds that during the Third Five Year Plan period, the target was to achieve Gross National Product by 3.8 per cent and per capita income by 1.8 per cent. The actual increase achieved in GNP is slightly more than 2 per cent. The population has also increased in the same proportion. Per capita income has not increased by more than 0.5 per cent.⁶³

Several reasons have been advanced for the failure to achieve the Plan targets. It has been pointed out that "we have not been able to develop a proper understanding of our resources, improve the purchasing capacity of the people and achieve the desired extent of progress in such basic fields as transport and electricity",⁶⁴ partly because of the "absence of measures to implement different policies",⁶⁵ and also owing to the lack of co-ordination between the government and the National Planning Commission. Non-availability of necessary resources and the execution of those schemes which were not assigned priority, are some other factors which are regarded as responsible for the failure of the Plan to achieve its targets.⁶⁶

Though the government is encouraging the establishment of new industrial concerns like cotton mill, paper and cement industries, yet the condition of the existing industrial plants is far from satisfactory, and many of them have ceased to operate. The Soviet-aided Agricultural Tool Factory at Birganj has to suspend its operation as it had unsold stock valued at Rs. 8,00,000.⁶⁷ Similarly, the two jute mills of Biratnagar had to suspend production because of accumulated stocks of unsold jute goods worth

Rs. 11.5 million.⁶⁸ Murang Sugar Mills at Biratnagar was closed down just after it has worked for three and a half months.⁶⁹ The Himalayan Iron and Steel Factory was closed down because of heavy accumulation of stocks, amounting to 6,000 tons of iron valued at Rs. 6.6 million.⁷⁰ The Straw Board Factory at Biratnagar, established in October 1967, with a capital of Rs. 2.5 million was also closed down. The Chinese-aided Leather and Shoe Factory was reported to be running in loss.⁷¹ The Soviet-aided sugar factory was closed down much ahead of schedule because of the non-availability of sugarcane. The Golcha Woollen Factory at Balaju was also closed down. The Judha Match Factory at Biratnagar stopped working on December 20, 1969, because of non-availability of wood.⁷² The stainless steel utensils producing factories also ran under heavy weather as the Government of India refused the Nepalese traders to export more than what was permitted under the treaty. The only industrial concern that recorded net profit, after initial losses, was the Soviet-aided cigarette factory at Janakpur.

Thus the working of industrial concerns presents a dismal picture in spite of protection and concessions granted by the government to them. To this is added a galloping inflation in economic field causing much hardship to the common man. The Table 9.1 of the price index of essential commodities would bear out the point.

Table 9-1

PRICE INDEX OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES⁷³
(Base Year 1960-61)

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>June 5, 1969</i>	<i>June 5, 1970</i>
Coarse (Tauli) Rice	168.75	218.75
Crushed Rice (Tauli)	167.94	238.17
Maize flour	184.81	198.10
Wheat flour (local)	136.06	216.35
Wheat flour (imported)	212.59	198.30
Mustard Oil (local)	169.26	208.33
Ghee	134.58	144.93
Textiles (9 popular varieties)	117.12	120.37

In order to find out what actual contribution the local Panchayat bodies are making in the national development a study was conducted by the author during 1965-66. The Table 9-2 of the work completed by these institutions will indicate the extent of their contribution in the task of national economic development.

Table 9-2

ACHIEVEMENT OF VILLAGE PANCHAYATS IN DEVELOPMENT

<i>Nature of work</i>	<i>No. of V. Ps. which undertook the work</i>	<i>Percentage of V. Ps. devoted to work</i>	<i>Amount of work done</i>
1. Roads	51	63	149 miles
2. Maintenance of Roads	17	21	32 roads
3. Water Tanks	2	2.5	2
4. Parking Shades	1	1.5	1
5. Wells	9	11	21
6. Maintenance of Wells	11	14	37
7. Primary School Buildings	22	28	22
8. Kanji Houses	3	5	3
9. Bridges	6	7	6
			(10' x 4' size)
10. Nalas	9	11	14
11. Pipe Lines	10	12	Worth Rs. 20,000
12. Hydrants	11	12	51
13. Library Rooms	3	4.5	3
14. Road Lamps	2	2.5	12
15. Panchayat Buildings	19	24	19

According to the information supplied by 14 District Panchayats surveyed during 1965-66, the following work was undertaken by them since 1963.

Table 9-3

<i>Nature of Work</i>	<i>Quantity of Work</i>
Digging of canals	40 miles (Approx)
Construction of roads	286 miles "
Construction of bridges	230 bridges
Construction of wells	800 wells
Sinking of tube-wells	50 tube-wells

The curtailment of freedom and the existence of an atmosphere of fear and suspicion was already proving heavy around the neck of the people. The failure of the government to ameliorate their conditions and to provide an efficient administrative machinery, as well as quick and cheap justice, and to bridge the wide socio-economic gap between various sections of the society made the people critical of the system. Commenting on the situation prevailing under Panchayat system, a leading paper voiced the general discontent: "The new legal code is not being enforced properly. Such social evils as polygamy and untouchability persist in different parts of the country. The Land Reform Programme was carried out without hurting the interests of landowners and exploiters. Consequently, exploiters are still all in all in rural areas of the country. While several roads have been constructed in Kathmandu, the inhabitants of Mustang, Rasuwa, Olangchung and other areas have still to walk through steep slopes. Hardly any development project has been completed entirely through the efforts of the Nepali people themselves. Foreigners hold a monopoly in the field of trade, uncertainties prevail in the field of industry. Slackness and complacency are rampant in the administration. Panchayat members are competing with each other for the fulfilment of their selfish interests. Journalists are divided. Communal and regional sentiments are raising their heads. Neighbouring countries are having evil designs over us."⁷⁴

However, it was not the disappointing performance of the government that spiked people's apathy towards the system, but it was the pervading sense of insecurity that made many of them to scream in utter disgust: "No one knows what will happen tomorrow".⁷⁵ Such a hunting sense was primarily the consequence of the manner in which the system was made to work. Instead of providing the much needed relief to the people, the system gave rise to a class of sycophants and reactionaries, who in their desparate attempt to preserve their privileges, kept the people at a distance, thus isolating them from the prevailing political current.⁷⁶

Popular Indifference

The general apathy of the people, thus generated, towards the system, may be analysed as follows: The people evinced little

interest to participate in the system as very few of them contested the elections and only a small section turned out at the polling booths to cast their votes. The contest pattern of 80 Village Panchayat elections, conducted during the year 1965-66, indicate that an overwhelmingly large percentage of elections have been uncontested.

Table 9-4

VILLAGE PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS

<i>Year of elections</i>	<i>No. of Village Panchayats surveyed</i>	<i>No. of Village Panchayats where unanimous elections were held</i>	<i>Percentage of such Panchayats to the total</i>	<i>No. of Village Panchayats where elections were contested</i>	<i>Percentage of such Panchayats to the total</i>
2018 (1962)	80	73	91	7	9
2020 (1964)	80	70	89	10	11
2022 (1966)	80	63	79	17	21

Even in the biennial elections at village level it were, in most of the cases, the retiring candidates who filed the nomination papers. The following table would bear out the above fact.

Table 9-5

RE-ELECTION OF PANCHAYAT MEMBERS

<i>Year of Elections</i>	<i>No. of Village Panchayats surveyed</i>	<i>No. of candidates in the second yearly elections</i>	<i>No. of old members who retired from their seats</i>	<i>Percentage of such persons to the total</i>	<i>No. of new candidates elected</i>	<i>Percentage of such persons to the total</i>
2020 (1964)	80	240	128	53	112	47
2022 (1966)	80	240	103	43	137	57

The above tables show that lately people have evinced interest in Panchayat elections yet the apathy cannot be said to have been got over.

As with Village Panchayats, so with the District Panchayats, people demonstrated little enthusiasm in their elections. Even during the second biennial election for District Panchayats held in 1966-67, it was reported that unanimous elections were held in many District Panchayats.

Popular apathy towards Panchayat institutions is not an outcome of people's ignorance about them; its roots lay deep in these institutions' failure to fulfil the aroused hopes and aspirations of the people. This apathy has continued to persist over a decade of Panchayat rule and the people generally have kept away from the elections to the Panchayat bodies. For instance, elections for one-third of members of the Bhumtar Village Panchayat in Sindhupalchok district were postponed because none had filed the nomination papers.⁷⁷ During the year 1969, in Kathmandu district the majority of the new Village Panchayat chairmen returned unopposed.⁷⁸ Such a trend still continues.

As a corollary, the Panchayat assemblies at village and district levels are hardly attended by their members. Although under the constitution each Village Panchayat is required to convene two meetings of the village assembly every year in practice, however, this quota has seldom been achieved. Thus, during the period of four years (1962-66), out of 80 Village Panchayats, which the author had surveyed, none fulfilled the minimum quota of eight meetings, while nearly a quarter called only one meeting. The details are given in Table 9.6.

While approving the significance of the foregoing table it must be remembered that during the first two years of the establishment of the Panchayat system there was considerable doubt and scepticism regarding the continuance of the Panchayat system itself and, hence, most Village Panchayats hesitated to convene meetings of the village assemblies. During the next two years the tempo of calling meetings of village assemblies had picked up appreciably but the improvement was mainly quantitative. Qualitatively speaking, the assembly meetings still fall far short of the objective of arousing people's interest in Panchayat Democracy. This can be easily demonstrated by referring to the fact

Table 9-6

VILLAGE ASSEMBLY MEETINGS CONVENED BY
VILLAGE PANCHAYATS
(2018-2022 V.S.)

<i>No. of Meetings of Village Assembly</i>	<i>No. of Village Panchayats</i>	<i>Their approx Percentage</i>
1	18	22
2	38	47
3	11	14
4	3	4
5	3	4
6	7	9

that in a large number of assembly meetings the requisite quorum is not available. Thus, while the average membership of the village assembly ranges from 1,000 to 1,500, the attendance is rarely cent per cent as shown by the following table pertaining to 80 Village Panchayats:

Table 9-7

ATTENDANCE IN VILLAGE ASSEMBLIES
CONVENED BY 80 VILLAGE PANCHAYATS

<i>Attendance</i>	<i>No. of Village Assemblies</i>	<i>Their Percentage</i>
Below 100	13	16
100 to 200	18	23
200 to 300	19	25
300 to 400	11	13
400 to 500	10	12
500 and above	9	11

The most glaring example of people's disinterestedness in the Panchayat institutions is found in the working of Class Organ-

izations. Most of the time these organizations remain defunct and people's attention is drawn towards them only on two occasions—first, when election, which provide an opportunity to some persons to enter power structure of the Panchayat, take place, and secondly, when one group publicly malign the other group of the same organization to capture power. Many times even the meetings of Central Committee of Class Organizations could not be held due to lack of quorum. Even on the occasion of national celebrations when the presence of the members of the Class Organizations are required, their attendance remains thin. For instance, on a Democracy Day celebration “only 46 workers of the Nepal Women's Organization were present. Thirty of whom were below 15 years of age”.⁷⁹

In the wake of anti-parliamentary democracy euphoria, and the tall talk about the effectiveness of the Panchayat system, many political leaders of banned political organizations had completely identified themselves with the Panchayat Democracy. They did everything to strengthen the system and to suppress any opposition. Gradually they too became disappointed. It appears that disillusioned with the grandeur of the system they withdrew their support. Such leaders included Tulsi Giri, V. B. Thapa, R. K. Shah, T. P. Acharya, S. B. Thapa, M. P. Koirala, B. C. Sharma and H. N. Sharma. The King, the founder of the system, had to walk on tight rope when many of its erstwhile supporters bitterly criticized the system.

If any section of the society was convinced about the anachronistic nature of the system, it was the conscious literate class. Since the inception of the system it had declined to extend their whole-hearted support although the prevailing conditions had forced them to pay lip-service to it. Describing the position and behaviour of teaching class in the Panchayat pattern, a leading paper had rightly commented: “The professors pose themselves both as pro-Panchayat and anti-Panchayat elements. In the presence of students, the professors express views that are contrary to the principles of the Panchayat system, while in the presence of ministers they pose themselves as the protagonists of the system. At seminars, they speak in favour of the Panchayat system, but outside of them they indulge in activities that are incompatible with it.”⁸⁰

Panchayat Democracy was, and still is, not popular with the student community. Elections to the Tribhuvan University Students' Union during the session 1969-70 have clearly shown that while the supporters of the Panchayat Democracy could get only 1 per cent of the total votes, the "Communists" polled between 40 and 45 per cent and the "democrats" secured between 55 and 60 per cent of votes.⁸¹

The above analysis of the working of the Panchayat system leads to the conclusion that despite peripheral relief it is providing to the poor masses, it is not easy for it to find its niche among the people. Moreover, the curtailment of fundamental rights has further added to the popular discontent and the people do not seem to have stakes in preserving the Panchayat system. Capitalizing on such a development many outlawed political parties, especially the Nepali Congress, commonly known as democrats, and the Communists have made a serious bid to challenge the Panchayat system. They have launched mass campaign demanding radical reforms. In order to assess the impact of these movements on the system, it would be worthwhile first to review their strength and strategies.

It may be pointed out at the outset that not all the democrats belong to the Nepali Congress. Those democrats who do not owe allegiance to this party are however regarded as its sympathizers. As mentioned earlier, prior to the abolition of parliamentary system in December 1960, it were the democrats who dominated the Nepalese politics and their growing strength has posed a serious threat to the unbridled ambitions of the King for power. Consequently, when the King banned political parties and assumed full powers his wrath was mainly directed against the democrats. Many democratic leaders in their bid to survive, fled the country and took refuge in India and from there they launched an armed insurrection for the restoration of parliamentary system in the kingdom. This development provided an excellent opportunity to the King to brand them as anti-national and to suppress them mercilessly.

But soon it became clear that the King was merely erecting a scarecrow by branding the Nepali Congress leaders and sympathizers as anti-national. There were clear indications of the growing realization among the Nepalese people that gross

injustice was being done to these leaders. A leading paper reported: "Democratic force have been rendered inactive and isolated since the inception of the Panchayat system, because unlike the Communists they are unable to infiltrate into the Panchayat system to undermine it from within. Reactionary elements and opportunists have launched a combined attack against the democratic forces because they think it would promote the cause of Panchayat system."⁸²

It was, therefore, suggested even by the supporter of the Panchayat Democracy that "responsible persons should not abuse and humiliate democrats", and the democratic elements, in turn, should be "united and active" and "offer healthy suggestions to the government and the people".⁸³ Responding to the call of the time, the democrats intensified their activities under the prevailing precarious political conditions. As a result, they made inroads into various sections of the society like the students, teachers, lawyers, writers, journalists, civil servants, youth labours, peasants and also in various Panchayat units. In spite of deep penetration, however, the democrats failed to put up a united front, mainly owing to hurdles imposed by the Panchayat Democracy. However, they succeeded in exposing the reactionary nature and the inherent weakness of the system. They created division and dissension in the Panchayat bodies, put obstacles in their operation and rendered many of them defunct. They are now undermining the present system on the one hand and spearheading the movement for its democratization, on the other.

The democrats have emphasized the imperative and immediate need for the democratization of the system in order to mobilize the people and the resources of the country. They argue that the "system that we have adopted has no meaning as long as all political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of people",⁸⁴ who, in order to perpetuate their hegemony, promote the interests of their supporters and proclaim them as nationalist and condemn their opponents as anti-national. A system, they opine, cannot flourish if it creates a wall around the system to protect the "hierarchy of privileged men".⁸⁵ Therefore, they plead that the present system can survive and be strengthened if it is democratized by adopting the following measures:

Since early 1966, subdued voices against the continuance of restrictions on the operation of political parties and political activities have been raised. It has been argued that "since the Panchayat system is acquiring stability, and since its objective is to establish real democracy, it is necessary to release political prisoners, grant emnesty to self-exiled elements and lift ban on political parties."⁸⁶ Moreover, "since the party in power alone cannot fulfil the growing aspirations of the people, in the absence of other democratic parties, the administration will veer towards dictatorship A strong opposition is essential for a really democratic set-up."⁸⁷ Later on, open canvassing for the withdrawal of ban on political parties was made. During the election campaign for the Rashtriya Panchayat in the year 1967 the candidates contesting from the Graduates' constituency demanded the release of all political detinue, the removal of ban on political parties and the curtailment of powers exercised under the Public Security Act.⁸⁸ These demands were well received in the public. A newspaper reported: "It is clear that in the eyes of the graduate candidates, who represent the most conscious section of the people, the Panchayat system and the constitution are not democratic . . . Their manifestoes have harshly criticized the undemocratic aspects of the Panchayat system and decried the encroachment on fundamental rights. This attitude cannot be ignored as a mere outcome of political groupism."⁸⁹

Another major demand of the democratic elements has been the restoration of fundamental rights including the freedom of speech. Pleading for such rights, T. P. Acharya, an ex-President of the Praja Parishad, remarked that "a government that wished the well-being of the people should not deny them their right and responsibility. If the government is sincere, it need not be afraid of the people. Every basic issue can be discussed only in public and in an atmosphere of freedom. Anything that the people choose after having exercised the liberty of considering the pros and cons of the matter, can remain permanent and bear fruit."⁹⁰ It is true, the democrats admitted, that certain fundamental rights are provided to the people but, they argued, they have no meaning because under the prevailing atmosphere of fear and suspicion they cannot be enjoyed. Therefore it was

demanding that not only the fundamental rights should be restored but the government should create such conditions that are conducive to their exercise.

The democrats have attacked the existing pattern of restricted and indirect elections to the Rashtriya Panchayat. Such a system, they argue, does not allow "the representatives elected from any district to maintain close contacts with the local people".⁹¹ Moreover, the present election procedure "made elections very costly and discouraged public workers from competing with the capitalists".⁹² Likewise, under the prevailing rules a candidate has to secure only 10 or 11 votes of the members of the District Panchayat in order to become a member of the Rashtriya Panchayat. Thus the task of moneyed men has become easier because now they have only to win over such a small number of persons to secure a seat in the legislature. Had there been a system of direct election, they had to win over a large number of voters, say 100,000, and that would have discouraged the capitalists to contest elections and paved the way for the social workers to represent the people in the Rashtriya Panchayat.⁹³ Moreover, in favour of discarding such an election pattern, it is argued that "one can be the representative of approximately 100,000 people through the support of only 17 or 18 persons. This makes it clear whether or not the system insures correct public representation".⁹⁴ Referring to the inherent defect of the election to the Rashtriya Panchayat which does not permit all the members of a District Panchayat to file the nominations, it was stated that "the provision requiring candidates contesting elections to the Rashtriya Panchayat to get a proposer and a supporter from the appropriate District Panchayat members has denied the right of District Panchayat members to contest elections to the Rashtriya Panchayat. In case three members of the District Panchayat contest one seat in the Rashtriya Panchayat, the other will not be able to do so, because in that event as many as nine members will become candidates, proposers and supporters. The remaining two District Panchayat members will thus be left with no proposer and supporter."⁹⁵ To remove these flaws from the election system and to satisfy the growing political consciousness of the people, to have close contacts between the people and their representatives, to avoid

official interference and corrupt practices and to preserve democratic spirit and the principle of decentralization, the democrats argue that the elections to the Rashtriya Panchayat should be direct and based on adult franchise.

The sessions of the Rashtriya Panchayat, in accordance with the provision of the constitution, are held *in camera*. A strong plea is being made for throwing the sessions of the Rashtriya Panchayat open. Tracing out the reasons for the inclusion of such a provision in the constitution, it is argued that in the present system "only 10 or 12 persons control the Panchayat politics. They have utilized it as a tool for fulfilling their ambitions on the plea that people do not constitute the basis of politics and should not be trusted".⁹⁶ The supporters of the present system are in fact fearful of the people and think that in case the Panchayat sessions are made open, the people would come to know about the restrictive nature of the Panchayat system and would demand its replacement by the more democratic institutions. The democrats further argue that the people have a right to know in detail what their representative speak at the Rashtriya Panchayat. "It is the declared objective of the Panchayat system to arouse public interest in the affairs of the nation. It is, therefore, necessary to keep the people aware of what takes place in the Rashtriya Panchayat". They conclude that there cannot be any co-relation between democracy and secrecy. "Since the Panchayat system is democratic, its debates, decisions and conclusions cannot become the outcome of secrecy at any level. In case decisions relating to public welfare are taken without the knowledge of the people they cannot but feel that they are not participating in the system".⁹⁷ Thus, in order to give the people a sense of participation in the processes of the system and to demolish the existing artificial wall between the people and their representatives, the democrats emphasized the need of keeping the sessions of the Rashtriya Panchayat open and its proceeding published in full.

The democrats also have questioned the provision in the constitution empowering the King to elect all the members of the Council of Ministers from among the members of the Rashtriya Panchayat in his discretion. Such a practice, they argue, is not only against the established democratic norms but also defeats

the basic principle of Panchayat Democracy. To replace this undemocratic practice in electing the leader of the people, it is being demanded, that the Rashtriya Panchayat itself should elect its leader who should, in turn, choose other members of the Council of Ministers and form the government.

The democrats view with alarm and dismay the drift in the foreign policy from non-alignment to appeasement of a certain power. In their opinion the kingdom is veering towards China and thereby undermining its independent status. They accuse that the government had transferred strategically important 250 square miles of territory to China under Nepal-China Border Treaty of 1962. They further charge that the government has succumbed to the pressure of China and recognized the Chinese claim over the northern slope of Sagarmatha (the Mount Everest). They deplore the weak and conciliatory policy towards its northern giant—the Communist neighbour—by allowing her to use the Nepalese territory for launching tirade against other friendly countries. They denounce the government of becoming overenthusiastic in supporting China's admission to the U.N. They demand the recovery of the lost territory from China and the maintenance of friendly ties with her on equal footing. The democrats want the government to adopt a nationalistic attitude both towards China and India. They supported Nepal's claim over Susta area, demand the withdrawal of Indian military personnel and the persons manning check-posts along Nepal-Tibet border. They further demand the abrogation of the Trade Treaty of 1960 and the need to conclude a new treaty based on parity.

The Communists

Any political group that has improved its leverage in the kingdom, under the conditions hostile to political parties, is the Communist Party. The party has now become a force to reckon with. Its ambidextrous dealing with prevailing situation and the new strategy evolved by it are largely responsible for its inflated image.

Since 1956 a controversy has been raging in the Communist Party about the nature of the strategy to be adopted to capture

power. The arch enemy of the Communists in the country, according to its extremist leaders, is the monarch, who, in their view, was spearheading the feudal and reactionary forces of the kingdom. Unless he was disarmed and dismounted from power, they thought, there was no possibility of their coming to power. However, the moderates in the party regard the democrats as their immediate enemy to be annihilated first. In their opinion, the democrats are thriving in the country owing to India's backing. The King, in his own interest, is out, in their view, to suppress the democrats and to extricate Nepal out of Indian influence. Therefore, they suggest a close co-operation with the King in his mission. In case the democrats are made ineffective and the country is isolated from India, they think it would be easy to curb the power of the King. And this will pave the way for the Communists to take over the kingdom.

The taking over of the administration by the King in December 1960, and his subsequent suppression of the democrats and the steam-roller campaign against India have provided the Communists with an excellent opportunity to realize their aims. The party was quick in declaring its support to the King and proclaimed him as the leader of the nation: "In view of its historical necessity and its probable nature, the leadership of the national front must necessarily be undertaken by His Majesty who is not only the propounder but also the symbol of national unity. The entire country and Nepal's real friends abroad have full faith in him."⁹⁸

The party had bitterly criticized the Nepali Congress for its indulgence in, what it called, "anti-national activities". The moderates toed the Royal regime in condemning the movement launched by the Nepali Congress for the restoration of parliamentary institutions, on the ground that it was backed by the Indian-American puppet forces led by Suvarna and Bharat Shamsheer".⁹⁹ At this moment of the history of Nepal the King was in desperate need of some organized force that could vindicate his stand and also help in diminishing the influence of the democrats and India in the kingdom. In the Communist Party, he found such a supporter. Since it was also advantageous to the Communists, they extended all-out support to the King. The King, in turn, allowed the Communists full play in the

country's politics. The patronage of the King and the absence of opponents in the political arena enabled the Communists to extend their activities to various sections of the society and to various regions of the country. They made dent in the Class Organizations, in the various tiers of Panchayats, and in bureaucracy and intelligentsia. The policy of the party that paid such a rich dividend may be classified in the following broad categories: (a) staunch nationalism; (b) support to the basic principles of Panchayats; (c) support to the King's inclination towards China; and (d) opposition to India's foreign policy towards Nepal.

The above policy of the moderate-dominated party, however, did not have a smooth sailing. The extremists, after their initial setback, demonstrated remarkable recovery and ousted the moderates from the leadership of the party. The 1962 warning of Ajoy Ghosh, the then Secretary of the Indian Communist Party, to Raimajhi, the leader of the moderates, that "he should not make the Nepal Communist Party a King's party", and if the "Communist Party of Nepal do not struggle for parliamentary democracy, history will never forgive. . . . As such the Nepal Communist Party should not now lag behind the Nepali Congress in its struggle against King's autocratic regime",¹⁰⁰ was realized by the party in its Third Conference held in 1968 when the extremist group headed by Pushpa Lal gained control over the party organs. The only policy of the moderates the new leadership approved was the support to Nepal's flirtation with China and the opposition to India's influence in the kingdom. It adopted a programme: (a) to overthrow the monarchy and establish people's republic; (b) to accelerate all the inherent contradictions of the Panchayat system and build a broad based movement for the masses from below; (c) to distribute land to the tillers and collectivize farming; (d) to have no truck with any feudal section; and, finally, (e) to wage armed struggle to achieve above aims.¹⁰¹

As a result, the party adopted a radical and militant posture. It declared that only Mao's line of action can redeem Nepal from the clutches of feudal lords. While writing in the *Nava Jagan*, Man Mohan Adhikari, an extremist leader, stated: "We shall be guided by the brilliant light of the thought of Mao Tse-tung Arms should be supplied to the proletariat in order to exterminate the capitalist class, confiscate its property and render it

unarmed. . . . For victory, we need three things, first, arms, secondly, arms and thirdly and lastly, arms. Every Communist should understand the truth that political power emerges from the barrel of a gun.”¹⁰²

Posters bearing Mao’s portrait and his quotations were affixed on walls,¹⁰³ attempts were made to hoist red flag on buildings;¹⁰⁴ the writings of Red Book were propagated and the class enemies were threatened with dire consequences; opponents were assaulted and their houses raided;¹⁰⁵ stones were thrown on certain official buildings; torch processions were carried out in which slogans like “May the Communist Party Live long”, “Give arms to the people”, Long live Mao, “Down with Indian interference”, “Death to Surya Bahadur Thapa (the then Prime Minister)”, “Down with B. P. Koirala and Ganeshman Singh”, and “Down with the Dhoti-clad men” were raised.”¹⁰⁶ The processionists clashed with the police at several places. And when many of them were apprehended by the police the Communists paraded the streets of Kathmandu, Ratan and Bhaktpur for days together.¹⁰⁷ They assaulted some government officials, supported the Naxalite movemet in India¹⁰⁸ and clashed with the democrats in various parts of the kingdom.

With a view to winning the support of those sections who had grievances against India and those who gathered an impression that India was interfering in the internal matters of Nepal, on the one hand, and to isolate Nepal from the democratic countries, on the other, the party launched anti-Indian and anti-American campaign. It demanded the abrogation of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between India and Nepal, repudiation of the 1965 Arms Assistance Agreement, scrapping of “unequal” trade treaty with India, withdrawal of the Indian personnel from the northern border check-posts and the Indian Military Liaison Group from Kathmandu, ban on the recruitment of the Gorkhas in the Indian Army, repudiation of Indian claim over Susta. Finally, the party declared India as a threat to peace in Asia: “India has ignored all international laws and rules. It has taken undue advantage of the geographical posititon of Bhutan and Sikkim to fulfil its selfish interests. Even then, it prides itself as being a great nation. India has created enmity with both China and Pakistan. It is now annoying a neutral and peaceful nation

like Nepal. India is a nation of Asia which encroaches upon the boundaries of other nations, has no sense of shame and does not fulfil its commitments."¹⁰⁹

Like India, America was also a subject of bitter criticism by the Communist Party. It regarded USA as an imperialist nation that was out to subjugate the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It supported the brave struggle of the Vietnamese people against the American aggressors. It protested against the visit of U.S. Vice-President to Nepal, and demanded the expulsion of hippies and Peace Corps volunteers.

In the absence of elections on party lines, it is difficult to ascertain the strength of the Communist Party which it has acquired owing to its subservience to the King and staunchly nationalistic strategy. But it is clear that they have made a big dent in the intelligentsia class particularly the student community by capturing most of the students' unions; they have gained influence in various Panchayat bodies and Class Organizations. They have become the most organized, aggressive and vocal force in Nepal. Now they are in a position to flout the royal directions and to criticize him openly.

The weakening of economic sinews, demoralizing impact of the working of Panchayat units and Class Organizations on the people and subsequent rise of progressive forces have posed a threat to the hegemony of traditional forces that were feeling safe under Panchayat Democracy. How the King who spearhead the traditional forces is going to meet this challenge? The measures undertaken by him in this direction may broadly be analysed as follows:

It has been realized by the government that one of the reasons for the people's apathy towards the system is the incapability of Panchayat leaders to manage the administration of local areas efficiently. Therefore attempts are being made to reform the present leadership as well as to train the departmental employees who provide the administrative machinery to support the leaders. For this purpose the government provides training facilities in the following ways:

(i) *Institutional Training for Men*: The institutional training for men is conducted mostly in the Panchayat Training Institute at Rampur (Chitwan district) in the Terai region of southern

Nepal. Pre-service and in-service training for employees of the ministry is provided here. In addition to this training, selected members of the Panchayats and some of the local leaders are brought to the Institute for higher training. The training period varies from 15 days to 6 months according to the needs and categories of the participants in the training.

(ii) *Field Training for Men*: The field training is organized and conducted by the Panchayat Training Officers, located at the zonal level, and Panchayat Training Assistants who are located in the districts. Training is organized in small groups to make it effective and to solve some of the problems of logistics. Training courses of 10 to 15 days duration are given to the members of the Village Panchayats, to the interested and active local leaders, and to Village Panchayat Secretaries. Training "camps" consisting of representatives from two or more neighbouring Village Panchayats are held in one of the Panchayats.

(iii) *Institutional Training for Women*: Institutional training for women is given at the Women's Affairs Training Institute at Jawalakhel, Kathmandu. Pre-service and in-service training is given to the women employees, who serve as *Gram Sevikas* in various districts and conduct training sessions for village women leaders. Institutional training is also given to local women leaders selected by members of the women's Class Organizations.

(iv) *Publications, Conferences and Seminars*: Orientation is further pursued by publication, radio programmes and seminars and conferences. The ministry publishes the fortnightly bulletin *Panchayat News* highlighting the work done by the Panchayats. The ministry also organizes two kinds of conferences and seminars, one exclusively for ministerial employees and the other for elected local governmental officials. These conferences and seminars are organized with a view to find out the problems which the Panchayats are facing in their developmental activities.

(v) *Panchayat Cadre Training Programme*: In order to turn out a dedicated well-organized group of active and ideologically cohesive adherents, the government have opened training centres at Chandragadi, Nepalganj and Narayani. Besides giving political orientation, it has been decided that the basic knowledge of planning at the local level, of public finance, of co-operative societies, of marketing, or first aid, of rudimentary engineering

and of improved farming would be imparted to the trainees so that it may enable them to be of the utmost assistance to the villagers.

(vi) "*Back to the Village*" *National Campaign*: During 1967 King Mahendra launched a national campaign—Back to the Village—and called upon the people to contribute their mite towards the strengthening of national unity; inculcating people's confidence in partyless Panchayat Democracy; weeding out corruption, injustice and exploitation, activating rural life; making the land reforms and other social and economic programmes successful; increasing of food production; developing co-operative spirit and communitarian way of life; and spreading small-scale industries all over the country. The King made it obligatory on the part of the ministers, Panchayat members of various tiers and Class Organizations to participate in the campaign and execute the programmes sincerely.

(vii) *Royal Directives to Panchayat Members*: From time to time King Mahendra issues directives and instructions to various institutions and formulated codes for them. The latest directives urge the Panchayat members to maintain close contacts with the people and remove their hardship. He has further directed them to avoid mutual recrimination and subordinate personal interests to the cause of nation and Panchayat system. He has advised them that instead of paying lip service to the objectives of Panchayats, the member should "dedicate himself to the cause of the nation and the system fearlessly on the basis of the motto: Do not Err; Do Not Fear". Similarly, the King has also advised the civil employees to function with "honesty, discipline, responsibility, dutifulness and impartiality. They should perform the task assigned to them in time and in accordance with the prescribed policy".

These steps in themselves may suffice to put the Panchayats on their legs. But the King fears a threat to the system not as much from inside as from outside. Therefore the problem before the King is how to safeguard the Panchayat polity from its enemies—the banned political parties, which are gradually mustering their strength.

The King has realized that although the continuance of the ban on political parties and strict vigilance on the activities of

political leaders and their organizations have weakened this threat somewhat, yet the danger to the Panchayat system from them has not completely been eliminated. The King has, therefore, adopted many tactics to meet this danger. They are:

As noted earlier, soon after scrapping the parliamentary system and banning political parties, the King had offered lucrative posts to the leaders of various political parties. Besides maintaining this practice, the King has started providing monthly allowances to the potential critics of the Panchayat system and a list is being prepared of about 400 "political sufferers" to whom the government has decided to distribute land.¹¹⁰ Thus, it is hoped that a large section of dissatisfied political leaders would be silenced. The government's intention behind sponsoring the scheme has been exposed by a leading paper as follows: "T. P. Acharya has not been granted this allowance (Rs. 1,500 per month) in his capacity of former Prime Minister, as everybody knows that he is not the only former Prime Minister. This means that he has been given this pension because he is a political sufferer. We are not prepared to put him in the category of political sufferers. In our opinion, a political sufferer is one whose condition has deteriorated because of his involvement in politics. But T. P. Acharya has been greatly benefited by his involvement in politics. It is because of his involvement that even a person like him was able to become Prime Minister. Moreover, his social and economic condition is much better today than it was before he entered politics."

In the last the paper has expressed that "Acharya would not indulge in anti-people activities while enjoying the money of the people".¹¹¹

In the hard process of socialization of partyless Panchayat Democracy the influence of minor political parties has been eliminated. But the democrats and the Communists not only have survived but have emerged as forces to reckon with. Since the overthrow of Rana regime in Nepal both these elements have been at loggerheads and the King has very cleverly utilized the differences among them in his favour. A study of Nepalese politics reveals the following ways the King is capitalizing on the differences of two major political forces in the kingdom.

He allows the Communists to stage demonstrations, bring out processions and organize meetings to condemn the democratic

elements and raise the bogey of Indian interference in Nepal. But whenever democrats hold meetings and express their views, the government falls on them with a heavy hand.

It is being felt that the administration is trying to suppress all democratic elements, regarding them as opponents of the Panchayat system, and supporting extremist elements who raise slogans in favour of foreign leaders as supporters of the Panchayat system, only to earn cheap popularity and fulfil personal interests.¹¹² When recently democratic students were punished by the court for holding a meeting near the temple of Pashupatinath, a leading paper accused the government of adopting discriminatory policy towards different groups of students. It remarked: "A leftist students union has been functioning in Kathmandu for the past several years. However, His Majesty's Government has taken no action to check its activities. Torch-light demonstrations were organized in Ratan recently. But the provisions of the Organizations and Associations (Control) Act did not apply to the demonstrators. On the other hand, 25 students were recently punished by the court under vague charges."¹¹³

Communists are encouraged and allowed to assault democrats. In the fight which ensues due to the retaliation of the latter, the government, in most of the cases, takes action against the democrats. This policy of the government has resulted in an endemic hostility between the two parties.

The government allows the Communist propaganda to go unabated, with the result that the Communist literature is freely circulated throughout the country. It has been assessed by many quarters that the Communist literature has "the widest circulation among all foreign literature in Nepal".¹¹⁴ Commenting on such a policy of the government the *Naya Sandesh* has remarked: "For sometime past, certain inconsistencies have appeared in the internal policy of His Majesty's Government. The publicity given to the subversive ideas of a Communist leader was considered to be a nationalist step, fit to be rewarded with a prize. A newspaper is free to publish the statement that 'the brilliant light of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung will guide the world. We are proceeding along this road'. In addition, freedom is being given to publicize the thought that 'every problem can be solved with a gun'."¹¹⁵

And whenever the democrats have demanded, through Press, the restoration of fundamental rights and democratization of the system or have criticized certain policies of the government, the paper publishing their views has either been asked to furnish a security deposit or has been put out of publication.

While the government allows the Communist leaders to attend the International Communist Conference for political discussion, it aenies the leader of the Nepali Congress to go abroad even for a medical check-up.

Whenever the government finds that the Communist influence is on the increase it immediately releases the leaders of the Nepali Congress and assures them a fair deal in the country's administration. Moreover, it does not hesitate to arrest Communist student leaders if it thinks that they are growing out of their shoes. Thus, one finds that the government is attempting to maintain a delicate balance between the Communists and the democrats, allowing none of them to go beyond its control.

To defend the Panchayat Democracy from the attack of its opponents in the kingdom, many suppressive laws have been enacted and enforced rigorously. When, for example, voices were raised for restoring party system the government enacted the Organizations and Associations (Control) (Amendment) Act, 1969, which stated: "No person shall establish or instigate the establishment of or direct or instigate the operation of any political party or any group, organization or association motivated by political party objectives. No person shall join or instigate others to join any political party or group, organization or association motivated by political objectives or maintain contacts or instigate others to maintain contacts with it with political motives. No person shall issue statements, shout slogans, hold demonstrations, take out processions, organize publicity and broadcasting or act otherwise advocating the establishment of any political party or group, organization or association motivated by political objectives or instigate others to do so."¹¹⁶

The violation of the Act is punishable with imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or with a fine not exceeding Rs. 1,500 or with both. On February 8, 1970, nine persons were arrested under this Act while they were trying to hold a meeting at Maharajganj in Kathmandu. On August 24, 1970,

the Bagmati Zonal Court sentenced three persons to imprisonment for one year each for their attempt to form an organization.¹¹⁷

On July 9, 1970, the office of the Bagmati Zonal Superintendent of Police published a notification banning meetings and processions on public thoroughfares in the Bagmati zone without prior approval.¹¹⁸ Thus, one finds that in Kathmandu, the hub of Nepalese politics, the people have lost their constitutional right to organize peaceful meetings and carry out processions. Through another enactment the government has armed itself to deal sternly with the critics of Panchayat system. The Treason (Crime and Punishment) (Second Amendment) Act provides that any person who refers to the action of the government through written or spoken words or through signs or symbol or otherwise, and fomented, instigated others or attempted himself to foment hatred, malice or contempt for government by means of baseless and unsubstantiated matters would be punished with imprisonment for a term of two years, or with a fine not exceeding Rs. 2,000 or with both.¹¹⁹

Besides framing suppressive laws the government condemns any criticism of the Panchayat system as anti-national. Minister Rudra Prasad Giri, for instance, has remarked: "Elements who say that the Panchayat system is undemocratic are anti-national and opposed to development. The system is prepared to welcome the persons who support it. However, nobody will be allowed to infiltrate into it in disguise. Everybody should be ready to eliminate mercilessly elements who try to vitiate the atmosphere by spreading undesirable rumours."¹²⁰

To those persons who want to democratize the system, the administration asks them to consider whether they are actually acting in the national interest. The government has warned them that they would not be allowed to raise their heads.¹²¹

The scourge of the government falls on those persons who muster courage to criticize certain policies of the government or who demand certain changes in the Panchayat polity. Large number of persons are arrested, imprisoned and fined under various suppressive laws like the Public Security Act, Treason (Crime and Punishment) Act, Organizations and Associations (Control) Act and National Guidance Act. A review of the Table

given below would reveal the extent of repression let loose by the government to suppress the critics of Panchayat system.

Table 9-8

PERSONS PROSECUTED IN CONNEXION WITH POLITICAL ACTIVITIES DURING 1967-1970¹⁹⁸

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of persons arrested</i>	<i>Yearly increase</i>
1967	87	
1968	127	(+) 40
1969	234	(+)107
1970	375	(+)141

Among the arrested persons are included the students, principals, vice-principals, professors, headmasters, editors, a former Chairman of the Council of Ministers, former ministers and assistant ministers, Chairmen and members of Town Panchayat, Chairmen and members of District Panchayat, Chairmen and members of Village Panchayat, a member of the Rashtriya Panchayat and the workers of the banned political parties.

These suppressive measures, however, have failed to deter the critics of Panchayat Democracy from launching movements for bringing about radical changes in the system. That their agitations are gradually becoming stronger can be understood by looking at the growing intensity of students movement. The Table 9-9 is illustrative of this phenomenon.

The analysis of the Nepalese politics leads one to conclude that the popular tidal waves have started lashing against the traditional forces well entrenched within the Panchayat walls. Equally, the King who spearheads the traditional forces, appears determined to ride roughshod over them in order to defend the system. The question which looms large on Nepal's political horizon is as to whether the King would succeed to maintain the Panchayat system against the rising popular discontent against it, and what will happen to the task of nation building, if the political forces continue to be engaged in the war of mutual annihilation.

Table 9-9

TABLE SHOWING STUDENTS' AGITATION DURING 1964-1970¹⁹⁹

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of students trouble</i>	<i>Academic trouble</i>	<i>Its %</i>	<i>Nature of students trouble</i>			
				<i>Non-Academic trouble</i>	<i>Its %</i>	<i>Political trouble</i>	<i>Its %</i>
1964	3	2	66.3	—	—	1	33.3
1965	4	1	25	—	—	3	75
1966	4	1	25	—	—	3	75
1967	10	2	20	2	20	6	60
1968	15	5	33.3	3	20	7	46.6
1969	37	15	40.1	1	27.1	21	56.7
1970	30	6	20	2	6.6	22	73.3
(up to June, 1970)							

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ *Matribhumi*, July 11, 1969. ² *Samaya*, May 1, 1970.
³ *Nepal Times*, April 30, 1970. ⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, January 22, 1970.
⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ *Ibid.*, January 10, 1970. ⁷ *Himachuli*, April 23, 1966.
⁸ *Motherland*, November 2, 1966. ⁹ *Janmbhumi*, May 1, 1966.
¹⁰ *Pratidhwani*, February 18, 1970.
¹¹ "Local units of the Panchayat system have become centres of exploitation. They are collecting various types of taxes and subscription in the name of development. There are no provisions to audit or safeguard the funds raised by them. People had been making complaints in this regard for a long time past. But now the common people have retired to the background because of their helplessness . . . Nobody knows whether Panchayats are for the people or the people are for Panchayats." *Nepal Times*, March 10, 1970.
¹² In course of recent Village and District Panchayat elections it was reported that in 8 districts of Bagmati Zone "voters were beaten and kidnapped and weapons brandished". *Samaj*, February 12, 1970.
¹³ It was alleged that during the District Panchayat elections and the Rashtriya Panchayat election from Kathmandu a large amount of money was spent.
¹⁴ Many reports indicated that at various constituencies forged votes were used. See *Gorkhapatra*, June 22, 1969.
¹⁵ In Kathmandu, the Chairmen of two Village Panchayats were suspended because they failed to welcome a Minister of State. *Jagriti*, October 11, 1968.
¹⁶ *Naya Samaj*, July 2, 1967. ¹⁷ *Samiksha*, June 20, 1967.
¹⁸ *Samaj*, February 23, 1969. ¹⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, July 8, 1967.
²⁰ *Ibid.*, July 15, 1969. ²¹ *Ibid.*, February 22, 1969.
²² *Ibid.*, March 13, 1970. ²³ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1970.
²⁴ The names of Tulsi Giri, V. B. Thapa, Vedanand Jha, Shailendra Kumar, S. B. Thapa and K. N. Bishta may be cited as an instance.
²⁵ *Swatantra Samachar*, April 11, 1969.

²⁶ *Pratidhwani*, July 25, 1969.

²⁷ *Naya Sandesh*, February 25, 1966.

²⁸ In this connexion leaders like S. P. Upadhyaya, V. B. Thapa, Indra Kant Misra and Nageshwar Prasad Singh were arrested. Tulsi Giri was prohibited from leaving Kathmandu Valley, while R. K. Shah and Tripuwar Singh were directed to present themselves before the Special Court.

²⁹ *Naya Samaj*, June 9, 1964. ³⁰ *Gorkhapatra*, November 30, 1964.

³¹ *Dainik Nepal*, December 9, 1964.

³² *Samaya*, February 15, 1966. ³³ *Gorkhapatra*, June 16, 1966.

³⁴ *Naya Samaj*, February 21, 1966.

³⁵ *Gorkhapatra*, March 17, 1970. ³⁶ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1970.

³⁷ *Nepal Times*, September 4, 1970.

³⁸ *Naya Samaj*, October 25, 1970.

³⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, October 22, 1970. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, October 24, 1970.

⁴¹ *Saptahik Samachar*, October 7, 1964.

⁴² *Samaj*, October 28, 1966. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, February 22, 1970.

⁴⁴ For details see *Gorkhapatra*, July 28, August 29 and September 1, 1970. ⁴⁵ *Nepal Times*, August 31, 1970.

⁴⁶ *Gorkhapatra*, July 16, 1970. ⁴⁷ *Gorkhapatra*, August 28, 1967.

⁴⁸ *Naya Samaj*, September 6, 1970.

⁴⁹ "Top-ranking officers are lacking the determination to tackle problems. In fact, they try to hide problems and pay greater attention to their personal interests. They try to make hay while the sun shines, and neglect employees working outside the capital, and do not care to make a realistic evaluation of the work of their subordinates. They respect persons with access to high sources, while neglecting honest employees. They do not even hesitate to engage themselves in intrigues if they apprehend any threat to their position."

Nepal Times, February 9, 1970.

⁵⁰ *Samaj*, November 2, 1964.

⁵¹ *Swatantra Samachar*, May 21, 1970.

Citing an example of corruption in the administration, D. B. Basnet, a member of the Rashtriya Panchayat, stated that the government employees has appropriated 208 bighas of land belonging to the 800 bighas Chatra Agricultural Farm in their own names or in the names of their families. *Nepal Times*, May 23, 1969.

- ⁵² *Samaya*, September 1, 1969.
- ⁵³ *Samaj*, March 18, 1970.
- ⁵⁴ For details see *Gorkhapatra*, July 28, 1970.
- ⁵⁵ *Gorkhapatra*, March 19, 1965.
- ⁵⁶ *Dainik Nepal*, March 4, 1965.
- ⁵⁷ *Nepal Sandesh*, August 1, 1966.
- ⁵⁸ *Gorkhapatra*, July 30, 1970.
- ⁵⁹ *Nepal Times*, July 31, 1970.
- ⁶⁰ *Samaj*, December 29, 1965.
- ⁶¹ "At the time of the commencement of the Third Five Year Plan, Nepal's National Income amounted to Rs. 5,285 million. The target was to increase it by 19 per cent during the Third Five Year Plan period, and by 100 per cent during a 15-year period. However, only 2.2 per cent increase yearly was achieved during the Third Five Year Plan period. On the other hand, population is increasing at this rate; it can be doubled only in 32 years." *Chamber Patrika*, February 12, 1970.
- ⁶² *Naya Sandesh*, June 16, 1970.
- ⁶³ Assessment of the Plan made by Y. P. Pant, a noted Nepali economist, Governor of the Nepal Rashtriya Bank and a member of the National Planning Commission. *Gorkhapatra*, May 29, 1970.
- ⁶⁴ Observations made by Y. P. Pant at a conference of traders and industrialists held at Singha Darbar, Kathmandu. *Gorkhapatra*, January 5, 1970.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, May 29, 1970. ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, January 5, 1970.
- ⁶⁷ *Motherland*, January 5, 1970. ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1970.
- ⁶⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, March 21, 1968. ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, February 5, 1968.
- ⁷¹ *Nepal Times*, May 24, 1966.
- ⁷² *Koseli*, January 2, 1970. ⁷³ *Gorkhapatra*, June 26, 1970.
- ⁷⁴ *Arati*, May 23, 1970. ⁷⁵ *Nepal Times*, March 31, 1970.
- ⁷⁶ *Matribhumi*, February 13, 1968.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, January 27, 1970.
- ⁷⁸ *Rising Nepal*, May 12, 1969.
- ⁷⁹ *Naya Sandesh*, February 22, 1969.
- ⁸⁰ *Naya Nepal*, February 1, 1970. ⁸¹ *Samiksha*, June 30, 1969.
- ⁸² *Samaj*, September 9, 1965. ⁸³ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1965.
- ⁸⁴ *Arpan*, August 21, 1970. ⁸⁵ *Gorkhapatra*, June 25, 1970.

- ⁸⁶ *Samaj*, September 2, 1966.
- ⁸⁷ *Naya Samaj*, August 30, 1966.
- ⁸⁸ *Dainik Nepal*, April 23, 1967. ⁸⁹ *Naya Samaj*, April 25, 1967.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, June 12, 1967. ⁹¹ *Gorkhapatra*, July 30, 1970.
- ⁹² *Samaj*, June 21, 1970.
- ⁹³ *Nepal Bhasha Patrika*, June 20, 1970.
- ⁹⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, July 11, 1970. ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 28, 1970.
- ⁹⁶ *Nepal Times*, June 23, 1970. ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ *Samiksha*, October 14, 1962. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, August 23, 1962.
- ¹⁰⁰ Quoted by Gurung in *Hamro Mool Bat*, pp. 71-2.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* ¹⁰² Quoted by *Samiksha*, July 24, 1970.
- ¹⁰³ *Samaya*, April 22, 1970
- ¹⁰⁴ *Dainik Nepal*, May 11, 1970.
- ¹⁰⁵ For details see *New Herald*, March 27, 1970.
- ¹⁰⁶ For details see *Gorkhapatra*, March 11, 1969.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, July 14, 1969. ¹⁰⁸ *Swatantra Samachar*, July 17, 1967.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Jagriti*, August 1, 1969.
- ¹¹⁰ It was officially decided to rehabilitate political sufferers by allotting them 700 bighas of land each in the Koshi, Janakpur and Mahakali Zones. *Gorkhapatra*, August 4, 1970.
- ¹¹¹ *Dainik Nepal*, March 30, 1970.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, October 13, 1970.
- ¹¹³ *Naya Sandesh*, May 15, 1970. ¹¹⁴ *Samiksha*, July 24, 1970.
- ¹¹⁵ *Naya Sandesh*, July 31, 1970.
- ¹¹⁶ *Nepal Gazette*, September 4, 1969.
- ¹¹⁷ *Samiksha*, August 26, 1970.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

KING MAHENDRA has been making Herculean attempts to make the Panchayat Democracy as the main engine of modernization in Nepal. But the manner in which Panchayat institutions have been functioning for a decade, has put at naught all these attempts and the country has not yet reached the take-off stage in its economic development. The study made in the context of historical perspective and contemporary political situation has brought into focus the causes that led to the emergence of traditional forces in 1960 when the King scrapped parliamentary democracy and introduced the present Panchayat system. That this new system too has failed to put the country out of socio-economic backwardness is not an entirely unexpected phenomenon. What, however, needs a deep probe is the fact that King Mahendra's own ambitions rest in the survival of this system and the fact that he and his system have not yet been accepted by the people at large. The following factors are the causes of the dismal failure of the system: (a) the structure of the system, (b) the functioning of the system, (c) the milieu under which the system operates, and (d) their impact on the working of the system on the Nepalese politics.

The monarchy is the kingpin of the Panchayat system. The King has been endowed with enormous power. His will is supreme in all matters. Constitutionally, he has been empowered to form the government, to reshuffle it and to dismiss it. He is the chief decision-maker and also the chief executor of the policies. Thus one finds that all the powers, through which modernization can be brought in a country, have been vested in the King, who as the helmsman of traditional forces would not like to disturb the placid waters of a backward polity.

Moreover, the denial of fundamental rights by the constitution to the people resulted in the loss of those effective

institutions like Press and platform, political parties and associations, through which the politicization and mobilization of the people in the task of nation building could be achieved.

Likewise, the election system, as envisaged under the Panchayat Democracy, cannot fulfil its basic principle of political development in the country. It cannot prove to be an effective instrument for creating political consciousness. The ban on political parties in participating Panchayat elections has severely circumscribed the role of political organizations as modernizing agents in Nepal. Moreover, the indirect election procedure to the Rashtriya Panchayat does not give to the people a sense of participating in the decision-making processes at national level, and therefore they do not feel attached to this system.

More than the structural defects, however, it is the mishandling of the system that has undermined its achievements. The lack of confidence on the part of King in the sincerity, of the Panchayat leaders, on the one hand, and his attempt to have his fingers on every pie, on the other, have much to do with the prevailing chaotic state of affairs. His practice of taking personal interest in the formulation of various policies at every stage results in making the government ineffective and its functionaries bitter. The present trend of supporting the system while in power and bitterly criticizing it soon after exit from the office, exhibited in the behaviour of the Panchayat leaders, is mainly due to this Royal practice. The ineffective working of the government can also be traced to the practice of the King to confront one minister against the other. Though these tactics pay dividends to the King as the dissension-ridden Cabinet cannot assert itself and undertake independent initiative, but they certainly expose the government as handmaiden of the monarch at whose bidding it functions. Such an institution cannot command popular respect.

The supremacy of the Royal Secretariat over the Central Secretariat, personal contact of the King with the high officials, political appointments and promotions, regular purging of "undesirable elements", Royal directives to, and supervision over, the officials are largely responsible for making the administration inactive, lethargic, corrupt and arrogant. Such a condition of the administration further tarnishes the image of the new polity.

But the worst kind of functioning of the Panchayat Democracy is manifested at local levels. As noted in the preceding pages, instead of allowing the local Panchayat bodies to work as semi-autonomous units managed by elected leaders, the government has turned them as departments of the administration. The government interferes in the elections of Village and District Panchayats frequently. Only those Panchayat leaders are allowed to take the responsibility of the Panchayat units who are willing to act as tools in the hands of the government. The administration controls, supervises and interferes in the working of the Panchayats. The elected leaders have no power, and prestige that go with the people's leaders. They have to dance to the tune of the government. Still worse, these elected leaders are using these Panchayat bodies for their personal gains. The belief that the Panchayats are not for the people but the peoples are for the Panchayats is gaining ground.

If the milieu under which the system is being operated had been free, open and congenial probably the Panchayat Democracy would have been more effective. Of the major characteristics that underline the prevailing atmosphere is the situation of confrontation. In the kingdom one group has been confronted against the other, one political party against another political party, minister against minister, Panchayat leader against Panchayat leader, community against community, students against students and journalists against journalists. Thus an atmosphere of mutual distrust and hostility goes on unabated.

Another characteristic of the prevailing milieu is the existence of an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Though the constitution has granted some fundamental rights, yet the people are afraid to avail them. Meetings are not organized by the people, national problems and contemporary situations are not discussed openly. Only few, with great risk and hesitation, muster courage to criticize the government and the system. The result is that the grievances of the people are not brought to light and there is no consciousness about the national problems among the people.

Such a situation has arisen because an environment of suppression and threat hangs heavily over the heads of the people. There are ample examples before the people that whenever

members of the Rashtriya, Town, District and Village Panchayat attempted to violate the policies of the government, they were arrested. Not only the Panchayat members but any person who deviates from the norms set by the government, is liable to be apprehended.

This trend in the Nepalese politics has instilled a sense of insecurity among the people. Constantly hunted by such feelings people would hardly prefer to associate themselves with the system and feel devoted to it. They have turned apathetic if not hostile towards the Panchayat polity.

The working of the Panchayat Democracy under such a milieu has made a serious impact on the Nepalese politics. The vesting of absolute power of the State into the hands of the King and its usage by him in his discretion has rendered various other institutions of the government and the State defunct.

The present system has given a severe blow to the growth of healthy leadership in the country. And if the present trend continues time would be not far off when the country would be devoid of leaders except the supreme leader of the nation—the monarch. The old guards are gradually disappearing from the national scene, and those who have survived their political character have already been humiliated by the Panchayat Democracy. The working of the Panchayat is not at all conducive to the growth of healthy and dedicated cadre of leaders. It has, on the other hand, given rise to the emergence of reactionaries, sycophants and tondies, who are more interested in their personal aggrandizement rather than of the nation. Can such a leadership provide guidance to the new generation that would be acceptable to it?

The system has left the people with no alternative but to organize secret parties, meetings and indulge in violence to express their feelings. In the absence of any available means to change the government and the system the present Nepalese youth is being attracted towards extremist political ideology and appears willing to accept alien leaders as his guide who vindicate the rule of proletariat through revolution. The rigidity of the system and intolerant attitude of the government has made even the democrats to talk about armed revolution as a means to bring radical changes in the present Nepalese political system.

The above analysis of the present Nepalese political system leads one to conclude that the Panchayat is not only incapable of modernizing Nepal but on the contrary is greatly damaging to the Nepalese politics. Is there any way out to halt such a trend and put this country on the path of progress?

Since the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950, two decades have been lost owing to constant struggles that have been raging between the traditional and progressive forces for assuming political power in the country. They have fragmented their energies as also nation's in attempting to subjugate one another. The victim has been the country. The attempt of the traditional forces to browbeat the progressive forces since 1951 only resulted in the victory of the latter in 1959 when they came to power and ushered in parliamentary system. Likewise, their attempt to annihilate the traditional forces only boomeranged on them when the parliamentary system was overthrown and the Panchayat system was introduced. Since then the traditional forces have been attempting to keep the progressive forces subdued and to develop Nepal under their hegemony. They have failed badly at both the fronts. Even if they are again succeeded by the progressive forces, what is the guarantee that the country would be modernized within a short period. It is high time therefore that both these forces forge an alliance for national reconstruction. The process of progress is painful and unless the people are mobilized and undivided attention is paid, it would be very difficult for a country, which has already been left far behind in the race of development, to modernize in a short span of time. Since the traditional forces are in power at present, it becomes their imperative duty to take initiative in accommodating the progressive forces by democratizing the system, granting fundamental rights to the people, reviving political parties, making direct election for the Rashtriya Panchayat and establishing responsible government at the centre. Similarly, the democrats, instead of attacking and humiliating the traditional forces, should join hands with them in the great task of nation-building. In this compromise lies the welfare of the King, that of the people and that of the country.

Select Bibliography

(a) Official Documents*

- Agricultural Reorganization Programme to Date and Plans for the Future*, 1964.
- Anchal Ebam Vikas Zilla Vibhajan Samitiko Report*, 1962.
- Anchal Panchayat Ain, 2019*, 1962.
- Anchal Panchayat (Sanshodhan)*, 2021, 1964.
- Arthik Ain, 2014*, 1957.
- Arthik Samitiko Dusro Prativedan*, 1967.
- Arthik Sarvachan (2024-25)*, 1967.
- Arthik Varsh (2025-26) Ko Budget Vaktavya* (n.d.).
- Bhumi Sambandhi Ain*, 1957.
- Birta Unmulan Ain*, 1960.
- Development of Primary Education in Nepal*, 1967.
- Educational Statistical Report (1965-66)*, 1967.
- Foreign Trade Reports (1961-62; 1962-63; 1963-64)*, 1965.
- Gaun Panchayat Ain, 2006*, 1950.
- Gaun Panchayat Ain, 2012*, 1956.
- Gaun Panchayat Ain, 2018*, 1961.
- Gaun Panchayat (Samshodhan) Ain, 2021*, 1964.
- Government of Nepal Act, 2004*, 1954.
- Guideline to the Democratization of Government Functions*, 1965.
- His Majesty the King's address to the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Session of Rashtriya Panchayat (n.d.).
- Interim Government of Nepal Act, 1954*, 1954.
- Jan Pratinidhitya Ain, 2015*, 1958.
- Khadga Nishan Ain, 1987*, 1931.
- Mahottari Zilla Parstithi Adhyayanko Lagi Gayako Sansad Pratinidhi Mandal ko Report* (n.d.).
- Maulik Hak Sambandhi Ain*, 1948.

*All Official Documents are published at Kathmandu.

- Mobility of Agricultural Labour in Nepal*, 1967.
Nagar Palika Ain, 2010, 1953.
Nagar Palika Nirvachan Niyamavali, 2010, 1953.
Nagrik Adhikar Ain, 2014, 1957.
Nagar Panchayat Ain, 2019, 1962.
Nagar Panchayat Nirvachan Niyamavali, 2020, 1963.
Nepal Pradhan Nyayalaya Ain, 2009, 1952.
Nepal Adhirajyako Rashtriya Janganana, 2018 Ko Prarambhik Natija, 1962.
Nepal Adhiraj ko Samvidhan, 2015, 1959.
Nepal Ain Samgrah, 2021, 1964.
Nepal Bal Sangthanko Vidhan, 2015, 1961.
Nepal Bhutpurva Sanik Sangthan ko Vidhan, 1961.
Nepal Kishan Sangthan ko Vidhan 2019, 1961.
Nepal ko Samvidhan, 2015, 1962.
Nepal Mahila Sangthan of Vidhan, 2019, 1961.
Nepal Mazdoor Sangthan ko Vidhan, 2019 (n.d.)
Nepal Nizamati Ain, 2012, 1956.
Nepal Vidyarthi Sangthan ko Vidhan, 2019, 1961.
Nepal Yuvak Sangthan ko Vidhan, 2019, 1961.
Panchayat Adalat Act, 2006, 1950.
Panchayat Vikash Chatriya Sammalen haruko Sifarishharu (2022-23) (n.d.).
Panchvarshiya Yojana (2013-18)—Pragati Report, 1961.
Panchvarshiya Yojana ko Samchipta Masauda, 1966.
Physical Input-Output Characteristics of Grain Production for Selected Agricultural Areas in Nepal Crop Year—1965-66 (n.d.),
Population Projection for Nepal (1955-75), 1963.
Prasashan Shakti Vikendrikaran Ayogako Prativedan, 2020, 1963.
Prashasan Samitiko Dutria Prativedan, 2024, 1967.
Pratham Panchvarshiya Yojana—2 Varshko Pragati (n.d.).
Pratinidhi Sabha—Birta Jagge Unmulan gari Thikanako Nimmita Banako Vedhayak, 1959.
Press Commission ko Report, 1958.
 Proclamation, Speeches and Messages of His Majesty, King Mahendra (2 Vols.). Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Kathmandu, 1967.
Puratatva Patra Sangrah, 1959.
Rajnitik Sammelan, 1959.

- Rashtriya Nirdashan (Sanshodhan) Ain, 2021, 1964.*
Rashtriya Panchayat Anuman Samiti ko Prativadan, (2020-21 to 2023-24), 1967.
Rashtriya Panchayat Sarvajanik Lekha Samiti ko Dusro Prativadan, 1965.
Rashtriya Panchayat Sarvajanik Lekha Samiti ko Prativadan, 1963.
Report of Second Zilla Panchayat Development Conference, 2021, 1964.
Report of Royal Tax Commission, 2017, 1961.
Report on the Successful First Year of Land Reform in Budhabari. Thapa (n.d.).
Report of Training Sub-Committee of First Zilla Panchayat Conference, 2020, 1963.
Rules and Procedure of Rashtriya Panchayat, 2019, 1968.
Samajik Samiti ko Dusro Prativadan, 1967.
Sarbochha Adalat Ain, 2013, 1956.
Sarbochha Adalat Niyamavali, 2013, 1956.
Shahi Kadambare Vibhinna Mantavya, 1961.
Sample Census of Agriculture, Nepal, 1962 (n.d.).
Some Speeches of Dr. Tulsi Giri, 1964.
The Brief Outline of the Composition and Working of the Rashtriya Panchayat, 1963.
The Economic Affairs Report (3 Vols.), 1960.
The First Amendment of the Constitution, 1967.
The Third Plan (1965-70), 1965.
Tresro Yojana (2022-27), 1965.
Trivarshiya Yojana (2019-22), 1962.
Trivarshiya Yojanako Dusre Varshko Pragati (2020-21), 1964.
Zilla Panchayat Ain, 2007, 1950.
Zilla Panchayat Ain, 2019, 1962.
Zilla Panchayat (Sansodhan) Ain, 2021, 1964.
Zilla Panchayat Karyalaya Nirdeshanavali, Ministry of Panchayat, 1965.
Zilla Panchayat ko Yojana, 2021, 1964.

(b) Works in Nepali Language

- Acharya, Bahuram, *Nepalko Sanchipta Vratanta*, Kathmandu, 2022.
Acharya, Badrinath, *Nepal Jan Kranti*, Kathmandu (n.d.)
Aryal, Vishnu Prasad, *Shahi Kadam Kin?* Kathmandu, 1961.

- Bahadur, Bir (ed.), *Nepalko Pukar*, Lucknow, 1954.
- Bahadur, Purna, *Panchayati Prajatantra*, Kathmandu (n.d.)
- Bahadur, Ram, *Nepalko Samvidhan*, Kathmandu, 1962.
- Bajrachaya, Dhanabajra and Nepali, *Gyanmani Aitihāsik Patra Sangraha*, Kathmandu, 1957.
- Bhandari, Dundiraj, *Nepalko Aitihāsik Vivechana*, Banaras, 1958.
- Bura, Harsha Bahadur, *Nepal ko Jananeta Dvetar K.I. Singh ko Samskshipta Jivani*, Gorakhpur (n.d.)
- Chemjong, Iman Singh, *Kirat Itihas*, Gangtok, 1952.
- Debesh, *Nepali Janakranti*, Lucknow, 1956.
- Devkote, G. B., *Nepal ko Rajnitik Darpan*, Kathmandu, 1959.
- Giri, H. P., *Panchayat Vyavastako Ruprekha*, Kathmandu, 1962.
- Giri, Surya Prakash, *Naya Nepal Digdarshan*, Bahraich, 1956.
- Giri, Tulsi, Bisht, Kirtinidhi, and Jha, Vedanand, *Panchayat*, Kathmandu, 1963.
- Himal, Laxman Bahadur, *Nepalko Samvidhan*, Biratnagar, 1960.
- Gaun Panchayat ke Ho?* Kathmandu, 1920.
- Nepalko Lagi Prajatantria Samajvadi Marg*, Kathmandu, 1967.
- Paushpanjali*, Kathmandu, 2024.
- Prashasan Shakti Vekendrikaranko Prativadan*, Kathmandu, 2020.
- Trivarshi Yojana Ke Ho?* Kathmandu, 2020.
- Yug Avahan*, Kathmandu, 2023.
- Itihas P. M., *Itihas Prakash* (3 Vols.), Kathmandu, 1955.
- Joshi, Harihar Raj, *Nepal Adhirajyako Samvidhanka Kehi Vishesh*, Kathmandu, 1958.
- Joshi, Ram Hari, *Nepalko Amar Sahid*, Patna, 1958.
- Nepalko November Kranti*, Patna, 1952.
- Kharidar, T., *Nepal Rashtra Sangthan Janamat*, Kathmandu, 1956.
- Karda, B. P., *Hamaro Anter-Rashtriya Niti*, Kathmandu, 1960.
- Nepal Vidyarthi Sangthan Kandriya Parishad ko Pratham Adhivashan*, Kathmandu, 2022.
- Nepali, Chitaranjan, *General Bhim Sen Thapa ra Tatkalin Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1956.
- Nepali, Ramraj, *Kranti ke Purba Nepal*, Banaras, 1951.
- Pasang, G., *Panchayat : Jivan Padhatiko Marg*, Kathmandu, 2024.
- Pramod Shamsher &c. (ed.), *Panchayat Parichaya*, Kathmandu, 2024.
- Poudyal, Anant, *Samanya Nagrikvadi Panchayat Darsan*, Kathmandu, 2021.

- Pramod Shamsheer, *Naya Bato*, Kathmandu, 2024.
Nepalma Panchayati Vyavastha, Kathmandu, 2021.
 Pushpa Lal, *Ten Varsh Yojanako—Ek Adhyayan*, Varanasi, 2020.
 Sapkota, Mahanand, *Sukhko Batora Nepal Karto Hunu Parcho*,
 Kathmandu, 1951.
 Sharma, B. C., *Nepalko Aitihāsik Ruprekha*, Banaras, 1957.
 Sharma, D., *Parliament re Sallahakar Sabha*, Kathmandu, 1959.
 Sharma, Lilaraj, *Sri Panch Maharajadhiraja re Sallahakar, Raj*,
 Kathmandu (n.d.)
 Shreshta, M. K., *Public Administration in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1965.
 Syapati, Lalit Jang, *Nepal ra Nepal Ka Raje*, Banaras, 1960.
 Srivastava, K.P., *Nepal ki Kahani*, Delhi, 1959.
 Tuladhar, Trithraj, *Sri Panch Mahendra ra Samkalen Nepal*,
 Kathmandu, 2023.
 Upadhyaya, Shyam Prasad, *Panchayatvad*, Kathmandu, 2024.
 Yemi, D. R., *Nepal Ko Kura*, Kathmandu, 1956.
 Yogi, Narharinath, *Gorkhaliharuko Sainik Itihas*, Kathmandu, 1954.
 Yogi, Narharinath, and Acharya Basuram, *Rashtrapita Sri Panch
 Bara Maharajadhiraja Prithvinarayan Shahko Diyopadesh*, Kath-
 mandu, 1953.

(c) *Works in Other Languages*

- A Himalayan Policy for India, Bombay, 1951.*
 Acharya, B., *Relation of Nepal to China and India*, Kathmandu (n.d.)
 Agrawal, S. K., *Rana Polity in Nepal (1846-1901)*, Delhi, 1967.
 Aitchison, C.U., *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements Sunnads Re-
 lating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. XIV. Calcutta,
 1929.
 Asad Husain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal
 (1857-1947)*, London, 1970.
 Bahadur, Poorna, *Foreigners Eyes and Attitude on Nepal*, Kathmandu,
 1959.
 —*Nepal Behind the Screen*, Kathmandu, 1957.
 Barreman, Gerald, *Hindus of the Himalayas*, California, 1963.
 Bhasin, A.S., *India, China and Nepal—Collection of Documents*, New
 Delhi, 1970.
 Bhattacharya, J.P., *India and Politics of Nepal*, Calcutta, 1970.
 Bishop, R.N.W. (ed.), *Unknown Nepal*, London, 1952.

- Bush, *The Administrative Reorganization of the Government of Nepal* (Type script), Kathmandu.
- Cammann, Schayler, *Trade Through the Himalayas—Early British Attempts to Open Tibet*, Princeton, 1951.
- Cavenogh, Orfeur, *Rough Notes on the State of Nepal, Its Government, Army and Resources*, Calcutta, 1851.
- Chaudhari, K.C., *Anglo-Nepalese Relations*, Calcutta, 1960.
- Chemjong, Iman Singh, *History and Culture of the Kirat People*, Kathmandu, 1967.
- Cunningham, J.E. (ed.), *Unknown Nepal, An Anthology*, London, 1955.
- David L. Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya*, Oxford, 1957.
- Dev, Maitra, *Our Ideal Monarch—King Mahendra*, Kathmandu, 1957.
- Dharam R., Tripitaka V., *Nepal Yatra* (Hindi), Lucknow, 1948.
- Digby, William, *1857, A Friend in Need: 1887 Friendship Forgotten, An Episode in Indian Foreign Office Administration*, London, 1890.
- Duncan, Forbes, *The Heart of Nepal*, London, 1962.
- Dusenberry, Horald L., *Six Years of Village Development in Nepal* (Type script), Kathmandu, 1958.
- Edwards, H.B. and Merivale, H., *Some Accounts of the Kingdom of Nepal, in Life of Sir Henery Lawrance*, London, 1873.
- Erika, Lecchtag, *With a King in the Clouds*, London, 1958.
- Ferdinand E. Okada, *Area Evaluation Report—Rapti Valley and Bara Parsa*, Washington, 1960.
- Fisher Margarel W. and Bondurant, Joan V., *Indian Views of Sino-Indian Relations*, Berkeley, 1956.
- Furer-Haimendorf, Chrostoph Von, *The Sherpas of Nepal, Buddhist Highlanders*, Berkeley, 1964.
- Gibbs, H.P.K., *The Gorkha Soldier*, Calcutta, 1947.
- Gimlette, G.H.D., *Nepal and the Nepalese*, London, 1928.
- Ginseppe, Tucci, *The Discovery of the Malla*, London, 1962.
- Goyal, Narendra, *The King and the Constitution*, New Delhi, 1959.
- Gupta, Anirudha, *Politics in Nepal—A Study of Post-Rana Political Development and Party Politics*, Bombay, 1964.
- Hagen, Toni, Wahlen, F. T. and Corti, W. R., *Nepal, the Kingdom in the Himalayas*, 1961.
- Hagen, Toni *Nepal*, Berne, 1961.
- Observation on Certain Aspects of Economic and Social Development Problem in Nepal*, 1959.

- Harris, George L., et. al. *U.S. Army Areas Handbook for Nepal (With Sikkim and Bhutan)*, Washington, 1964.
- His Majesty's Government Chart of Zonal, District Administration, Panchayat, Population and Area* (cyclostyled), Kathmandu.
- Hitchcock, John, *The Megars of Banyan Hill*, New York, 1965.
- Hongson, B.H., *Essays the First: On the Kooch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes*, Calcutta, 1847.
- Essay on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, London, 1874.
- Hunter, R., *Military Sketches of the Gorkha War in India in the Year 1814, 1815 and 1816*, London, 1822.
- Industrial Corporation: An Introduction*, Kathmandu, 1960.
- Jain, Giri Lal, *India Meets China in Nepal*, Bombay, 1959.
- Jeenes, Stanley, *Land of the Sherpas*, London, 1962.
- Jennifer Boundillon and Victor Coverley Price, *The Sherpas of Nepal*, London, 1958.
- Johnson, J. John (ed.), *Role of Military in Underdeveloped Countries*, Princeton, 1962.
- Joshi, B.L. and Rose, Leo E., *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, Berkeley, 1966.
- Joshi, Hora Prasad, *The Way to Political Stability—An Analysis*, Kathmandu, 1958,
- Karan, Pradyuman P. and Jenkins, William H., *The Himalayan Kingdom—Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal*, Princeton, 1963.
- Kaphley, I.P., *Fundamental Basis of Panchayat Democracy*, Kathmandu, 1967.
- Khanal, Y., *Reflections on Nepal-India Relations*, New Delhi, 1967.
- Kirkpatrick, W. *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, London, 1811.
- Krishnamurti, Y.G., *His Majesty King Mahendra, Bir Bikram Shah Deva: An Analytical Biography*, Bombay, 1965.
- Political Ideology of King Mahendra*, Delhi, 1967.
- Lamb, Alastair, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia, the Road to Lhasa, 1767 to 1905*, Edinburgh, 1960.
- London, Percival, *Nepal* (2 Vols.), London, 1929.
- Lehani, V. P., *On the Rising Generation of Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1960.
- Levi, Sylvain, *Le Nepal* (3 Vols.), Paris, 1905-8 (typewritten translation in English, ICWA Library, New Delhi, 2 Vols.)
- Leo E. Rose and Margaret W. Fisher, *The Politics of Nepal*, New York, 1970.

- Lohia, Rammanohar, *Himalayan Policy for India*, Bombay, 1951.
 — *India, China and Northern Frontiers*, Hyderabad, 1963.
- Malhotra, Ramchand, *Government Economic Policy for Nepal: A Case Study of an Underdeveloped Country*, Syracuse, New York, 1954.
- Manab, P. B., *King Mahendra's Active Non-Alignment*, Kathmandu, 1963.
 — *King Mahendra's Bold Step*, Kathmandu, 1963.
 — *Humanized Socialism*, Kathmandu, 1963.
- Mihaly, Eugene Bramer, *Foreign Aid and Politics in Nepal—A Case Study*, London, 1965.
- Narayan, Shriman, *India and Nepal—An Exercise in an open Diplomacy*, Bombay, 1970.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches* (September 1945-April 1961), Delhi, 1961.
Nepal and the Gorkhas, London, 1965.
- Nepali, Gopal Singh, *The Newars: an Ethno-Sociological Study of a Himalayan Community*, Bombay, 1965.
- Norman Hardie, *In Highest Nepal*, London, 1957.
- Northey W. Brook, *The Land of the Gorkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, Cambridge, 1937.
- Ojha, Jagdish Chand, *Modern Banking and Currency in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1961.
- Oldfield, Henery Ambrose. *Sketches from Nepal* (2 Vols.), London, 1880.
- Painyuli, P. P., *Nepal Ka Punarjagaran* (Hindi), New Delhi, 1955.
- Pant, Y. P., *Nepal's Economic Development on an International Basis*, Kathmandu, 1956.
 — *Planning For Prosperity in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1957.
 — *Economic Development of Nepal*, Allahabad, 1965.
- Pasang Goparma, Pranod Shamsher, etc. (ed.). *Panchayat Democracy*, Kathmandu, 2024.
- Pashupati Shamsher, *A Study of Report of the Pattern of Emerging Leadership in Panchayat: With Special Reference to District and Village Panchayats of Mechi, Kosi and Sagarmatha Zones*, Kathmandu, 1967.
- Pathak, S. R., *Facts of Nepalese Economics*, Kathmandu, 1961.
- Petch, Luciano, *Medieval History of Nepal (C. 750-1480)*, Rome, 1958.
- Politicus (Pseudo), *Inside Story of Nepal*, New Delhi (n.d.)

- Pradhan, Bishwa, *Panchayat Democracy in Nepal*, New Delhi, 1963.
 — *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy*, New Delhi, 1964.
- Rana, Pudma Jung Bahadur, *Life of Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal*, Allahabad, 1909.
- Regmi, D.R., *A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal*, Banaras, 1950.
 — *Ancient and Medieval Nepal*, Calcutta, 1961.
 — *Modern Nepal*, Calcutta, 1961.
 — *Whither Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1952.
- Regmi, M. C., *Industrial Potential of Nepal* (Type script), Kathmandu (n.d.)
 — *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, Berkeley, 1963.
 — *Recent Land Legislation in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1962.
 — *Some Aspects of Land Reform in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1960.
- Rose Saul, *Socialism in Southern Asia*, London, 1959.
- Sanwal, Bhairava Dat, *Nepal and the East Indian Company*, New York, 1965.
- Scalapino, Robert, A., *The Communist Revolution in Asia*, New York, 1965.
- Sekelj, Tibor, *Window on Nepal*, London, 1959.
- Shakya, Narendra Bahadur, *Our Indigenous Path*, Kathmandu, 1966.
- Shaha, R.K., *Heroes and Builders of Nepal*, London, 1965.
 — *Nepal and the World*, Kathmandu, 1955.
- Sharma, Jitendra Raj, *Nepal-India Relations*, Kathmandu, 1963.
- Sharma, Kulshekhar, *Talk on the Constitution of Nepal* (Type script), Kathmandu, 1959.
- Sharma, Laxmi Kant, *Nepal Vidroho Ki Kahani* (Hindi), New Delhi, 1951.
- Sharma, Ramvaran, *Unis So Pachas Ki Kranti Aur Dr. K. I. Singh* (Hindi), Patna, 1955.
- Shastri, S. C., *Freedom Loving Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1957.
- Shrestha, Badri Prasad, *An Introduction to Nepalese Economy*, Kathmandu, 1962,
- Shrestha, M. K., *Public Administration in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1965.
- Singh, N. M., *Nepal First Five Year Plan: A Criticism*, Kathmandu, 1957.
- Sinha, B. K., *Co-operative Development in Nepal*, Allahabad, 1965.
Six Years of Educational Progress in Nepal, Oregon, 1959.

- Snellgrove, D. L., *Buddhism in Nepal in Buddhist Himalayas, Travels and Studies in the Quest of the Origins and Nature of Tibetan Religion*, Oxford, 1957.
- Srivastava, K. P., *Nepal Ki Kahani* (Hindi), Delhi, 1955.
- Thapa, N. B., *A Short History of Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1962.
- The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*, New Delhi, 1959.
- The Citizen King*, New Delhi, 1959.
- The Developing Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1967.
- Thweatt, William O., *The Concept and the Growth Equation With Emphasis On the Role of Capital in Nepal Economic Development*, Bombay, 1961.
- Tilaman, H.W., *Nepal Himalaya*, Cambridge, 1952.
- Trivedi, Upendra, *Nepali Jana-Neta Doctor K. I. Singh Ka Sam-skshipta Parichaya* (Hindi), Lucknow (n.d.)
- Tuladhar, Sugatadass, *Deliberations on Nepal's Five Year Plan*, Kathmandu, 1957.
- Tuladhar, Tirtharaj R., *Constitution of Nepal*, Kathmandu (n.d.)
- Tuker, F., *Gorkha: The Story of the Gorkhas of Nepal*, London, 1957.
—*While Memory Serves*, London, 1950.
- Upadhyaya, Devendra Raj, *A Glimpse of Nepal Under Rana Tyranny*, Calcutta, 1948.
- Upadhyaya, Ramji, *Nepal Ka Itihas Athava Digdarshan* (Hindi), Banaras, 1950.
- Way Farer (Pseudo), *Nepal Today*, New Delhi, 1950.
- Wheeler, James Talboys, *Diary of Events in Nepal (1841-46)* Calcutta, 1878.
- Wood, Hugh Bernard, *Education Planning in Nepal and Its Economic Implementation*, Kathmandu, 1962.
—*The Development of Education in Nepal*, Washington, 1965.
- Wright, Daniel, *History of Nepal*, Calcutta, 1958.
- Yemi, D.R., *The Study of Critical Situation in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1958.

Newspapers and Journals

Alok, (W); *Arpan*, (W); *Arthika Sarvekshana*, (Y); *Asiali Awaz*, (W); *Audhyogika Jagat*, (F); *Baidehi*, (W); *Bimarsha*, (W); *Bishwadut*, (W); *Charcha*, (W); *Chetana*, (W); *Commoner*, (D); *Dainik Narnya*, Pokhra, (D); *Dainik Nepal*, (D); *Desh Sewa*, (D);

Diyalo, (D); *Everest*, (W); *Filingo*, (D); *Gatividhi*, (W); *Glimpse*, (D); *Goreto*, (W); *Gorkhapatra*, (D); *Halkhabar*, (D); *Hamro Desh*, (D); *Himadut*, (W); *Himalchuli*, Biratnagar, (M); *Himali Bela*, (D); *Himali Hulak*, (W); *Jagran*, (W); *Jan Akanksha*, Janakpurdham, (W); *Jan Awaz*, (W); *Janchatana*, (M); *Jandut* (D); *Jan Jagriti*, (W); *Jan Jivan*, (D); *Janmabhumi*, (W); *Janvarta*, (D); *Jhyali*, (W); *Journal of the Tribhuvan University*, (H) English; *Jyoti*, (W); *Kalpana*, (D); *Karmvir*, (W); *Khasokhas*, (W); *Kishan*, (W); *Koshi*, (W); *Lokvarta*, (D); *Lumbini Sandesh*, Butwal, (W); *Mashal*, (W); *Matribhumi*, (W); *Motherland*, (D) English; *Mukti*, (W); *Navin Khabar*, (D); *Naya Kiran*, (W); *Nayamood*, (M); *Naya Nepal*, (D); *Naya Pailo*, Janakpurdham, (W); *Naya Samaj*, (D); *Naya Samaj*, (W); *Naya Sandesh*, (W); *Nayayug*, (W); *Nepal Bhasha Patrika*, (D); *Newari*; *Nepal Gazette*, (Bi-W); *Nepali* (D) Hindi; *Nepal Kanoon Patrika*, (M); *Nepal News*, (W); *Nepal Perspective*, (W) English; *Nepal Press Digest*, (W) English; *Nepal Samachar*, (D); *Nepal Times*, (D) English; *New Herald*, (D) English; *Panchayat Patrika*, (M); *Pragati*, (F); *Prakash*, (W); *Pratidhwani*, (W); *Pratignya*, (W); *Pravartak*, (W); *Ramjhum*, (M); *Rashtriya Pukar*, (W); *Rashtravani*, (W); *Rising Nepal*, (D) English; *Royal Nepal Economist*, (M) English; *Sagarmatha Times*, (W); *Sahi Awaz*, (D); *Sahibato*, (D); *Samaj*, (D); *Samaya*, (W); *Samiksha*, (W); *Samyukta Prayas*, (W); *Saptahik Samachar*, (W); *Sharda* (M); *Suryodaya*, (W); *Swatantra Samachar*, (D); *Tarka*, (W); *Vasudha*, (M), English; *Vidhyarathi Sandesh*, (F); *Vyapar Patrika*, Nepali; *Himalayan Guardian*, New Delhi, (W) English; *Himalayan Sentinel*, Patna, (W) English; *Nepal Sandesh*, Patna, (W) Hindi; *Nepal To-day*, Calcutta, (F) English; *Udai*, Varanasi, (M);

Unless otherwise stated the Newspapers and Journals mentioned are published from Kathmandu in Nepali language.

The following abbreviations have been used:

D=Daily W=Weekly F=Fortnightly M=Monthly H=Half-Yearly
Y=Yearly.

Index

- Acharya, Babu Ram, 20
Acharya, Tanka Prasad, 70,
82, 85-90, 96, 100, 124-25,
155, 169, 188, 290, 293, 303
All India Nepalese Congress, 24
Anti-Corruption Act, 174
—amendment of, 25
Arya Samaj movement, 17-9
Bahadur Shah, 13, 14
Bhim Sen Thapa, 11, 13-4
Bir Shamsheer, 15
Birta system, 10, 48, 52, 56,
127, 136, 157
—abolition of, 118
—impact of, 121
Bishta, K. N., 225, 227, 275
British India, 2, 9, 18, 21, 23
Ceylon, 86, 234
—expenditure on defence
and its comparison with
Nepal, 234-35
Chandan Singh, 23
Chandra Shamsheer, 7, 15, 19-27
—expansion of education, 16
—institutionalization of the
line of succession, 27
China, 28, 86, 88, 90, 124-30,
135, 152, 155, 176, 189-90,
227, 240, 278, 296, 298-99
—agreement over Tibet, 16
—agreement for linking
Kathmandu with Lhasa, 176
Civil Service Act, 196
Communist Party, 29-30, 58-9,
69, 87, 98-102, 121-25, 127,
133, 160-61, 168-70, 180-81,
291, 296-300, 303-05
—birth of, 29
—ban on, 59
—removal of, 87
—criticism of Indian policy,
124
—criticism of K. I. Singh's
government, 91
—criticism of parliamentary
government, 122-25
—demand for general elec-
tion and its acceptance for
parliament, 97-8
—election campaign, 100
—position in the election, 101
—Panchayat democracy and
party's activities, 296-300
Constitution introduced by
Ranas, 25-6
—interim, 49-50:
—parliamentary, 110-14
—panchayat, 201-19
Damodar Pande, 12-3
Dayanand Saraswati, 19
Dashrath Chandra, 21-2
Delhi Agreement, 33-6, 42-4,
48
—terms of, 33
—impact, 34-6
Dev Shamsheer, 16

- Dharambhakta, 22
 Dharnidhar, 20
 Dhir Shamsher, 15
 Elections
 —announcement for holding election, 97
 —campaign by political parties, 100, 161
 —movement for holding elections, 94-7
 —results, 101
 Election Commission, institution of, 101
 Executive Arrangement during the Extra-Ordinary Situation Act, 171
 Five Year Plans, 87, 237, 255-58, 282-83
 Ganeshman Singh, 22, 31, 45, 135
 Ganga Lal, 20, 22
 Girvan Juddha Bikram Shah, 13
Gorkhali, 23
 Gorkha Parishad, 58, 64, 82, 98-9, 102, 121, 124-25, 130, 134, 160, 162, 168-70, 187
 —birth of, 58
 —criticism of elected government, 124-26, 130
 —criticism of royal regime, 64-5
 —election manifesto, 100
 —opposition and support to King's action against parliamentary system, 168-69.
Gorkhapatra, 16
Gorkha Pracharni, 16
Gorkha Sansar, 23
 Gyan Dil Dass, 7
Hinduism, 5-8.
 Hiraniya Shamsher, 27
 India, 17-24, 28, 31-3, 35-6, 44, 51-2, 68-9, 86, 100, 124-30, 133, 135, 152, 155, 167-68, 172, 178, 187, 189, 226, 239-40, 296-300
 —impact of Indian national movement on Nepalese politics, 18-9
 —initiated proposals for political settlement, 33
 —King's removal of parliamentary government criticized, 167-68
 —Nepal Communist Party attitude towards India, 297-300
 —warning against interference in internal affairs, 187
 Inspection Committee, 174
 Interim Government of Nepal Act, 49, 62, 67, 88, 97
 Interim Government, 42-3
 —attitude of political parties and vested interests, 43-8
 —new arrangements, 50-1
 —revolt against, 50
 Jang Bahadur, 8, 11, 13-7
Janta, 21
 Japan, 86
 Jayaprakash Narayan, 23, 29, 58
 Jhagira System, 175
 Joshi, Madhav Raj, 19-20
 Juddha Shamsher, 7, 20
 Karmvir Mahamandal, 88, 91, 130, 134
 Kedar Man, 20
 Kiriti movement, 58
 Kishan Lal, 21
 Koirala, B.P., 23-4, 29-31, 48,

- 50, 53-9, 61, 63, 65-7, 82, 88, 90-1, 93, 115, 125, 129-30, 135, 137, 146, 154-55, 157, 161, 171, 299
- attitude towards Crown, 115
 - criticism of direct rule of monarch, 82, 91
 - differences with colleagues, 135
 - detention, 146
 - on Nepal-China friendship, 129
 - on parliamentary constitution, 155
- Koirala, M. P., 30-1, 35, 44-5, 54-7, 59-8, 70, 79, 82, 90, 135, 157, 290
- leader of the revolution, 31
 - disillusionment with Delhi Agreement, 35, 44
 - criticism of the role of intellectual in revolution, 45
 - appointment as Prime Minister, 54, 63
 - dispute with party leaders, 56, 59
 - expulsion from the party, 60
 - resignation from the government, 71
- Kunwar Inderjeet Singh, 51, 58-9, 90-5, 100, 115, 130, 155
- contempt against Nepali Congress, formation of government and the adoption of domestic and foreign policy, 90-2
- Labour Act, 175
- Lakhan Thapa II, 7
- Lekhnath, 20
- Lohia, Ram Manohar, 23, 29
- Mahendra (King), contempt against democratic institutions, 79-80
- direct rule, 79-84
 - basis of monarchy strengthened, 81
 - convening of political and social organizations conference, 83
 - direct contact with the people, 80
 - reforms introduced, 80
 - failure of the administration, 81-2
 - indirect control of power, 85-97
 - appointment of Acharya, T.P. as Prime Minister, 85
 - appointment of K. I. Singh as Prime Minister, 90
 - dismissal of K. I. Singh, 95
 - King *versus* parliamentary system, 97-146
 - granting of election for parliament, 97
 - attitude towards the elected party, 115
 - criticism of the working of government, 131-32
 - charges against the parliamentary government, 147-50
 - charges against the parliamentary system, 150-51.
 - parliamentary system scrapped, 147
 - personal rule imposed, 171-189

- adoption of repressive measures, 178
- introduction of administrative reforms, 173-76
- economic reforms, 176-77
- impact of, 177-78
- power and position under
 - Panchayat Democracy, 211-18
 - control over various panchayat institutions, 223
 - Rashtriya Panchayat, 223-28
 - bureaucracy, 228-29
 - army and police, 229-30
- Mao Tse-tung, 298-99, 304
- Mathabar Singh, 13
- Mohan Shamsher, 27, 29, 31-3, 48, 53
- Mukti Sena, 32-3, 51
- Naga Bhagwandas, 19-20
- Narayan, Jayaprakash, 23, 29
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, 28, 167, 172, 189
- Nepal-British India, 2, 9, 18, 21, 23,
- Nepal-China, aid agreement, 86, 119, 128
 - border agreement, 128
 - construction of canals, 257
 - construction of Kathmandu-Lhasa road, 176
 - construction of leather factory, 257
 - construction of warehouses, 257
 - importing of goods, 176
 - reaction on Chinese claim over Mt. Everest, 129
- violation of border agreements, 129
- Nepal-India, Gandak project, 119, 125, 129-30, 133
 - identity of interests, 129
 - opposition to the scrapping of parliamentary system, 167
 - reaction of India's assurance over violation of Nepalese border, 128
 - Sinauli-Pokhra road, 258
 - telecommunication link, 258
 - trade treaty, revision of, 119-20, 129
 - Trisuli project, 256
- Nepal-USSR, agreement for sugar, cigarette factory and a hydro-electric plant, 119
 - importing of Soviet goods, 176
 - inauguration of factories, 256
- Nepal-USA, 32, 33, 59, 100, 229, 300
- Nepalese society, its socio-economic and geo-political structure. 3-15
- Nepalese nobility, 12
- Nepali Congress, birth of, 30
 - coalition government, formation of, 48,
 - resignation from the government, 53
 - formation of new government, 54
 - besetting of rivalry in the ministerial rank, 56

- failures of the government, 58
- intra-party differences, 57-8
- policy pursued, 55-7
- rebellion in the party, 59-60
- resignation from the government; in opposition, agitation for the restoration of power of High Court, 69
- criticism of direct rule of King Mahendra, 92
- criticism of King's choice of appointing K.I. Singh as Prime Minister, 92
- election campaign, 100
- formation of Democratic Front, 94
- formulation of party's objectives and programmes, 92-3
- launching of movement for holding elections, 95
- parliamentary election accepted, 98
- position in the election, 101
- in power, formation of government and prevailing domestic milieu, 115-16
- formulations of policies, 117-20
- rift in the party, 134-37
- scrapping of the government, 138
- Nepali Nagarik Adhikar Samiti, 20
- Padma Shamsher, 16, 25, 27
- Pahariyas, 4
- Pakistan, 170-176
- Panchayat Democracy, adoption of, 169
 - postulations of, 195-201
 - elections, corrupt practices, 242
 - government interference, 242
 - undemocratic practices, 241
 - use of terror and intimidation, 243
 - King's control over various panchayat institutions, 223-30
 - leadership pattern, at village level, 244-46
 - at district level, 246-50
 - motives behind the introduction of Panchayat Democracy, 218-19
 - structural pattern, village panchayat, 201-05
 - district panchayat, 205-08
 - anchal panchayat, 208-10
 - Rashtriya Panchayat, 211-18
 - working of Panchayat Democracy, at local level—government apathy, 272
 - government dominance, 273-74
 - rise of casteism, groupism and vested interests, 268-71
 - at national level, administrative conditions, 279-82
 - economic conditions, 282-89
 - government and opposi-

- tion, 276-77
- government and Press, 277-78
- Rashtriya Panchayat, 274-75
- reforms introduced—agricultural, 259-61
- bureaucratic, 250-55
- economic, 255-59
- rise of vested groups—army, 232-35
- bureaucracy, 230-32
- business community, 235-37
- peasantry, 237-38
- struggle for reforms in panchayat democracy, 291-300
- steps to strengthen the system, 300-08
- Parliamentary government, attitude of King, 115
- attitude of opposition, 116
- attitude of people, 116
- constitution of, 109-15
- convening of, 109
- introduction of reforms administrative, 117
- economic, 118
- their impact, 120-22
- King's criticism of parliamentary government, 131-32
- opposition at work, 122-26
- their charges and assessment, 127-30
- outbreak of lawlessness, 133-34
- steps to curb them, 158
- scrapping of system and government, 146
- charges for their scrapping, 147-51
- assessment of charges, 151-58
- launching of movement for its restoration, 168, 170, 177-78
- suspension of movement, 189-90
- Political heritage, 11-5
- Prachanda Gorkha, 45
- Pradhan Nyayalaya, 26, 50, 67, 69, 80, 86-7, 97
- Pratap Shah, 12-3
- Praja Panchayat, 29-30, 45
- Praja Parishad, 21-2, 45, 47, 66-8, 82, 84-6, 88-9, 115, 122, 181
- birth and objectives, 21-2
- criticism of Koirala, M.P. government, 67
- criticism of royal regime, 82
- formation of government, 85
- policies pursued, 86-7
- their failures, 87
- resignation from the government, 89
- support to monarchy, 88
- Press arrest of editors, 184, 277-78; ban on *Blitz*, 278
- Chetana*, 278
- Dainik Nepal*, 277-78
- Goreto*, 278
- Halkhabar*, 184
- Jan Akansha*, 278

- Kalpana*, 183
- Lumbini*, 278
- Mazdoor*, 278
- Motherland*, 278
- Naya Sandesh*, 277
- Nepal*, 183
- Nepal Times*, 278
- Nirnaya*, 277-78
- Philingo*, 183
- Pratidhwani*, 278
- Samaj*, 184
- Samaya*, 278
- Samiksha*, 183, 278
- Swatantra Samachar*, 184, 277
- expulsion of foreign journalists, 184
- formation of Rashtriya Sambad Samiti, 184
- Press and Publication Act, 57
- Screening of newspapers, 182-83
- warning to Press, 182
- Prithvinarayan Shah, 9, 11-3
- Public Service Commission, 50, 52, 55, 57, 60, 87, 92, 99, 117, 125-26, 281
- Raja Lal, 20
- Raksha Dal, 58-9
- Ranas, basis of rule, 2
 - economic, social and political conditions, 9-10
 - power and position of Rana Prime Minister, 11
 - reforms introduced, 15-7
 - rise to power, 14
- Ran Bahadur, 12-4
- Ranoddip, 14-5
- Ram Hari Sharma, 21-2
- Rashtriya Prajatantrik Party, 63, 65-6
- Regmi, D.R., 23, 55, 61, 157
- Revolution, beginning of, 32-33
 - causes, 17
 - Delhi Agreement, 33
 - impact of agreement, 34-6
- Sajha*, 176-77
- Sati*, abolition of, 16
- Security Act, 178
- Shah, R.K., 169, 171, 226-27, 277, 290
- Slavery, abolition of, 16
- Special Courts, 174
- Special Emergency Power Act, 62
- Special Police Organization, 178
- Special Situation Act, 178
- Subba Devi Prasad, 24
- Subvarna Shamsher, 27-8, 31, 56, 66, 119-20, 135, 157, 168, 170, 178, 189, 297
- Sukraj Shastri, 7, 20, 22
- Surya Bikram Gyavli, 20
- Tarun Gorkha, 23
- Terai Congress, 61, 94, 101
- Thapa, S.B., 171, 225, 276, 290, 299
- Thapa, V.B., 135, 169, 171-72, 182, 225, 290
- Tibet, 4, 7, 28, 59, 86, 127, 296
- Tour Commission, 175
- Tribhuvan (King), 22, 31-3, 42, 44, 47, 53-4, 59-64, 69, 71, 82, 90, 185
- Tulsi Giri, 155, 169, 171, 226-27, 290
- Tulsi Meher, 19

- Udai Raj Lal, 19-20
- United Democratic Party, birth of, 90
- election manifesto, 100
 - its position, 101
 - allegation against the fairness of elections, 116
 - formation of government, 90
 - policies pursued, 91-2
 - opposition to government, 92-4
- dismissal of the government, 95
 - criticism of parliamentary government, 116
 - support of King's action against parliamentary government and system, 169
- Upadhyaya, S.P., 23, 45, 50, 52, 56, 66, 99, 120, 123, 135, 157
- Vir Gorkha Dal, 50-1

