

NEPAL

IN
PERSPECTIVE



EDITED BY
Pashupati Shumshere
J. B. Rana
and
Kamal P. Malla

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NEPAL

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**The editors dedicate their book to the young
and development-oriented
monarch of Nepal**

H.M. KING BIRENDRA BIR BIKRAM SHAH DEV

**in whom we place our hopes for the radical
transformation of Nepal which the
perspective of this book
envisions as essential
to the future of the Nepalese people.**

P R E F A C E

This book began as an informal proposition to collaborate between its two editors. Prior to autumn 1969 what little we knew of each other—which was not very much—was through our writings. In autumn 1969 the Centre for Economic Development and Administration began to function with Pashupati Shumshere J.B. Rana as its Executive Director. As the Centre was temporarily housed on the first floor of Tribhuvan University Library, Kirtipur, we saw each other frequently and discussed our work. In the congenial atmosphere of the University Library we soon found that we were both interested in writing a book on Nepal. We agreed to collaborate and by agreeing to collaborate we thought we had solved all the problems of writing a book on Nepal. Although we were soon to find out that books do not get written just by agreeing to write them, we had already made a beginning by the proposition to collaborate, and collaboration remains the most important single feature of this book.

We found Nepal an unwieldy theme for a book unless we defined our area of enquiry. We, therefore, agreed to break up the idea of “a book on Nepal” into a number of fields—each specifying one aspect of the common theme. Thus, sooner or later, we were to arrive at the classic formula of intellectual collaboration: a symposium. Once we had decided upon the idea of a symposium, we began to invite contributions. We laid down no rules for the contributions except that each should be on the area specified and that each essay should give a sense of perspective on the field. Most of the essays in this book were originally written for us; others were selected from among the published literature on the field. As a consequence, the ideas and opinions expressed are very much the individual writer’s. It seems otiose to state

PREFACE

that we do not necessarily agree with each and every idea stated in the individual essays dealing with such wide and diverse subjects. The contributors to this symposium need no introduction. Each of them has worked for long in his field. In fact, some of them, like Rishikesh Shah or Y.P. Pant, have been actively associated with the process of decision-making in the field they have chosen to write about; while others, like Dor Bahadur Bista, Mahesh C. Regmi, and Harka Gurung, have worked intensively and published extensively on their areas of interest. Some of our contributors, like Surya Bikram Gewali and Y.N. Khanal, are venerable father figures of historical and literary studies in Nepali. The works of P. R. Sharma, Ratna Rana and Prakash C. Lohani have been hailed for their promise, their grip over the problems and, above all, for their lucidity of treatment.

This book conceived in CEDA premisses, owes much to CEDA's institutional guardianship. Many of the contributors are closely associated with CEDA and much of the community of ideas, to the degree it exists was forged in discussions, seminars and even conversations in CEDA. Above all the mechanics of production have been handled by CEDA staff members. In particular we acknowledge with thanks the efforts of Bharat Gyawali, CEDA Documentation Officer, Aishwarya M. Shrestha, Private Secretary to the CEDA Director, and Mrs. Barbara Eaton for their assistance in manuscript preparation and supervision of press work. Thus it is appropriate that CEDA should acknowledge ownership by publishing this book.

In trying to cover several fields of Nepalese life, we are not trying to compete with the tourist guides—official or unofficial; in trying to have the specialist's view of the area, we are not appealing to the specialized audience either. The book, if there ever was any need for such a book, deserves a hearing because it presents a perspective on Nepal not easily available elsewhere. The justification for yet another book on Nepal is that this is not just another book on Nepal. Books on Nepal are not so scarce, and they are now published not so few and far between as they used to be. However, the market situation of the books on Nepal has remained a closed one. The books are either of a popular nature (e.g., travel books) or for specialists (e.g., doctoral theses); they are either by foreigner-tourists or by foreign-experts; they are either in Nepali or in English. They are, in brief, either bedside books or acres of specialized studies.

PREFACE

When one comes to think of it, there has never been an informed presentation of the Nepalese point of view on several aspects of Nepal's heritage and problems—a presentation which is accessible both in terms of its readability and standard of treatment. The world, of course, is curious: what do Nepal's own experts and authorities think of their land, their people, history, culture, their languages and literature, and above all of the numerous challenges they face as a young nation? The contributors to this book are concerned, each in his own way, with the problem of defining the nation's heritage and problems. One of the central themes of the book is the definition of Nepal's identity. Another dominant theme is the problems that are the hurdles in Nepal's chosen path of modernisation. Finally, one persistent strain that underlies almost all the essays is the influence of her idiosyncratic geography on almost all aspects of her personality and problems. Each contributor to this book provides an insight and perspective of his own on the chosen field so that the total picture that emerges is a stereoscopic view of Nepal.

Kathmandu
June 15, 1973

Editors

CONTENTS

<i>PREFACE</i>		Vii
CHAPTER 1	Introduction	1
	<i>Kamal P. Malla</i>	
	<i>Pashupati Shumshere J.B. Rana</i>	
2	The Land	25
	<i>Dr. Harka Gurung</i>	
3	The People	35
	<i>Dor Bahadur Bista</i>	
4	Political History	47
	<i>Surya Bikram Gewali</i>	
5	Culture and Religion	65
	<i>Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma</i>	
6	Art and Architecture	79
	<i>Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma</i>	
7	Language	101
	<i>Kamal P. Malla</i>	
8	Literature	119
	<i>Yadu Nath Khanal</i>	
9	Political Institutions since 1951	139
	<i>Dr. Prachanda Pradhan</i>	
10	Planning and Development	167
	<i>Dr. Yadav Prasad Pant</i>	
11	Land Tenure	181
	<i>Mahesh Chandra Regmi</i>	
12	Agriculture	191
	<i>Dr. Ratna Shumshere J. B. Rana</i>	
13	Industrial Policy	203
	<i>Dr. Prakash C. Lohani</i>	

14 Trade	219
<i>Pashupati Shumshere J. B. Rana</i>	
15 Foreign Policy	241
<i>Rishikesh Shaha</i>	
16 The Intellectual in Nepalese Society	263
<i>Kamal P. Malla</i>	
APPENDIXES	
A. Country Data	293
B. Nepal's Periodic Plans	297
CONTRIBUTORS	299
INDEX	305

MAPS

Orientation Map

Planning Regions and Districts

TABLES

Page

The Census Data on the Languages	117
Election Results of 1959	145
Ministers' Representation	156
Yield Trends of Various Crops	194
Index of Physical output of Various Crops	195
Index of Agricultural Production	196
Performance of the Industrial Sector	208
Foreign Trade	238
Foreign Aid	254
Country Data	293
Periodic Plans	297

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

Nepal in Perspective: An Introduction

—Kamal P. Malla
—Pashupati Shumshere J. B. Rana

I

Of the several questions that this book looks at closely, one is: what does being a Nepali mean? How does it differ from being, say, a Sikkimese or a Tibetan or an Indian? The question or questions involve a definition of the nation's heritage and identity—an identity which has to be, if it is not just a superficial one of political boundaries, at once geographical, ethnic, historic, and cultural. If geography is the most visible form of this identity, with the people forming a composite exponent, the least visible form of this identity is their culture. In the sense of the values a people live by, culture is the least explicit perspective on a people; this is very true of the Nepalese who have been an ethnic and cultural melting pot in Asia. One superordinate theme of the book, taken up severally by Harka Gurung, Dor Bahadur Bista, Surya Bikram Gewali, P. R. Sharma, Y. N. Khanal and Kamal P. Malla, is this land of confluence of peoples, languages, cultures and religions. The topography of Nepal with its rugged relief and a wide variety of terrain has served as a physical setting for its people who “deify the imposing mountains that divide them and sanctify the fertile rivers that unite them.” The encounter of the aboriginal peoples of the Nepal Himalayas with these imposing mountains and sacred rivers as well as with one another was the beginning of it all. This dramatically beautiful land soon became a meeting ground for different races and cultures. It attracted and sheltered waves on

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

waves of migration from all directions. Nepal's ethnography and history tell us of the vicissitudes of this encounter; the culture and heritage of Nepal is a resumé of all the positive achievements of this encounter.

Geographically, Nepal is as much a part of the Indian sub-continent as Kashmir. The fact that it stayed politically independent is due to the action of man rather than the effect of nature. In mid-eighteenth century, when British power was expanding in the sub-continent, the Gorkhalis began to extend the territories of Nepal both in the east as well as on the west. It was due to emergence of this powerful military state in the difficult mountainous and forested terrain of Nepal that the British could not absorb the Himalayan Kingdom into its network of "princely states," and then, under the doctrine of lapse, into British India. If the rise and fall of empires and dynasties, of invaders and conquerors in the plains left Nepal comparatively unaffected it was partly because of its geography, its comparative seclusion and frustrating terrain. Thus, although Nepal remains on the geographic periphery of India, whenever the sub-continental tumult reached Nepal, it reached only as ripples on the shore.

Nepal owes its present political identity as a nation-state to Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723-1775) who forged a unified kingdom out of scores of warring city-states and principalities. As a unified kingdom Nepal is an offspring of a series of military campaigns by the Khas Kshyatriyas, Thakuris and Brahmins—all under the leadership of the Shah Kings of the House of Gorkha. These Kshyatriyas, Thakuris, and Brahmins were mostly Hindu immigrants from the Indian plains who came to the mountains, seeking respite from the Muslim persecution after the Battle of Tarain in A.D. 1192. The so-called 'Baisi' and 'Chaubisi'—of which Gorkha was one—were small kingdoms that these southern immigrants had carved out for themselves from the Himalayas. Much earlier than their arrival there were also the Khasas living in the western hills of Nepal. They were probably a minor branch of Indo-Aryan migration from the north-west, and because of their social contact with the Mongoloid peoples they were considered "fallen" or impure by the Aryans in the Plains. Before their arrival these parts of the Nepal Himalayas were inhabited by the Mongoloid peoples. However, the point is that as the builders of modern Nepal, the Gorkhali power had not one but three distinct social strands to it: 1. the Brahmin-Thakuri-Chhetri or Kshyatriya axis; 2. the Khasas who include a number of mixed offspring

INTRODUCTION

of the above and also such occupational castes as Kami, Damai, Sarki; and; 3. the Mongoloid peoples of the western Nepal Himalayas, mainly the Magars and Gurungs—some of whom are recent converts to Hinduism. It is of crucial significance to the student of Nepalese history, society and culture that almost everywhere else in Nepal, except in the western hills and the valley of Kathmandu, the social structure could not transcend the frontiers of the tribe. And it is in these two regions that the ethnic, social and cultural interaction between diverse peoples seems to have borne some positive fruits.

Gorkhali power was inspired by the Kshyatriya ideals of Rajputs: Hindu religion and military chivalry. It is these twin ideals that had laid the foundations for the rise of modern Nepal as a nation-state. In a sense, the post-unification history of Nepal is, by and large, the history of the Nepalese military aristocracy, of its confrontation first with the external powers—the Tibetan and the British, and secondly, of its internecine struggle for power within different scions of this military aristocracy, which began with the succession of minors to the throne after the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1775. The second phase of this internecine struggle began with the rise of Jung Bahadur after the bloodshed of Kot in 1846. The final phase, the phase of a family divided within itself, came to an end with King Tribhuvan's return to Kathmandu in February 1951.

At a heraldic level of interpretation the twin symbols of the Khukri and the footprints of Vishnu appear to symbolize Nepal adequately—both symbols appearing in Nepal's coat of arms as well as in our coins till fairly recently. To the world outside, Nepal still remains somewhat of a mystery, or at best invokes such cliches as "the land of fierce fighters" or "the land of mysterious religions and quaint ornate craftsmanship." Even in the midst of the recent plethora of literature on Nepal the heritage, identity and culture of Nepal remains undefined or at best ambiguously defined. The ambiguity of Nepalese culture is not an apparent one: the ambiguity is real and genuine. It seems that one of the reasons for this ambiguity is entrenched in our tradition of historiography. Our chroniclers, medieval as well as modern, have found it respectable to start everything off with the dynastic histories of solar or lunar Rajputs, and if possible link everything up, as our historian D.R. Regmi puts it, "with nothing less than the Mahabharata." The people of Nepal are left out. Although it is the people who make a nation, and it is on the basis of their race, language, religion, and their history and

culture as a repository of all these that their identity and heritage as a nation can be defined.

Unfortunately the ethnography of Nepalese peoples is still in its infancy. However, from what little data we have of ancient and modern waves of migration of peoples in Nepal, a reconstruction of the movement of peoples is possible. It appears that the original inhabitants of these regions were probably the Austric peoples who had racial and linguistic affinities with the ancient peoples such as the Kols, the Bhils, the Santhals, the Nagas and other *adivashis* of Assam and Bihar. The modern traces of these earliest inhabitants of the Nepal Himalayas can be found in the so-called "broken tribes" of Nepal such as the Chepangs, the Hayus, the Vrahmus, the Satars and possibly the Tharus. It is quite likely that they had migrated to Nepal from the north-east—the seat of India's eastern aboriginals who were inhabiting these parts earlier than the Rig-Vedic Aryans arrival in India. The broken tribes of Nepal are 'broken' in the sense that they were displaced and dispossessed, as it always happens in the clash of races with different levels of culture. It is invariably the aboriginal who is displaced and dispossessed (c f. the Australian bushmen, the Red Indians, the aboriginals of south America and the Adivashis of India). They may have been thus "broken" by the more powerful and fierce Mongoloid immigrants who came in from the north. There are long and powerful traditions among the modern Rais, Limbus and the Newars that they had migrated from the north in the distant past. A version of *Swayambhu Purana*,¹ a Buddhist text copied in Yakshya Malla's reign (d. 1480), mentions how a Chinese monk called Manjushri, after draining the valley of Kathmandu, brought with him a colony of settlers from the north to inhabit the valley.² But the southward migration of nomadic Mongoloid peoples does not seem to have taken place in one single wave. This is obvious from the existence of at least three distinct

1 The original version of *Swayambhu Purana* is a work composed by a poet named Manjushri who, according to R.L. Mitra (*op. cit.*, p. 249), lived in the early part of the tenth century A.D. Tracing a number of parallels between the legends of Nepal and Khotan (in Sinkiang Province of China). Professor John Brough of Cambridge argues that the *Swayambhu Purana* belonged to a cycle of legends which originated in Khotan and was later transmitted to Nepal via Tibet. John Brough, "Legends of Khotan and Nepal," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London, Vol XII, Part 2, (1948), pp. 333-339.

2 R. Mitra, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal* (Calcutta, 1882) pp. 251-253.

INTRODUCTION

strata of ethnic and linguistic data on the Mongoloid peoples of Nepal. The first wave of Mongoloid migration can be traced in the peoples who speak 'pronominalized' languages, the wave which must have confronted the Austric inhabitants of the Himalayan valleys and basins and absorbed their influences. They are mostly the eastern and central Mongoloids—i.e., the Kiratas of Eastern Nepal, the Rais and Limbus, and certain strata of Newar society (probably, its lowest Buddhist section). One of their tribal names, Nepara or Nebala appears to have given the country its name.³ In its Sanskritized form the name 'Nepal' occurs already in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (c. 4th century B.C.), in the *Vinaya* of the Mulasarvasthavadins, a Buddhist text of about 3rd century A.D. and in the Allahabad inscription of Samundra Gupta (c. 335–376 A.D.).

A later wave of northern migration seems to comprize the Mongoloids whose languages are not pronominalized and who do not show any Austric traces either in their languages or in their physiognomy. They probably include the Gurungs and Magars of Western Nepal, and certain sections of the Newars and the Tamangs of Central Nepal. A much more recent wave of migration across the Himalayas is represented by the distinctly "Tibeto—Himalayan" peoples like the Sherpas, the Dolpos etc.—in all likelihood crossing the Himalayas only after Tibet's conversion to Buddhism in the mid-seventh century. Although it is not possible to present these migrations in terms of absolute chronology it is almost certain that both Austric and Mongoloid peoples were inhabiting the Nepal Himalayas before the arrival of either the Indo-Aryans in the valley of Kathmandu, or the Khasas from the west or the Mediterranean type Aryans who, as we saw earlier, on their arrival in the 12th centuries A.D., brought with them the Hindu religion and social values to the western hills of Nepal.

Although a Nepalese historian has made a controversial claim that the Khasas had an extensive kingdom in western Nepal contemporary with

3 Baburam Acharya, "Nepal, Newar and the Newari Language," *Nepal Sanskritik Parishad Patrika*, 1:2 (Baisakh 2009), 3; and: S.K. Chatterjee, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti, The Indo-Mongoloids; Their Contribution to the History and Culture of India* (Calcutta, 1950) p. 170–171.

that of the Lichchavis in the Kathmandu valley, the available historical data do not seem to go further than the medieval Malla kingdoms of western Nepal. According to Dr. Luciano Petech,⁴ "As to the Khasiya kingdom in western Nepal, its origin goes back to the last quarter of the 13th century, and is therefore later than the Nepalese Mallas." This creates one of the serious problems of Nepalese history and culture. For apart from the Kathmandu valley there is no unbroken and continuous record for the rest of the Kingdom. Earlier than the Khasa kingdom of the western Mallas there are, in fact, no historical records⁵ worth mentioning for anywhere else. That brings us inevitably to the valley of Kathmandu whether one likes it or not. We can say for certain that the valley was inhabited by the Austric and Mongoloid peoples before the Aryan infiltration. This is obvious from the Sanskrit inscriptions of the Lichchavi kings of the valley (5th century to 9th century A.D.) in which more than 80 per cent of the place-names of the valley are non-Sanskritic words. A 14th century Nepalese chronicle called *Gopalaraj Vamshavali* (compiled c. 1387-1390) mentions a long rule of 29 'Kirata' kings in the valley who were later driven out to the east by the Lichchavis. In Sanskrit literature of ancient India the word 'Kirata' is a generic term for the wild, fierce and mountain peoples of the Himalayas.⁶ In all likelihood the Kiratas were a Mongoloid people who had also absorbed Austric influences in race and language. But *before* their political subjugation by the Lichchavis the Kiratas seemed to have already been converted to Buddhism. For one thing, the earliest religious monuments in the valley are certainly Buddhist. There are four stupas at four corners of Patan and one at the centre of the city. According to the local traditions they were built by Ashoka (269-232 B.C.). They certainly look as old as the oldest Buddhist relic mounds in India. Ernst and Rose Leonore Waldschmidt⁷ are of the opinion that "the design of these so-called Ashoka stupas is certainly rather ancient."

4 Luciano Petech, *Medieval History of Nepal* (c. 750-1480) (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio Estremo Oriente, 1958), p. 81.

5 Although "authentic" history cannot be written without the aid of archaeology the archaeological remains in themselves do not seem to make history. Excavations in the Tarai have yielded remains of terracotta datable to the 3rd century B.C. Perhaps, more research in the future will help reconstruct a model of history of the Nepal Tarai.

6 Chatterjee, loc. cit.

7 E. Waldschmidt and R.L. Waldschmidt, *Nepal Art Treasures from the Himalayas* (London, 1969), p. 1 .

INTRODUCTION

An Indian art critic, Madanjeet Singh in his *Himalayan Art* (London, 1968, p. 162) writes, "It is very likely that the message of Buddhism had already crossed into the Nepal valley shortly after the birth of Gautama, the Buddha (567 B.C.) in Kapilavastu on the India-Nepal border. Definite evidence of this is, first, the inscribed memorial pillar at Lumbini which was erected by the emperor Ashoka in commemoration of his pilgrimage to the birthplace of the master and, secondly, Stupas of the original shape, four at Lalitapatan and one at Kirtipur in the Kathmandu valley." Similarly, Dr. David Snellgrove, in his *Buddhist Himalaya* (Oxford, 1957, p. 94) writes, "Also the earliest monuments are definitely Buddhist, for they are stupas similar to those in India, which we have considered above. It is likely therefore that Buddhist communities established themselves in this valley well before the beginning of the Christian era. It seems also that a very special sanctity was associated with Patan, which at that early period was certainly the chief and perhaps the only settlement there. The Tibetans name this city *Ye-rang*, which means 'Eternity Itself.'" The *Gopalaraj Vamshavali* records Yalambara as the first of the 29 Kirata kings, and both Tibetan name *Ye-rang* and the name of the Kirata king can be traced in the Newari name of Patan, *Ya-la* which appears to be the linguistic residue of either or both.

Stupa-worship was a form of Buddhism which flourished when the gospel of the Buddha was passing from the phase of the historical Buddha to the phase of the mythic Buddha. The chaitya of Swayambhu, as is obvious from the *Swyambhu Purana* as well, was transformed under the powerful impact of Vajrayana which came from Bihar and Bengal around the 10th century A.D. Originally both Swayambhu and Bodhanath stupas must have been very archaic structures rather like the so-called Ashokan stupas of Patan and they may have contained the relics of the early Buddhist patriarchs, missionaries or tribal chiefs.⁸ What is almost certain is that when the Lichchavis came to the valley around the 1st century A.D. they did not bring the Buddha's gospel with them. None of the extant Lichchavi inscriptions earlier than Jisnugupta (c. A.D. 642) mentions even a word about the Buddhist monasteries in the valley. This makes it clear that the ruling house was not the

8 According to L. Austin Waddel (*The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, London, 1895, pp.314-318) there is a long-standing tradition amongs the Tibetans who, together with the Gurungs and Tamangs, are the main visitors to the Bodhanath Stupa, which claims that the stupa contains the mortal remains of the fifth 'Manushi' Buddha—Kashyapa—the immediate predecessor of the historical Buddha Siddhartha Gautama.

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Stupa-worship was a form of Buddhism which flourished when the gospel of the Buddha was passing from the phase of the historical Buddha to the phase of the mythic Buddha. The chaitya of Swayambhu, as is obvious from the *Swyambhu Purana* as well, was transformed under the powerful impact of Vajrayana which came from Bihar and Bengal around the 10th century A.D. Originally both Swayambhu and Bodhanath stupas must have been very archaic structures rather like the so-called Ashokan stupas of Patan and they may have contained the relics of the early Buddhist patriarchs, missionaries or tribal chiefs.⁸ What is almost certain is that when the Lichchavis came to the valley around the 1st century A.D. they did not bring the Buddha's gospel with them. None of the extant Lichchavi inscriptions earlier than Jisnugupta (c. A.D. 642) mentions even a word about the Buddhist monasteries in the valley. This makes it clear that the ruling house was not the

⁸ According to L. Austin Waddel (*The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, London, 1895, pp.314-318) there is a long-standing tradition amongs the Tibetans who, together with the Gurungs and Tamangs, are the main visitors to the Bodhanath Stupa, which claims that the stupa contains the mortal remains of the fifth 'Manushi' Buddha—Kashyapa—the immediate predecessor of the historical Buddha Siddhartha Gautama.

follower of this faith; and that it was probably Amshuvarma who extended a generous patronage to different faiths prevailing in the mid-seventh century Nepal—giving the country a synthetic religious culture in its first archaic form. That there were several flourishing buddhist monasteries in the valley in the mid-seventh century is obvious from Amshuvarma's Handigaon inscription (A.D. 638) which mentions six *viharas* by name as well as from the contemporary accounts of Hsuantsang (c. A.D. 637) who writes that there were 2,000 monks living in the Buddhist monasteries of both Hinayana and Mahayana schools. The point is that the form of religion that the Lichchavis brought with them to the valley was an ardent form of Vishnu worship with the cult of Shiva only secondary in importance. Consequently, for some time the Buddhist settlements of the Kiratas appear to have been completely overshadowed. Besides, the Kiratas do not seem to have any system of records or sophisticated non-functional culture. It was the Lichchavis who brought the Sanskrit language and Gupta script to Nepal and perhaps a class of priests and scribes who specialized in both. Later, when the dynasty was established in Nepal the Lichchavis appear to have brought other forms of Hindu worship as well. Shiva worship must already have had some hold by the mid-seventh century. An inscription of Amshuvarma (Sanga, A.D. 636) uses such form of address as *Pashupati = bhhattaraka = padanugrhitto* ("the favourite of the foot of Lord Pashupati"). At any rate, the infiltration of the Indic elements of culture, race and language had started in the Valley, probably, long before the arrival of the Lichchavis, with the first Buddhist missionaries and the early north Indian traders in Nepalese woolen goods. According to the Buddhist traditions of the Newars, all the six Manushi Buddhas before Siddhartha Gautama had come to the valley. But this tradition, as Sylvain Levi says,⁹ may just be a legendry metaphor for the actual Buddhist missionaries who certainly seem to be the first to bring the light of religion to the Himalayas. The historicity of the Buddhist missionaries sent to the Himalayas by Ashoka has recently been proved convincingly by a German scholar, E. Frauwallner, in his fascinating detective work *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Rome, 1958).

The ethnic, linguistic and cultural infiltration of Indic elements had started in the valley long before it did elsewhere in Nepal. It certainly started

⁹ Sylvain Levi, *Le Nepal. Etude Historique d'un Royaume Hindou*, I (Paris: E. Leroux, 1905), 224-225.

INTRODUCTION

before the Khasas or the Mediterranean type Hindu immigrants began to arrive in the western hills. With the arrival of the Lichchavis also arrived Nepal's first historical kings. The aryanization of the valley became only more and more intense thereafter. With each new ruling dynasty came its own form of worship. The pantheon of the valley began to bulge with Mahayana Buddhist gods as well as the tantric cults of Vajrayana which travelled from the contemporary centres of learning like Vikramashila and Nalanda. The Hindu Shākta cults penetrated the Buddhist cosmos. Wave upon wave of immigrants from neighbouring Mithila, Bengal and Magadh brought with them diverse social, cultural and religious influences to bear upon the local society. Arts and crafts of the Pala schools found a new home in the valley of Kathmandu just as the artists and scholars fleeing from the Muslim persecution found the valley congenial for their pursuits. As far as the receptivity of the valley society was concerned there seemed to be no limit for absorbing anything. It is this capacity to absorb and then transform which seemed to characterize the culture and society of the valley. As long as this receptivity was retained the confluence of peoples, worships, practices and beliefs seemed to flower, transforming the valley into a museum-like fantasy erected within the Buddhist-Brahminical religious and social set-up. However, the elaborate code of caste system promulgated by Jayasthiti Malla (A.D. 1382-1395) was the beginning of the end. Prior to that the Kirata, the Buddhist missionaries, the Lichchavis, the Thakuris, the Mallas, the immigrants from the north as well as from the south—the Maithil pundit, the Karnatic priest, the Brahmins from Kashi, the Bengali acharya, the Bihari Baniya—every one became part of the Newar society; every one was lost in it, changing it and being changed by it. It was not only men who lost their sectarian identity in the valley; even gods shed their sectarian aspects so that a Hindu deity like Matsyandra Nāth of Nāth sect was absorbed by the Buddhist Newars as their own Avalokiteswara, a Bodhisattwa; while distinctly Buddhist deities like Tara or Bhairava became popular new-comers in the Hindu pantheon of the valley. It was the rigid caste structure imposed, not only on the late arriving Hindu Newars, but also on the Buddhist Newars, which eroded the absorbing and transforming power of the valley social and cultural life. One hundred years later, when the kingdom of the valley was politically divided among the sons of Yakshya Malla (d. 1480) the end that had begun socially began to penetrate the whole political arteries of the valley vitiating its sap.

The process at work in the valley of Kathmandu for nearly two thou-

sand years is, perhaps, what is meant by the culture-historians when they talk about “Nepalese genius for cultural synthesis” or “the cultural symbiosis” that Nepal has achieved. When a historian talks about Nepal he will, sooner or later, talk about the Kathmandu Valley. When a culture-pundit writes about ‘Nepalese culture more often than not he writes about the Sanskritized peoples of Nepal, i.e., mainly about the Newars and lately of the Khasas as well. This is largely due to the fact that, as one of our contributors puts it, “Nepal does not show a simultaneous and uniform development of history everywhere.” The places where it has shown ‘a development of history’ have been the ones where different waves of migrations of people have interacted socially and culturally. These culture zones appear, in a sense, fiercely local—particularly after the founding of the unified kingdom; so that, for instance, the complaint one of our contributors voiced recently is a very valid one. He wrote saying that when some people write ‘Nepal’ one does not know whether they mean the Kathmandu Valley or the whole Nepal. The cultural framework that evolved either at the Kathmandu Valley or in the Khasa kingdoms of the western hills may be *local* but they did certainly transcend the framework of the tribe. The crucial point is that compared with the rest of the country, these culture-belts appear to have operated within similar parameters. There are three basic parameters which distinguish these belts from the rest of country, culturally as well as socially: 1. these zones have developed a level of non-functional articulation of culture like art, architecture, sculpture, painting; 2. they have had a tradition of literate culture with its concomitant functional and non-functional skills (calligraphy, for instance), and 3. the societies articulating these activities have adopted social, religious and cultural values of Sanskritization—no matter whether its members are Khasa or Newar, Hindu or Buddhist. The problem of approaching the question of national culture, heritage and identity is not one of deciding to identify it with one or the other—the Khasa culture and the Newar culture. In a sense, the two have met and already lost their distinct identities when Prithvi Narayan Shah declared on March 23, 1770, Kathmandu as his new capital instead of Gorkha. In fact, the problem is to see if it would not be more fruitful at this stage of national development to visualize Nepalese culture, not as something monolithic, but as a mosaic of different sub-cultures—‘a floral garden of four *varnas* and thirty-six castes’, as Prithvi Narayan Shah himself put it.

Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, a British anthropologist, has written that the best way to distinguish between a Hindu Newar and a Buddhist

INTRODUCTION

Newar is to find out whether the Priest he employs is a Brahmin or a Vajracharaya. This may be very true, but the best way to distinguish between the sub-cultures of Nepal is to find out whether the priest a people employ knows or pretends to know some Sanskrit. It seems the major watershed between the sub-cultures of Nepal is not so much a geographic dividing line between the Khasa culture (the military culture—according to the late Historian-Laureate Kharidar Baburam Acharya) and the Newar culture ('the artisan culture'), but between the non-Sanskritized tribal cultures and the Sanskritized local cultures, between the pre-literate cultures and the literate cultures, and finally between the functional articulation of culture and the non-functional articulation of culture. In the past Nepalese culture had always been defined within the framework acceptable to the Sanskritized peoples of Nepal who have been, not only culturally most articulate, but also politically at the centre of power. In their terms of reference the rest of the people of Nepal appear to have been sub-consciously classified as "sudras." The caste system which was brought to Nepal by Indian immigrants and officially codified by Jayasthiti Malla for the Newars, by Rama Shah (1606–1633) for the Khasas and legally instituted for the whole Nepalese society by Jung Bahadur (1846–1876) has been very crucial social factor since. But such vestiges of caste system as *patiya* system and the Rajguru's power to excommunicate a person socially appear to have much less validity for wide sections of Nepal's tribal societies which have nearly always been outside this official framework. It is this fundamental feature of Sanskritized society and culture which sets it apart from the non-Sanskritized society and culture. It is this watershed which makes the cultural historians approach to our identity and heritage suspect and ambiguous.

By confining oneself to non-functional articulation of culture such as art, architecture, sculpture, painting and institutionalized religions, one assumes that all sections of Nepalese society have achieved a level of material, social and cultural sophistication where they can afford non-functional pursuit of culture as well as the functional ones. This seems to be far from the truth in the Nepalese context. If one takes a tribal group like the Tamangs, for instance, who are numerically one of the most important Mongoloid peoples of Nepal, we see that the only manifestations of culture among them are the functional ones—i.e., weaving functional textile, fishing nets, bamboo nets and baskets, and primary habitational architecture. Economically a large number of our tribal societies are in one of the three following

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

stages; fruit-gathering and hunting, nomadic livestock farming, and subsistence level agriculture. As for religion, except for the places where there has been contacts with Lamaist Buddhism and with Bonpo, most of Nepal's tribal peoples follow one or other version of Shamanism with Jhankris and sorcerers as their priests. One can very easily forget that not every section of Nepalese society composed verses and wrote literary pieces, nor did every place in Nepal yield artists and craftsmen who built temples, painted scrolls and cast images, carved in wood and stone. Arnikos, Bhanu Bhaktas and Devkotas are products of non-functional pursuits of culture, not of functional ones. In their labour of faith if some have erected such bizarre monuments as the Bir Library—a collection of 24,000 assorted Buddhist and Hindu manuscripts in diverse scripts and languages, several other parts of Nepal did not yield a written text. This uneven development of history makes a more comprehensive approach to society and culture desirable. Perhaps, a healthy and generous approach to Nepalese society and culture is the approach of the culture-historian tempered with the approach of the social anthropologist who is as much interested in the functional manifestations of culture as in the nonfunctional ones, as much in the pre-literate cultures as in the literate ones.

In his essay on "The Cultural Heritage of Nepal," Kharidar Baburam Acharya says that from the medieval age onwards the image of Nepal changed. Till then Nepal was known to the world outside "mainly through its arts," but according to this historian, with the rise of the Khasas, Nepal became known to the world outside for its "military culture."¹⁰ The term "military culture" may sound quaint to some students of culture, but the Nepalese historian appears to have used it as a functionally adequate description. Because the most important contribution of the Khasas, led by the military aristocracy of the House of Gorkha, is political; through a series of military campaigns they have unified the country and brought diverse peoples into the common orbit of power. This has laid the foundations for building a truly 'national culture' as against the tribal, local or sectional cultures. The army has undoubtedly been a major social institution since the 1770s, because it has been in the army, if not elsewhere, that an integration of diverse tribal peoples can visibly be seen. The fact that neither the

¹⁰ Baburam Acharya, "The Cultural Heritage of Nepal", *The Gorkhapatra*, 15 Bhadra 2020/ 2 Aug. 1963.

INTRODUCTION

till the 1950s does not seem to make any difference to its role as a social integrator. After the World War I and II when the Gorkha rifles of British India were partially demobilized and pensioned, the returning men, well-known in Nepalese villages as 'Lahure-dai'—quite indifferent to the fact that they may or may not have returned from Lahore, brought the light of the world outside, and above all, of literacy, to Nepalese villages. In fact, a great many of them were instrumental in bringing the political changes of 1950–51. However, the most important cultural contribution of the Khasas is the Nepali language—first the *lingua franca* of Nepal Himalayas and now the national language of the country. The rise of Nepali as the national language has opened up genuine possibilities of much closer social and cultural contacts between Nepalese peoples who speak scores of different tongues at home. The literature written in Nepali, as one of our contributors ably traces, has fulfilled a national need, and as a common cultural medium a number of different sections of Nepalese have contributed to its flowering. As a factor of emotional integration Nepali literature is likely to play a crucial role in our society. In order to make Nepali a more effective implement of communication it may be worthwhile to find out *how much* of Nepali and *what kind* of Nepali is comprehensible to some 49 per cent of the non-Nepali speakers of Nepal. It will help us to understand the gaps in the channels of cultural communication between the various peoples of Nepal. The sheer number of languages spoken at home by the Nepalese, as revealed by the census figures, appears to belie the "one nation one language" theory. But as long as we can afford to be complacent it is unlikely that we will ever know where precisely we stand as far as the communication situation is concerned. But on the question of language, as on that of culture, the decision-makers in Nepal have always been more keen to show their patronage of Sanskrit than of Nepalese languages. The increasing Sanskritization of the Nepali language is only a visible instance of the overshadowing of the indigenous elements of our languages and cultures. The mosaic is likely to cease to be a mosaic if the distinct shades of its pieces are to be coated with an official paint. While there is some form of deep-rooted stigma attached to the indigenous elements of our languages and cultures (making it respectable, for instance, to start an abortive 'Sanskrit University' while a course in Buddhist studies or Kirata studies or Newari literature and language is objectionable at Tribhuvan University), we can only hope that with the help of dispassionate Nepalese ethnographers, archaeologists, historians, sociologists, anthropologists and linguists we may, in good time, be able to unearth some

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

uncompromized truth on our peoples, their culture, languages, literatures and life. In a society like ours, the excruciating function, the *raison d' être*, of intellectuals seems to be "to tell truth to power."

II

If identity provides one superordinate theme to the various essays—the problems of modernisation provide another powerful theme. In each aspect of personality—social, economic, political, cultural—Nepal faces the problem of translating the heritage of the past and the resources of the present into the benefits and values of the future. Yet before we proceed to this theme we must, so to speak, cross a bridge between the two themes of 'identity' and 'transformation.' For it is clear from a reading of these essays and the recurrent references to this aspect how deeply influenced by her geography Nepal is. Geography is the inescapable mould in which her 'identity' has taken and is taking shape and in which the contours of her 'transformation' must be cast.

Seldom has the geography of a country been as central to its history as in the case of Nepal. The external situation has been defined for Nepal by the fact that it lies between the two great cultural and power entities of Asia, China and India, 'like a yam between two rocks'. This pithy metaphor of Prithvi Narayan Shah, which bears the pungent odour of that high drama and edge of action, that is the quality of the grand stage of geopolitics, describes the situation clearly. Nepal has been a precarious but resilient entity. Threatened by the crushing force of the great boulders on either side, she has had to draw the roots of her strength from that very fact; to make her adjustment to this balance between these great boulders, at times precarious at others stable, the basis of her statecraft. It is the logic of this geography, an inescapable logic as Rishikesh Shah points out, that the rulers of Nepal have had to be fatalists in foreign policy. Too small to determine the course of events in the subcontinent or in the vast land mass to the north, but caught in the grip of the combined effect of these events to north and south, geo-

INTRODUCTION

graphy has defined the frontiers of policy for Nepal. This means that adaptation, elasticity, the ability to respond quickly to situations, forecasting and playing by ear are the arts that a Nepalese ruler must cultivate for his foreign policy. He must eschew the temptation to divert his scarce resources to the building of grand designs and continental structures of power. It is indeed this modest mastery of the art of the possible by her rulers that has made Nepal's long, sovereign history in a much conquered subcontinent feasible.

So strong is this factor in Nepal, that even the culture of the country bears the imprint of this threshold aspect of her personality. As in the great cities of Italy, the culture and civilization of Kathmandu grew on the economic foundations of trade. It is this trans-Himalayan trade that has given Nepal a culture that is also trans-Himalayan; strongly influenced by both, it belongs to neither. It is indeed a yam,¹¹ conscious of its roots on both boulders, but as different from both as plant from stone. It is this curious cultural ecology, permeated by geopolitics, whose unique and persistent flavour tourists are now pouring into Nepal to savour.

The connection between the external and internal situation too bears this geopolitical theme. For well into the twentieth century, Nepal remained a land isolated, not only from the outside world, but also within itself one part from the other. 'Punctuated', in Harka Gurung's phrase, by mountains and rivers, the grammar of geography dictated the rhythm of socio-economic life. Prithvi Narayan Shah had advised his successors that Nepal was 'a fort built by nature', that its malarial forests and difficult mountains should be used as natural defences against the likely incursions of the British colonial system. It was a piece of advice that the Ranas took to heart. But the very success of isolation as a policy in maintaining sovereignty had heavy costs in domestic policy. When the curtain of isolation was torn aside at noon-tide in the twentieth century, it revealed a country without a transport system or communication network, illiterate, backward and poverty-ridden. The people had truly been made to pay high costs for the privilege of the state's independent existence. Ironically this refusal to create transport and communication links, so central to Nepal's defence against Britain, proved the Achilles heel of the Rana regime. For in Nepal's geographic context the cost

11 Prithvi Narayan Shah the founder of the Nepalese nation called it "a yam between the two rocks of China and India"

of not investing in a national transport system was dependence on the Indian railways even for movements from one part of Nepal to another. So, when the rebel movement went into action in 1950–51 with implicit Indian support, Nepal's total dependence on the Indian railway system proved fatal to the Ranas. India did not have to provide significant military support to the rebel movement. She merely denied the use of the railways to the Rana troops while permitting its use to the rebel movement. This one fact, the advantage of movement, accounts for the early and dramatic success of the 'progressive' forces in the major towns. It was thus poetic justice that the Rana regime fell a victim to precisely that lack of a national transport and communication-framework that it failed to develop. Nor is it a coincidence that the new and more development-oriented leadership of Nepal moved quickly to fill this gap. Without the rudimentary air transport system established in the first decade, Nepal's history in 1960–62 might well have been different. The same reasons explain the need for the east-west highway above and beyond economic factors.

The predominant role of the capital, Kathmandu, is also largely an accident of geography. Had not the Kuti and Kerung passes (to the North of Kathmandu) been the easiest route for trans-Himalayan trade the whole emergence of Kathmandu's entrepot civilization may not have taken place. This fact comes out clearly in the essay on trade. Under the Shah kings and in the Rana period, the superior amenities of Kathmandu and the primitive state of the rest of the Nepal, caused the ruling class of Nepal to adopt a mode of government which permitted them to remain in Kathmandu and enjoy its amenities. This, as Prachanda Pradhan points out, gave rise to a highly centralised political system. The consequence of this was the emergence of an absentee ruling elite.

The rulers were absentee landlords in the Tarai, the income from whose forests and lands they derived through intermediaries such as the Jamindars. They were also absent from the hills from which they drew the manpower for their army. The provincial governors, revenue or judicial officials who represented the Kathmandu-based government, seldom came from the highest echelons of the aristocratic hierarchy. The hinterland (the rest of Nepal) was mainly assessed in terms of its capacity to serve the metropolis (Kathmandu valley). This divorce between centre and periphery was not terminated even after the 1950 evolution. While the composition of the power-elite altered, it was mostly in terms of one Kathmandu-based elite

INTRODUCTION

replacing another; only at the margins could the hinterland groups make minor incursions into the power-elite. It is a consequence of this fact that even today, two decades after the revolution, Kathmandu has retained the lions share of development investments. As Paris dominated France, so is Kathmandu lord of all it surveys in Nepal. Thus, the geographical accident that placed Kerung and Kuti passes in such close proximity to the Kathmandu valley had far-reaching consequences for Nepalese history.

Similar consequences can be seen to be the result of geography on the whole economic system of Nepal, as Harka Gurung has pointed out elsewhere¹² the differences between middle, western and eastern Nepal hills are also explained by geographic features. The low valleys and high hills of eastern Nepal made a local system of trade and exchange between the products of these two different agricultural patterns possible and profitable, commercialising the subsistence economy of the east through the 'hat' (marketing) system. The large valleys of Pokhara and Kathmandu provide a natural urban force to the life of the central hills. The fact that in the western hills, the valleys and hills are all on a high plateau makes local exchange unprofitable and makes, instead, seasonal exchange with the Tarai and the Indian market the only option; thus, these areas remain the most backward and subsistence oriented.

Indeed the geography of the country, the Himalayan belt, middle hill regions and the Tarai from North to South and the three major river systems of the Karnali, Gandaki and Kosi from east to west, provide a natural nine-sector matrix for developmental analysis. It is precisely in this framework of a regional system that the future of Nepal's development lies. This fact has been both realised and declared in policy by Nepal's new ruler, King Birendra. Nepal has been both the victim and the hero of her geography. From this reality, as the contributors to this book have perceived, we must draw our strength.

12 Harka B. Gurung, "Rationale for Hill Areas Development," *Nepal Industrial Digest*, V (1971), 20.

III

The first half of this book defines the contexts, social, historical, geographical, and cultural, in which present-day Nepal finds herself. In the second half the writers confront the problems of modernization. Due to her late start (1950) in the process of deliberate transformation, Nepal faces deep and complex problems in each aspect of her development effort. The fragility and ineffectiveness of most of her political institutions (Pradhan), the scarcity of her economic resources (Pant), the contradictions in government policies (Pashupati Rana and Lohani), the contrast between the fact that 'the struggle to achieve economic development is surely going to be won or lost in the field of agriculture' (Ratna Rana), and the fact that even the post-reform institutional structure on the land provides a well-nigh insurmountable hurdle to agricultural development (Regmi), and, above all, the 'poverty of her intellectuals (Malla) who must man the engines of modernisation, makes this challenge specially steep and severe. If we look at this from the point of view of mobilisation, Nepal's attainments so far are an even greater source of solicitude. According to one estimate total, domestic savings represents only 3.5 per cent of gross domestic capital.¹³ This low level of economic mobilisation accurately reflects the equally backward state of political mobilisation (see Pradhan on Political organisations). In this mountain-cleft and jungle-barred country, whose natural cleavages are only marginally qualified by man-made transport and communications networks, the barriers to an effective mobilisation drive are indeed formidable.

Yet, if there is much ground for despair, there is also sound basis for hope. If Nepal's problems are infinitely complex, they are also, in comparison with those of China and India, of a small enough size to encourage aspirations to overcome them. If her capital resources are few, her manpower and natural resources, such as hydro-potential, are plentiful, though so far hardly tapped. If most of her political institutions are weak, she has attained a level of unusual political stability for a developing nation. If she has made few dents in the problems of development, she has shown remarkable expertise in dealing with international relations and in utilizing these relationships for capital resources which she needs for her development.¹⁴

¹³ Pashupati S.J.B. Rana, *Role of Foreign Aid and Trade in Economic Reconstruction During King Mahendra's Reign* (Kathmandu: CEDA, 1972), p. 5. mimeo.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Table 1, p. 4.

INTRODUCTION

Paradoxes abound. While she is in dire need of non-convertible funds (i.e. Nepalese and Indian currency) for her public sector expenditures,¹⁵ she continues to mount rising surpluses of convertible currency. While most Nepalese agencies badly need technical and managerial cadres, we find at the same time well-trained cadres who are under-utilized in the very same agencies and increasing numbers of unemployed graduates in most towns. The panorama of Nepal's efforts at transformation contains both sun and shadow, hope and despair, scarcity amidst plenty and a few striking achievements amidst grey failure.

In most of these essays dealing with various aspects of modernisation, there is an indication that apart from the issues relevant to the specialised aspect that they discuss, there is a broader problem common to all. For instance, Prakash Lohani analysing the contrast between the 'manifest' objectives of industrial policies and the often completely contradictory interpretation of those policies in implementation, comes to the conclusion that government practice serves the 'latent' interests of those who dominate the power-structure. Mahesh Regmi refers to the "discriminatory treatment" of the *Lands Act*, 1964, favouring landlords and disadvantaging the tenants and concludes that this much vaunted 'radical' measure "only strengthened the position of landowners as rent-receives without giving them commensurate obligations." Ratna Rana in his analysis of agricultural policies refers to the fact that the services extended by the government tend to "benefit only those few individuals who are already well-to-do and have relatively few credit needs." Pashupati Rana shows how an unscrupulous alliance between foreign interests and their allies in Nepalese government and business have carried on a fantastically profitable system of trade under the banner of industrialization for diversifying exports. K. P. Malla finds that "the broad stratum of the intelligentsia have come almost entirely from the upper-castes—the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the upper caste Newars." Prachanda Pradhan refers to the dominating hold of the elite over the strategic institutions and the consequent growing divide between "the norms, values and ways of looking at problems" of this elite and those of the masses. Thus, most of the writers are concerned with the emergence of a bias in favour of certain select groups in Nepal's development process.

15 John Beyer, "Resource Mobilization for Development in Nepal," *Report of the Seminar on Resource Mobilization for Development of Nepal*, Jan. 18—Jan. 20, 1973, (Kathmandu: CEDA, 1973.)

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INTRODUCTION

Paradoxes abound. While she is in dire need of non-convertible funds (i.e. Nepalese and Indian currency) for her public sector expenditures,¹⁵ she continues to mount rising surpluses of convertible currency. While most Nepalese agencies badly need technical and managerial cadres, we find at the same time well-trained cadres who are under-utilized in the very same agencies and increasing numbers of unemployed graduates in most towns. The panorama of Nepal's efforts at transformation contains both sun and shadow, hope and despair, scarcity amidst plenty and a few striking achievements amidst grey failure.

In most of these essays dealing with various aspects of modernisation, there is an indication that apart from the issues relevant to the specialised aspect that they discuss, there is a broader problem common to all. For instance, Prakash Lohani analysing the contrast between the 'manifest' objectives of industrial policies and the often completely contradictory interpretation of those policies in implementation, comes to the conclusion that government practice serves the 'latent' interests of those who dominate the power-structure. Mahesh Regmi refers to the "discriminatory treatment" of the *Lands Act*, 1964, favouring landlords and disadvantaging the tenants and concludes that this much vaunted 'radical' measure "only strengthened the position of landowners as rent-receives without giving them commensurate obligations." Ratna Rana in his analysis of agricultural policies refers to the fact that the services extended by the government tend to "benefit only those few individuals who are already well-to-do and have relatively few credit needs." Pashupati Rana shows how an unscrupulous alliance between foreign interests and their allies in Nepalese government and business have carried on a fantastically profitable system of trade under the banner of industrialization for diversifying exports. K. P. Malla finds that "the broad stratum of the intelligentsia have come almost entirely from the upper-castes—the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the upper caste Newars." Prachanda Pradhan refers to the dominating hold of the elite over the strategic institutions and the consequent growing divide between "the norms, values and ways of looking at problems" of this elite and those of the masses. Thus, most of the writers are concerned with the emergence of a bias in favour of certain select groups in Nepal's development process.

15 John Beyer, "Resource Mobilization for Development in Nepal," *Report of the Seminar on Resource Mobilization for Development of Nepal*. Jan. 18—Jan. 20, 1973, (Kathmandu: CEDA, 1973.)

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

Nepal's modernisation efforts in the last two decades have taken place without much explicit analysis on the part of decision-makers as to whom the beneficiaries would be. However, since no policy can be implemented in an interest vacuum, the power elite have tended to formulate the policies or to influence the decisions in their own favour. So, the consequence of failing to analyse the interplay of interests has been to aid and abet elite interests. In this Nepal has committed an error common to most developing countries who have followed the development models of the west, originating from a view of economics which saw this science as 'neutral between ends'. This prime emphasis on growth regardless of distributive justice has led to a situation full of imbalances. In terms of development expenditure, a disproportionately large part of the total investment in the last two decades has gone to Kathmandu and its surrounding areas and to a lesser extent to the eastern Tarai¹⁶. This has gone so far that the gulf between Kathmandu valley and the subsistence economies of the hill areas of Nepal is growing similar to the gulf between the developed countries and the underdeveloped 'third' world. To the problems of cultural heterogeneity mentioned earlier, the process of development is adding the problem of economic heterogeneity to such a degree that truly disturbing dualities may emerge in the nation. These differences between areas are echoed by differences between social strata. The two decades of development have seen the emergence of a privileged stratum which skims the cream of development opportunities and benefits. In this aspect also, Nepal is not unique. Such phenomena are as apparent elsewhere in Afrasia, to take nearby examples, in the emergence of monopoly capitalists and the landed political elite of India on the one hand and of the 22 families of Pakistan, on the other.

Since, however, each privileged stratum has its own distinguishing characteristics, this class in Nepal is well worth a description. For its social origins we must go back to the Rana period. As one description puts it, in that:

"System, the highest posts were held by a social category, who were then referred to as the 'Role Walla' Ranas.¹⁷ Below these

16 Pashupati S.J.B. Rana, "Regional Incidence of Tax and Allocation of Resources," in *A New Dimension in Nepal's Development: The Regional Approach in Planning and the People-Oriented Development Strategy*, ed. P. Pradhan (Kathmandu: CEDA, 1973).

17 'Role Walla' meant those Ranas who were in the agrate line of succession to the Rana Maharajaship.

INTRODUCTION

posts with paraministerial authority, like the director generalships, however a whole host of highly important officials, like the Kazis, the Sardars, the Mirsubbas, the officers in between the ranks of Lieutenants and Colonels, and even Kharidars and Subbas in powerful Rana households fulfilled a function which in a more modern set-up the civil service would have taken up. All these officials tended to come from a narrow group of some two, three hundred families. Many of these families were from the Bhardar' class. And in addition to their privileges of authority and prestige, they had further consolidated their position in the economic system through the land grants they received, and in a few cases by establishing sections of their families in trade and commerce. These ramifications in the economy of this group of families, which I will from now on refer to as the 'Client families' (under the patronage of the Rana system), were further enhanced by their marital connections with the Jamindar groups, which emerged to look after the lands of the many absentee landlords of the Rana system. Thus the 'Client families' took shape as a fairly clear and distinguishable social strata."¹⁸

As Prachanda Pradhan points out, the most vital aspect of the change in 1951 was the removal of the Ranas from the power apex of the system. Due partially perhaps to the peaceful nature of the change, the political revolution was not accompanied by a socio-economic revolution. The effects of this can be seen with interest in the question of 'land' which remains the principle means of production in Nepal. Legislation to abolish the Birta system (see Regmi), which was the basic means through which the Ranas and their 'client' families controlled the land, was only enacted 8 years after the Rana regime. Even land reform when it came in 1963, as Mahesh Regmi clearly shows, was very limited in terms of either the scope of its social justice or of effective implementation. In terms of altering ownership and control over the means of production, indeed, it did little more than eradicate the class of largest landowners. The whole history of Nepal has shown that with changes in the ruling groups consequent changes in control over the principal means of production, land, took place. The political changes that took place after Bhim Sen Thapa's downfall 1837-

18 Pashupati S.J.B. Rana, "Towards an Intergrated Policy of National Integration," *Vasudha*, XII:8 (July-Aug. 1969), 7-14.

46 show them very well. When the Pande clan would oust the Thapa clan from political power or vice versa, ownership of the lucrative Birta lands would pass from the ousted clan to the new incumbents.¹⁹ The Birtas underwent a dizzying series of changes in this period as the instability of the times caused many changes in the ruling groups. Similarly the only reason for the comparative stability in ownership of the Birtas during the Rana period was the stability of the Rana hold over political power itself. Thus, when power passed over the Birtas also changed along with it. As Mahesh Regmi states elsewhere, "the emergence of a new political authority. was invariably accompanied by a change in the composition of the Birta owning class."²⁰ In this historical perspective the land reform of the sixties can be seen as a readjustment of control over land in consonance to the change in political power. The revolution of 1951, by removing the Ranas oligarchy from power, allowed the 'client' families to rise to those strategic positions of power in the second rank. Similarly, Land-reform, which removed the hold of the old oligarchy over the largest tracts of land, permitted the second-rank of landowners, the 'client families', to find legal means of consolidating their hold over this principal means of production in consonance with their enhanced political authority.

In the last two decades this privileged group has added a few members. One group of new entrants comes from the business community, such as those who made their vast profits from the unplanned industries which flourished during the Third Plan period (see P. C. Lohani). Quite a few such new entrants have Indian antecedents or connections. A few others have made their entry through the political machinery. However, if this privileged class is not totally closed, the openings at the margins have not significantly altered its social origins or its social character. The majority of these families come from either the old 'Bhardar' groups of Brahmins and Chhetris or the higher caste Newar groups. Geographically, most of them are inhabitants of Kathmandu or have become Kathmandu-based with their entry into the charmed circle.

This stratum has truly spread its net wide. The strategic heights of most of institutions such as the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the

19 M. C. Regmi, *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, II (Berkeley: Institute of International studies, 1964), p. 91 ff.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

INTRODUCTION

university are held by this privileged elite. It has cornered most of the new industrial and developmental openings. Whether in the sugar lands of the Narayani Zone, in the jute trade from the eastern tarai, in the newly irrigated lands, or in urban real estate, the subtle but certain grip of this class is always in evidence. Most significantly, perhaps, this class has perceived that control over the opportunities of higher and foreign education provides the strategic means of consolidating and perpetuating its dominance over the new Nepal.²¹

This regional and social imbalance provides the most serious inhibition to Nepal's efforts at modernisation. It is clear from the history of the developing countries since the second World War that narrow enclaves of change cannot modernise a country. Unless the masses themselves are brought into the process of change, unless a major social force capable of galvanising large sections of the populace is created, true transformation is not possible. We must then be able to alter the hold over the means of production held by a small privileged elite and to spread the benefits of development to both the neglected regions and classes.

The editors are heartened by the fact that regionalisation and mass-oriented economic policies are much in vogue among the new decision-makers that have come to the fore in King Birendra's first year of rule. Even as Crown Prince, the new educational plan he supported carried as a major plank the idea of modifying the monopoly of the privileged elite and of spreading the ambit of educational opportunity more widely. We are of the hope that a new leadership will bring a new generation of policies free of the trammels of privilege and replete with the needs of radical change.

(1973)

21 Pashupati S.J.B. Rana, *Nepal's Fourth Plan: A Critique* (Kathmandu: Yeti Pocket Books, (1971), pp. 8-10,18-21.

CHAPTER 2

The Land

—*Dr. Harka Gurung*

I

The independent kingdom of Nepal covers an area of 54, 718 square miles with an average length of 500 miles and breadth of 100 miles mainly along the south slopes of the Himalaya. The spatial location of the country between longitudes 80°4' to 88° 12' east and latitudes 26° 22' to 30° 27' north has certain significant landscape features. The Himalayan range within Nepal undoubtedly forms the most central and extensive section of the whole Himalayan system. The stupendous mountain pedestal has caused extreme elevations, in that more than a quarter of the country's land surface exceeds 10,000 feet in altitude including a thousand square miles under the realm of snow and ice. The country is not all peaks and pinnacles and has a fair share of low levels; half of the total land surface lies below 5,000 feet and about 20 per cent of the total area has elevations lower than a 1,000 feet above the sea level. Such close juxtaposition of contrasting altitudinal levels implies rugged relief with a wide variety of terrain. The rise of the land from the south to the north is not in a singular grand sweep but rather through a succession of ranges arranged *en echolon* punctuated by lowlands. Nepal may therefore be likened to a giant staircase ascending from the low-lying Tarai plain to the culminating heights of the Himalaya.

II

Some order can be discerned in spite of the rugged topography with a maze of spurs and valleys. The basic physical lay-out has been determined by series of parallel ranges of varying height that traverse the country east to west. The first elevations are those of the Chure Range (*Siva-Lekh*) which rise abruptly from the Tarai lowlands. These foothills have a general elevation from 2,500 feet to 5,000 feet and even exceeds 6,000 feet in the western section. The geological strata of the Chure range is composed of alternating hard and soft rocks inclined to the north and presents a hogback shape with steep south slope and gentle north slope. The relief is rugged and soils are dry and immature.

Immediately north of the Chure Range rise the Mahabharat Lekh with elevations ranging from 5,000 feet to 9,000 feet. The Mahabharat Lekh runs close and parallel to the Chure Range and where the two ranges converge, they can be distinguished only geologically and by the superior height of the Mahabharat Lekh. The geological structure is characterized by complicated folds particularly along the south face. The higher ridges have steep slopes but the general elevation along the main axis is remarkably regular. The Mahabharat Lekh which has been broken through only by a few narrow river gorges, provides an effective natural barrier to the interior parts of the country.

The third range system is represented by the main Himalaya that lies about 60 miles north of the Mahabharat Lekh. The main Himalaya does not form a continuous range but rather separate narrow ridges and the deep river gorges incised across the Himalayas present the greatest extremes in altitude in the shortest horizontal distance. The rock strata in the high Himalaya are inclined to the north and are expressed in the asymmetrical relief of steep south face and a comparatively gentle north slopes. Steep gradients discourage formation of large glaciers and the snow-line varies between 17,000 feet and 19,000 feet depending on aspect and slope. The mountain groups in turn send out high spurs in diverse directions thus contributing to a profusion of snow-peaks in Nepal including eight of the world's ten highest peaks.

In western Nepal another mountain range, lying 20 to 30 miles north of the main Himalaya, defines the boundary between Nepal and Tibet. These

THE LAND

Tibetan marginal ranges have altitudinal levels of 19,000 feet to 23,000 feet and the relief is less rugged than those found on the main Himalaya. The climate is dry owing to their location in the rain-shadow area and the lower slopes of these marginal ranges have a modulated surface. Although they are lower than the main Himalaya in altitude, they form the chief watershed between the rivers of the Ganga and Tsang-po.

III

The series of parallel ranges are alternated by characteristic lowlands. Within the grand parameters defined by the Tarai extension of the Ganga plain and the high Tibetan plateau, the lowland areas within Nepal may be distinguished as the *Dun* valleys between the Chure Range and the Mahabharat Lekh, the *Pahar* complex of low hills enclosed by the Mahabharat Lekh and the high Himalaya, and the Bhot valleys north of the high Himalaya but south of the Tibetan marginal ranges.

The Tarai (*Madhesh*) plain within Nepal is a 25 to 35 miles broad belt and its gentle topography makes a striking contrast to the rugged relief of the rest of the country. The Tarai is not a monotonous flat plain, but slopes gently towards the south. The higher elevated part of the Tarai adjacent to the Chure range is known as the *Bhabar* where streams from the Chure foothills deposit sand and gravels. The streams that filter down the *Bhabar* tract as well as the rivers swirling down the mountains become sluggish waters as they enter the lower Tarai, and the alluvial plains so enriched with silt deposition are marked by meander loops and marshy swamps.

The *Dun* (*Bhitri Madhesh*) valleys, although disjointed from the Tarai by the Chure range, have topographic forms similar to those prevailing in the Tarai plain. The *Dun* valleys are most conspicuous in places where the Chure range diverges away from the Mahabharat Lekh. In Dang—Deokhuri and Navalpur-Chitawan, the *Dun* are extensive enough to act as ecological barriers similar to the Tarai plain elsewhere and here the Indo-Nepal boundary is defined by the Chure range. The *Dun* valleys are also found in areas where east - west flowing rivers between the Chure and Mahabharat ranges have carved longitudinal basins as in the case of Jogbura, Surkhet, Marim, Kamla, Trijuga, and Kankai valleys with general elevations varying from 600 feet in Trijuga and 900 feet in Chitwan to 1,600 feet in Dang valley.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

The *Pahar* zone between the Mahabharat Lekh and main Himalaya is a 40—50 miles broad complex of hills and valleys. Compared to the pronounced altitudinal levels of the ranges enclosing this zone from the south and north, the *Pahar* zone provides a composite impression of topographic depression as the land surface has been much eroded by the large net work of streams and rivers. The relief is less harsh than those in the high Himalayas and the lower limit of snow-fall varies from 8,500 feet in east Nepal to 6,500 feet in west Nepal. The southern part of the *Pahar* zone is dominated by the longitudinal valleys that run east-west close to the Mahabharat Lekh. The higher northern part of the *Pahar* zone is characterized by numerous north-south valleys alternated with southern extensions of the Himalayan spurs. The higher ridges with temperate climate and winter snowfall are called *Lekh* that are ultimately linked-up with the higher Himalayan slopes above 10,000 feet elevation.

The trans-Himalayan *Bhot* valleys are found only in western and central Nepal where the country includes large areas north of the main Himalaya. They are particularly extensive in the upper reaches of the Karnali river as the Tibetan marginal ranges hereabout are more clearly defined than the main Himalaya. With the exception of Mustang and Mugu valleys which run north-south, these *Bhot* valleys are oriented in an east-west alignment to the enclosing high ranges. These *Bhots* are elevated valleys exceeding 12,000 feet in general elevation and their broad open profiles and pronounced dry climate are reminiscent of the Tibetan landscape.

IV

The alternating highlands and lowlands that characterize the orographic alignment of the country and further superimposed by an intricate hydrographic pattern. The river systems of the Karnali, Gandaki and Kosi drain western, central and eastern Nepal respectively and they exhibit certain common features. The three river systems cover their drainage basins like the branches of a tree and the trunk is represented by a single major outlet. The net work of rivers joins the main rivers Karnali, Gandaki and Kosi to form three major longitudinal river valleys—Seti-Karnali (80 miles), Kali-Trisuli Gandaki (96 miles), Sun Kosi-Tamar (140 miles)— and force their way across the Mahabharat Lekh to enter the plain through narrow gorges.

THE LAND

The *Karnali* river system draining western Nepal between Byasrikhi Himal and Dhaulagiri Himal is the most extensive system as it covers a considerable area north of the main Himalaya. The main rivers of the Karnali system are the Humla-Karnali, Mugu-Karnali, Tila Nadi, Seti river, Buri Ganga and Bheri river. Humla-Karnali has its source in Tibet and is reinforced by the Mugu Karnali from the east in its upper reaches. The combined waters of the Seti and Buri Ganga rivers from the south of Byasrikhi Himal and the Bheri river from Dhaulagiri Himal join the main Karnali through narrow gorges across the Mahabharat Lekh. The Karnali river has a complicated three-fold bend in its lower reaches where it negotiates through the twin barriers of the Mahabharat Lekh and the Chure range and enters the plain at Chisapani.

The *Gandaki* system that drains central Nepal between Dhaulagiri Himal and Langtang Himal includes the Kali Gandaki, Bari Gad, Seti Marsyangdi, Darondi, Buri Gandaki and the Trisuli Gandaki rivers. While the trans-Himalayan rivers make deep gorges across the main Himalaya, those like the Seti and Darondi originating on the south slopes of the Himalaya have steep gradients. The Kali Gandaki which flows south from Mustang and the Trisuli Gandaki that enters Nepal at Rasuwa from Tibet together describe a large loop circumscribing the central hills and other tributaries join them within a close distance of the Mahabharat Lekh. The combined waters of the Gandaki system breach through the Mahabharat Lekh at Deoghat and after a short westerly course through Chitawan valley enters the plain at Bhainsalotan.

The *Kosi* river system draining east Nepal is made up of the Indrawati, Sun Kosi, Tamba Kosi, Likhu Khola, Dudh Kosi, Arun and Tamar rivers. The Arun has its source (Phung Chu) in Tibet and flows more or less due south. The Sun Kosi (Poe Chu) and Tamba Kosi (Kang Chu) also originate in Tibet (hence called Bhote Kosi) and enter Nepal through narrow gorges at Bhainse and Lapche respectively. The Dudh Kosi draining the south flanks of Khumbu Himal descends south to join the main Sun Kosi while Tamar Kosi flowing down the western flank of Kanchenjunga flows southwest to join the Arun. The five affluents west of the Arun join together to form the main Sun Kosi river and continue eastwards close to the Mahabharat Lekh. The combined waters of the Sun Kosi from the west, the Arun from the north and the Tamar from the east join together above the Chhatra gorge to cut through the Mahabharat barrier and enter the plain as the Sapt Kosi.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

The rivers that do not fall within the above river systems drain the western and south-eastern peripheries of the country and the gaps between the three drainage systems. The far western part beyond the Seti river watershed is drained by the Maha Kali river with its eastern tributaries Chauyani and Surna Gad and enters the plain at Barmdeo Mandi as the Sarada river. In the south eastern sector, the Mechi and Kankai rivers flow down their separate courses to join the Mahananda river in India. The gap between the Karnali and Gandaki drainage system is drained by the Babai and Rapti rivers which traverse the valleys of Dang and Deokhuri respectively. Similarly the intervening space between the Gandaki and Kosi drainage area is covered by the Bagmati river with its headwaters in Kathmandu Valley.

V

Apart from the more apparent vertical contrasts from north to south there are subtle differences in landscape pattern from east to west owing to the north-west/south-east lateral disposition of the country. Thus western Nepal with a greater share in the higher northern latitudes has a much drier and colder aspect than the more southerly eastern Nepal where humid monsoon conditions prevail and these bio-climatic divergences affect the local geomorphic processes. The horizontal variations in landscape are not so much in the basic alignment of major landforms but rather in the degree of their relief expression.

Western Nepal corresponding to the Karnali sector has a broad extent averaging 140 miles and incorporates the whole gamut of natural divisions from the Tarai plain to the Tibetan highlands. The Tibetan marginal ranges appear as the dominating feature as the main Himalayan range is practically insignificant hereabout for a distance of 48 miles between Saipal and Kanjiroba Himal. However, the lateral spurs branching off the main Himalaya and the Tibetan ranges are fairly high with long extensions. The ridge-tops are comparatively less dissected and have broad level surfaces. A considerable portion of the land area lies within the intermediate temperate elevations and even the Chure range exceeds 6,000 feet in altitude. These free-lying mountain slopes with easy gradients provide western Nepal a composite landscape of an elevated plateau. In spite of the gentle topography, ecological contrasts between the north and south slopes in relation to the

THE LAND

exposure to the sun are very evident in this sector owing to the area's more northerly latitude as implied by the local terms *Pahara* (sunny) and *Siyala* (shady) slopes.

In central Nepal, served by the Gandaki river system, the striking landscape feature is the sharp transition from the high Himalayas to the low sub-tropical hill complex. The main Himalaya range in this area sends out high spurs towards the north enclosing large amphitheatres of *Bhot* valleys, but the south-trending spurs are short and steep providing a free south face. This sharp inflection of high spurs into a network of minor ridges and low hills has much depressed the general elevation of the central *Pahara* region and even the Mahabharat Lakh averages below 5,000 feet in height. The altitudinal declivity from the heights of Annapurna Himal to the Pokhara area, for instance, is of the order of over 20,000 feet within a short horizontal distance of 18 miles. In western and eastern Nepal, such great contrasts in relief are observable only in the trans-Himalayan gorges through which low elevations intrude far into the north.

Eastern Nepal or the Kosi sector is comparatively narrow and has no share in the trans-Himalayan zone. The Tarai plain is conspicuously extensive and the Chure range has been much eroded away. This sector has far wider vertical dimension encompassing the highest of the Himalayan peaks to the low-lying Tarai. The main Himalayan range is well-defined and there is a high concentration of land areas above 20,000 feet. On the other hand, land surface of intermediate temperate elevations are of limited extent. The spurs bifurcating off the main range have sharp ridges with narrow steep valleys in-between. Khumbu in the upper Dudh Kosi and Walung-Ghunsa in the upper Tamar valleys are high mountain enclosures located on the south slopes of the Himalaya. Eastern Nepal receives twice as much rainfall as western Nepal and much of the broken topography may be attributed to the heavy precipitation. In contrast to the bold elevated relief of western Nepal and pronounced depression of central Nepal, the *Pahar* landscape of eastern Nepal, is characterized by long narrow ridges with deeply incised trans-section valleys.

VI

The physical setting of Nepal may be studied either by correlating the alternating highlands and lowlands from north to south or comparing the

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

main drainage basins from east to west. Both these approaches yield three major geographic regions in Nepal each with its own distinctive landscape and ecological pattern.

The area south of the Mahabharat Lekh composed of the *Dun* valleys, Chure foothills and the Tarai plain corresponds to the Tarai or the Plain region. In spite of the intervening Chure range, this southern region as a whole has a dominant plain aspect. The Chure ranges do stand out conspicuously from the level plains particularly in western Nepal, but elsewhere they have been much reduced in height and even stand as isolated hillocks. The increasing height of Chure range from east to west is complemented by the corresponding rise of Tarai plain from 300 feet average elevation in eastern Tarai to 600 feet in western Tarai. The longitudinal *Dun* valleys of *Bhitri Madhesh* have been formed mainly by the detrital depositions from the lower slopes of the enclosing Mahabharat Lekh and Chure range. The *Bhabar* tract acting as the transition area between the foothills and the southern Tarai plain is very much the creation of large-scale hill wash, detrital cones and alluvial fans. The Tarai is a finely graded alluvial plain overlain with silt and fine sand. The prevailing climate of the Tarai Region is humid tropical that supports luxuriant vegetation. Prevalence of malaria in the past made this a negative settlement zone dominated by dense forests and marshy stretches. This natural landscape has considerably changed over the last decade through the agency of man. The southern strip of the Tarai plain has been transformed into an extensive belt of farms and new settlers have made deep inroads even into the *Bhabar* and *Dun* areas by clearing forests and draining marshes and where now tree trunks fence the new fields.

The *Pahar* or the Hill Region extends along the central belt of the country between the Mahabharat Lekh and the high Himalaya and the characteristic landforms are low hills and sinuous ridges much dissected by numerous rivers and streams. While the smaller valleys make narrow steep defiles, the larger valleys have an easy gradient with a wide open character. The main longitudinal valleys and their northern tributary extensions make deep indentations in the *Pahar* topography and these low *Bensi* valleys have numerous old river terraces (*Tar*) indicating periodic fluctuations in the depositional process. On the hill, landslides and landslips are common and the tributary streams overloaded with such materials deposit alluvial fans and cones at their terminus. The mild sub-tropical climate and adequate rainfall have made the *Pahar* Region a favourable zone for agricultural settlement

THE LAND

thus encouraging large-scale deforestation and attenuating the spoilation of natural landscape. The typical scenery of the *Pahar* country with flights of terrace fields carved out of adverse slopes and overgrazed barren hillsides is an eloquent expression of man's imposition on land.

The northern part of the country dominated by snow ranges and intermont valleys falls under the Himalayan or the Mountain Region. The region is conspicuous for its extreme altitude and wild terrain and the highest ranges have sharp ridges crowned by jagged peaks. Although glacier fields are limited, ice-scooped rock basins are found at lower elevations indicating a much wider glacial provenance in the past. The Himalaya Region has a definite north and south aspect. The south trending spurs of the main range are covered with temperate forests lower down and confine steep valleys marked with occasional waterfalls. North of the main range, the prospect is much more desolate with bare mountain slopes and undulating valley bottoms filled with detrital materials and sparse vegetation in sheltered corners. The Himalayan Region is a marginal area for human occupance and man's impress on the landscape is minimal.

VII

The configuration of Nepalese landscape has been determined by emphatic ridges that run east-west and numerous south-flowing rivers. They define the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the country's physiographic component. The third dimension is provided by the lateral deposition of country causing bio-climatic variations from the arid west to the humid east. The fourth, but no less important factor in landscape evolution is the impact of man. Man attempts to adapt himself to the natural environment and in the process leaves his imprint on the landscape. Thus, while harsh nature dominates in the Himalayan region, in the traditional settlement zone of the *Pahar* region man has accelerated soil erosion and this depletion in natural resource is being reflected in the present process of increasing occupation of the Tarai region. Since these three major geographic regions (Tarai, Pahar, Himalayan) correspond to altitudinally arranged ecological zone, they have inherent differences in natural endowment and these diverse products must be exchanged. The mountain ranges do act as natural barriers among the various regions of the country, but the rivers traversing down the mountains to the plain not only shape the landscape, but also articulate circulation of man, materials and ideas. It is not without significance that the Nepalese deify the imposing mountains that divide them and sanctify the fertile rivers that unite them.

(1972)

CHAPTER 3

The People

—*Dor Bahadur Bista*

Nepal has always been a meeting ground for different peoples and cultures. Situated at the natural boundary and the watershed that runs through the middle of the largest continent in the world, the land has traditionally attracted and given shelter to people from all directions east, west, north and south. But the mountainous nature of the land made the movement of people and goods very cumbersome. Therefore the different regions of the country and their people remained largely isolated from each other until very recently. It is as if groups of people were left like water in the hollows after the different waves of migration moved across the continent. The result is that there are quite a number of separate ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups traditionally identified with specific geographic regions of the country. However, in the present essay an attempt will be made to show not only the distinctions between these groups, but also the areas where they overlap culturally.

The great majority of the people are subsistence level farmers living in a rural setting. They have evolved different ecological adaptations according to the altitude, climate, and topography of the areas in which they live. The number of people who are now mobile and more of a national nature than of regional, tribal, religious or ethnic identification are increasing. And yet there are large numbers of people who could be identified as distinctly belonging to one or the other categories.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

The people live under quite diverse environmental conditions from the low, nearly sea level plains at the border of India, northward through the middle hills and valleys up to the flanks of the great Himalayan range where they live at altitudes of up to 16,000 ft. Farming practices and agricultural production are therefore equally diverse. The various styles of life, social customs, house types and attitudes exhibit their different origins and social history.

Racially speaking the people fall into three main divisions: Mongoloid, Aryan and some small isolated groups of pre-Aryan indigenous people.

Little has been known about the ethnic origins and language of these people, however, recently a small group of Dravidian speaking people has been detected in the Central Tarai. Their language and that of another group in the Eastern Tarai is now being studied.

Mongoloid people have been established in the sub-Himalayan region longer than the Aryans. The (Mediterranean type) Aryans arrived later, as part of the ancient migration of Aryans into the subcontinent from the west. The small groups of indigenous people also display some features of Mongoloid physiognomy today, indicating the prolonged period of intergroup mixture.

The Mediterranean type of people today belong to the Brahmin-Chhetris and some occupational castes. They are found both in the hills where they are long time residents, and in the plains along the Indian border, where they are relatively recent arrivals. The Chhetris of the hills are descendants of the first Aryan arrivals. Known locally as the Khas, they spoke an Indo-Aryan language, the basis of present day Nepali, the national language. They constitute the bulk of the Chhetri, Thakuri and many an occupational caste of today. The west, far west, and north western districts of Nepal are referred to as "Khasaan"—the land of the Khas—by the local people. Few Khas principalities were flourishing in the region during the medieval period, until a powerful Khas kingdom had emerged and dominated many others around it. Babu Ram Acharya,¹ the acknowledged authority on Nepalese history, is of the opinion that the Khas Aryans, living in a pastoral economy, had established an independent and powerful state which lasted

1 Babu Ram Acharya, "Nepal Ko Sanskriti Parampara," (31 August 1963).

THE PEOPLE

until the end of the 16th century and which included Kumaon and Garwal in the west, Mustang in the east and reached as far south as the Tarai plains. Another renowned Historian, Kaishar Bahadur K.C.² believes that the Kushans, or Sakas were the forerunners of the same people who were the Khas kings of western Nepal and of Gorkha.

Today two types of Khas exist: the Chhetris and the "Matwali Chhetris." The Matwali Chhetris do not wear the sacred thread³ and are allowed to drink alcohol openly. For this reason they are of lower rank than "proper" Chhetris in the social hierarchy. But in every other respect—religious, cultural and economic—the two groups are indistinguishable. The ethnically different Himalayan people of Tibetan speech and many craftsmen of unclean castes such as Damai (tailors), Kami (smiths), and Sarki (cobblers) use the term Khas or Khasiya to refer to both groups. The few remaining vestiges of tribal organization among the Khas in Jumla, Humla, Mugu, Tibrikot and Dolpa districts clearly indicate the original state of the Chhetri and Thakuri castes of today. There are quite a few other groups who are still untouched by Brahminism and therefore do not seem to fall under the categories of Hinduism as understood in the country and outside it.

The gradual reinforcement of some of these Khas by the arrivals of the Hindu Brahmins and related peoples from North India had indeed continued over a long period of several centuries. With the arrival of the Brahmins, the Hindu priest caste, and the related castes of the social hierarchy, Nepal began its role as Hindu Kingdom. Brahmins by profession are the priests, preceptors and religious leaders of the Hindu caste community. In the hills, however, the Brahmins could not afford to abide by all the prescribed rules of their caste status. The first thing almost every Brahmin family has done is to undertake farming as its main occupation.

To the Chhetris can be attributed the military and political tradition of the nation. In the caste hierarchy, Chhetris (Kshatriyas) are the warriors, the military establishment. It is the Chhetris and Thakuris of the middle

2 Kaishar Bahadur K.C. "Assessment of the Judicial Customs of Nepal: From the Buddhistic Period of the 6th Century A.D.," (unpublished mss.), pp. 146-147.

3 The sacred thread is worn by both Brahmin and Chhetri boys after participating in a ceremony which initiates them into fullcaste membership.

hills, who along with Magars, first organized the Gorkha armies, led the conquest of several principalities, and unified Nepal along modern lines.

It must be emphasized that the Brahmin-Chhetri role in the past has been one of shaping the course of the nation religiously and culturally. That is with the exception of the Kathmandu Valley area where cultural and economic developments were taking place independently until mid-18th century. These castes are no less important today. Many important social, political, and economic positions are still controlled by Brahmin-Chhetri individuals, enabling them to wield disproportionate authority.

The occupational castes, mentioned earlier, have played their own role too, tending the crafts in the service of those above them. They are found living close to the Brahmin and Chhetri villages, and in every town. They are the shoe-makers, smiths, tailors and other such craftsmen.

Other Brahmins and Chhetris and occupational castes have arrived more recently, migrating north from the Gangetic Plain of North India into the Tarai regions of Nepal in search of more suitable farmland. They stand apart from their hill cousins in almost every aspect. They have settled in areas climatically and geographically contiguous to their former homeland, and the settlement patterns are the same as that of north India, compact villages located amidst their farmlands. They tend to be Orthodox Hindus, and adhere more strictly to the social rules of their caste groups than their hill cousins. Tarai Brahmins are invariably vegetarians even though their counterparts in the hills are meat-eaters. Unlike the hill Brahmins they never work in their fields even though many of them are land-holders. Their languages are those of the north Indian communities across the border from where they have come. In their own right many of the higher classes, Brahmin, Rajputs and the like, have come to dominate the political, social and economic life not only of the Tarai but increasingly also at the national level. The other community which has dominated trade and commerce in the Tarai as well as in Kathmandu is that of the Marwaris. Their influence can be seen mostly in the fast-growing industrial centres along the border. But even Marwaris are beginning to take some interest in the socio-political life of the nation.

The Tharus, Danuwars and other minority groups of the Tarai are farmers, fishers and hunters. They have dwelt longest in the Tarai, prima-

THE PEOPLE

rily in forested areas, and have only relatively recently come under the influence of the more numerous and dominant classes, the Brahmins, Rajputs and others. Their religion and language have been greatly influenced by those of their Hindu neighbours, but they still retain tribal religious patterns and distinct dialects. They are probably the truly indigenous people of the regions. They seem to be the most provincial of all the people in Nepal. They do not maintain any strong traditions about their origin except for mythological ties with the Indian plains. But these ties are very tenuous. They are the only original people of the Tarai who exhibit any mongoloid features in their physiognomy. They are very peaceful and shy. Their villages consisting of one to two dozen very clean, large, thatched huts, either very close to or usually inside forest clearings have their own styles very different from both the Hindu caste society of the Tarai group identity during the past two decades. This has helped encourage education and political consciousness among them to a considerable extent.

In considering Tibeto-Burman speaking hill peoples, we shall first look at the Newars,⁴ who dominate Kathmandu Valley. Racially they exhibit a mixture of Mongoloid and Aryan features, with the former predominating. Their language is essentially Tibeto-Burman, but has incorporated a profusion of words derived from Sanskrit. In contrast to the bulk of Nepal's population, living in villages and dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, the Newars are traditionally town-dwellers, and constitute a class of traders and craftsmen. Many are also employed as civil servants. Their role as traders has led them to spread far and wide over the entire nation. Today, one finds Newars in virtually every bazaar town from border to border. In spite of this dispersion, Newars have retained a social-cultural identity, with strongest ties to their origins in Kathmandu Valley.

Newars' religious traditions indicate great tolerance, for alongside Hinduism one finds Buddhism, and the two are often interwoven and fused to an extremely fine degree. The caste system brought by the Hindu arrivals from the south, has permeated Buddhism as well as Hinduism and one finds, for example, the caste hierarchy among Newar Buddhists including as many as fifteen levels, from the various priestly roles, the crafts and trades, men down to the lowly sweeper.⁵

4 Gopal Singh Nepali, *The Newars: An Ethno-Sociological Study of a Himalayan Community* (Bombay: United Asia Publications, 1965), 476 pp.

5 Christoph von Furrer Haimondorf, "Elements of Newar Social Structure, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol, 86, Part 11 (1956), pp. 15-38.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

Newar social institutions include the joint family which lives in large houses built in long rows, often two and three storeys high, along the bazaar streets. Related family or caste communities in Kathmandu, Patan, Bhadgaon and the smaller towns of Kathmandu Valley often live around a central courtyard within which one finds the family shrines and other related religious institutions. The houses are most often found to be of the large, well-built variety, of baked brick, using timbers and tiles for the roof. Long verandas overlooking the alley ways below are prominent. Store fronts on the ground floor open on to the street. Intricately carved designs on the wooden window are the speciality of Kathmandu Valley Newar houses. For the most part, the Newars have left their imprint upon the bazaar town designs and institutions by virtue of their great number and economic influence.

Throughout the middle hills, and only recently in the newly opened Tarai farmlands, live the Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloid peoples, the Kiratis-Rais and Limbus of the east, the Gurungs, and Magars of the western and central hill regions and the Sunuwar, Jirels and Tamangs of near east and the hills surrounding Kathmandu Valley. Their economy has always been agrarian. In the past two hundred years they, and the Chhetris of the hills, have had a great role in the military. These hillmen have been the main source of recruits for the Gorkha regiments of the British and Indian Armies. Today active service pay and army pensions account for a great share of their cash income.

The Kiratis, the eastern-most of these people, live up to and even beyond the borders of West Bengal and Sikkim. Some Lepcha have still retained their houses in the eastern most district of Ilam although most are found in Sikkim and Darjeeling. Sunuwar and Jirels live in districts east of Kathmandu Valley, and from there westward one finds Tamang settlements. Further west, in the districts abutting the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges and encircling Pokhara Valley, live the Gurungs, a farming and herding people, who make use of the high Himalayan pastures for their sheep and goats.

The religion of all these Mongoloid ethnic groups is heavily influenced by Hinduism, much more so among Magars and Sunuwar than among the others. Those groups living contiguous to the northern border regions and along the Himalayas have felt the impact of Lamaistic Buddhism. A

THE PEOPLE

third element of importance is their own tribal tradition based on Shamanism and spirit worship. All these groups speak various Tibeto-Burman dialects not mutually intelligible. Sometimes the same ethnic cultural group, such as the Rai, speaks several dialects, each confined to one valley. The Nepali language is RES QUI RED as a *Lingua franca* for intergroup communication.

House types for all Nepali people are directly related to the geography. In general, one can say that throughout the middle hills, stone and mud, with thatch or slate for roofing, are the chief house building materials. A prevalence in one area or another of stone, or mud brick, bamboo matting, thatch or slate material, is indicative only of what is locally available, and cannot readily be ascribed to any one group or people of another.

Two generalizations about house types in the hill villages can be made, however. One is that the village houses of these tribal peoples tend to be less substantial than those of Newars in the neighbouring bazaar towns. A one or two storey structure seems to be sufficient. Often the first level is the living level for an entire family, and the second level is used for storage of grain and supplies. The other generalization is that in the east, villages appear to be scattered widely across the ridges, with houses standing amidst one's own fields. In the west most villages are compact units, and one must leave its confines to go to the fields.

The higher hills are inhabited by yet another group of Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloid people, the Tamangs. They are Lamaistic Buddhists. Tamangs also live in the hills around Kathmandu Valley, with heaviest concentrations in the north-east and north-west. The majority are tenant farmers, load-carriers and wood-cutters. To a lesser degree they have taken to military service.

High in the Himalayas and north along the border with Tibet dwell the Himalayan people. They include such groups as the Dolpa people, Manangba, and Lopa of the west, the Himalayan people of upper Arun and Tamur Valley in the east, and the Sherpa of Solukhumbu, the Mt. Everest region. All are Lamaistic Buddhists, except for a few Bonpos. Their languages are various Tibetan dialects, their dress and physical features reflect their Tibetan heritage. Because of the harsh geographic and climatic conditions of their environment, they tend toward herding yak and sheep, and trading along

the border. Farming is negligible, except for a few fields of wheat or barley, grains and potatoes. The Sherpas have, in addition, taken to mountaineering, and have thereby made a name for themselves far beyond Nepal.

The region of Thak Khola, along the Kali Gandaki river of western Nepal, lies between the middle hills and the northern border. Its people, the Thakali and their neighbours north toward Mustang, are not truly middle hill-men, and yet should not be classified as true Himalayan people either. They are traders, herdsmen and farmers all three, though the later occupation is limited due to the harsh, dry climate of Thak Khola. Of late, Thakali traders cut off from the traditional intercourse between India, Nepal and Tibet, have migrated south and in many cases have all but cut the social ties with their homeland. Thakalis can be found all the way to the Indian border, in positions of prestige and wealth. Others migrate south during the dry winter season to establish inns along the western trade routes.

In Thak Khola, they live in compact villages, in apartment like dwellings built one upon the other, constructed of mud, stone and wood. The houses are flat roofed, and enclose an inner courtyard and stable area for livestock. Each village has a Buddhist monastery or shrine. In these aspects they resemble the Tibetans to the north. In recent years Hindu religious practices and social customs have been adopted in earnest by a majority of Thakalis in search of higher social status in the eyes of their Hindu neighbours to the south. The dialects of the Thakalis are of Tibeto-Burman origin, and are not far removed from the Gurung language of the middle hills.

All that has been discussed so far accounts for the different origins and cultural development of the different groups of people. But the Nepali society of today presents a unique combination of peoples of different origins who have come from different directions at different periods of history and have blended into one national identity having singular characteristics. The identification of Nepal as "the only Hindu kingdom of the world" is a grossly oversimplified statement, because Nepalis have always represented numerous deviations from the Hindu standard of behaviour as codified in the *Manusmriti* or as understood in the existing literature by most people around the world. Very few people, for example, stick to the professions prescribed for their castes. As a result the caste names are not much different from family names or tribal names which do not have connotations of caste occupations. For instance, it is very common to find hill Brahmins pursuing almost

THE PEOPLE

every conceivable job other than the priestly profession. The same thing applies to the Bajracharya and Sakhybhikshu, the two highest castes within the Buddhist hierarchy of the Newars. We run into many Lamas from among the Tibetan Buddhists of the northern hills who are neither priests nor ritual specialists but are in other professions instead. Shamans (Jhankri) in Nepal come from practically every tribe or religious group such as Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim and every caste including Brahmins and untouchables, and their influence is more widespread than that of Brahmin priests. In the Buddhist community of Kathmandu it is quite common to find families named Chitrakar (painter), Tamrakar (copper worker), Tuladhar (business people) and many others who would not even dream of following the profession indicated by their caste names. They are not very different from the Goldsmiths, Smiths, and Millers among the Christians in England or America.

It has been mentioned earlier that the Aryans who were locally called Khas came into Nepal from the west. These Khas later came to be known as "Khas-Bahun" as the Brahmin immigrants from India joined them. Khas-Bahun gradually moved eastward joining with the prior arrivals of the Tibeto-Burman speaking Kirati, Gurung, Magar, Newar and the like as they arrived and settled in the sub-Himalayan regions, the middle hills of Nepal. Ever since then they have been gradually moving further and further east. This trend has continued for centuries into present times, and analysis of the movement eastward across the Nepali border into the regions of Sikkim, West Bengal, Bhutan, Assam, and other nearby areas shows that today these migrating peoples are not only Khas-Bahun or "Brahman-Chhetri" as they tend to be called today, but also Tibeto-Burman speaking groups. They are basically Nepali, disregarding, as it were, their ethnic identities in favour of identifying themselves as a single community. In general these migrating Nepalis, living outside of the country, have discarded their ethnic languages, and speak Nepali almost exclusively.

The movement eastward across Nepal's eastern border is a continuing phenomenon and in a sense has completed its circuit with the several thousand Nepali repatriates who have come back to Nepal from Burma, whereas the immigration across the western border from Kumaon has ceased. This eastern movement has always been in search of land, it seems. The further east one goes all through south and south-east Asia, the more virgin lands and opportunities one finds. The oldest and most well-used lands are always found westward.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

For these same reasons, there is a current movement of people southward from the hills into the fertile Tarai and inner Tarai lands of Nepal. This movement has been greatly stimulated by the recent removal of the scourge of Malaria from many jungle areas and also by the pressure of increasing population on available resources in the hills.

Two other patterns of population movement are those across the northern and southern borders. Migration from India to the south has primarily been in search of land. One sees a trend to move further and further into the forested regions of Nepal, until recent government measures have discouraged this movement to a certain extent.

The traditional movement southward from Tibetan lands into the north of Nepal has been prompted by the search for better living conditions. Some, arriving as religious pilgrims, stayed behind and settled in the higher Himalayas. Since the late nineteen fifties, thousands of Tibetan refugees have fled south into Nepal. Many have stayed although many others have either returned to Tibet or gone on to India.

Newars represent a still different kind of movement pattern. Their traditional realm is Kathmandu Valley. For the past two hundred years, however, Newar merchant traders and craftsmen have moved in all directions, east, west, north and south. In every area of Nepal now one finds Newar bazaars and crafts centers. For the Newars have always moved in order to trade and seldom to farm lands.

Because of these past and present movements outlined above, the population distribution of Nepal is influx. This has been one of the main factors facilitating the process of nationalization of foreign diverse groups into a unified and harmonious community. At the same time, even though migrations have been taking place around them, groups which have remained in their traditional homelands still maintain some degree of ethnic and cultural distinction.

Traditionally, the highest density of population per square mile has been in the middle ranges of Nepal, primarily because this has been the most hospitable region in which to live and adapt to an agricultural existence. The middle hills, as discussed, have been the route of the migration pattern west to east, and have attracted peoples in greater numbers than the northern and southern border regions.

THE PEOPLE

In recent years, however, the traditional pattern has been greatly altered. A comparison of census accounts between the period 1952-1954 and 1962 shows that the southern and south-eastern regions of the country, that is the inner Tarai and the Tarai areas along the Indian border, have made substantial gains in population over the calculated general rise in population country-wide. This holds true also in the western Tarai and inner Tarai regions traditionally regarded as the least hospitable areas in Nepal which means that even more people are moving south now than in the past.

Panchayat democracy has provided effective organization at different levels, from the village upward, making possible the participation of every individual adult citizen of the country in its political, economic, and social affairs. This has gone a long way to develop a feeling of being part of the national polity, beyond the confines of separate cultural, linguistic, or ethnic groups. Increased educational facilities and the new legal code are working to achieve the same goal. While maintaining pride in their distinctive traditions and cultural heritage, the primary loyalty of all the people is to the nation, the unified kingdom of Nepal.

(1972)

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CHAPTER 4

Political History

—*Surya Bikram Gewali*

The Kingdom of Nepal, the home of the world famous Gorkhas, was formed only in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Before its consolidation into a single kingdom it was divided into over 50 principalities and tribal organizations. The history of Nepal before its formation into a single united kingdom under the Shah rulers is the story of the exploits of some of these principalities. The three most important of these were situated in what is now known as the Kathmandu valley.

According to the chronicles, the first rulers of this valley were the Gopals (cow-herds) and Ahirs (buffalo-keepers). They were followed by the rulers of the ancient tribe of Kirats, who are mentioned in the *Mahabharat*¹ the great Hindu epic, and other ancient books of the Hindus. The chronicles of Nepal assert that a Kirat king of the valley went over to the side of the Pandavas to take part in the great battle which they fought with the Kauravas. After a long period of rule by the Kirats, the valley was ruled for a short time by the Chandravamsi kings (literally, “of the lunar dynasty”) of whom almost nothing is known. This dynasty was followed by that of the Lichchavis who appear to have migrated into the valley from North Bihar in India and established a monarchy there in the first or second century A.D. We do not know much about these Lichchavi rulers who ruled Nepal before

1 The *Mahabharat* is the *Iliad* of the Hindus. It tells the story of a long struggle between two branches of a family, in which the Pandava branch finally gained victory over the Kauravas.

the middle of the fifth century. It is recorded in the Allahabad² pillar inscription of Samundragupta (ca. 330–380 A.D.), the great Gupta monarch who ruled over most of North East India, that Nepal along with other frontier kingdoms of the region paid tribute and homage to him.

With the waning of Gupta power in India, Lichchavi rule in Nepal began to grow and prosper. Under the great Lichchavi King, Manadeva (ca. 464–505 A.D.), whose inscription of Changu Narayan is perhaps the oldest of the Lichchavi inscriptions found to date, recalcitrant tribes of the east and west were defeated and the country appears to have grown in prosperity. In the beginning of the seventh century Lichchavi rule had to face a political crisis when the power of the Lichchavi king was usurped by the chief feudal barons of the Thakuri and Gupta families. The first to do so was Amshuvarma, the scion of a Thakuri family, who was the chief feudal baron of Shiva Deva, the Lichchavi. Inscriptions show that this powerful baron issued charters in his own name, a right reserved for the monarch alone. Amshuvarma was a man of many talents and has been mentioned by the Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsang, who was in India from 629 to 645 A.D., as the author of a treatise on etymology. The Chinese pilgrim also spoke of the Lichchavi rulers of Nepal as scholars and devout Buddhists. Friendly relations with Tibet developed in this period and Bhrikuti, a daughter of Amshuvarma, was married to Srong-San-Gampo (ca. 629–650) of Tibet. This Tibetan ruler also married a Chinese princess and both these princesses helped in the propagation of the Buddhist faith in Tibet. New routes through the Nepal mountains leading to Tibet were discovered at this time and caravans of merchants passed between Nepal and Tibet along these routes.

After the death of Amshuvarma, the post of the chief feudal baron was taken over by the Guptas, one of the noble families of the valley and the Lichchavi kings became only an adornment to a throne devoid of power. The legitimate heir to the Lichchavi throne was driven away and the throne was usurped by a collateral. Under Narendra Deva, the Lichchavi Dynasty managed to get back the throne perhaps with the help of the Tibetans and curbed the power of the Gupta barons.

Narendra Deva was friendly³ with China as well as Tibet. He is

² A city in Uttar Pradesh, India, about 400 miles to the east of Delhi.

³ He provided military help to a Chinese punitive expedition against a North Indian Kingdom which had maltreated a Chinese Envoy.

POLITICAL HISTORY

known to have sent missions to China. Similarly the successors of Narendra Deva laid the foundations of friendship with India by entering into matrimonial alliances with Indian Royal Families. Thus, Nepal in the seventh and eighth centuries maintained friendly relations with Tibet and China on the one hand and India on the other.

The Lichchavi period, it appears, came to an end in the ninth century. A new era known as the Nepal Era began in the valley from 879 A.D. and though the history of Nepal passes through a dark period at this time, it may be assumed that this era marks the end of effective Lichchavi rule in the valley.

An important event during those dark centuries was the foundation of the city of Kathmandu in the valley also known by the same name, by Gunakama Deva towards the end of the tenth century. Kathmandu remained the capital of the country even after the unification of the kingdom of Nepal in the eighteenth century.

In the beginning of the 13th century when the thread of history can be picked up again we find Ari Malla upon the throne of the valley kingdom. This was the beginning of the rule of the Malla dynasty which lasted more than five and a half centuries till the latter part of the 18th century.

A few centuries before Malla rule was established in the valley, another Malla dynasty, unconnected with the Mallas of the Kathmandu valley, ruled in West Nepal in the basin of the river Karnali and in western Tibet. It is difficult to tell the exact time when the western Malla dynasty came into power in this area but it is believed that it began to rule from about the 11th century. These Mallas, who professed both Hinduism and Buddhism and were divided into two houses of Palas and Mallas, ruled over a vast territory comprising the western districts of Tibet including Guage (the area south of the Sutlej), Pureng (the south eastern part of the Sutlej) and the basin of the Karnali river. The southern limit of their kingdom was the present village of Malawara in the Karnali district in the Tarai. Nagraja of the Malla dynasty in about the 12th century established his capital at Sinja in Jumla. It appears that soon afterwards their winter capital was established at Dullu, south of Jumla. Krachalla, the sixth king after Nagraja, invaded the ancient kingdom of Kumaon in 1223 and conquered it. Prithvi Malla, the last

powerful king of this dynasty, ruled towards the end of the fourteenth century. After him the Malla rule went into decline and the Baisi (the 22) kingdoms of the west Nepal emerged as the successor states to the Malla Empire. In the meantime the Chaubisi (24) kingdoms arose in the basin of the Gandaki river further to the east of these principalities. A word on the origin of these kingdoms.

Due to the rise of Muslim power in India, Rajputs and other Hindus had been migrating from the plains of India to the western hills of Nepal during the previous centuries. The sparsely populated areas of the western hills from the Mahakali river to the Kali Gandaki river were parcelled out among these migrating Rajputs and thus the Baisi and Chaubisi Kingdoms were formed. When one of these kings died, he divided his kingdom among his sons and new kingdoms sprang up like mushrooms. The local tribal population was not, on the whole, hostile to the newcomers and eventually forty six such kingdoms were formed in the course of centuries. Between these two groups of princedoms known as the Baisi and Chaubisi were pockets where the rule of the martial tribes of Nepal such as Magars and Gurungs prevailed.

Some of the Baisi and Chaubisi states were rich and influential, having territorial possessions in the Tarai and political relationships with Indian Muslim rulers. Doti, one of the 22 states in the extreme west, was large enough to wage wars with the Chand rulers of Kumaon, (in present day India) from time to time. But most of these princedoms were small, poor, and of little note. This, in brief, is the picture of the western hills of Nepal, before the eighteenth century.

Towards the end of the eleventh century, the powerful kingdom of Simraongarh (now in Narayani Zone) was founded in the Tarai, by Nanya Deva, an adventurer from Southern India. Soon, he was able to establish his rule in the whole of Mithila (this is the Tarai part of the region between the Gandaki and Narayani, and included large parts of present day Bihar) and thus, the Kathmandu valley had a powerful neighbour to the south. The growth of Muslim power in India, subsequently, brought about the fall of the dynasty of Nanya Deva. Harisingh Deva, the last ruler of the dynasty, was compelled to leave his country, being unable to withstand the onslaughts of Ghiyasuddin Tugluq, the Sultan of Delhi, in 1324. He left and entered the valley, where it appears, he died soon after. This episode in Nepalese history

POLITICAL HISTORY

has given rise to the myth, also perpetrated by the Malla kings of the divided valley, that they were descended from Harisingh Deva's ancient and famous lineage.

Let us now resume the story of the valley, and see what happened to the descendants of Ari Malla, the first Malla ruler of the valley, in the thirteenth century. Though surrounded by high hills all around, the valley was not invulnerable and it had to bear the brunt of several invasions from outside.

Before the advent of Harishingh Deva, the chronicles of the valley, describe two invasions made in quick succession by the western Malla kings. Jayatari Malla twice invaded the valley, about 1288, and Ripu Malla, of the same dynasty, invaded it in about 1313. Soon after the episode of Harisingh Deva, Aditya Malla is said to have invaded the country in about 1328. About the middle of the fourteenth century, the valley kingdom had to face a greater calamity than these three western Malla invasions. In 1350, a Muslim predator from Bengal, invaded the valley and caused rack and ruin there. Shamsuddin Iliyas Shah of Bengal, who, perhaps, was attracted by the wealth of the valley, sent his army there, causing destruction of Hindu temples and Buddhist holy places. But the Muslim army left the country after some time and the religious people of the valley soon repaired the damage and restored life to normal. This was the first and the last Muslim invasion of the valley.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Jayasthiti Malla sat upon the throne of the valley kingdom. He brought about major changes in the political, administrative and social structure of the society. But he is remembered mostly for his social reforms. It appears that a large number of refugees from India, specially from neighbouring Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, came to the valley during this time, being hard pressed by Muslim conquerors. These refugees had to be settled and their places fixed and defined in the society. To accomplish this, Jayasthiti Malla enforced a rigid caste system for the whole of valley society. Along with the Hinduisation of society, he introduced new methods of land measurement, and distributed the land among his nobles, following feudal patterns. Though his rule lasted for a short time only, he holds a high place among the rulers of the Nepal valley, because of the various reforms he introduced.

Jayasthiti's grandson, Yakshya Malla, who was already on the throne about 1428, ruled until almost the end of the fifteenth century, when he

divided the kingdom among his sons, following the practice prevailing at that time in the western hills. Eventually, the three independent kingdoms of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan, (also known as Lalitpur) were formed in the valley. These kingdoms of the valley were well-developed city-civilizations. The countryside surrounding them was fertile and large and they had a lucrative trade with Tibet, inherited from the ancient Lichchavi rulers of Nepal. The division of the valley into three kingdoms was, therefore, the division of wealth, or the potentiality of earning wealth by trade. This led to mutual jealousies and hostilities among these kingdoms and rendered them an easy prey to the lean and hungry invaders from the western hills.

Let us now turn to the western hills again, and see how political life was developing there. Ever since the fall of the powerful Malla kings in the fourteenth century, their Tibetan possessions were lost to Nepal forever, and their possessions in Nepal were divided into many principalities. In the confused history of these many principalities, the names of the rulers of Doti (amongst the Baisi (22) and the Senas amongst the Chaubisi (24) stand out. The dynasty of Doti carried on a long, but finally unsuccessful attempt to gain supremacy over Kumaon. The Senas held large areas in both the middle western hills and the Tarai and branches of this family, carried the torch of Rajput conquest, into the Kirati areas, (present day east Nepal) compelling these fierce people to accept them as their overlords.

Of far more significance to the later history of Nepal, was the arrival in Nepal during the 15th century, of the Shah branch of the famous Rajput family of Udaipur. They settled in the Gandaki River basin and after one hundred years, had established about half a dozen kingdoms in this region, which owed allegiance to the state of Lamjung in the mid-sixteenth century.

At this time, Dravya Shah, Prince of Lamjung, went to Gorkha, where he led a successful conspiracy of Brahmins, Chhetris and Magars against the local ruler. So in 1559, he became king of the independent state of Gorkha. Dravya Shah's family in Lamjung, laid claim to Gorkha, but Dravya Shah continued to rule as an independent king, a task made difficult by the fact that Gorkha was very small.

Ram Shah, the fourth successor to Dravya Shah, was a wise administrator and a sagacious ruler and was popular among the hill people, due to the fair and consistent administration of justice in Gorkha. He managed to

POLITICAL HISTORY

extend the north-eastern boundaries of the kingdom of Gorkha, upto present day Rasuwa.

While Dravya Shah and his descendants were consolidating their rule in Gorkha, the three Kingdoms of the Valley were engaged in internecine quarrels among themselves. The root cause of these quarrels was the Tibetan trade. At first, Bhaktapur controlled the main Kuti route leading to Tibet and reaped the major advantage from this trade. But soon after, Kathmandu became aggressive and wrested control of the Kuti route from Bhaktapur. With the acquisition and possession of this most important trade route, Kathmandu grew in importance and wealth. It was very difficult for Bhaktapur to reconcile itself to its lot.

Another source of friction between the valley kingdoms, was that Mahendra Malla, King of Kathmandu from about 1560 and 1574, obtained the privilege of minting coins for Tibet, which had none of its own. The purchase of all gold and silver imported from Tibet was the privilege of Kathmandu and thus it became rich and powerful. The neighbouring kingdoms of Patan and Bhaktapur tried to obtain a portion of the Tibetan trade but the lion's share continued to go to Kathmandu. This, in brief, was the cause of the continuing quarrels among them. The kings of Gorkha and other Chaubisi Kingdoms took advantage of this situation and joined one side or the other in the quarrels and reaped what advantage they could.

The whole of the seventeenth century passed in this way. Gorkha was repeatedly assailed by neighbouring Lamjung during this period. At last, Prithvi Narayan Shah succeeded his father, Nar Bhupal Shah, upon the throne of Gorkha in 1742 (B.S.). Prithvi Narayan Shah was aware of the quarrelsome politics of the kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley and also of the power vacuums towards the south, due to the weak position of the nominal Mogul ruler and obviously saw, the time was ripe for creating a large and powerful territorial unit under his rule.

Jaya Prakash Malla ascended the throne of Kathmandu in about 1735 on the death of his father Jagajaya Malla. He was not liked by his nobles, who conspired against him with a view to ousting him from the throne. They organized a rebellion against him, as a result of which, his brother was declared king of a part of the kingdom of Kathmandu. Considering the time opportune, Prithvi Natrayan Shah captured Nuwakot which lies between

Gorkha and Kathmandu. Jaya Prakash Malla attempted to drive Shah's armies from this valley, but was unsuccessful. Control of the valley gave Shah control of the Keroung Pass route to Tibet and put him in a favourable position to capture the Kuti Pass Route, the most important trade route with Tibet.

Once the Nuwakot valley was secured, Prithvi Narayan Shah began to capture strategic places in the hills surrounding the Kathmandu valley. Conserving meagre resources, he avoided pitched battles in order to reserve his military strength for the defense of Gorkha, should Lamjung or the other western princedoms attack while he was engaged in the conquest of the valley. He contented himself with cutting off the valley's communication with the outside world. In about 1756, Shah was able to capture the route leading to the Kuti Pass and thus, completely cut off the valley's trade with Tibet. He had also now surrounded the valley on almost all sides and was slowly penetrating nearer and nearer to the capitals of the three Kingdoms. Prithvi Narayan Shah coined his own money and tried to capture the trade of the Kuti region and beyond. Nuwakot, his headquarters, became the centre of this trade and Indian merchants from neighbouring Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, who previously traded in Kathmandu, were encouraged to visit Nuwakot for the purpose.

There was at this time, a large Sena Kingdom to the south of the Nepal valley named Makwanpur. Its southern portion included the present Tarai belt and its boundaries in the north touched the Kingdom of Patan. This Sena Kingdom turned hostile to Prithvi Narayan Shah and tried to encourage the Muslim nobles of Bengal to fight against the Gorkha ruler. With the connivance of this Kingdom, they intended to break through Prithvi Narayan Shah's blockade. Prithvi Narayan Shah had to remove this obstacle to his plans for the unification of Nepal. In 1762 he fought and defeated the Sena king and annexed Makwanpur. The capture of Makwanpur brought Prithvi Narayan Shah, not only a large tract of fertile land, but also enabled him to strengthen the blockade of the valley of Nepal.

The Makwanpur enterprise of Prithvi Narayan Shah involved him in a skirmish with the army of Mirkasim, the Nawab of Bengal. Mirkasim was very much dissatisfied with the English East India Company's management of Bengal's affairs and hoped to increase his strength by conquering Makwanpur and perhaps, even the valley of Nepal, and thereby improve his position

POLITICAL HISTORY

vis a vis the English in Bengal. He sent his newly trained army under his Armenian General Gurghin Khan. At first, these invaders met no resistance. But when they began to climb the passes leading to Makwanpur, they were ambushed and routed by the Gorkha forces. The defeat of Mirkasim's army by Prithvi Narayan Shah is important, because it relieved him of extra-neous concerns.

Shah finally began to enter the valley slowly and captured town after town. Patan was reduced to such a straightened condition, that its people and nobles invited him to accept their throne in 1764. Eventually, Jaya Prakash Malla, King of Kathmandu, seeing no alternative to surrender, sought help from the English in Bihar. The English, in their pride of power and ignorance of the nature of hill warfare, thought that they would be able to drive away Shah's army without much effort. So they sent a contingent of soldiers under Major Kinloch to the aid of Jaya Prakash Malla in 1767. The English force met with no opposition till it reached the Sindhuli Pass, in the east. There, the Gorkhas came out of their hiding places in the hills and jungles and fell upon the invaders, inflicting heavy losses. The defeat of the English completely shattered the hopes of Jaya Prakash Malla, while adding to Prithvi Narayan Shah's store of fire arms.

On the 25th of September 1768, as the festival connected with Indra Yatra was being celebrated at Kathmandu, Prithvi Narayan Shah and his men marched to the place where the festival was being celebrated, with a vacant throne for the king of Kathmandu to occupy, according to ancient custom. On reaching the spot, the Gorkha King sat upon the vacant throne and was hailed by his men as their King. Jaya Prakash Malla managed to escape with his life to Patan, but when Patan was captured a few weeks later, he and the King of Patan both fled to Bhaktapur, the last stronghold of the valley kingdoms. Prithvi Narayan Shah offered lenient terms of surrender to Ranjit Malla of Bhaktapur, but when these were refused, Bhaktapur was quickly captured. Thus the whole of the ancient valley was annexed to the Kingdom of Gorkha and became the modern nation of Nepal, which celebrated the 200th anniversary of its birth in 1969.

After laying the foundation of the Kingdom of Nepal, Prithvi Narayan Shah turned towards the east and decided to eliminate the two Sena Kingdoms of Choudandi (presently in Saptari District) and Vijayapur (presently Morang District) which were off-shoots of the Kingdom of Makwanpur

already conquered by him. These two kingdoms ruled over the entire mountainous region, extending from the Dudh Kosi river in the west, to the Tamor in the east and to the Tarai districts of Mahottari and Morang in the south. The Sena Kings were trying to seek help from the English to fight Prithvi Narayan Shah. Therefore, Prithvi Narayan Shah decided at once to cross the Dudh Kosi river and meet the brave Rais, on whose strength, the weak Sena Kings of the eastern region solely depended. The Rais were armed with bows and arrows while the Nepalese army had fire arms, but in spite of this, the brave Rais offered stiff resistances to the Nepalese army. After a few battles on the banks of the Arun, however, the Rais were defeated and the boundaries of the Nepalese Kingdoms were extended up to the Arun river.

The hilly country, between the Arun and the Tamor rivers, was populated by another brave tribe, the Libmus. Unlike the Rais, the Limbus decided to capitulate Prithvi Narayan Shah, so they surrendered and became part of the great new nation which was then taking shape. The eastern boundary of Nepal, now reached the Tamor river and the Nepalese soon had control of the Chia Bhanjang Pass leading to Sikkim. Soon after, the Limbus of Ilam, the eastern most district of Nepal at that time, also decided to join the Shah. Now the eastern boundary of the New Kingdom of Nepal reached northeast to the Single La range and the Mechi river and southeast to the Kankai river in the plains.

Soon after these boundaries were established, Prithvi Narayan Shah died on January 10, 1775, at the age of 52. During his lifetime, he was successful in founding the Kingdom of Nepal, extending from the river Marsyangdi in the west, to the rivers Mechi and Kankai in the east and comprising more than one third of the Present Kingdom of Nepal. Thus, Prithvi Narayan laid the foundations for a Nepalese nation composed of peoples from the hills and the Tarai, speaking different languages and having different manners and customs, yet united in their loyalty to the king and country and drawing inspiration for life from the Himalayas and the mountains.

Prithvi Narayan Shah had been in favour of adopting a closed door policy with regard to the English. He was not against trade and commerce as such, but he wanted to establish trade markets only at selected places in the Tarai, for the exchange of merchandise and avoid unnecessary contact with the imperial rulers of India. He also advocated a strictly neutral policy towards Sikkim, Nepal's neighbour to the west, in order to avoid disputes

with Tibet and thus China. He hoped to establish trade marts at the border, between Nepal and Tibet and keep the country closed from the north also. He wanted the hills, surrounding the valley of Nepal, to be fortified and vigilantly protected.

After the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah, his son, Sinha Pratap Shah, who ruled about three years only, wisely continued his father's peaceful policy towards Tibet, as China was once again taking an interest in Tibetan affairs. Sinha Pratap Shah was succeeded by his infant son, Ran Bahadur Shah. The guardianship of the baby king was, at first, given to Bahadur Shah, uncle of the infant king. But eventually Rajendra Lakshmi, the widowed queen mother, who was a lady of considerable ability and judgement, forced Bahadur Shah to flee and took over the regency herself. During her regency it was decided to take up the unfinished work of the conquest of western Nepal, which the great Prithvi Narayan Shah had begun immediately, after his conquest of the Nepal valley. The initial reverses he had met and the necessity of dealing quickly with the hostile Sena Kings of Choudandi and Vijayapur had made him give up the western enterprise. His son, Sinha Pratap Shah during his short reign, avoided the problem in order to maintain good relations with Tibet. Rajendra Lakshmi, now took up the problem and decided to move cautiously towards the west. Her efforts in that direction met with considerable success, as her army was able to defeat many of the Chaubisi states and reach the Kali Gandaki river. But her greatest success was the conquest and annexation in 1782, of the powerful Chaubisi state of Lamjung, which had been the arch-enemy of the kingdom of Gorkha since its inception in 1559.

Queen Rajendra Lakshmi died in 1785 and Bahadur Shah, the banished uncle of the young king, came back from exile and again took up the regency. He continued the policy of conquering and annexing the western states and reached the banks of the Bheri in 1786. Jumla, an ancient and powerful state, was captured in 1789 and Doti, another ancient state, fell in 1790. The Nepalese proceeded further west and captured Kumaon (Almorah) in 1791 and were fighting with Garhwal, when Nepal became entangled in a war with the Chinese which took their attention away from the west.

The major reason behind the war with China lay in the disputes that arose with Tibet, when the new Gorkha rulers tried to assume the old privileges in trade and economics that the valley rulers had traditionally

maintained over Tibet. The actual pretext became a dispute over coinage and the asylum granted by Nepal to the leader of a Tibetan faction, but at the heart of the problem lay the whole question of the valley's privileges in trans-Himalaya trade, which was what made the valley such a desirable objective for conquest.

Bahadur Shah, under whose able guidance, Nepal had extended its boundaries in the west to Almorah, forgot the cautious Tibetan policy of his illustrious father, Prithvi Narayan Shah, and decided to settle this long-standing problem by resorting to arms. A ready pretext was found in warlike preparations being made by Tibet and the failure of the Tibetan authorities to permit the transmission of letters sent by Nepal to the Emperor of China, through the Chinese representative at Lhasa. And a Nepalese army was sent to Tibet in 1788. The Nepalese were successful in capturing the Keroung and Kuti passes. The Chinese representative at Lhasa intervened and a pact was signed between Tibet and Nepal in which Tibet promised to pay about Rs. 50,000 annually to Nepal. A deputation of Nepalese representatives was sent to China and it was believed that the problem of Nepal's relationship with Tibet was solved. The stipulated amount was paid by the Tibetans the next year, but payment was not made the third year. So in 1791, the Nepalese again invaded Tibet and reached Shigatse. Tashi Lumpo, a monastery, was sacked and the Nepalese army came back with booty and two Tibetan high officials whom they had captured. When news of the Nepalese invasion reached China, the Manchu King, Chienlung, sent a large army to Tibet to punish the Nepalese. On Nepal's refusal to return the captured Tibetan generals and the booty, and also to deliver back Shamerpa Lama (the factional leader to whom Nepal had given asylum) to the Chinese, the Emperor's army marched from Tibet to Nepal. The Nepalese attempted to resist the Chinese advance, but were compelled by superior force to retreat to Nepal.

Faced with an overwhelmingly larger force, the Nepalese resorted to a scorched-earth policy and retreated using harrying tactics on the invaders. The Chinese line of Communications and supply lengthened as they followed. As these lines stretched over the barrier of the Himalayas and the unacclimatised Chinese troops had to move in mountainous territory with its unending fold upon fold of hills and valleys, they began to find progress increasingly difficult. Finally at the banks of the Betravati, which was only 25 miles northwest of Kathmandu, both sides found it opportune to come to

POLITICAL HISTORY

terms. The war ended without a decisive victory on either side and the Nepalese agreed to return the captured officials. The previous treaty of 1780 imposed by Nepal on Tibet was abrogated and the treasure of the sacked monastery of Tashi Lumpo was returned. Nepal agreed to send a quinquennial mission bearing gifts to the court of the Chinese Emperor. This agreement was to prove profitable to the rulers of Nepal, both because the magnificent gifts sent in exchange by the Chinese emperor were far more valuable than those sent by Nepal and because this relationship with China could be cited as a counterpoise to the emergent claims of British colonialism in the south.

Freed from war with China, the Nepalese again took up the unfinished war in the west. They annexed Garhwal and proceeded into the present north Indian province of Himachal Pradesh and annexed the hill states one by one. In the end they crossed the banks of the Sutlej and invaded the famous, ancient Fort of Kangra. The Nepalese by now aspired to establish their rule in the Himalayas from Sikkim to Kashmir. At this time they already ruled Sikkim and the river Tista (the eastern boundary of present day Sikkim) was their eastern boundary. However, the fascinating idea of forming a Himalayan state of Himalayan peoples was an idea which still required much effort for its fulfilment. At this time Ranjit Singh, the great Sikh ruler of the Punjab, was trying to establish his power in the Punjab and its neighbouring hills. The similar objectives of the Gorkhas and the Sikhs were bound to collide. Ranjit Singh agreed to help Sansar Chand, King of Kangra, against the Nepalese. The Sikhs and the Nepalese thus came to blows and the ill-equipped and resourceless Nepalese army had to give in. Thus the Nepalese were compelled to relinquish all their possessions on the northwestern side of the Sutlej and bide time on its southern bank.

The Nepalese also had differences with the British in India, regarding the long land frontier in the Tarai. Both sides claimed this as their own: The Nepalese, because they had received the Tarai through agreement with the states conquered by the British; the British, by virtue of the tenuous lines held over these territories by these very same states which they had conquered. Charges and counter-charges were made, and enquiries instituted. At last Marquis Hastings, the Governor General of India, considering the time opportune, started a war with the Nepalese at the Nalapani river (at the extreme western point of Nepalese held territory). Though the Nepalese were now pitted against a powerful enemy, they had no alternative but to

fight as they could. During the first phase of the war, they inflicted severe damage on the British and showed remarkable bravery and tenacity, which drew praise from their adversary and aroused the interest of the princes of India, who could have been potential allies against the British. At Dehradun the Nepalese hero, Balbhadra Kunwar, with a small army was able to resist the British attack and inflict heavy losses. A British General and many others were killed. Similarly, Amar Singh Thapa, the Nepalese commanding general, showed great ability by frustrating the designs of the British commander, Ochterlony, and in the Kumaon hills Hastidal Shah proved himself an able warrior. In the Tarai also, the English met with some reverses. But in the end, the superior weapons and the larger army of the British proved too strong for the Nepalese and they were compelled to withdraw from all their possessions west of the Mahakali river. Yet the war-like spirit of the Nepalese was not satisfied and skirmishes continued. General Ochterlony was sent with a large army from the Terai to ransack Kathmandu. Nepal was finally compelled to accept the treaty of Sugouli in 1816 and relinquish all her acquisitions west of the Mahakali river and east of the Mechi river in the Himalayas. These rivers were fixed as Nepal's western and eastern boundaries. A British resident was to be appointed for Kathmandu and the Nepalese were not to be permitted to have direct communication with any western power.

At this time the king of Nepal was minor and the power of the state was in the hands of Bhimsen Thapa, an able administrator. Thapa restrained the Nepalese from aggression against the British in India, on the one hand, and on the other, he tried to improve the administration and make the country strong and self-supporting. He wielded enormous power from 1806 to 1835 in Nepal during the minority of Girban Yuddha Bikram Shah and his son, Rajendra Bikram Shah, and thus foreshadowed the subsequent rise to absolute power of the Ranas, under Jung Bahadur and his brothers and cousins. The accident of the minority of the two kings was the cause of Bhimsen Thapa's power, while Jung Bahadur wrested power from Rajendra Bikram Shah, having dethroned him and put his son, Surendra Bikram Shah as a puppet ruler on the throne.

Thapa's death in 1839, combined with the unsteadiness of the king, led to a scramble for power among the nobles and this period is marked with bloodshed and murder. In 1846 Jung Bahadur, the founder of Rana rule in Nepal, emerged as a powerful and clever leader after the notorious

POLITICAL HISTORY

Kot Massacre, in which a large number of his rivals were put to death. He ousted King Rajendra Bikram Shah and his son, Surendra Bikram Shah, was made king. Jung Bahadur managed, by appointing his brothers to all the key posts in the country, to wield enormous power. So much so, that the established Rana Maharaja became the *de facto de jure* ruler.

Jung Bahadur helped the British in suppressing the Indian Mutiny in 1857–58 in Oudh, and was instrumental in securing, from them for Nepal, a few districts of the western Tarai, which became known as Naya Muluk. Though the income from these districts was treated as the personal property of Jung Bahadur and his brother, the acquisition of this territory was ultimately valuable for Nepal. Jung Bahadur visited England in 1850, being the first subcontinental ruler to do so. His visit brought much publicity for Nepal in the countries he visited. He codified the laws and improved the administration in various ways. His rule brought stability to the country and firmly established the hold of the Ranas over the fortunes of the country. Jung Bahadur's rule is also significant for the second Tibet-Nepal war in which Nepal won a decisive victory over Tibet and established a tributary relationship over her. But he also imparted to his authority, the character of a ruling system, primarily designed to serve the interests of a single family.

The fifth Rana prime-minister, Chandra Shumshere, who came to power at the beginning of the 20th century, was considered to be an enlightened ruler and is remembered for the emancipation in 1925, of about 60,000 slaves in Nepal. Chandra Shumshere was also responsible for obtaining the revision of the humiliating treaty of Sugouli with the British. All the clauses of the previous treaty, diminishing or curtailing the sovereign status of Nepal, were abrogated and the independence of Nepal, was fully recognised by the British Government in 1923. As a result of this treaty, Juddha Shumshere, the seventh Rana prime minister, was able to establish direct diplomatic relations with Britain by sending an ambassador from Nepal to the court of St. James in London. Mohan Shumshere, the last prime minister entered into a treaty relationship with the United States and effected an exchange of ambassadors with that country.

Chandra Shumshere remains the most enlightened Rana prime minister. He established the first modern college (Tri-Chandra College) at Kathmandu and tried to ameliorate the condition of the people, by developing electricity, providing modern amenities of life, improving means of

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

communication, and by various other ways. From a ruler of his caliber, it was expected that he would understand the demands of the twentieth century and act according to its spirit. Yet, he failed to rise above the internal pressures and the vested interests of the family to meet the challenges of the times, in democratising the regime and assimilating popular elements. Although the seventh Rana, Juddha Shumshere, was instrumental in the establishment of a modern bank and a few industries, he, like the rest of the successors of Chandra Shumshere, was basically a typical autocratic ruler.

Rana rule lasted in Nepal for 104 years, from 1846 to 1950, but even after such a long time, it failed to win popular support. Not that the Ranas did not make contributions to the well-being of Nepal, but they failed to keep up with the times. Instead of keeping Nepal abreast of the tumultuous changes occurring the world-over, and particularly in India in the first-half of the twentieth century, they attempted to keep Nepal unchanged, and this, in the end, led to their downfall.

The independence of India, in 1947, brought a complete change in the situation. Up to 1947, the Ranas had relied on their friendship with British, to avoid any external interference with the continuity of their regime. The new popular forces that came into power in India had links with the radical and popular groups in Nepal also. Thus the forces of change there, found a favourable base to the south. King Tribhuvan, who had long chafed at his position as a puppet ruler in the Rana system, forged contact with the new forces and began to encourage and aid them indirectly.

Rana rule lasting for 104 years, thrived on the ignorance of the people and the selfishness of a few families, who were the henchmen of the Ranas. The common man had little interest in the affairs of the country, steeped in ignorance and poverty as he was. The Ranas cleverly took advantage of this situation, by keeping the people at a low level of consciousness and based their system on an iron hierarchy, whose fundamental elements were fear and systemic distrust.

As a first move, the new rulers of India tried to persuade the Rana Regime in Nepal to change its ways and to establish a more democratic form of rule. However the old leaders proved obdurate. Reforms would be legislated and then put into cold storage, so to speak, and never implemented. Finally, India gave up hope of establishing a stable process of reform through

POLITICAL HISTORY

the medium of the Rana Regime. The popular movement which had gathered force at this time capitalized on India's withdrawal of support for the regime.

These developments took a dramatic turn when King Tribhuvan left his palace and took asylum in the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu as a protest against Rana autocracy. By this move, the King capturing leadership of the democratic movement gave legal sanction to the revolution. It is only too apt that he who ushered democracy into the kingdom should have been recognised as the father of the nation by the grateful people.

Nepal has entered the modern age and is treading the path of democracy. Development of the country is going on apace. The crown and the people are one in their outlook and determined to take the country out of the morass of ignorance and poverty to which it had sunk deeper and deeper during a century of Rana rule.

1951 the end of Rana rule, and the initiation of the new monarchic-democratic system of rule marks a definite break between the past and contemporary history. In 1951 Nepal opened its doors to the modern outer world and stepped into the new stream of socio-economic development. It was a time of vivid aspirations and great challenge. We cannot but hope that these aspirations for development and release from the 104 year old marass of ignorance and poverty, will find their resolution in the new institutions forged jointly by the king and the commons of Nepal.

(1971)

CHAPTER 5

Culture and Religion: Its Historical Background

—*Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma*

Nepal is wedged between India on the south and Tibet on the north, and this intermediary position has had a definite bearing on the development of her culture. India and Tibet were the two countries from which Nepal received cultural contributions and through which Nepal passed her achievements to the outside world.

Nepal does not show a simultaneous and uniform development of history everywhere. It is difficult to know how early men settled in Nepal, and from what racial stock they came. The first evidence in Nepal of the Paleolithic period was found in the Gandaki River basin up the Tribeni River in the Naval Parasi district. Isolated neolithic findings are more widespread and have been picked up from Mechi, Ramechhap, Makawanpur, Kathmandu valley, and Dang valley. But this evidence is too meagre and represents only surface findings. As a result it cannot enable us to enlarge the picture of that period of Nepal's pre-history. Still it may be safe to predict that the Chure belt will offer us one day more positive proofs of old stone age culture in Nepal.

In terms of absolute chronology, the Tarai of central Nepal has produced the earliest historical evidence so far. Ashoka, the great Mauryan emperor, on the 20th anniversary of his enthronement in 249 B.C., visited Lumbini and paid homage to the birthplace of Lord Buddha by erecting there a pillar bearing an inscription. Six years before this, he had visited Niglihava,

near Lumbini, and set up a similarly inscribed pillar at the holy site of the stupa of Konakamuni, a previous Buddha. The excavation at Tilaurakot near the modern town of Kapilvastu in the Taulihava district has brought to light the remains of a fortified town from about the 6th century B.C. Because the site is large, and since its location seems to correspond with accounts of Chinese travellers in India, it appears to have been ancient Kapilvastu the capital of the kingdom ruled by the father of Lord Buddha. The chief kinds of pottery found at the earliest level of habitation at the site were the Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Ware. Both were from cultures which seem to have invaded the whole stretch of the Tarai between Kapilvastu and the river Gandaki, for this whole area is full of sites containing these types of wares. These two ancient ceramic industries, each typifying a particular cultural phase, prevailed in northern India between the 11th and 1st centuries B.C. In the Gangetic plains, Grey Ware is found in painted as well as in plain forms. But that found in Nepal is plain with little suggestion of painting. The earliest cultural stratum found in the Central Tarai digs show the two wares overlapping, with the Northern Black Polished Wares predominating after the 5th century B.C. One sees the same succession at Tilaurakot also. This fortified town was much like many other settlements of that time in parts of northern India. The layout of the city, the defence and the general cultural life were very much the same. But the fact that this town was the capital of the Sakyas, the clan of which Buddha belonged, gives great importance to the site.

This central Tarai area of Nepal was kept constantly alive by the cultural impacts of the Mauryans, Sungas, Kushanas, and the Guptas,¹ proof of which was found in the excavations at Tilaurakot and Lumbini. A general cultural decay seems to be evident in this region after the Kushanas, while after the Guptas the region really passed into oblivion. There were, however, a few medieval temples in brick and terracotta, and as such the excavated temple at Kodan is very impressive in its ornamentation.

The historic spotlight is now focussed on the Kathmandu valley, far up in the Himalayan foothills. Of all the parts of the country, this valley alone can offer us an uninterrupted account of human habitation in Nepal from two thousand years ago to this day. The valley is the oldest seat of a characteristic Nepalese culture. Much of its present heritage crystalized

1 Successive dynasties of adjacent India.

CULTURE AND RELIGION

in the form of religious practices and spiritual beliefs expressed in stone, metal, and wooden art and architecture were produced here. The supremacy of Nepal in these spheres remained undiminished until quite recently. This very factor was perhaps responsible for the supreme effort the Gorkha dynasty made to conquer it, and to establish there its capital.

The early history of the Kathmandu valley is legendary, and the accounts are preserved in the traditional chronicles called the Vamsavalis of Hindu and Buddhist origin. These chronicles describe a successive rule of three dynasties (before the rule of the Lichchavis): The Gopalas, the Mahisapalas, and Kiratas. The later chronicles describe even earlier events, for they tell of the days when the valley was a lake, and was visited by various Manushi Buddhas,² and the god Manjushri. The Vamsavalis also tell of the coming of important personalities like the Buddha, Ashoka, and Shankaracharya, the great 8th century exponent of Brahmanical culture. The visits of these important personages cannot be substantiated, however, nor is there evidence of the rule of the above mentioned dynasties prior to the rule of the Lichchavis. Even the spade of the archaeologist has drawn a blank on this question thus far. The earliest cultural strata revealed by excavations at Handigaon and Vishalnagar were both of the Lichchavi period.

Despite the lack of proof, the Kirata tradition in Nepalese history is too deeply rooted to be dismissed easily. The Kiratas are a widely mentioned tribe in ancient Sanskrit literature, especially the Epics. Many references point to the northeastern Himalayan foothills as the home of these people. The Himalayas were still an area outside the sphere of Aryan domination, and the Kiratas therefore seem to differ from them racially. The region between the Dudhkosi and Tamur rivers in eastern Nepal is still known as the Kirata land. Its chief inhabitants, the Rais and the Limbus, claim to be the Kiratas. The features of these people distinctly betray their Mongoloid origin. A traditional story current among them tells how their ancestor came from Tibet to the upper reaches of the Kosi river accidentally, crossing over the Himalayas in search of lost cattle. This led to the discovery of very fertile lands on this side, and finally to settlements on these lands. The fact that Nepal is still home to different tribes of Mongoloid origin such as the Tamangs, Gurungs, and Magars, in addition to the Rais

2 Manushi Bauddhas are men recognized in their own lifetime to be Buddhas.

and the Limbus lends added support to the Kirata theory. The use of the term 'Kirata' in ancient literature seems to have been wide enough to encompass all groups of Mongoloid stock. Thus all these people may be referred to properly by the common name of Kirata. Furthermore, the Lichchavi records of Nepal contain too many place names of non-Sanskrit origin. Had the land not been inhabited by a people speaking quite a different language, it would be a puzzle how these names could have gained currency. If a group of people really lived in Nepal before the Aryans arrived, they could very well be the people called the Kiratas.

The matrix of Nepalese culture in the valley must have been laid by these Kiratas. The modern inhabitants of the valley, the Newars, are believed to be an intermixture of Aryan and Mongoloid strains resulting from the unions between the Kiratas and the Aryans migrating from the plains of India. The early prototype of the Newari language might have struck its first roots also during this time, as this language is considered to be basically of the Tibeto-Burmese group. The liberal assimilation of the Indo-Aryan Sanskrit into the language proceeds only from the time of the Lichchavis, who were responsible for introducing Sanskrit into the land.

In the middle of the 5th century A.D. the history of Nepal emerges from a long obscurity, as sudden as it is spectacular. The earliest inscriptions speak of the reign of King Mahadeva I, the first Lichchavi ruler, who was already on the throne in 464 A.D. The first inscription was carved over a pillar erected at Changu by Manadeva at the end of a successful military campaign against unruly feudal lords east and west of the valley. During the reign of this king ancient Nepal's frontiers were flung to their widest limits ever, from the Gandaki river in the west to the Kosi in the east.

It appears that the Lichchavis in Nepal came from the plains to the south. At the time of the Buddha in the 6th century B.C. their capital was at Vaishali near modern Muzaffarpur. They were a famous clan of the Vajji confederacy which subscribed to a republican form of government. Owing to certain political events of which we have yet no definite idea, some of the Lichchavis made their way into the mountains and came to the Nepal valley, but they were not the only people coming to Nepal. There also came the Ahiras, called the Guptas, and the Varmans. All these played a major role in the Nepalese politics and governments at that time.

CULTURE AND RELIGION

The coming of prominent dynasties from India into Nepal is a significant landmark in Nepalese history. The early history of Aryan culture in Nepal in its manifold forms begins here. One remarkable thing to remember is that whether by sheer coincidence or some definite political reason, all the Indian cultural traditions of Nepal commence from the time of Manadeva. As he was the first Nepali king to erect an inscribed pillar, so did he strike the first coin of Nepal, set up the first temple, commissioned the first sculptures, and established the first monastery. The history of Nepal before Mandeva's time seems to be void because of a lack of records. As this king bears credit for all these works, it appears as if it were he who laid the actual foundation of Nepalese cultural tradition with a conscious effort. The art, architecture, religion, social values and customs, and the system of government of the Nepal valley started assuming a continuity from this time.

The Lichchavis ruled Nepal for about three centuries from the time of Manadeva I. The cultural movement begun by the dynasty continued to gather momentum, and its achievements form the bedrock of Nepalese cultural life.

The influence from the southern plains in the early stages is quite obvious, and Nepal has drunk quite deeply from that source in her art, architecture, religion, and in her social structure. But no cultural idiom was put to use before it was altered to suit the local tastes, aptitudes, and conditions. Present day Newari society is an index, although somewhat remote, to social life in ancient Nepal. We need only look at it a little closely to see many variations from the social life in any part of India, although both are basically Hindu or Buddhist. The same is true of art and architecture. Style and idioms came from different quarters of India, but this did not render Nepalese sculptures characterless. The derived styles were sorted and rearranged into a new and original scheme, giving Nepalese art a distinct individuality.

Not only did the originality of the Nepali artisan mould a characteristic art tradition, but also perhaps Nepal's relative isolation contributed to its distinctive styles. The *Mulasarvastivada*, a Buddhist work, tells a story about Buddha discouraging his disciples from undertaking a journey to Nepal because the way was perilous and infested with wild animals. This difficulty of access left the country isolated and removed from the fast pace of changing events in the Indian plains. The changing boundaries, the crumbling empires,

and the inroads made by the various invading hordes of foreigners made a far reaching impact on Indian life, but little affected Nepal. Its uninterrupted peace and solicitude gave birth to an unbroken cultural pattern, a continuity to all the traditions and ultimately a definite national identity. The isolation never amounted to complete insultation from the outside world however. Peaceful travellers found their way to Nepal, many scholars and pilgrims even settled there.

Nepal's dynastic changes happened quietly and with little violence until the last one which brought the present ruling house of the Shahs to the throne.

The mountainous location of the country also generated a conservative outlook which led to the preservation of traditions and a resistance to change. All aspects of cultural life art and architecture to the style of address in the royal edicts show a striking continuity from the Lichchavis to the Shahs. Symbols and styles were repeatedly produced over a long period of time without any attempt at change. For instance, the Umamaheshvara panels, which depict Shiva and His spouse as the central theme are the most common of all the Shiva sculptures in Nepal. Shiva is shown sitting in his abode on Mount Kailash with all his family. This mode of depicting Shiva which appears in the early Lichchavi period continues down to the early Malla period, without any change in the basic composition on the theme except for minor details. When the god was depicted, he was mostly represented in this form or abstractly, in his phallic form, as a lingam. The eminent art critic, Coomaraswamy, for instance, sees in a 13th century bronze of Avalokiteshvara Padmapani of Nepal, now in the Boston museum, retained styles of the Gupta period. New ideas and styles continued to arrive and to find a ready acceptance in Nepal, but this did not lead to the rejection of the old styles already in vogue. Rather, after some time, both the old and new were blended together in an original synthesis.

Although a small country, Nepal showed a tremendous ability to assimilate all elements present in its midst. People coming from all directions were received and ultimately absorbed beyond recognition into the life of the land. Newari society today is not made up of a single socioethnic strain. It is made up of people who have come to Nepal from different areas and at different epochs. Nepal's power of assimilation seems to have been lost

CULTURE AND RELIGION

gradually towards the late Malla period because of a general decline in cultural dynamism.

In the early Lichchavi period, Nepal, together with India undertook the cultural colonization of Tibet. Buddhism and its concomitant art spread from Nepal to Tibet in the 7th century A.D. According to Tibetan tradition the famous Nepali King Amshuvarman married his daughter Bhrikuti to the first historical King of Tibet, Srong-tsan-Sgam-po. Bhrikuti is said to have carried an image of Buddha among other things as her nuptial present to her husband, and during her lifetime in Tibet, knowledge of Buddhism spread far and wide. After some time Bhrikuti was deified, her memory being forever perpetuated in Tibetan traditions.

Close physical proximity brought about political conflicts between the two countries from time to time, but this was not a lasting phenomenon, and the cultural bonds tying the two countries together became stronger with the passage of time. From the 7th century to the present days, Nepal's relationship with Tibet has been continuously reaffirmed. Nepalese artists, especially bronze makers, painters, and architects went to work in Tibetan monasteries and seminaries, many even settling there. Buddhist scriptures were taken to Tibet to be copied or translated. Ranjana, an ornately elaborate Newari script became the divine script in Tibet, and was used for carving sacred mantras like Om Mani Padme Hum. The different Tantric schools which overwhelmed Tibet also found their way from Nepal as well as India.

An illustrious page in the history of Nepal's relationship with Tibet occurred in the 13th century A.D. when a young Nepali artist named Ar-ni-ko, at the invitation of the abbot of Sa-skya-Monastery, led a group of 80 artists to erect a golden stupa there. It was also via Ar-ni-ko that Nepal's artistic genius spread as far away as Peking. Ar-ni-ko ultimately spent the greater portion of his life in China erecting stupas and creating cast bronze sculptural works there.

It is in the field of religion that Nepal maintained a unique tradition of synthesis and mutual toleration among different faiths. Three main faiths were prevalent in Nepal from the earliest time: Buddhism, Shaivism, and Vaishnavism. It is difficult to say which one of these was introduced first in Nepal. Among them, Vaishnavism does not seem to have made any headway as a

sectarian religion. This is not to say that Vishnu and his diverse forms were not worshipped here, but they were worshipped probably without a sectarian bias as part of Brahmanical religion.

On the other hand, Shiva worship was very popular and was strengthened by cults like those of Pashupati.

Pashupatinath has enjoyed the status of a presiding deity among all Nepali religious groups from the days of Amshuvarman in the early 7th century. In addition the consecrating of Shivalinga has remained a popular practice throughout the years.

Buddhism has permeated even deeper into the life of the land. A large section of Newari society is Buddhist. Nepal abounds with stories, legends, stupas, viharas, icons, and above all, thousands of Buddhist sculptures, some of them dateable from the early Lichchavi period. If the chronicles are to be believed, Buddha and Ashoka came to Nepal in the time of the Kiratas. The sectarian division of Newari society into Shaivas and Buddhists did not seem to impair social life very seriously. Far from it, each group showed respect and veneration for the deity of the other. The literature of the times supported and propagated the spirit of this harmony. Religious institutions in Nepal were maintained and given unbroken continuity through an ingenious device of the *guthi* system, or land endowments.

For several centuries after the Lichchavis, Nepalese history is either totally obscure or just a bare sketch of the rulers about whom we know so little. For five centuries from the 8th to the 13th century there are fewer monuments than from any other period of Nepalese history. What could have been the reason for this sudden eclipse can only be guessed. If the chronicles are to be believed, Nepal was hit by natural calamities of great magnitude such as earthquakes, plagues, and other epidemics from which recovery was very slow.

From the 10th century A.D. onwards, a mystic and esoteric religious literature developed, giving a new approach to the existing religious practices. At this time, the earlier Buddhism grew into powerful Tantric Vajrayana sect. The pantheon was enlarged and importance was attached to a new set of deities. New iconographic forms were prescribed for the gods. The place of mantras or mystic utterances in religion was emphasized not only

for attaining salvation in the life hereafter, but also for acquiring supernatural powers in this life. At the height of growth of Tantrism, the female or Shakti element and sex were freely introduced in both Shaivism and Buddhism, thereby helping to reduce the distinctions between these two sects. Artistically many Vajrayana deities were represented with their consorts, locked in each others arms in the act of coition.

The Chandamaharoshanatantra, a Buddhist Tantric scripture claims that Buddha himself asserted the only sure way to Nirvana is by the union of men and women . The element of six in Tantric Buddhism is backed by the philosophy of Prajnopaya. Prajna and Upaya, supreme knowledge and universal compassion, respectively, are represented as personified deities in the Vajrayana. Vajrasattva represents Upaya and he is embraced by knowledge (Prajna), his consort or female element. Perfection lies thus in the union or complete harmony of these mutually fulfilling powers and this union is also the source of all creation. The erotic carvings on many Nepalese temples are very likely the popular understanding of this philosophy.

In the late 11th century A.D. Nanyadeva of the Karnatak dynasty founded a kingdom called Tirhut with its capital at Simraungarh, east of Birgunj. This kingdom comprised most of present day Nepal's eastern terai and portions of the present Indian state of Bihar. Little is known yet about the full cultural significance of this kingdom. Its sculptural art had reached a highwater mark judging from a fine group of icons found in Simraungarh and several other regions of the eastern terai. The rise of Tirhut posed a new political threat to Nepal, but at the same time it also opened fresh avenues of cultural exchanges between the two states. No other language after Sanskrit has made such a valuable contribution to the literature of the Nepal valley as Maithili, the language of this kingdom. Many dramas were written in Maithili or Maithili and Newari by the late Malla rulers of Bhaktapur. Maithili scholars were held in great respect in Nepal. The Maithili Jha Brahmins were given high positions in the heirarchy of the Nepalese priesthood. Far more important than this, the two houses of the Mallas and the Karanatakas were actually joined by blood when Rajalladevi became the wife of Jayasthiti Malla. Thus the late Malla rulers trace their ancestry to the Karnatak dynasty. Lastly, goddess Taleju, the highly venerated goddess of the Mallas, and still a prominent deity of the valley, is believed to have been introduced from Tirhut. In the 18th century the relationship with Tirhut was revived by the marriage of Rana Bhadur Shah with a Maithili, a Brahmin widow.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

With the rise of the Mallas in the 13th century, the history of Nepal emerges once again from obscurity. The valley is studied with relics from this period: inscriptions, sculptures, bronzes, paintings, temples, viharas, and coins. At this time in spite of the occasional attempt of some rulers to bring the kingdom under a single powerful authority, factions and cliques divide the country into independent segments, sapping its strength. It is a period of anarchy, conspiracy, internal warfare, and invasions. A Muslim invader raided the country for a week, looting it and defiling Nepal's most cherished divinities. In the 16th century the country was formally divided into three weak states. All the same, cultural activities went on unabated, though in a fossilized and dogmatic way.

The Malla period is important because it has left behind a culture still alive in modern Newari society and presents us with the only surviving examples of Nepal's age old architecture. But for the standing specimens of temples, monasteries, and stupas created or renovated at that time, all traces of Nepalese architecture would have been lost to us forever.

The multi-storeyed temples of the valley, popularly called 'pagodas', and singularly characteristic in form have turned the Nepalese landscape into picturesque scene. Although their aesthetic qualities are blurred by a monotony of reproduction, they display marvels of wood carving.

This carving skill, seen in doors and window frames, cornices, struts and lattices relieved the uninspiring mass of brick built houses crowding in the dark and narrow lanes of Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kirtipur.

Toward the late Malla period, in the mid 18th century, the cultural tide seems to have reversed, now flowing from Tibet to Nepal at a time when political disunity was causing Nepalese culture to stagnate. Nepalese bronzes and paintings of the period exhibit a great degree of Tibetan influence. The authority of the Tibetan Lamas in several Nepalese Buddhist centres also came to be recognized.

Nepalese culture to-day is a product of two streams flowing from two separate directions and converging in the late 1760's. One stream was comprised of the extremely skilled people of Kathmandu valley the Newaris who had developed a high artistic standard and who had evolved an organized social, religious, economic, and political order. The other stream is made

or a people whose own attainments, judging from relics of the period, may be less, and their history much shorter in perspective. Nonetheless, their part in the promotion of Nepalese cultural life must be recognized. If the valley gave the country its name, the Khasas, as these people were called, gave it its language, the lingua franca of modern Nepal.

Neither the origin of the term Khasa is clear nor do we know the people it originally meant. The term Khasa is now used to refer to the Chhetris and it carries a slightly derogatory connotation. Perhaps it had a wider application previously, embracing other castes, as the name Khasa Kura, i.e., Khasa speech seems to indicate. Also, it appears that the earliest form of this language was evolved in the Karnali river basin of western Nepal collectively by Brahmins, Thakuris, Chhetris, and others of the region who lived within a single political order. One of the rulers of this kingdom, Ashokachalla, was designated as Khasadesharajadhiraja, i.e. the king of the Khasa country. The people of the Nepal valley knew these people as Khasaiyas, and today they are called Khain by the Newars.

We have no knowledge so far of the circumstances in which the Malla kingdom of the Karnali basin came to be established. This kingdom seems to have been founded by one Nagaraja with its capital at Sija, a little northwest of Jumla in the early 12th century A.D. At least sixteen kings ruled this kingdom after Nagaraja until the end of the 14th century A.D. The kingdom of Karnali basin included the provinces of Guge and Purang in Tibet, and in Nepal it extended roughly from Lumbini to Kumaon. Its last noted ruler was Prithvi Malla, and after him the kingdom disintegrated into petty principalities ruled by different houses of the Thakuris. The nearly three hundred years' rule of these Mallas was accompanied by a building activity which produced temples, chaityas, sculptures, water conduits, stone-paved wells, and pillars erected along the highway. The copper plate inscriptions issued by Punnya Malla and his son Prithvi Malla in 1337 and 1356 A.D. respectively are most significant in this context because they contain the archaic form of Khasa Kura or Nepali language. The people of this kingdom contained the nucleus of all the important caste groups inhabiting the hills of Nepal. Hence the kingdom of Karnali basin may truly be the earliest known stage of the Chhetri-Bahun or the Khasa culture of Nepal's middle hills. The origin of the Brahmins and Thakuris and their subservient occupational castes like Damai, Sarki, and Kami within Nepal are first traceable to this Khasa kingdom of the Karnali basin.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

The subsequent story of these Khasa is their gradual advance eastward into the tribal territories of the Gurungs and Magars in central Nepal, the Tamangs, the Rais, and the Limbus in eastern Nepal. Although the Khasas were politically disunited, they were people of the same stock sharing a common language and culture. Refined cultural traditions such as the art and architecture of the earlier years were however forgotten and classical Buddhism and Brahmanism were giving way to cruder Shamanistic practices. The Khasas could not escape being influenced by the widely prevailing local beliefs of other socio-ethnic groups. Ultimately, however, their influence on these peoples has been overwhelming because of their greater political awareness and the greater numerical strength. The advance of the Khasas appears to have been very rapid. By the 17th century, they seem to have been numerically strong even in the valley, obliging the Malla kings there to issue several inscriptions in their language. Wherever they went the Khasas chose for their home a strip of hills, both in the Silwalik and in the Mahabharat ranges, which seemed to suit them climatically and otherwise. All along the way they succeeded in assimilating the tribal people, whose homes they had invaded. The Sena kingdom of Palpa, which once extended as far as the Kosi river along the tarai, was chiefly instrumental in transmitting the Khasa culture from the west to the hills of eastern Nepal even before Prithvi Narayan Shah's later conquest of that region.

The spread of the Khasas is also the history of the Baisi and Chaubisi kingdoms. One of these Chaubisi Kingdoms, called Gorkha, was destined to play an outstanding role in the political history of Nepal. Its last ruler, Prithvi Narayan Shah, combining vision, courage, and perseverance, set upon a career of expanding the Gorkha kingdom of that day. He ended by creating a unified, sovereign Nepal. This Shah had a great ability to integrate people of divergent origins and to galvanize them into a common cause without attempts at suppression or subordination. He never considered the Newars a different people or their culture an alien one. In his words of advice to his nobles he more than once emphasized the need to encourage native art and industry for the welfare of the country, always keeping the Valley in mind. His contribution lay not only in creation of a larger and unified Nepal, but also in instilling a consciousness in the successors to preserve the entity of the country at any price. Nepalese nationalism begins from this time.

Nepalese culture evolves in this way for nearly 2600 years through the flowing and ebbing tide of events. Various centres become important and in-

CULTURE AND RELIGION

fluent in different epochs. History shows that the core of Nepalese culture was formed by the Nordic Aryans coming north from the Indo-Gangetic plains and meeting the different groups of Mongoloids in the latter's habitat in the Himalayan foothills. We do not know the significance of this fusion in all aspects yet, but the two regions where it produced definite results were the Kathmandu Valley and the hills of far western Nepal. The cultures from these two areas, though articulated differently, developed within the same Brahminical and Buddhist concepts. They grew and expanded, and in the process incorporated other social groups with varying degrees of success. In the 18th century all the area today known as Nepal was brought under a single political authority. Distinct cultural groups adhering to varied tribal practices still survive over a large part of the country. Little is known about the origin of these peoples, or about their historical growth. They were mostly illiterate and kept no records about themselves. Only in a few cases could information about them be gleaned from their religious texts or from biographies of their religious preceptors. Even more intriguing are groups such as the Tharus, Satar, Dhimal, Danuwar, and Majhis, some of whom evidence certain Dravidian elements in their cultural matrix. Suffice to say, the country of Nepal has now inherited all these diverse cultural facets and incorporated their rich variety within a single national structure.

(1970)

CHAPTER 6

Art And Architecture

—*Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma*

The history of Nepalese art is at least a millennium and a half old. This art is religious in character and symbolic in meaning, as in most countries of the East. It is chiefly expressed through figures of the deities in wood, stone or colour in their multitudinous forms which are prescribed by numerous religious texts. If, however, more mundane figures of men, animals, and plants found relevancy, they were also freely included. While Nepalese art paid great attention to forms prescribed in the religious text, it excelled above all in the aesthetic expression that it achieved.

The present essay is written with a limitation in mind. The term 'Nepal' is used in a narrow sense to signify chiefly the Kathmandu valley and not to embrace the whole country as it exists today. Before the Gorkha conquest of Kathmandu valley in 1768-69 Nepal was the name which applied mainly to Kathmandu valley. Later this name was extended to describe the whole of the Gorkha kingdom. The scope of the present article is not however so extensive.

Stone Art

An unbroken tradition of art in Nepal begins from the middle of the Fifth century A.D. Its history prior to this is represented by some instances which either thematically or stylistically speaking appear as stray productions without conforming much to the post-fifth century A.D. sculptu-

res. These were possibly due to instances of freak inspiration, before the founding of the regular art school in Manadeva's time, the second half of the fifth century.

Such instances are the round three dimensional image of Shiva (popularly known as Virupaksha) found at the cremation ghats at Pashupati temple, and the Yaksha torso in the Nepal Museum. These examples appear to be isolated works also because they seem to share few aspects of styles with other works. Some characteristics of the Yaksha anticipate the styles of the early Mathura¹ school of the pre-Gupta period of the second and third centuries A.D. or this group of sculptures all over northern India. Even in its early stage, Nepalese sculpture gives no suggestion of a faltering skill. The themes are drawn from classical Hindu or Buddhist sources. Nepalese art had no fold element or local basis in its early evolution. Its stimulus came entirely from the south.

Thus, stone art was founded on regular lines only in the second half of the fifth century A.D. Skills and ideas arrived from different quarters of India to keep it pulsating. The Ikshvaku, the Gupta, the later Gupta, the schools of the Deccan and the Pala school all influenced Nepalisculptural art in different epochs. The imported styles were sorted and rearranged into a new scheme. The originality of this amalgam in the main forte of Nepali images.

The art of Nepal from the fifth to the ninth centuries A.D. may be termed Lichchavi or classical art. Although the Lichchavis themselves had ceased ruling in the second half of the eighth century A.D. the movement which started during their regime went on. Classic art manifests itself through many icons of Vishnu in diverse forms,¹ including incarnations.² The numerous Shivalingas and the Umamaheshvara panels, images of Brahma, and the images of Gautama Buddha as well as the Avalokiteshvaras, Padmapani, and Vajrapani are other examples. For a study of the development of sculptural art the Umamaheshvara panels which were constantly reprodu-

1 Such forms are the Sridhara Vishnu and Garudanarayana Vishnu who is depicted riding on the mythical bird Garuda; the Jalashayin Vishnu in repose on a bed of serpents in water, and Vishwarupa Vishnu who represents in himself every shape in the universe, (normally shown many-headed and many-armed).

2 Such incarnations are the Trivikrama, Varaha, Narasimha, and Kaliyamardana.

ced from the late sixth century A.D. to the fifteenth century A.D. are highly instructive. Early Nepali art is also represented by image of Garuda, Brahma, and Ganesha.

From the time of the earliest dated sculpture of Vishnuvibranta murti in the year 467 A.D. the deities have been portrayed wearing undara-bandha, tassel, and knots at their waist lines. This costume was first evolved in the Ikshvaku school of Indian art, circa second to fourth century A.D., from where it was taken later to Pallava, Chalukya, and Chola schools of Indian art. But this style, as it were, reached Nepal earlier than them all.

Although such may be the origin of certain costumes, Lichchavi sculpture owes much to the Gupta school for the ingenuity and refinement of its modelling. The subtlety of Gupta sculpture in creating a body form of melting contours and in chiselling faces radiant with expression has been reproduced almost with the same precision, but occasionally a three dimensional effect is given by means of the holes chiselled right through the body of the sculptural stele. The images evoke many emotions in the minds of the onlooker. Most images are small charming pieces depicted in conformity with iconographic canons. However, some images are large, too, such as the Varaha image of Dhumbarahi or Sheshashayin of Budhanilakantha. The Lichchavi artist gives testimony to a perfected skill in modelling by according every stance and posture of the divinity its consonant dignity, elegance, or vigour. A polish and lustre accompanied by naturalistic modelling are the general distinctions of Lichchavi sculpture. Its rich plasticity is displayed in a round fleshy face with a small chin, a slightly swollen chest, a gently receding waist, a sensitive portrayal of the navel, and supple and slender limbs. The ornamentation is sparse. Treatment of the legs is natural, but later petrifies and becomes stiff and heavy. The images of Padmapani, Garuda, and Lakshmi have one of their legs limp with a relaxed knee and a characteristic slight *Bhanga* stance.³ The headgear is either a tall square object seeming to broaden above or a triangular one with triple crests along a beaded diadem. The earrings range from the circular or *patrakundalas* to rosettes or ribbed spheroids. The images wear only one necklace close to the neck, a *yajnopavita*, and *ananta* or bejewelled armlets. The *adhovastara* or the lower garment is worn short in one leg and below the knee in the other. One end of this dress hangs loose vertically between the two legs.

³ *Bhanga* is the term used in Indian and Nepali art to describe a curve or flexion at the waist.

The female figures wear a thin crown on their heads. Their carving shows delicacy, grace, and a suggestion of voluptuousness. They have fully developed breasts, a thin waist, a spreading mass of belly, and broad hips. The hair is arranged in a bun on the top of the head or in an elaborate coiffure. In certain feminine figures the broadened hips and legs seem to possess the vigour of the rock cut figures of the Deccan, although in a miniature scale.

The images of the Buddha and Avalokiteshvara also reveal an unmistakable Gupta stamp both in regard to expressions and costumes. Both the folded and plain translucent draperies were used in the Buddha images. The characteristic stance of the Avalokiteshvara, the sash tied slantingly and the serene and meditative eyes are exactly similar to their counterparts at Saranath and Nalanda, India, of the later Gupta period.

The Umamaheshvara panels depicting the Shiva couple in an informal attitude of repose on Mount Kailash surrounded by their family are identical in composition to similar panels at Ellora, India. These panels are found in large numbers all over Kathmandu valley. This mode of depicting Shiva was obviously popular for a long time. But the details of the panel seem to have proliferated increasingly from the much simpler theme consisting just of Shiva and his spouse in the earlier periods. One notices from these many panels a desire for repeated productions of a standardized form in Nepal.

Towards the concluding phase of the classical period the borders of the sculptured pieces are ornamented with designs of petals, flames, or a plain band. The floral element is increasingly preferred later, as a result of which sinuous stems and lotus pedestals supported on stout stalks with several ramifications providing seats for the subsidiary deities occur more commonly.

The Lichchavi period forms the true basis of Nepalese art. The norm and style of the images worked out during this period were doggedly adhered to in later years. The mode of depicting the four-armed form of Vishnu or the Chhatra Chandeshwara, the Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha and a score of other deities was similar throughout.

Nestling in the vastness of the mountains away from the eventful plains to the south, Nepal was naturally slow to any kind of change. Tradi-

tions were cherished and clung to. The standardized plastic forms of the earlier periods were therefore retained faithfully. New styles reaching Nepal in this period however, also found acceptance. In dating Nepalese sculptures on the basis of styles, greater reliance may be put on the appearance of new forms than in the continuation of the old ones.

The period from the end of the 9th to the 14th century may be classified as the post-classical period. There is no need to coincide the artistic history of Nepal with its political history. Changes of dynasty were not due to violent political upheavals, and did not bring in their train drastic differences in the cultural outlook of the country. Therefore the stone art of the post-classical period proceeds on the rigid and regulated, plastic and ornamental conventions of the earlier period. But there is no doubt that art in the 10th and 11th centuries had lost its earlier vigour and dynamism. It languished for want of new thinking, its progress checked by stereotyped copying from earlier forms. Thus art deteriorated gradually at this time.

Nepali art was for a time stimulated by the Pala school of Bengal. Its widespread influence was felt in stone, metal and colour works alike. This influence reached its zenith towards the 11th century A.D. The Pala idiom can be seen at work in two phases. In the first phase, the style is chaste, pure and close to its original. In the second phase it appears in a localised and redefined form, marketing the ascendancy of a regional style. Heavy ornamentation, a sharp bhanga tilting of the image, head to one side, and the use of the lotus-foot-pedestal for the dangling foot are some of the prominent contributions of the Pala school to Nepalese art.

A new dimension in art signalled by a diversified production in stone, metal and colour is achieved in the post-classical period. Although there is no instance of woodwork available from this period, the extant examples of the later periods must have had their roots here. The period also witnessed the enlargement of the Vajrayana pantheons providing a challenge as well as enormous scope for the artists.

Art after the 14th century may be termed Malla art. It is characterized by a steady decline in the quality and an increase in the quantity of production. Stone art, especially fails to create any impression. The sculpture depicts gross neglect of good modelling, expressive faces and proportionate limbs. One of the reasons for the decline of stone art perhaps lies in the concentrated

production of bronze at this time. Towards the late 17th century stone sculpture makes a last effort to pull itself out of the state of ignominy to which it had sunk. This is illustrated in about half a dozen images found at the Bhaktapur palace dating from the time of Bhupatindra Malla. These small and round limbed images, with their chubby faces and heavy ornamentation, though ill-proportioned, have an appealing form.

The religion of the day was deeply tinged with Tantrism, which had corresponding effects on iconic art. The suave and placid expressions now give way to angry and ferocious looks. Deities are represented with multiple heads and arms in frenzied and spasmodic acts. They are shown grasping their females in a sexual embrace. But beneath all these ghastly forms, the deities still expressed mercy and compassion and the ennobling concepts of their religion, Vajrayana.

Terracotta art

We do not have enough material to make a succinct account of the terracotta art of Nepal. The country's singular skill in brick and tile layings, as evidenced by its traditional architecture, justifies the assumption of the existence of this art form since ancient times. Until a few years ago, our knowledge of actual terracotta art extended back only to the Malla period and the period following it. But the excavation at Dhumbarahi, Vishalnagar in 1966 in a post-Lichhavi dump provided a rich assemblage of small terracotta art consisting of animal and Human figures including divinities. Some of them represent very appealing scenes rendered realistically. Many figurines were made hollow and finished by joining two parts.

A newly found inscription at Sikabahi, Patan, dated 573 A.D. on the pedestal of a Umamaheshvara panel states how clay images of an earlier date having been mutilated and allowed to fall into disrepair, were replaced by new ones in stone. It presupposes that terracotta images, as well as stone were made and consecrated for worship.

Terracotta art was used with a new effectiveness in the Malla period. Ornamented plaques were cast to size be arranged in decorative friezes or panels which were attached to cover the outside of the brick temples. Figures *in round* were made even as accessories to temples serving well the total scheme of a particular type of architecture. The noted example of this is the Maha-

bodhi temples of Patan. There are similar plaques attached to the side of the plinth around the courtyard of the house of the Living Goddess in Kumari-ghar, Kathmandu. The Ashtamatrika figures at the Nepal Museum are also reported to have come from a fallen temple. The plastic merit and modelling skill, the ornamental style and costume and the expressions of the terracotta images run nearly parallel to their stone counterparts.

Bronze

Bronzes were, until recently, the only widely known objects 'd' art of Nepal. Because of their size and portability, they have reached every corner of the world. The two significant points in the history of bronze casting in Nepal are, first, its heavy indebtedness to the Pala school during the most prolific period, and secondly its propagation in Tibet through the sheer mastery of this art by the Nepalese craftsmen. But in the 17th-18th centuries the influence changed its direction so that Tibetan idioms become abundant in Nepalese bronzes. The artistic current was ebbing out in Nepal and Nepalese craftsmen who returned home after many years of practice in this profession in Tibet, brought their impressions back home to be reflected in the latter Nepalese work.

The first man to introduce Nepalese bronzes to the world and to critically evaluate them was A.K. Coomaraswamy. Through him the Boston Padmapani Avalokiteshvara has become famous. Coomaraswamy saw the art of the late Gupta period reflected in what he called the early Nepalese bronzes. He dated the above-mentioned Padmapani in the 9th century A.D. From this time onwards the date of Nepalese bronzes has been a matter of wide controversy. The same Padmapani of the Boston Museum has also been dated as late as the 13th and 14th century A.D.

The Pala influence on Nepalese bronzes is indisputable. Taranath, the Tibetan historian, wrote as early as the 17th century A.D. that the art (bronze casting) of Nepal resembled in style the art of the Eastern school. Subsequent scholars have had various opinions on the subject. But the general concensus seems to be that all the known bronzes of Nepal had developed their local peculiarities by this time. Reckoning the time lag between the origin and popularity of the Pala style at home, its travel to Nepal and its development into a regional style there, the earliest bronzes of Nepal, according to these scholars, are not dateable before the 13th or 14th century A.D.

The present author, however, believes otherwise. The early bronzes of the Pala style in Nepal should date from the same time as the instances in stone and paintings showing this influence. We have absolute evidence from dates of paintings that the Pala style had come to Nepal already in the early 11th century A.D. These early bronzes of the 11th century had not yet developed their later regional peculiarities and were still very close to the Pala productions of Bengal and Bihar. Examples of these bronzes are provided by the Khadirvani Tara in the Philadelphia Museum, Vajrapani, the Buddha and Padmapani Avalokiteshvara.⁴

The 12th century saw some changes in styles. One sees a very finely chiselled face with all its features carved with precision viz., the straight ridge of the nose, the thin sensitive lips, slightly curved eye slits, a fleshy face, full breasts set closely, an elongated waist, either rigid or slightly arched. They are illustrated by the Kurukulla Tara and Devi Sculptures.⁵ Regional characteristics appear in an overriding manner from the 13th century A.D. The Boston Padmapani should be attributed to this period.

This apart, did Nepal have an earlier bronze-casting tradition? Most certainly it did. The author chanced to see a bronze in the arts Gallery of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, during the winter of 1961. It was an image of Chandeshvara, a recent acquisition of the museum which was said to be from Nepal. The image looked so different from the usual bronzes of Nepal that the author was reluctant to admit it was Nepalese, but an oval ball in one of its hands stilled all his doubts. This object represents the lotus in Nepal and is commonly used in the Lichchavi sculptures. The general artistic feeling in the 30 inch tall image is comparable to the late 9th century A.D. Vishnu images. This image raises new questions, and the author is now inclined to believe in the existence of an earlier bronze-casting tradition of Nepal. This belief is supported by the publication of another bronze entitled 'Nimbate figure and attendant' by Stella Kramarisich.⁶ It is similar to the Chandeshwara image of Calcutta in so far as the general fashion of the modelling goes. It may even antedate the former in time. The above illustrations establish a tradition of metal works in Nepal from the Lichchavi period.

4 Stella Kramarisich, *The Art of Nepal* (New York: Asia House Gallery, 1964), Plates 5,6, and 30.

5 *Ibid.*, Plates 4 and 15.

6 *Ibid.*, Plate 7.

The bulk of Nepali bronzes is Buddhist. The bronze workers of Nepal were Buddhists, and Patan, the famous centre of Bronze production, is a predominantly Buddhist town. Bronze casting in Magadh, a district in northeast India, was also done by a class of monk artists. A wide experience in metal works also produced vessels, utensils, lampstands, and Sukundas (small Newari chalices).

We state below some broad characteristics of Nepali bronzes. Bronzes are cast a solid fairly regularly until the 15th century A.D. The period after this witnesses a large scale production of images either hollow cast or prepared with repousse. Careful modelling and expressive demeanor are the striking qualities up to the 15th century. The back of the image is also molded, but at a declining rate in later images. The use of ornaments is sparse, which gives a generally plain appearance to the torso. The crown is a simple affair. It is not multicrested yet, nor decorated with other accessories which would make the headdress from the ears upwards a crowded mass of metal. The undergarments worn by the deities in the early images are thin and cling closely to the body. The fold marks are thin and indicated by a double line. Later the mass of the garment becomes thicker and rises in high relief. In the case of female figures, the breasts are large and full. These are reduced and are set further apart from each other during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The general suave appearance with pleasant modelling persists in the later images also, especially in the treatment of the torso and arms. But this is marred by monotony. The bhanga (flexion) at the waist becomes pronounced. In the case of standing images, the legs and palms become stiff and wooden. A conservating style is the chief characteristic of these later bronzes also.

From the 17th century onwards Mongolian features become commonplace, though not indispensable. This is mainly indicated by the thin and long-arched eyebrows with widely spaced slit-eyes covered by thin eyelids. The later bronzes were not only cast hollow, but completed by joining the parts. The ornamentation increases and is used at times to cover the joints of such piecemeal images. The use of scarves, except on those deities who are never shown wearing them, becomes universal. The early scarf appears natural without its fluttering ends. But towards the 18th century it appears to be a metal sheet thrown round the neck of the deities. The two ends of the scarf are shown fluttering on the sides. Towards the 18th century

the *Vaijayantimala*, a long wreath also appears. The deities carry a trefoiled halo or sit underneath a plant aureole or a *Toranas*, an overhead arch. The earlobes are long and rectangular and the ear ornament hangs loosely at the lower end. In many cases, the girdle is undulated in the front. The awe inspiring figures of the *Vajrayana* pantheon, having many heads, arms and legs also date from the 17th century A.D.

Painting

The early paintings of Nepal date from the beginning of the 11th century, A.D. These are in the form of illustrations and illuminations on palm leaf manuscripts and their hard wooden covers called *patas*. These miniature paintings resemble the styles of the Eastern Indian School of painting of that time, and thus are a common descendant of the classical as well as medieval painting schools of Ajanta and Ellora. The subject matter of these early paintings is Buddhist, with figure illustrations of the deities or scenes depicted from the life of the Buddha.

These paintings have an appeal about them, because of the softness of line and the ease and grace of the figure's postures and stances. Yet the linear strokes lack the same spontaneity as those of the Eastern School. Brahmanical (Hinduist) illustrated covers and manuscripts are found from the 12th century onwards. There is hardly any difference between the two faiths in their manner of treating the miniatures. The general overtone and linear definition is generally quite the same.

Nepali paintings lose their modelling skill gradually from the 12th century onwards. Stella Kramarisch believes that modelling by colour combination, shade and line was never a concern of the Nepali artist. Under the stimulus of the Pala paintings, modelling is attempted for a short while, but starts degenerating very soon. In later instances where modelling appears, it occurs in blotches and faint colour patches. But in isolated instances one continues to see unusually skillful modelling until much later.

Painting at this time also undergoes a change in respect to line drawing. Sharp and hectic lines characteristic of the Western school of India overwhelm the paintings arresting a continuous flow of line. Figures seem composed of separate units and the body joints form sharply twisted angles. During all this change the *tribhanga* curve of the Pala school persists, but in an inclined body form, according to Kramarisch.

Although different schools were at work in Nepalese paintings, such as the Eastern, Western, the Rajput-Moghul, the Tibetan, and even the Chinese, at different times, yet the influence of the Eastern school was the most profound and long lasting. The Nepali artist never forgot to use the linear principle of the Pala style with all its vicissitudes in his art later. He loved to paint his figures from the front instead of in profile, with round faces and slender supple limbs. His use of colour, however, lacked the knowledge of plasticity. Colour was employed only as a sort of 'fill-in' between the lines, as its significance had become more religious than anything else. This style continues to be used to this day by Nepali artists brought up in the traditional school. One can see this very well by the painted and line drawn illustrations of the various Buddhist deities in *The Indian Buddhist Iconography* by B. Bhattacharya.

A different class of paintings in Nepal is called the *Paubhas*. These are the same as the Tibetan *Thangkas*.⁷ They are of two types mainly: the *patas* and the *mandalas*. The *patas* are illustrative paintings of the deities. In the centre presides the deity to whom the *paubha* is dedicated with lesser deities symmetrically arranged around him. The *mandalas*, on the other hand, have an esoteric significance. These are mystic diagrams, paintings of complex test-prescribed patterns of circles and squares. The centre of the *mandala* is the sanctum of the deity, to whom it is dedicated. Every inch of space in the *mandal* represents the conception of a cosmos realized through meditation and inner vision.

The earliest dated *Paubhas* found in Nepal belong to the middle of the 15th century. But Nepalese *paubhas* have been found in Tun-Huang in western China, dating from five centuries before this. The Tun-Huang paintings are, thus, not only the earliest *Paubhas* of Nepal, but her earliest painted works of any kind.

Tibetan and Chinese influence in Nepalese paintings is especially evident in the *Paubhas*. This is seen in the cloud patterns, the use of costumes the characteristically extended necks of the subsidiary figures, and the pavilions drawn in the Chinese fashion. Some *Paubhas* of 17th century Nepal are indistinguishable from those of Tibet.

⁷ *Paubhas* and *Thangkas* are mostly Tantric paintings done on silk and cotton cloth

The middle of the 17th century witnessed the transplantation of the Rajput-Moghul style in Nepal. This style mainly dominated a class of paintings called scroll paintings which narrate episodes from the different avadanas. These paintings use the same colour scheme, costumes of a folded turban, tunic, cumerbund and skirt-like garment for the males and a tight bodice, shawl, and a skirt for the females had become the accepted costume of the Malla nobility, and the fashion may date from this time.

The paintings of animals and the use of musical instruments in the paintings of the Rajput-Moghul style is, however, Nepali in origin. Portrait paintings of Pratap Malla and Jayaprakash Malla were also done in this style.

The Rajput style continues well into the 19th century during the period of the Shah rule also. The Shah initiated very few cultural traditions of their own. Hence the art and architecture of Kathmandu valley at this time is the continuation of the earlier period, the only change being that the subjects are predominantly Hindi from now on.

Several examples of mural paintings from the Malla period have been discovered recently in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. The first shows a painting of the Ashtamatrika panel which portrays eight goddesses along with paintings of a few other deities in the traditional Nepalese style finally derived from the Pala school. The other depicts narratives from the dramatic episodes of the Puranas, a class of Hindu religious literature, in the Rajput style. I have detected murals in a deteriorating condition on the Bag Bhairav and the Brahmayani temples of Kirtipur and Panauti, respectively.

Woodwork

Actual evidence of woodwork is forthcoming from the end of the 14th century A.D, but its tradition must have been older than this in Nepal. Wood was one material which was available in abundance to the Nepali craftsman, and from the range of woodwork we can see very well what pleasures and delight he took in running his chisel over this soft and pliable material

Among the earliest examples of woodwork are the strut figures over the Indreshvara temple at Panauti, Wokubaha at Patan, and Yatkha and

Itum Baha and the small Vishnu temple of Naghal square in Kathmandu. There are tall, slender, round limbed figures of females with one hand holding on to decorative foliage above, enlivened by a rhythm in their graceful curves.

A large part of the woodwork in Nepal serves as an adjunct to temples, palaces, and monasteries. In addition, there are also a few independent icons of wood. There are a couple of charming female figures kept in the Bhaktapur Museum. The woodwork preserved in temples and other structures tends to be monotonous. The motifs and the role assigned to the pieces are fixed. The themes and carving styles follow along hackneyed lines. The struts depict numerous deities arranged singly or in pairs, and their grouping in a temple decor bears a certain relation to the deity placed inside. The corner struts of the temple on each story repeat the leaping figure of a mythical animal, having wings, the body of a lion, and the horns of a ram. Upon close investigation, one can see that the figures on the struts betray varying standards in the quality of carving. The tall and slender figures found on the temple of Panauti and Wokubaha become stunted in later years, but manage to maintain the roundness of limbs. Further late figures are very flat and show scant respect for any plasticity.

The figures represented at the bottom of the temple struts are, however, the most interesting for their varied themes. Although they sometimes bear repeated representations of the deities, very often they are either lesser deities or personifications of Zodiacal signs, religious devotees, and demons. They also depict scenes drawn from mundane life and erotic portrayals. The erotic figures because of their outright provoking theme, have been a matter of interesting query. The figures show participating in the act of sexual intercourse sometimes common folks, but others are rather bearded personages having an uncommon air about them. The act of copulation is sometimes shown in humanly impossible postures or in groups with an ill-proportioned ratio of males to females.

Apart from wood works on temples, independent images *in round* exist in the collection of the important Viharas in the Nepal valley. They are displayed for about one week beginning at Shravan Purnima, the time of the full moon, in the month of Shravan, and then stored away for the rest of the year. Some such sculptures are also put on show in the streets and public

squares of Kathmandu at the time of Indraajatra, of Hindu festival held in the month of Bhadra. For religious reasons, they have not received the publicity they deserve. Evidence of early wood works should be found in this group with some amount of luck.

Architecture

An idea of the town settlements and the nature of the palaces and houses of the rulers and commonfolks of medieval Nepal can still be formed by studying the present towns of Bhaktapur, Kirtipur, Patan, and a number of Newar hamlets scattered over the valley. In medieval times, the town was a defended settlement surrounded by walls and a moat. It was entered through gateways which were closed in times of emergency. It had closely clustered houses lining both sides of the narrow, cobbled public ways. The focal point of the town was a Layaku, i.e. the palace square or some such square from which winding lanes wandered in diverse directions. The Malla palaces were built impressively and covered large areas. There were usually three storeyed houses with roofs sloping steeply from round a central ridge, and built around a square courtyard. The ground floors had open vestibules which were supported on pillars. The windows and doorways were marvels of carved wood. The palaces consisted of many courtyards, several of which enshrined prominent deities of the time and were named after them. The goddess Taleju was invariably assigned a place inside the palace complex. The palaces were thus partly religious places also.

The religious architecture of Nepal may be studied under three broad categories: the stupas, the viharas, and the temples. Stupas are the Buddhist monuments of worship with their prominent domes and tall metal spires. The viharas are the monasteries, the abodes of the Buddhist priests and preceptors which contain a shrine of worship. Temples are religious structures with symbols of their respective cult-deities enshrined within. The earliest stupas of Nepal might well be the so-called Ashokan stupas at Patan. Ashoka's visit to the Nepal valley is only a legend, and not supported by facts. But the stupas themselves possess an archaic character similar to those of the Mauryan period in India. All of them are low hemispherical mounds of earth with a thin layer of turf growing over them. The people of Nepal have shown a great respect for these stupas by strictly avoiding any major alterations in

them. The northern stupas were thoroughly lime plastered at the beginning of the present century, however, the three other stupas have been little changed except for the addition of niches for the Dhyani, or meditative Buddhas and finials. The typical Nepali finial such as the one topping the Swayambhu stupa evolved in the early medieval period. The finial is universally used in Nepal after this time. The Tibetan chorten, i.e. chaitya, was very likely adapted from this class of Nepalese stupas. Such a finial consists of a square base supporting a series of thirteen circular rings in diminishing proportions crowned by a majestic parasol. The four sides of the square *harmika* are painted with pairs of serene eyes, supposed y those of the Buddha.

The domed part of the Swayambhu stupa is a large hemispherical mound based on a circular plinth and truncated at the top. This is the most celebrated of all the stupas in Nepal and claims a long history. Inscriptions from the Lichchavi period are reported in its vicinity indicating the existence of a Vihara here, or at least the association of the site with Buddhism from an early date. But the Swayambhu stupa cannot have acquired the eminence it enjoys now before the early medieval period. For the theory of the Adi Buddha or the Primordial Buddha was not promulgated perhaps before the 10th century A.D. The Swayambhu, or the self-existent, is regarded as none other than the Adi Buddha himself. The identification of the stupa with Swayambhu whom it celebrates and the typical finial surmounting it might thus date only from the early medieval period.

The other major stupa of Nepal is the stupa of Bodhnath, which is impressive for its sheer size. Its dome is larger than that of Swayambhu and it looks majestic because it is raised atop three tiered, square pedestals with reentrant angles. The whole structure is also enclosed within a wall.

The numerous stupas of Nepal, although varying in size, are all similar in style to the Swayambhu stupa. The votive chaityas of bricks and stucco however show a tendency to rise in height by exaggerating or multiplying the number of pedestals. All stupas built now have plastered and white washed external surface.

Viharas, popularly called *baha* or *bahi*, still exist in large numbers in Kathmandu Valley. They are no longer monastic retreats of celibate monks, for Buddhism in this form has long been extinct in Nepal. They now serve as places for celebrating rituals or observing the socio-religious festivities of

Buddhism. The central features of a *baha* is a square courtyard open to the sky surrounded by the shrine and the living quarters of the Bhikshus and the Vajracharyas, two classes of Buddhist priests. The shrine is always placed opposite the entrance gateway. A *bahi* possessed some additional features over a *baha*. These were a wooden corridor projecting from the first storey and overlooking the central courtyard and a small circumambulatory path around the shrine. The Viharas of Nepal once hummed with activity. Some of them were great centres of learning which were frequented by distinguished scholars from India and Tibet. They were reactivated for a while by Buddhists fleeing from the Universities of Nalanda and Vikramashila in the wake of the Muslim invasion in the 13th century A.D. in India. In subsequent periods manuscripts copying and bronze production were the chief preoccupations of the viharas of Nepal.

Nepalese art history has an illustrious page in the late 13th century A.D. when a young Nepalese artist, A-ni-ko, led a group of eighty artists to Tibet. They were invited by the abbot of the Sa-Skya monastery of Tibet to erect a golden stupa there at the express wish of Kublai Khan in Peking. The great skill of this artist so pleased the emperor that he asked him to stay in China for the rest of his life. In response to this, A-ni-ko lived in China professing and propagating his skill. When he died, he left behind a school of bronze casting which survived in China for many years.

The temples of Nepal can be divided into two groups, those built in the Sikhara, or the Indo-Aryan or the Nagara styled and those which are the so called 'pagodas'. The former style in later medieval Nepal was known as: *Granthakuta*

The first group of temples was a direct legacy from Northern India, which might have come to Nepal around the 8th or 9th century A.D. The temple of stone, which stands in the northwest corner of the premises of Pashupati Temple near Kathmandu is the earliest temple of this style built in the valley which still survives. Due to the use of soft and perishable materials like wood and brick and also due to numerous external invasions or natural calamities, temples of very early dates have not survived. All other existing examples are not older than the 14th or 15th century A.D. But it is inferred on good grounds that the traditional form and style lives in the standing monuments.

The temples of Indo-Aryan style in Nepal are made with no architectural pretensions to compare with those of India. Nor do they possess any distinctive features originating in a particular region of India. Rather, they exhibit basic elements common to all these temples. Such temples are made either of brick or stone. Stone is used for constructing temples only in the 17th century A.D. The *Granthakuta* style of temples are of two kinds: those having a shallow and perfunctory portico in front and those resting on columned corridors.

The superstructure of these temples is always a tall curvilinear or pyramidal tower whose surface is broken up vertically into five, seven or nine different planes as the case may be. The finial consists of a bell shaped part, an *amalaka*, a *kalasha*, and a *vijapuraka* on top. The use of portico is sometimes seen on all four sides of the temple so that the sanctum could be entered through four doorways. Sometimes the portico is completely absent as it was never utilized as part of the effective architectural scheme of the temple facade.

The proudest example of the Sikhara, i.e. Nagara, style is the Krishna temple in Patan consecrated in 1637 A.D. by Siddhinarasingha, the Malla ruler of that time. It furnishes a good example of the combination of the local style with the Indo-Aryan on the one hand and the influence of distant Rajputana in certain of its features, on the other. The temple stands upon two square pedestals. A slender curvilinear tower soars high above the central mass, which consists of a columned corridor at the base, two successive storeys of running balconies bordered with low railings, and lined with pavilions. Further up, four shrine-niches appear on the four sides of the tower base. The columned corridor is obviously adapted from another group of temples, which will be described presently. The attempt to give the temple a storeyed form has also succeeded. The carvings of railings, the gateways, and the ornamental borders along the pedestals are all made in imitation of wood. The pavilions are typical of the Rajput-Moghul style. (That artists from those parts had come to Nepal to work can be supported by paintings of that time also.) The overall impression of the Krishna temple is one of a slender, balanced, and well integrated structure.

The Krishna temple heralded a new style of temple in Kathmandu which was followed in many other subsequent constructions. But none of

these later instances could outdo or even equal the original. Although they copied all the essential features of the Krishna temple, they appear quite unimpressive in later works.

The second group of temples is more indigenous in form and expression and seems to be rooted in the country's long traditions. Westerners have given this style of temple the name 'pagoda', and this term has caught the fancy of many Nepalis who use it indiscriminately. But it would be a grave mistake to call these temples by an alien name of comparatively recent origin. The term 'pagoda' is used to describe a wide range of structures spread over a vast territory having only a superficial resemblance among them. A temple in the valley is locally known as a *dega*, and when it is of a storeyed form it is referred to as a 'storeyed temple'. The famous temple of Taumarhi at Bhaktapur built by Bhupatindramalla in 1702 A.D. is known as *Nyata-Pol*, i.e. the 'five-storeyed' one. Such temples are distinguished by the number of their storeys, viz., *nitaja* and *swataja* meaning respectively the 'two-storeyed', and 'three-storeyed' ones. It would hence be more apt to call them 'storeyed' temples.

These temples with their extending roofs of tiles arranged in ascending tiers, their richly carved pillars, struts, windows, doorways, and sometimes gilt roofs sparkling under the bright sun beating down from the tropical blue sky have made the landscape picturesque. The origin of this architecture is uncertain. There are all sorts of theories that it is either Chinese or Indian, or that it evolved in Nepal and was taken to China from where it spread to other parts of the world. The oldest reference to this architecture in Nepal is made by the Chinese and preserved in the Tang annals about the middle of the 7th century A.D. The actual storeyed temples in China are thought to have been built later than this. But relief-carvings in stone of the multi-storeyed shrines are found in China from as early as the 6th century A.D. From this evidence neither country seems to have influenced the other in this matter.

Some scholars are inclined to believe that the conception of tiered roofs was derived from the stupas. The great stupa of Peshawar built by Kanishka was of this multi-staged kind. The idea could well have come from the *Chhatravali* or umbrella over the stupas consisting of several concentric rings in diminishing proportions. Very likely this architecture travelled to different regions along with Buddhism. But it developed independently over the centuries according to the taste, aptitude and environment of the

recipient countries.

A close scrutiny of the various motifs occurring on these storeyed temples reveals beyond doubt their Hindu origin. One can see in them the remnants of the Gupta and later Gupta motifs. The temples could not incorporate all the essential features of a Hindu shrine due to the inconvenience caused by their architectural form. Still the basic components like the sanctum and a tall tower above the present. Because circumambulation is an essential ritual at the Buddhist and Hindu shrines, the perambulatory passage around the sanctum is sometimes actually provided. In most cases, however, worshippers circumambulate the temple through the columned corridors or walk around the topmost pedestal.

The storeyed temples are made largely of wood and brick with metal used only in the finial and occasionally in roofing and embossing the facade. They have either a wall or the base or a colonnade going round the sanctum. The pillars are square prisms in their lower half and profusely carved in the upper half, with a bracket capital and a long extending beam above.

The temples are mostly square in plan, although sometimes rectangular and octagonal also. All the noted Bhairav temples of Kathmandu Valley along with one of Bhimasena at Patan have curiously enough, a rectangular plan. The temples are mostly erected over one, two, or a series of pedestals. The latter helped in further accentuating the height of the temple. The presence or absence of the pedestals considerably affected the appearance of a temple. This can be clearly seen from a comparison of the Kumbheshwara temple of Patan and the *Nya-ta-pol* of Bhaktapur. Although both are five storeyed, the absence of any kind of substructure has deprived the former of dignity and grandeur which the latter so much possesses. A flight of steps guarded by different men, animals, or deities carved of stone leads one to the temple doorway. These doorways are present on one or all four sides of the sanctum and are usually three-fold with a larger door at the centre flanked by two side ones with a trefoiled arch above. Suspended over the central door is a semicircular tympanum with the figure of the enshrined deity at its centre. The doorways have heavily carved wooden frames. The extended sills and the wing like flaps of the doorways, and the niches, windows and cornices are further examples of carved wood ornamentation in relief against the brick wall. The broad cornices consist of several decorative bands on which the prominent subject is a row of animal heads. A singular feature of

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

Nepalese storeyed temples are the struts extending from the cornices at the angle of about 45 degrees to the vertical wall of the shrine. These in turn support the sloping roofs of tiles laid upon the thickly set rafters which radiate from the wall on all four sides and provide a safe cover to its wall. This scheme is repeated on each storey of the temple, but with a diminishing scale. The sanctum wall goes up from the base to all the storeys above, and acts as the central support for the radiating roofs. The sequence of roofs is reduced in proportion from the lower to the upper one. The temple walls along the upper storeys are interspersed with carved window frames. Certain temples are shielded in their upper storeys with lattice screens fitted between the struts and sloped at the same angle. This is done only when these parts of the temple are occupied. The metal finial is a bell shaped member carrying an *amalaka*, a *kalasha*, and a *vijapuraha*, which is collectively called *gajura*. The entire finial is covered with a triangular cover with a chhatra or umbrella on top.

Hallowed by time and by use, this style of temple continued during the Shah period also. The palace of Prithvi Narayan Shah at Basantapur is a living tribute to the undiminished glory of this architecture. Nevertheless, traditional Nepalese art and architecture steadily declined.

The one notable feature introduced by the Shahs in their temples which was very popular was a domed roof. The Shahs had shown a predilection for this form at Gorkha itself, where Ram Shah built a temple with such a roof. The commonly occurring engraved arches over the doorways of Kathmandu are a derivation of Moghul architecture, imposed during the early Shah period.

Conclusion

The foregoing narrative will give the reader a broad idea of the main forms and contents of the Nepalese art forms in different phases of its history and the currents and cross currents of ideas which flowed into the place from the south and the north, shaping its course to no small extent. The 6th to the 9th century A.D. appears as its best period of accomplishment, our knowledge being mostly derived from the sculptures of stone, the only representation surviving today. However, a more diversified, as well as a more prolific phase of production set in only in the 11th—12th century A.D. This perhaps is because of its expansion in Tibet. The services of architects, bronze casters, and painters from Nepal were in great demand in monasteries all

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

over Tibet. At home, the art lived and procreated itself as long as the society owned and patronised it. But this period may be said to have ended with the Mallas for all practical purposes, although in some instances it continued to appear until the early 19th century A.D. The art still survives with a few families of mason, carpenter, or metal worker, or painter in the Kathmandu valley. However, it is no longer a living tradition, as the society has ceased to extend support to it.

(1970)

CHAPTER 7

Language

—*Kamal P. Malla*

Historical Perspective

The earliest archaeological evidence that has been found of language use in Nepal is epigraphic. This is an iron pillar of about 250 B.C. erected by the Indian Emperor Asoka in Lumbini to commemorate the Emperor's visit to the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautam, the Buddha. For the next seven centuries no linguistic evidence is found on a victory pillar erected by King Manadeva in A.D.463 at Changu Narayan. The language of this inscription is Sanskrit and the script is Gupta, a script used in North India at that time. Mahadeva belonged to the ruling dynasty known as the Lichchavis. They came to the Kathmandu Valley from North India and when they became a dominant political power they, like their kinsmen—the imperial Guptas,—patronized Sanskrit and made it a prestige language of epigraphy. The aboriginal people of the Valley were possible Austroasiatics who were later assimilated by the Mongoloid Kirats. It is very likely that the Kirats who, according to a fourteenth century chronicle of Nepal, ruled the Valley before the arrival of the Lichchavis, spoke dialects of the Sino-Tibetan language family. That the aboriginals of the Valley were ethnically of a non-Aryan racial stock seems to be evident from the non-Sanskrit place-names and works which appear in the Sanskrit inscriptions to be found in the valley from the earliest times. More than 80% of the place-names in the extant Lichchavi inscriptions (5th century A.D. to 9th century A.D.) are non-Sanskrit. Several of these are, in fact, archaic forms of Newari.

Since Buddhism was introduced in the Valley very early, the Indic infusion must have begun with the religious acculturation of the Valley population. The local laity must, in the meantime, have come in social contact with the Buddhist missionaries and the north Indian traders who spoke Indo-Aryan Prakrits. With the arrival of the Lichchavis round about the early Christian centuries Sanskrit was encouraged and patronized as the language of epigraphy. Sanskrit, as against the local vernaculars, was probably the symbol of the new ruling elite. The very remoteness of this language from the speech of the common man presented itself as the voice of authority—requiring the services of the initiated mediator for deciphering the edicts. Steadily literacy became the preserved function of the Buddhist and Hindu priesthood, and Sanskrit was the language of both religions in Nepal. This is evident from the fact that all the extant ancient sacred texts of both Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism found in Nepal are in Sanskrit. Ancient Nepalese manuscripts belonging to the 9th and the 10th centuries are extant in Nepalese and Western collections, but the language of these manuscripts is invariably Sanskrit. As the priesthood built a stronghold in society in the first Christian millennium, they sanctified Sanskrit in all rituals and localized literacy as a priestly occupation. It was the Buddhist and Hindu priests and scribes who composed and engraved the inscriptions; it was they who wrote, copied and studied the Buddhist and Hindu texts in ancient and medieval courts and monasteries of Nepal. Sometime towards the beginning of the tenth century the engravers and copyists in Nepal seemed, out of idiosyncratic or aesthetic impulse, to have evolved an increasingly local variety of script out of Gupta characters. By the thirteenth century there were at least three different varieties of Nepalese script in use among the copyists in the monasteries and in the courts of the Kathmandu Valley.

Vernacularization of the literate culture started only after the first Christian millennium, perhaps with the decline of Sanskrit scholarship among the priesthood. Scholars must have found it increasingly necessary to write commentaries and translations—however poor they were as substitutes—to maintain the sanctity of the original texts and ritual. Vernacularization began first with the inscriptions because they were for lay consumption. At first only technical details (the size of the land granted, the amount of gold donated, etc.) were mentioned in Newari. It was during the early Malla period (between A.D. 1207, when Newari began to be used, and roughly A.D. 1400) that the Newari language was instituted as a rival of Sanskrit in inscriptions,

copper plates, etc. As far as manuscripts are concerned, Newari came nowhere near the position of being a rival language. It became a language of literature under the court patronage only after the restoration of the Malla dynasty in the second half of the fourteenth century. It was during this period that Newar commentaries on, and translations of, classics such as *Hitopadesa* (Newari translation A.D. 1360). *Manavanyayashastra* (Newari commentary A.D. 1380), and *Amarakosa* (A.D. 1387) were accomplished. An original chronicle, now known as *Gopalaraj Vamshavali* was compiled in Sanskrit and Newari in A.D. 1387–1390. Under the patronage of Jayasthiti Malla's court (A.D. 1380–1395) Newari began to be used for epigraphy, historical records, dramatic and literary compositions. With the arrival of the Maithili ruler Harsingh Dev and his retinue in the valley in A.D. 1324 the later Malla courts became increasingly polyglot and with Sanskrit and Newari a number of New Indo-Aryan vernaculars such as Maithili, Eastern Hindi and even Bengali began to penetrate the literate culture of Nepal. Although Newari is a Tibeto-Burman language, it has undergone profound changes in its phonology, grammar and lexicon ever since it came into early contact with Sanskrit and Prakrits. Since c. A.D. 1200 the written Newari began to be permeated with Sanskrit as well as the New Indo-Aryan diffusion. Between the middle of the fourteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century, a large number of Newari manuscripts were written and copied. They remain unexplored. Because of a break in continuity and the loss of contact with the written tradition after the Gorkha conquest, the distance between the spoken Newari and the written Newari began to widen. Today not many can read the Newari scripts in which these manuscripts were written.

After the Gorkha conquest of the Kathmandu Valley, Newari was replaced by *Khas Kura* a language written in Newari script. For quite some time Khas Kura was known as "Parbatiya" (i.e. the language of the hill-people) in and around Kathmandu. Because it was the language of the Gorkha conquerors, it was called "Gorkhali" till very recent times. Today, however, it is known as "Nepali". The Khasas were the people who-assisted by the Magar and Gurung tribes of western Nepal- overran not only the whole of modern Nepal but also Sikkim and Bhutan in the east and Simla, Garhwal, Nainital, and Kumaun in the west, reaching up to the banks of the Sutlej River. Parbatiya or Khas Kura spread with the Khas conquerors. As early as 1802–3 Dr. Francis Hamilton noted:

"The language spoken by the mountain Hindus in the vicinity of

Kathmandu is usually called the Parbatiya Bhasa, or mountain dialect; but west from the Capital, it is more commonly known by the name of Khasa Bhasa, or dialect of the Khas country, because it seems to have been first introduced into the territory of that name... There can be no doubt that it is a dialect of the Hindwi (sic) language; and it is making rapid progress in extinguishing the aboriginal dialects of the mountains.”¹

In the course of military campaigns, the Khasas spread from western Nepal, their original home, to eastern Nepal thus practically all over the hills of Nepal. The only places where they have not spread in considerable numbers are the once-malarious Tarai plains. The Khasas now serve as a vital link in a chain of isolated tribes and ethnic groups. It is their language, the “Khas Kura” or “Nepali,” which in the last 150 years or so has come to serve as the lingua franca between diverse linguistic communities in the hills. The political and cultural ascendancy of Nepali, first as a lingua franca and now as the national language of Nepal, is, therefore, not due to an arbitrary or abrupt political decision, nor is it due to an innate dynamism of the Nepali language vis-a-vis other languages of Nepal as such. It is a consequence of history.

Diversity of Language

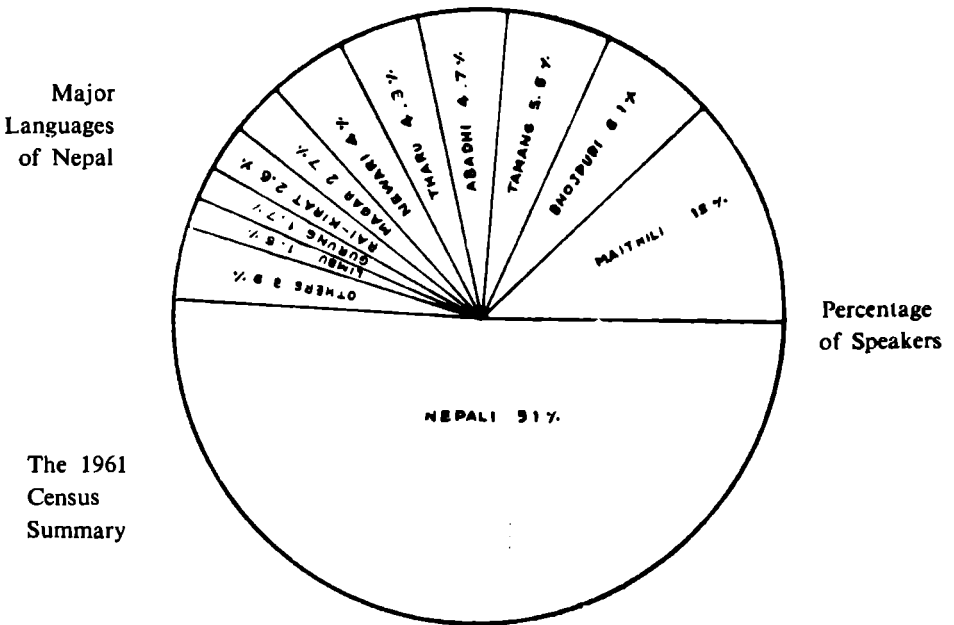
Language is at once both a unifying and a dividing force in a society. It would be a happy but over-simplified generalization to talk of two languages, two peoples, or even two cultures of Nepal—the language and culture of the conquerors (i.e., the Gorkhas) and the language and culture of the subjugated peoples (e.g. the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley). Such a neat segmentation—as proposed by the late French Orientalist Sylvain Levi in his classic *Le Nepal* (1905–8)—is not very helpful for examining the complex ethnic, cultural, and linguistic situation in Nepal. Few Western authorities were allowed to move anywhere outside the Kathmandu Valley until the 1950s and most of their writings on the rest of Nepal were more impressionistic than objective accounts. Perhaps, the sole exception was the British Resident, Brain H. Hodgson (1800–1894, Resident 1833–43), who in the first half of the last century started the pioneering studies on the languages, religion, and ethnography of the Himalayan peoples. Of several languages

¹ Francis Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1819), p. 16.

LANGUAGE

and aboriginal peoples of the Nepal Himalayas Hodgson's writings are not only the first, but also the only scientific studies available so far.

Although some sort of census has been taken in Nepal every ten years since 1911, reliable figures are available only for a short time. In 1952 a census was begun in all the districts except Mahotari, but it was not completed on a nationwide basis until 1954. However in the 1952-54 Census, such tentative but unhelpful language names were given: Eastern Tarai Dialects, Mid-Western Tarai Dialects, Maithili Pradesh Dialects, etc. Language data is well-produced, in the 1961 Census Report.

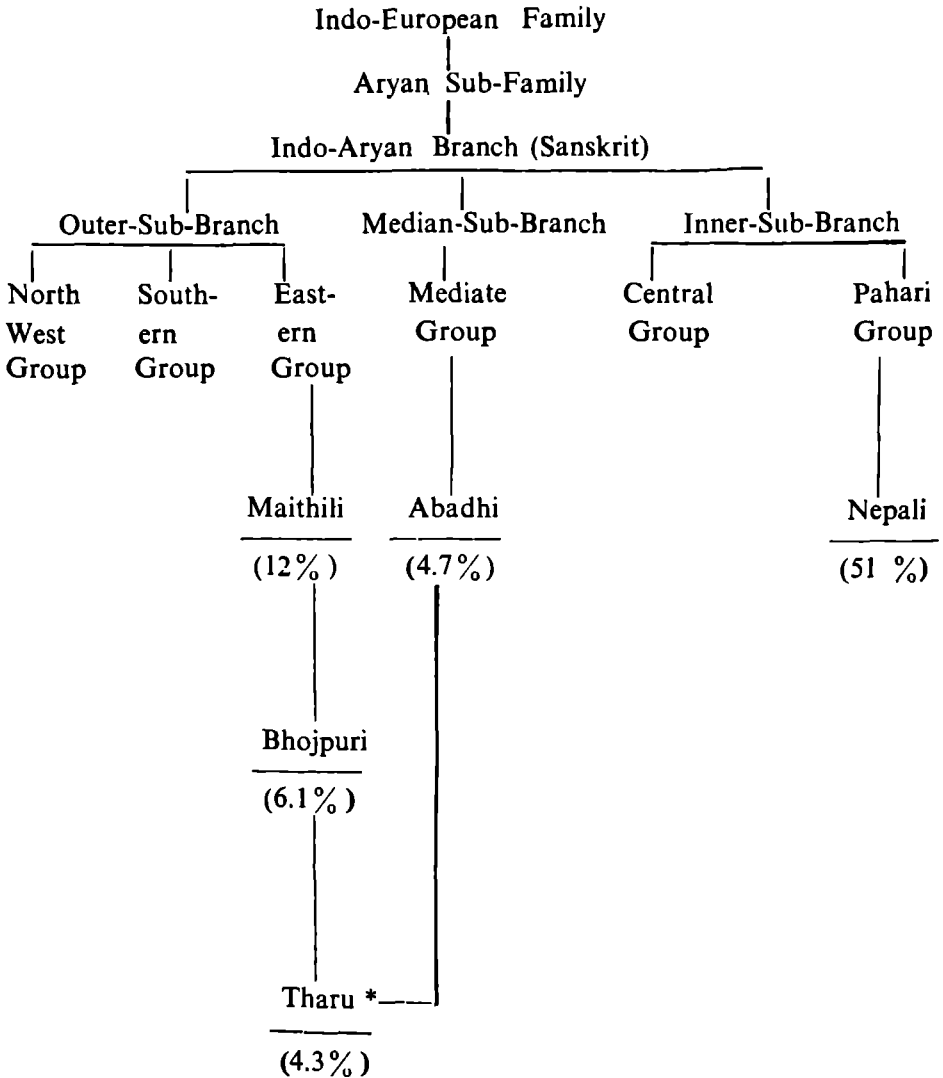


Although most people reading the two Census figures will raise their eye-brows as to the accuracy of percentage of rise or fall in the number of some speakers, the language tables give a reliable picture of the linguistic diversity and the geographic distribution of different linguistic communities.

The 1961 Census Report lists 36 languages as spoken in the Kingdom of Nepal. Almost all these languages have been classified in Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* as languages belonging to one or the other of three language families: (1) Austric, (2) Tibeto-Burman, and (3) Indo-Aryan. For our purposes Nepalese languages have been assigned to different language

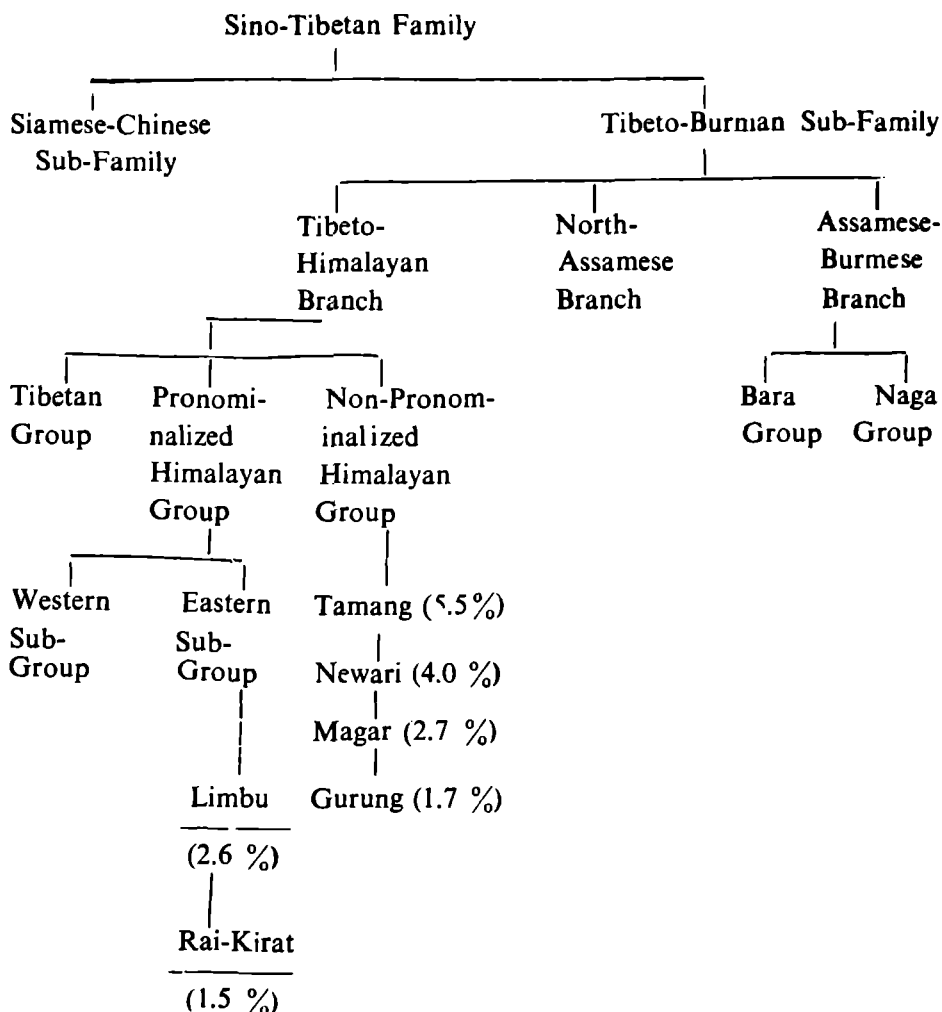
sub-groups, groups, branches, sub-families, and families according to Grierson's classifications. Of the 36 languages there are only 11 which are spoken by more than 1 per cent of the total population. Given below are two three diagrams of the genetic relationships of these 11 major languages of Nepal.

Figure 1



* The Tharus speak a hybrid language which resembles Bhojpuri, Abadhi, and Maghi. Ethnically they are Mongoloids, but they speak an Indo-Aryan language/dialect.

Figure 2



Of the 25 remaining languages of Nepal, only seven are spoken by more than 10,000 people. Each of the eighteen remaining languages is spoken by a population numbering less than 10,000. In fact twelve of these languages are spoken by fewer than 5,000 people. Sir Ralph Turner, the distinguished scholar of Indo-Aryan languages, writing as early as 1928, remarked on this staggering extent of linguistic diversity in Nepal:

“In a population of under six millions in all there are spoken at least

a score, if not indeed a still larger number, of languages, all mutually unintelligible, and some broken up again into numerous and often very different dialects. Even within the limits of a single valley there may be a village the inhabitants of which speak a language completely unintelligible to their neighbours in the next village a mile or two away.... The origin of this diversity is to be found firstly in the various migrations which have brought the present population into the country, and secondly in the difficulties of intercommunication imposed by the geographical features."²

Among the 36 languages spoken in Nepal, according to the 1961 Census returns, there is a group of languages which are essentially foreign in that they are spoken by small immigrant communities which came from India to settle in Nepal in the recent past.

Among Nepalese languages other than Nepali, there are not many which have either a writing system (of their own or otherwise), a written literature, or a literate population or culture. Among the Indo-Aryan group of Nepalese languages, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Abadhi, and Tharu are the languages of the Tarai (group total 27.1 per cent). Although politically the Tarai is a part of Nepal, the people of the Tarai have more in common linguistically, socially, and culturally with the Indian people of Bihar and U.P. than with the people in the hills of Nepal. This is a tragic consequence of a prolonged isolation of the Tarai from the hills, a policy relentlessly followed by the hill-dominated political structure since the days of Rana rule. The integration of the Tarai with the rest of the hill country of Nepal will take time. Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Abadhi each has a literature of its own. But once again the works of literature in these languages were produced not in Nepal but in Bihar and U.P. There is no noticeable activity of a creative nature attempted by the Tarai elite manifesting either language loyalty or language maintenance. Their rallying point has been Hindi rather than Maithili, Bhojpuri, or Abadhi which they speak as native language speakers.

The picture is less simple in the hills. The Nepali-speaking Khasas are scattered all over the hills. They live in overwhelming numbers in the western mountains, but their density decreases relatively as one moves west

² Ralph L. Turner, "The People and Their Languages", *The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs, and Country*, ed. W.B. Northey and C.J. Morris, (London: Bodley, 1928), p. 65.

LANGAUGE

to east and from the hills in the north to the lower altitudes in the south. The Khasas are Indo-Aryan, whereas ethnically speaking almost the whole of the remaining population of the Nepal Himalayas (group total 14 per cent) are Mongoloids: the Magars and the Gurungs in the West; the Sherpas in the North; the Tamangs in the Central Hills; the Rais and the Limbus in the East. All these tribal groups have their own languages; some have adopted at least one of the three Tibetan scripts, others have ancient and forgotten systems of writing. The Sherpas have an ancient literature preserved through and studied in their monasteries. The Rais and the Limbus—collectively called Kirats—also have an ancient literature including a Veda of their own. But because of their low literacy and the abject living conditions and suppression they have suffered in the last century, the links with their past have become weak. Although once in a while a few cultural patriots among these speech communities have published random items on their cultures and languages, the usual tendency among them is to adopt Nepali and become bilinguals. This tendency is most pronounced in the western hills among the Gurungs and the Magars.

This same tendency to adopt Nepali and become bilingual, or even to cease speaking any tribal language except among one's primary group and kinship circle, is growing in the eastern hills as well. This is due to a number of factors. First, Nepali is a lingua franca throughout the hills. It has been so for quite some time. Secondly, it has been the language of social prestige in terms of civil or military service—mostly military, either in the Nepalese army or the Gorkha Rifles of India or Britain. Thirdly, in terms of literacy, and availability of printed materials, etc. there is no future for tribal languages. Finally, Nepali, as the national language, has been identified with Nepal's growing aspirations towards nationhood; any attempt at other linguistic loyalty and language revival is often interpreted as communalism or tribalism.

Even if all other factors were favourable, there are no resources, no pre-conditions for language maintenance because the literacy rate in speech communities is abysmally low. Where Bubisturce is a problem, language loyalty is a sheer luxury and language maintenance or linguistic self-determination a fallacy of idealism. With the rise in literacy and economic standards, a distinct sense of oneness with the tribe (language serving as an immediate marker of group identity and loyalty) may grow, but it is unlikely to go further than that. At least the present trends among the literate in the

hills are in the opposite direction. For almost all the hill peoples, there are hardly any opportunities to read their languages in school at any stage whatsoever, and there is little language tradition to rely upon. Where there is something to fall back upon, the link is missing; the contact with the past, as in the case of the Sherpas, has been frozen. The smaller the size of the linguistic community, the greater becomes the case against a strong loyalty. And most linguistic communities in Nepal are invariably small.

An interesting case in point is the Newari language. If there is any language in Nepal which in range of use and cultural importance approaches Nepali, it is Newari. The Newari-speakers, unlike the speakers of other languages, are scattered all over Nepal—in small numbers in all urban areas, in district headquarters, in trade-centres. According to the Census Report of 1961, “As a language spoken in every district of the Kingdom, Newari occupies the second place”. (p.44) Their largest concentration is in the Kathmandu Valley—their original home—where they constitute a notable 52 per cent of the total population. Since the 1920s the Newar elite have been struggling to revive their language. Determined to suppress all creative activities in Newari, the Ranas imprisoned and exiled several Newari writers and poets. Under the public opinion pressure of Indian Buddhists, publishing in Newari has been permitted since 1946, and roughly 1,000 titles have been published since—all of which are financed and sponsored by the writers and their organizations from within the speech-community.

The Newari-speakers have the advantageous position over other non-Nepali language groups by being in the centre of political activity, trade and education. They also had an earlier educational start than any other non-Nepali speaking community in Nepal. So literacy is very high—comparatively speaking one of the highest in Nepal. But prior to 1954 Newari was not taught at any stage in schools. Only a few can write it. The old script was abandoned as early as 1909, and Newari was adopted by the Newari men of letters during the first phase of the revival. Today Newari is a subject studied in the schools and colleges, and as far as writing goes, it is confined to literary, creative and journalistic use alone. It is very rarely used for the written social discourse by the Newari-speakers. Most of them are bilingual speakers of Nepali. Those in governmental bureaucracy and those living outside the Kathmandu Valley tend to switch over to Nepali. Nepali is adopted by the Newars whose forefathers had migrated or were driven out of the Valley by the Gorkha rulers. The size as well as the com-

LANGUAGE

position of their community is the weak point in the language loyalty among the Newars. Though the Newari-speakers number less than 4,00,000 in the whole kingdom, their language loyalty has remained one of the strongest ones in Nepal. In a sense, this is more a manifestation of cultural identity-seeking than of ethnocentricity, because the Newars are a society composed of very diverse ethnic, cultural and religious influences so that where they have not adopted Nepali as bilinguals they have no common identity except their language.

Unity of Language

In the previous section ethnic and linguistic diversity among the people of Nepal was deliberately emphasized. A discussion of Nepali was left out of the picture. However, this language was in use in the medieval kingdoms of the Parbatiya Mallas. Epigraphic evidence of the use of Nepali as far back as A.D. 1336, has been discovered. The extant evidence of Nepali or Khas Kura during the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th centuries are all epigraphic / documentary. The Khas speakers seem to have infiltrated into the Kathmandu Valley and elsewhere in small communities by the end of the 17th century. Between A.D. 1336-1672, some thirteen instances of the use of Khas Kura have so far been found. However, only in the second decade of the eighteenth century did it come to be used for translation, commentary, etc., in manuscripts. The earliest evidence of the use of Nepali in manuscript traced so far is a translation (dated A.D. 1713) of an Ayurvedic book called *Jwarotporti Chikitsa*. Its use for scholarly purposes was very rare in the Kathmandu Valley prior to the Gorkha Conquest in 1769. Even after the founding of a unified kingdom, the Khas Brahminical intelligentsia favoured Sanskrit as a medium of learned discourse and composition. Before the twentieth century, Nepali was subject to a great deal of dialectal inflections and uncertainty. It was, however, only after the establishment of the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashani Samiti (Gorkha Language Publishing House) in 1913 that some efforts were made to make Nepali a stable language. A secular and modern literature in Nepali began to flourish with the founding in 1933 of *Sharada*, a literary monthly. Thus, although Nepali had been the court language for two hundred years, its popular flowering is a recent phenomenon. Nepali was not made a compulsory language of law and administration, let alone the national language, until 1905 when the Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere Rana declared all legal documents written in other languages illegal.

During the last fifty years Nepali has taken great strides to raise itself to the status of a national language. Although nobody has ever made any objective field tests regarding the comprehension of Nepali by non-Nepali speakers, or on its use as a second language; necessity-sheer expediency-seems to have driven more and more non-Nepali speakers to understand and use it in their day-to-day transactions, their inter-tribal communication and the communication with the channels of local and national administration. In all of these strata of communication some form of Nepali has been used for the last two centuries. The rise of Nepali, first as a lingua franca in the wake of the Gorkha military campaigns, then its continuous use as the language of authority and administration—the total ousting of all other languages from the courts and the final triumph of instituting Nepali as the national language of Nepal—completed a long historical process that has been going on as a centripetal tendency consequent upon the political unification of Nepal.

Nepali: Possibilities and Limitations

The standardization of Nepali has been a painful process. Because of their interest in the Gorkhas, the British scholars laid the foundations for the standardizing process by taking up to study Nepali seriously. As early as 1820 J. A. Ayton published *Grammar of the Nepalese Language*, which is, probably, the first grammar of Nepali ever written. In the present century Sir Ralph Turner's *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* (1931) is a work of classic standing. Some Nepalese authorities, too, have written a few grammars and dictionaries in the last sixty years. The first indigenous grammar was *Gorkha-Bhasa Vyakarna Chandrika*, a grammar written by the royal preceptor Pundit Hemraj and published in 1912. A popular version of this scholarly grammar, called *Madhya Chandrika*, was published in 1920 by Somanath Sharma. Another textbook version was published in 1949 for use in schools and college. This is the celebrated *Nepali Sajilo Vyakarna* by Pushkar Shumshere Rana (1902–60). Pushkar Shumshere did more than any other single grammarian and lexicographer in Nepal to stabilize the usage in Nepali. Among other things, he edited a monumental two-volume English-Nepali version of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. The first indigenous monolingual dictionary in Nepali was published in 1951. This was Pundit Ramchandra Dhungana's *Samchhipta Nepali Subdakosa*. In recent years the Royal Nepal Academy has published a magnificent Nepali *Dictionary* in a monolingual edition. This is *Vrihad Nepali Sabdakosa*

(1962) edited by Balachandra Sharma. The Academy is also planning to bring out a dictionary of synonyms of Nepali and fourteen other languages and a scientific grammar of the Nepali language. Despite the fact that there are furious disputes about points of grammar and usage, the dust of controversy is likely to settle under the pressure of the needs of everyday communication.

The area of dispute, very often, is not so much the standardization of grammar and orthography as or the degree of Sanskritization of vocabulary. Nepali is an Indo-Aryan language. Like all other Indo-Aryan languages, Nepali has to rely on Sanskrit roots for learned, abstract, and technical vocabulary. At a certain level Nepali becomes indistinguishable from Hindi except in structural items and other incidental particles. Linguistic nationalists, however, want to preserve the indigenous flavour of Nepali by coining abstract terms from indigenous nouns and verbs, while the Sanskrit-oriented writers and scholars want to borrow as many words as possible from Sanskritized-Hindi. The Nepali purists are finding it more and more difficult to make their usage acceptable, and they have not succeeded in having more than a few dozen words admitted to sophisticated usage.

Nepali, as an indigenous language, has no resources other than Sanskritized forms for handling an intellectual, abstract, or technical discourse of any kind. More than 85 per cent of its vocabulary is similar to Hindi from which it has borrowed more words in the last 20 years than from all the rest of Nepalese languages put together in the whole history of modern Nepal. So the paradox of Nepali linguistic nationalism is that the broader the scope of Nepali, the less it sounds like a language of Nepal. Nationalism in Nepal, in so far as it is manifestly anti-Indian in orientation, is a self-defeating aspiration, particularly when one of its major foundations is Nepali, which is bound to be increasingly Sanskritized.

Sanskritization of the literate culture is thus a most prominent cultural process at work in Nepal's modern history. The media—the Indian movies, the local newspapers, popular books, etc.—have, in one way or the other, encouraged the tendency on an unofficial level. Other than English, Nepali is the only important language to which an average literate Nepalese is therefore likely to be exposed. Apart from about 5 million Nepali speakers in Nepal there are more than a million Nepali speakers in India—in the Punjab, Simla, Garhwal, Nainital, Darjeeling, Sikkim, Bhutan, Bengal, and

as far south as Bangalore. Politically and numerically the status of Nepali is, thus, unquestionable. Like all other languages of the under-developed regions of Asia and Africa the question about Nepali is, however, the question of its intrinsic potentialities, mainly in terms of available vocabulary for the whole range of functions that a full-fledged language is required to perform, Nepali may burst at the seams with an unmanageable load of Sanskritized vocabulary after a certain stage. but it is proving effective for a wide range of communicative activities.

Roughly speaking, since 1913, publishing in Nepali has been going on more or less steadily. The Gorkha Bhasa Prakashini Samiti—Samiti for short—has contributed a great deal to enriching the treasury of printed Nepali literature, which now includes about 5,000 titles, by publishing original and translated works in Nepali. The Samiti, a government body, was formerly an embryonic and improvised version of the Academy in that it set a standard until 1960 when it was made a publishing corporation called Sajha (Co-operative) through its numerous publications, both in grammar and usage or style. It also produced numerous textbooks and readers in Nepali, mathematics, basic crafts, and so on. There were periodic additions to the Samiti's publications by private publishers from Darjeeling, Kathmandu and Benaras. However, it was not until the founding of the Education Materials Production Center in the 1960's that textbook production became a planned enterprise. The Education Materials Production Center, in recent years, has produced some excellent, standardized teaching materials in Nepali and English.

The Royal Nepal Academy, founded in 1957, deals mainly with the promotion of Nepalese arts, culture, and letters. Through new book production of a standard-setting type the Academy is giving an additional impetus to Nepali. It has produced, in the past thirteen years, some commendable works in Nepali, mainly literary in nature (including translations from Oriental and Western literature).

As far as organized official efforts towards standardizing the Nepali language are concerned, it is only fair to say that in spite of the Samiti, the Academy and the Sajha Corporation, there is no prescriptive agency as such, and the media like the government subsidized publications (e.g. the *Gorkhapatra* and *Madhuparka*), Government publicity materials, and Radio Nepal cannot in themselves be called standard-setting agencies. For one thing, although the media are influential agencies of linguistic "conditioning," they

do not substitute a grammar or usage acceptable to a general concensus of conscious or semi-conscious habits. It is more realistic, therefore, to hope that standardization of Nepali (orthography, grammar, style, usage, etc.) is likely to occur through the agency of the schools than through any other single body, including the Academy. What is necessary in standardization efforts is not just the legislation, but also the reinforcement of these measures through actual linguistic usage in the community. Even when the Academy succeeds in producing an "authoritative and scientific" grammar, the grammar will have to reach the literate strata of society (particularly if it is prescriptive—and all standardization processes are prescriptive). This can be done most effectively only by collaborating with the schools, colleges, and the universities, particularly through textbooks.

Language Policy of the Government

His Majesty's Government has a declared policy that over the next ten to fifteen years, Nepali should become the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Apart from this, the Government policy towards language is that Nepali and only Nepali should be used in law, administration, Government publications, and the communications media. Nepali is the only language used also by semi-governmental bodies like the Royal Academy and other publishing concerns with large government shares. Only two Nepalese languages, Maithili and Newari, are introduced as optional subjects in the school curriculum at the secondary level (from grade six). At the college level, these two languages continue to be taught right up to the B.A. level both as optional vernacular composition and principal elective subjects. There is no course for either at the Master's level so far. Students may answer examination questions in English, Nepali, Hindi (but not in Newari). In higher education almost all subjects (except the languages) are taught in English, although now there is a noticeable tendency to use Nepali instead.

His Majesty's Government of Nepal is determined, not only to promote Nepali as an instrument of national integration, but also to discourage all linguistically divisive tendencies. The Government does not sponsor any publications in any other Nepalese language. The publicity media, with the exception of Radio Nepal, has no place for any language other than Nepali. Since its inception in 1950, Radio Nepal used to broadcast the news in Hindi and Newari, together with Nepali and English. Since April 15,

1965, however, the news broadcasts in Hindi and Newari have been discontinued.

All efforts to favour the other languages have been made from within the respective linguistic communities. The Newari speakers of Kathmandu at one time demanded the status of an associate official language for Newari in the Valley, while the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Abadhi and Tharu speakers of the Tarai demanded that Hindi, the lingua franca of the Tarai, should be the national language of Nepal.

The political instability of post-1950 Nepal greatly favoured all kinds of linguistic wishful thinking. The 1952-54 Census Report became a crucial document in this language controversy. It showed that 48.7 per cent of the population spoke Nepali, compared to 16 per cent Maithili speakers, the second largest linguistic community. Only 80,181 persons were found to speak Hindi as their mother tongue, while 3,83,184 (4.7 per cent) Newari speakers were counted. These figures gave the Government enough evidence and political courage to settle the question of a national language to Nepali, a status it had held informally for quite some time.

Conclusion

Nepali is the national language of Nepal, not because it is the language of a comparatively overwhelming majority (51 per cent), or just because it is the language of the conquering race. Nepali is the national language mainly because among the languages of Nepal there is no better alternative to it. The comparatively primitive state of other languages (few Nepalese languages other than Nepali and Newari have either a grammar or a dictionary) has considerably boosted the status of Nepali while the foreignness of others has made the choice inevitable. There are ancient indigenous languages, like Newari or Rai-Kirat, but their loss of contact with the past and their dwindling numbers of speakers have fortified the position of Nepali and made it finally unassailable.

After having said that, the uneasy question remains: What should be done with the other languages of Nepal? This is an oppressive question in every multilingual polity, and as in every such case there are three possible policy decisions: 1. Assimilation, elimination or extermination; 2. Toleration of the minority languages, and 3. Encouragement of the minority lan-

LANGUAGE

guages. Language is so much a part of one's way of life, a code through which a people's culture is transmitted from one generation to another. The first language policy equates nationalism with uniformity, the second language policy equates it with tolerance (positively) or indifference (negatively) while the last alternative equates nationalism with a unity based on cultural pluralism and diversity. The so-called dying languages can take an agonizingly long time on their death-bed. The question is: Unity or Uniformity? Political unity and economic feasibility cannot be ignored. The important consideration in language policy decisions should be cultural pluralism as well as political unity. In any case what Nepal does with her minorities and their languages will be the best test of the maturity of her democracy. To ignore them is convenient, but not necessarily the most effective way to national integration.

TABLE 1
The Census Data on the Languages of Nepal

Language	1952-54 Census	%	1961 Census	%	Gains	Loss
1. Nepali	4,013,567	48.7	4,796,528	51.0	782,961	
2. Maithili	300,768		1,130,401	12.0	829,633	
3. Bhojpuri	16,335	0.2	577,357	6.1	561,022	
4. Tamang	494,745	6.0	518,882	5.5	24,064	
5. Abadhi	—	—	447,090	4.7	447,090	
6. Tharu	359,594	4.4	406,907	4.3	47,313	
7. Newari	383,184	4.7	377,727	4.0		5,457
8. Magar	273,780	3.3	254,675	2.7		19,105
9. Rai-Kirat	236,049	2.9	239,749	2.6	3,700	
10. Gurung	162,192	2.0	157,778	1.7		4,414
11. Limbu	145,511	1.8	138,705	1.5		6,806
12. Bhote-Sherpa	70,132		84,229		14,097	
13. Morang Desh Dialects	106,569		83,986			22,583
14. Rajbangsi or Tajpuri	35,543		55,803		20,260	
15. Satar	16,751		18,880		2,129	

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

(Table 1 Continued)

Language	1952-54 Census	%	1961 Census	%	Gains	Loss
16. Sunwar	17,299		13,362			3,937
17. Danuwar	9,138		11,624		2,486	
18. Santhali	—		10,645		10,645	
19. Bengali	7,375		9,915		2,540	
20. Chepang	14,261		9,247			5,014
21. Thangar	4,812		9,180		4,368	
22. Thami	10,240		9,046			1,194
23. Dhimal	5,671		8,186		2,517	
24. Marwari	4,244		6,716		2,472	
25. Majhi	5,729		5,854		125	
26. Thakali	3,307		4,134		827	
27. Pahari	864		3,002		2,138	
28. Hindi	80,181		2,867			77,314
29. Jirel	2,721		2,757		36	
30. Urdu	32,545		2,650			29,895
31. Kumhale	3,510		1,724			1,786
32. Darai	3,084		1,645			1,439
33. Lapche	—		1,272		1,272	
34. Meche	523		938		415	
35. Raji	1,514		801			713
36. Udissa	—		782		782	

TABLE 2

Language	1952-54 Census	1961 Census
Maithili Pradesh Dialects	671,443	—
Eastern Tarai Dialects	460,946	—
Mid-Western Tarai Dialects	259,015	—
Far-Western Tarai Dialects	69,446	—
<p>These languages, all of which were given in the 1952-54 Census, have either died out or have not been enumerated in the 1961 Census.</p>		
Byansi	1,786	—
Hayu	233	—
Bote	649	—

(1973)

CHAPTER 8

Literature

—*Yadu Nath Khanal*

Some mention has been made in other sections of the book of the unusual variety of languages and dialects current in Nepal. These languages which are influenced in different subtle and obvious ways by others with which they have come into contact for historical, geographical and social reasons and which have thus become hybrids in the course of time belong broadly to two great families; namely, the Indo-European and the Tibeto-Burman. All languages have not been uniformly influential which has led each of them to undergo a different degree of hybridisation; but as there is no pure tribe or race in Nepal there is no pure language either. In the literatures of these languages, wherever they exist, mutual influences have been even greater. Forms and sentiments commonly found in the folk culture of a particular language are more easily adaptable in the literature of another. Such adaptations of metres, folk songs, forms and sentiments abound.

Before I come to Nepali which occupies a predominant place as literature in modern Nepal, I wish to make a passing reference to Sanskrit and Newari literary traditions. Of these two, the Sanskrit tradition appears to me to be more significant in terms both of quality and of influence on other literatures of the country. Nepal has maintained at least from the time of the Lichchavis, with some ups and downs, a fairly glorious, independent tradition of writing in Sanskrit. Many of the Sanskrit inscriptions and writings which have come down to us through different periods, from the Lichchavis through the Mallas to the Shahs, apart from their historical value, maintain a literary tradition of high artistic achievement. The pages of the *Purnima*,

a journal conducted by a competent group of Sanskrit enthusiasts and devoted to Nepal's historical research, are interspersed with passages which analyze with perception and judgement, even though incidentally, the high literary qualities of some of these documents. Man Dev's Changunarayan inscription, among many others, can easily bear scrutiny in this sense. The best Lichhavi writings are characterized by a mature feel for truth which ensures harmony between the subject and the form. One Nepalese historian, Kesar Bahadur K.C., makes what would appear a controversial claim that Bharavi, the famous writer of the *Kiratarjuniyam*, being the grandson of Man Dev from the daughter's side, was a Nepalese poet. The tradition continued with remarkable though declining strength and persistence right through the Malla and Shah periods. Jagat Jyoti Malla of Bhaktapur was a poet of considerable reputation in the literary world. Pratap Malla whose prayer to Pashupatinath can still be seen in the area described himself in the inscription as the lord of poets (*Kavindra*). During the Shah period, Shakti Vallab Arjyal who wrote *Jayaratnakar*, a play devoted to the early exploits of Shah rulers towards unification, and Kulchandra Gautam who composed the *Bhagvatmanjari*, a summary of the *Bhagvat Purana*, after the style of the Kashmiri poet Kshemendra can be cited as examples not only of the persistence of the Sanskrit literary tradition in Nepal to the recent times but also of the direction which this tradition has taken. As the *Adarsha-Raghav Pushpanjali* of Somanath Sharma shows, the recent trends in Sanskrit writing have been increasingly non-secular and devotional. Thus, the total direction of Sanskrit poetry in Nepal, unfortunately, is not an upward direction. The vigor and originality of earlier writings, the touch of mastery and judgement exhibited in the selection of words, the immediacy of effect that follows inevitably from them, above all, the sincerity of feeling have increasingly given way to what is unmistakably an artificiality due to the uncritical adherence to the rules of rhetoric and prosody (*Alankara Shastra*). The critical spark that enlivens literature has declined.

Though the history of Nepal until the end of the Malla period has as its main constituent the history of the people of the Kathmandu valley, at least for the most part, the development of Newari as literature is comparatively recent. The study of Newari as a language, after Sanskrit, is important in Nepal for historical purposes; and some Newari writings and inscriptions, as collected in a recent Newari publication, called *Nepal Bhasha Shahitya Jata* (Origin of Newari Literature), go back by several hundred years. Why a gifted community like the Newars who produced exquisite works of archi-

LITERATURE

itecture, sculpture and wood-carving through different ages and whose life even at the level of common people is suffused with a feeling for music and dance should be relatively indifferent to the cultivation of serious literature in its heyday is, so far as I am concerned, one of the curiosities of Nepalese history. If such literary works are now unavailable because they have been lost, they should be diligently searched out. But this does not seem to me to be the whole explanation.

In spite of its recent origin, Newari literature is interesting for at least two reasons. In the first place, Newari alone among the languages of Nepal other than Sanskrit and Nepali has a distinct literary tradition. Maithili and some other languages have literatures of varying richness, but it is difficult to discover in them an independent Nepalese tradition. Surkishordas' *Sitayana*, for example, though written in Janakpur in the first half of the eighteenth century, is almost completely in line with the literary tradition current across the border. Kirati literature is extremely significant for historical purposes and growing recent interest of Nepalese scholarship in it, as evidenced by some publications relating to the Kirati period of our history, is most welcome. But the Kirati literary tradition is yet an uncertain field for scholarship. Newari, however, is an exception. This tradition, besides being born and brought up in Nepal, seeks to reflect and embody the experiences of a community with a rich historical and cultural heritage. Unlike the Kirati period, the Newari period is not remotely shrouded in history. Secondly, Newari as literature is a product of a certain positive urge among the Newars to recreate, as they see it, the significance of the Nepalese view of life through an intuitive understanding, acceptance and embodiment of this heritage. In recent years a group of writers have emerged, of whom, many like Siddhicharan Shrestha, Kedar Man Vyathit, Dhu Swa Saymi and Chitta Dhar Hridaya, have left their stamp as important literary figures. With the exception of Chitta Dhar Hridaya many Newari writers write with equal fluency in Nepali and, as we shall see later, have come to acquire and occupy important places in the hierarchy of poets and writers in Nepali literature.

As some of the Malla inscriptions indicate, Nepali was being used increasingly for inter-communal communication even before the unification of Nepal in 1769. Since the unification, however, it has acquired a pre-eminent position in Nepal among the languages for various reasons of which administrative convenience is among the more important. A united nation needs a

common language not merely for administrative purposes but also for communication and sharing of feelings, moods, experiences and aspirations across communities. Significantly, therefore, literary writing in Nepali may be taken to have begun right from the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah himself. The exploits and conquests of this rough but remarkable dreamer and man of action and his successors find expression in the poetry of Subanand Das and Udayanand Arjyal. The poetry which is generally of patriotic kind is wanting in fine feeling and the style is somewhat rough and primitive. Prithvi Narayan Shah's own *Divyopadesh*, owing no literary motivation, seeks beneath somewhat primitive language and expressions to embody his vision of Nepal poetically in considerable detail through fresh and appropriate similes. The wealth of ideas, economy of expression and the profusion of right phrases and vivid images combine to make *Divyopadesh* into the first significant example of Nepali prose. The literary writings of this period, whether prose or poetry, give us the impression in point of both language and feeling of their having ensued directly from life and experience. There is no doubt that this directness was the major characteristic of the age though some minor strains of tradition which had their roots in the literary practices current across the border are certainly traceable.

The nature and strength of the external danger became obvious as in a flash during the Anglo-Nepal War ending in the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816. Even more disturbing was the internal state of the country, as exposed by these traumatic events, of weak and selfish leadership and intriguing courtiers. In this situation, Yadunath Pokhrel's attempt to restore confidence in the destiny of the nation by extolling the achievements of Bhim Sen Thapa in patriotic poetry met with feeble response. The mood of the times was not one of hope and optimism which comes when there is a creative interaction between the land and the people. The overall national impulse of the moment was not to accept life and its challenge at its most significant point but to escape to a more comfortable state of false or negative response to life. It is no wonder, therefore, that by far the larger bulk of writing at this time was devotional and introspective, translations rather than original.

The most outstanding among the writers of the age and consequently the most representative was Bhanubhakta Acharya who wrote and translated many works. He was not much ahead of his times in ideas and opinions. There is a wide gap in his original poetry between the quality of content which

LITERATURE

is often disappointing and the quality of language which is usually superb. The gap remains disguised in his more important and sustained works such as the *Ramayan* and the *Prashnottari* which are translations but in his original works whether of a sustained kind like the *Badhu-Siksha* or of a lighter kind like a poem on *Gajadhar Soti's Wife* it is unmistakable. But from the point of view of language and expression his works are models not only to his contemporaries but also to many modern writers. His language is the language of the common people, direct and spontaneous, free from unfamiliar Sanskrit words. He avoids subtlety and sophistication; and as his language is classless, to use a modern jargon his works have an appeal to all classes of people. He avoids also long and compound words and does not labour after effect. The following lines from the *Prashnottari* may be cited as an example:

Who is a person always in chain?
He who has set his mind on joys vain.

Clarity, precision and simplicity are the texture of which Bhanubhakta's poetry is made; and though he invariably uses rhyme, he does not sacrifice any of these higher values for that sake. The following verse from the *Ramayan* which depicts the Lanka of Ravan reinforces the argument:

Golden are the houses, golden are the streets;
One palace studded with jewels another beats;
I went round all gardens, lakes and looked;
Assailable by none, it could not be hooked;

Bhanubhakta was followed by Motiram Bhatta, a very enthusiastic young man and a leader of a literary movement. Bhatta's was a remarkably modern mind endowed with a scientific attitude to things and a new sense of social awareness and insight. As he was ahead of his times in many ways, he stood head above shoulders over his contemporaries. He was a threefold pioneer. First, he collected Bhanubhakta's writings and, with singular dedication and selflessness, popularized his poetry and name. He played a Boswell to him and his *Life of Bhanubhakta* remained for a long time a standard source of information on the poet and his writings on account of its general reliability. Secondly, he gathered round him a group of writers and poets, encouraged exchange of ideas among them and created a unique literary climate of responsible criticism and mutual appreciation. Finally, he strove through persistent encouragement and through his own poetical writings to rescue Nepali poetry from the devotional escapism on which it had landed itself. For this purpose, he initiated an age of *shringar* or erotic poetry and

though some poetry written under this inspiration is good and marks a refreshing contrast to the heavy devotional theme of the previous generation, as Motiram Bhatta had expected, most of it is rather a warning than an example.

It is said that both man and the moment are needed for the proper flowering of poetry in any nation. As we have seen, Motiram did all he could to prepare the moment, though strong forces hostile or indifferent to culture were deeply imbedded in the society of his times. The man for whom he prepared the moment came in the person of Lekhanath who made full use of the climate of poetic discipline so created. So, with Lekhanath Nepali poetry came to acquire excellence in many respects. First, poetry was pursued intensely as a discipline in its own right. Such pursuit led to the creation of a poetic tradition characterized by a new feel for words, a new insight into man and nature and, above all, a degree of formal correctness unknown before. This development raised Nepali poetry to a new height of excellence as a form of art. Secondly, the spirit of questioning and enquiry, which formed the social component of the general climate brought into being by Motiram found expression in *Buddhi-vinod* and more directly in *Satya-Kali Samvad*. While a poem like *Pinjara ko Suga* (The Parrot in a Cage) is capable of being interpreted in a spiritual sense as the soul imprisoned in the body and in a social sense as the poet enchained within a political tyranny, neither *Buddhi-vinod* nor *Satya-Kali Samvad* permits any such ambiguity. Though there are some purple passages of social criticism, specially in *Satya-Kali Samvad*, which embody a genuine and sincere experience, this is not the area in which Lekhanath is at his best. He was far too happy with the existing social structure to be a sensitive social critic. Nevertheless, the lines like the following have a true ring:

The hungry stomach is your lot even if you,
sweating profusely, carry for your masters
heavy baskets of load, day in and day out.

While *Buddhi-vinod* and *Satya-Kali Samvad* reflect his concern with social questions and are open to criticism for more than one reason, *Ritu-vichar*, on the other hand, is a product in its final form of his single-minded application to poetry as poetry. *Ritu-vichar* signifies thought about seasons; and though inspired broadly by Kalidas's *Ritu-Samhar*, it is an original work reflecting the poet's own deep insight into man and nature.

LITERATURE

In this poem, unlike in many others, we are fed, happily, with a less heavy dose of moral wisdom and philosophical speculation. Even where philosophy enters, it does so unobtrusively and in a form in which it is indistinguishable from poetry. The following lines from his *Vasant-vichar* (Thoughts of Spring) may be examined to illustrate the point:

Every flower has forms, lines and colours infinite;
But there is one effulgent beauty inhering in them all.

Like a bee, the poet flies from sprout to sprout, from flower to flower and from tree to tree; he observes the sudden sprouting, as if by a miracle, into life of many flowers in the spring season. He is deeply impressed by the apparent multiplicity of things. But beneath this multiplicity he experiences one supreme radiant beauty encompassing all and transcending all. In fact, he has given us here a poetic expression to the eternal philosophical question of one-in-many. Lekhnath's supreme quest in poetry as in life is the creative synthesis between the intellectual and non-intellectual aspects of reality. In *Ritu-vichar* he remains a poet first and philosopher afterwards. In his later poems including *Tarun-Tapasi*, in spite of many brilliant passages of exception, he progressively reverses his position and becomes a philosopher first and poet afterwards.

Lekhanath produced a powerful impact as a poet. This impact developed into a school which persists even today. Among the many poets belonging to the Lekhanathian school mention may be made of Chakrapani Chalise, Somanath Sharma, Madhav Devakota and Madhav Ghimire, all four poets of considerable distinction. Madhav Ghimire's *Gauri* and *Rajeshwari* appear to me too sentimental to deserve the high praise that has been generally bestowed on them. *Papini Ama* (Sinful Mother) and *Kali Gandaki* are certainly more successful poems because they exhume maturity and strength. In *Kali Gandaki* the poet has used *dhwani* or suggestiveness to good effect. Ghimire is unrivalled in the felicity of expression and in the selection and use of words close to the people and with the right sound and shade of meaning. He is essentially a poet of Nepal, deeply moved by sentiments of patriotism; and he is most impressive in this sense when he depicts with vivid precision and delightful freshness rural scenes of his native Lamjung dominated by Himal Chuli.

At this stage of our analysis it may be profitable to make a brief survey of the social and political conditions obtaining in Nepal during the period in so far as they have a bearing on literature. It may be noted that

Lekhanath started his poetical career towards the beginning of the twentieth century and died in 1965. It is important to recall that, externally, these sixty-five years experienced two World Wars which gave rise to tremendous human suffering and intense social consciousness. The first War ended in the Soviet Revolution and the second in the emancipation of Asia and Africa. If the dynamic societies developed enough resilience to survive through these changes, the more obstinately traditional ones fell one after another like a house of cards. No sensitive mind in Nepal could remain unaffected by the cumulative impact of such events; the Gorkhas, returning after demobilization, added the impetus. Internally, it is significant that the publication in 1920, immediately after the First World War, of a book called *Makaiko Kheti* (Cultivation of Maize) was looked upon with suspicion by the Rana authorities. The general wave of awakening that followed the war, demonstrated eloquently in the intensification of the Indian struggle for independence, was more responsible for Rana over-reaction than the so-called sedition contained in the book. The incident had the effect of spreading further popular consciousness especially among the educated youths coming out of Tri-Chandra College and many Indian universities. This made the authorities even more suspicious, leading to a game of hide-and-seek between them and the growing number of awakened youths as well as the issues they raised. *Sharada*, a monthly literary magazine, which began its eventful career in 1934, was a product of an unwritten, silent compromise, allowed and accepted as an experiment, between the authorities and the rising impatient intellectuals.

Thus, the movement of awakening as exemplified in the pursuit of meaningful literature could not be stopped. The urge for expression that grew internally in Nepal among a growing number of youths was fed powerfully from India and particularly from Darjeeling by men like Dharanidhar Koirala who wrote spirited poems, Surya Bikram Gewali who did pioneering work in history and made the Nepalese increasingly aware of their history and Paras Mani Pradhan who rendered disinterested service to the cause of Nepali in different ways. Yet, the movement even on its literary side had to undergo many modifications to accommodate or evade authorities. One example of such modification is found in Lekhanath's *Satya-Kali Samvad* in which the poet, having made relevant social criticism, ties a few verses to the end in praise of the Rana regime. Bala Krishna Sama's position was more complicated. Being a member of the family, he had inherited a typical Rana milieu from which he could not easily extricate himself. On the other hand, the

LITERATURE

intellectual and artistic values which he came to cherish as a result of his wide reading of English literature and of his single-minded application to the Muse were out of harmony with those common among the members of the Establishment. His agnosticism, in particular, was highly suspect among the older Ranas. In these circumstances, he felt compelled to develop a literary technique which could disguise his social criticism behind the facade of dramatic characters. Though such devices were not always successful, they had an important literary side-effect. The forced use of far-fetched symbols and the development of a style of writing that avoids commitment as far as possible took our literature progressively away from the people. Even Gopal Prasad Rimal's poems which are addressed to the people and are comparatively direct in their commitment are not such as are commonly understood by them. During a considerable stretch of time before the Revolution in 1950-51 obscurity in Nepalese literature which drew also from the symbolistic practices of Hindi current at the time in India became a measure of the widening gap between the values that the regime propagated and those which the writers and poets sought to promote. The trend, though general, was most conspicuously manifest in the poetry of Bhavani Bhikshu.

It is necessary to bear this general background of the *Sharada* age of Nepali literature in mind when we come to writers who, though influenced by and even contemporaneous with Lekhanath, attained their flowering during the years of awakening before the Revolution and charted a literary course different from his. Neither Bala Krishna Sama nor Lakshmi Prasad Devakota nor perhaps Kedar Man Vyathit belongs to the *Sharada* group of writers in the same sense in which Siddhicharan Shrestha, Gopal Prasad Rimal, Govind Bahadur Gothale, Vijay Bahadur Malla, Ratna Dhoj Joshi and even Bhavani Bhikshu do. Narrowly interpreted, even Bhim Nidhi Tiwari falls outside the charmed circle. But if we interpret the *Sharada* spirit in the best and broadest sense, we will find that all the above writers without exception belong to it because all of them were part of that new awakening of which *Sharada* was a collective expression. Even B. P. Koirala who had started writing stories based on sex and social problems, Guru Prasad Mainali who gave in his short stories smart and vivid pictures of Nepalese life in Chekhovian style and Ram Krishna Sharma who initiated criticism with refreshing objectivity and great perception are very much part of the group in a sense too relevant intellectually to reject.

As we have noted earlier, Lekhanath is a poet whose intellectualism

in his later poetry is concerned with philosophical problems which do not derive vitally and immediately from his social environment. But when we come to Bala Krishna Sama, thanks to the new climate symbolized in *Sharada*, we meet with an intellectualism that is more relevant and more immediate. Sama was both a disciple and rebel to Lekhanath. As a disciple, he adopted Lekhanath's meticulous care in the selection of words and phrases and his restraint and discipline as exemplified in his use of the *anushtup* metre which, as blank verse, is the form he uses in most of his dramas. Many lines in *Chiso Chulho* (The Cold Oven) carry both a conscious and an unconscious echo of Lekhanathian discipline and formal or metrical correctness. But Sama is more distinctive as a rebel. Apart from the fact that he introduces greater flexibility in the forms he adopts and uses, his intellectual world, his present profuse references to the Vedas notwithstanding, is very different from and even fundamentally opposed to Lekhanath's. He has cultivated a remarkable historical sense. Apart from the sense of the history of the world reflected in such works as *Ago ra Pani* (Fire and water) and many other poetical and prose works, his sense of the history of Nepal has found expression variously in *Prem-pinda*, *Amar Singh Thapa*, *Bhakti Thapa* and parts of *Chiso Chulho*. It seems as if whatever sense of void he felt as an agnostic by rejecting the spiritual view of things permitting his social milieu he appears to have tried to make up by developing an intellectual curiosity on a grand scale in history in general and Nepalese history in particular. Besides, his intellectual curiosity is multi-dimensional and extends to pursuits other than literature such as painting and philosophy. It is not surprising, therefore, that intellect presides as a jealous mistress over the entire range of his literary works.

This attempt of Sama to make the whole of human knowledge his province in the Baconian sense has had some unhappy manifestations. His *Niyamit Akashmikata* (Regulated Chance) shows that it is an impossible task. Between the plethora of information which he embodies from all sources of human knowledge and his formulation of reality as regulated chance there is a wide gap of intellectual reasoning which distinguishes philosophy from any other intellectual pursuit. As a result of this gap, no feeling of realization ensues when we end the study of *Niyamit Akashmikata*. Fortunately, the impression is entirely different with his plays and poetry.

Following Sama and contemporaneously with him throughout his comparatively short poetical career, Lakshmi Prasad Devakota shot into the horizon like a meteor. His genius was so different from that of either

LITERATURE

Lekhanath or Sama that he compels us to define poetry in an altogether different way. Poetry to both Lekhanath and Sama is basically a discipline in the classical sense to be acquired and cultivated diligently as if at the feet of a master. The need of genius is recognized; but its rough edges should be smoothened and polished by technical skill acquired and cultivated. In other words, poetry to both of them is the art of maintaining a balance in a fully integrated form between the technique that should be learnt and cultivated as a discipline and inspiration that comes to poets at certain moments of their lives. But this definition does not hold good in the poetry of Lakshmi Prasad Devakota. For him, poetry is a hill stream in flood which by its very nature breaches the technical embankments at many places. According to him, a poet, like a lunatic, sees a sound, hears a sight and tastes a smell; and in his arithmetic he has one left when he subtracts one from one. The following lines from his *Pagal* (The Lunatic) seek to concretize the elusive character of language for the purposes of poetry:

A language ! friend ! which is not written, printed, spoken, explained,
announced,

How different is this concept of poetry from that suggested in the following lines of Kedar Man Vyathit!

Slowly and slowly, *twak-twak-twak-twak*
Striking the chisel-head with his hammer,
Now pleased, now cross,
And then serious again
The sculptor surveys the chiselled image,
Stepping back a little from time to time.

This concept of poet or artist, applying himself in his varying moods with persistence, dedication and regard for details and observing a detachment with a view to self-criticism is foreign to Devakota. He is impatient with this hammer-and-chisel concept of art and believes that they are poor artists who are not carried away by spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. His own image, as has been noted earlier, is a hill stream in flood which neither flows slowly nor steps back a little from time to time. In fact, Devakota never stepped back, though one would wish sometimes that he had done so. However, what may have been possibly lost through lack of revision and polish is more than made up as much by the effect of immediacy and freshness and torrential flow of emotion as by volume and number. Though he is a versatile genius, he is most outstanding as poet and essayist. The

exquisite *Muna-Madan*, written and published comparatively early in his career, is an example of successful use of *Jhyaure Chhand* or folk metre for the communication of truly poetical experience. The poem is as excellent as it is popular. Equally felicitous are many of the poems collected in *Bhikhari* inspired principally by love of nature in the manner of English Romantic poets. *Shakuntal* and *Sulochana*, written in the Sanskrit Kavya style, develop the same romantic theme in different ways; but the language is heavy and difficult on account of over-Sanskritization. Smaller works like *Kunjini*, *Vasanti* and *Mhendu* are better able as poems to produce right resonance in our hearts. With all their beauties and charms, none of these poems, whether long or short, can be regarded as disturbing poems. But there are occasions when Devakota gets over his romanticism and looks the world straight in the face. Poems like *Bagh le Bachcha kina Khanchha?* (Why does a Tiger Eat its Cub?), *Prabhuji Bhedo Banau* (Lord Make me a Sheep) and *Sandhe* (The Bull) are poems of this kind. They mercilessly expose the hypocrisies inherent in Nepalese life. Of such poems the best is undoubtedly *Pagal* (The Lunatic), written like similar other poems in free verse. It is remarkable as a truly creative work because in it the overflow of feeling and the formal discipline have attained their equilibrium at a new level.

Keeping Sama on one side of the gate and Devakota on the other, one may now enter the inner sanctuary of the *Sharada* group of writers. This group consists of Siddhicharan Shrestha, Gopal Prasad Rimal, Govind Bahadur Gothale and Vijay Malla. As writers who were politically most conscious and purposeful, next of course to B. P. Koirala, in the years before the Revolution, they shared a similar outlook and adopted a similar approach. They were united by a sense of common danger which has always been great in Kathmandu and by a common ideal. They lived two lives, one of apparent co-operation with the regime and the other, a more real life, of underground, secrecy and political activity. This physical involvement in dangerous political life gave them the intensity of conviction on social questions that characterizes their writings. Shrestha's *Mero Pratibimba* (My Image) and Rimal's *Amako Sapana* (Mother's Dream) indicate not only their common concern with fundamental social and political issues of the day but also their differences. While Shrestha is more subjective and principally concerned with an analysis of himself in relation to problems that confronted him, Rimal (whose plays incidentally, appear to me over-praised) is by comparison more objective and concerned with an analysis of the relevance of revolution in relation to himself. Gothale and Vijay Malla carried forward the *Sharada* tradition

LITERATURE

and made their mark as writers only after the Revolution. Starting their careers with a concern for social questions, as viewed from a middle-class background, they came in later years to apply themselves to themes arising out of inter-relationship between the social and psychological aspects of human nature.

Also about this time, B. P. Koirala's stories based on sex under the influence of D.H. Lawrence unfolded a new dimension in Nepali literature. Whether in *Karnelko Ghoda* (The Colonel's Horse), or in *Doshi Chashama* (Defective Glasses) or in others, he shows his deft hand in creating situations which combine the social and sexual problems both of which he is interested in unfolding. In his recent works such as *Tin Ghumti* (Three Curves) and *Sumnima* which are more extended as novels he gives a greater display of his literary talents. In *Tin Ghumti* he examines the problem of a woman who decides on her own to marry the man she loves, to have a baby by another man when her husband is in prison for a long time and to leave her house with her grown daughter after the release of her husband. The theme of *Sumnima* is a blind clash between a culture that speaks with the head at the expense of the heart and a more earthly culture that speaks with the heart at the expense of the head. The characters who embody these concepts are highly concretized and individualized. Yet, most of the situations created by him are so neat that it is difficult to avoid the impression that he writes under the influence of a formula, too logical to be true. As an artist among short story writers, Guru Prasad Mainali, as has been noted above, ranks higher than Koirala. By weaving common incidents of life with understanding and feeling around what appear to be common and familiar people he makes his situations into vital experiences and his characters into living men and women. Bhavani Bhikshu attempts with good effect to analyze the characters and situations of his short stories with greater subtlety; but he suffers greatly from over-abundant use of words in the course of his analysis.

Thus the *Sharada* age in Nepali literature was really an age of enlightenment. The *Sahitya srot* published in 1947 under the inspiration of Hriday Chandra Pradhan and Kedar Man Vyathit represented the culmination of enlightenment initiated by *Sharada* and was so far ahead of the times that it soon fell into trouble. Kedar Man Vyathit's poetical career began from this time; and for a time moved in step with his political career. He remained in India during this formative period and was considerably influenced by such Hindi poets as Maha Devi Varma. But he is a gifted poet with genuine poetical talents. His mature poetry, at its best, though somewhat over-

Sanskritized, is an unusual blend of sound, form, thought and rhythm. The significance of his poetry is unmistakable; and in fact it is this significance which has led a number of critics to write for and against him.

This growing stream of enlightenment suddenly gathered a new momentum in 1950 and broke the bonds. The happy feeling of freedom and release which the nation felt following the Revolution gave rise to a sudden spurt of progressive literature marked by social realism. Otherwise, the literary scene was not materially different because, as it took time for the new generation of writers to arise, the pre-Revolutionary figures continued to dominate the field. A large number of books by writers who have already been discussed came to be published for one reason or another after the Revolution. They are valuable additions to the stock of significant Nepali literature and contribute to a more rounded understanding of the pre-Revolutionary Nepalese literary scene. Several of these works reflect the concessions or attempts at concession made by older writers to the spirit of the new age as they understood it. Even Lekhanath felt that he must make concession to the times and added the epithet, *tarun* (young) to the title of the poem called Tarun Tapasi. Others made more serious attempts in their publications to capture the spirit and mood of the new generation, with varying scales of failure. Indeed, there were increasing indications with each passage of the day after the Revolution that the communication between the two generations was like a dialogue between two deaf men. An impatient young writer came to me once and said that the greatest contribution that the older generation of writers could make to the new age was for them to stop writing. He thought that they write meaningless babble, entirely irrelevant to the age. This extreme reaction has a negative overtone but reference to it is useful to underline the breakdown. In such a situation the tendency among the older writers was to write even more in the mistaken belief that writing more and saying more are the same thing. This led the angry young men to fume and fret further which was equally negative. The result was that the void of age was further deepened. For some time after the Revolution the real picture of the literary scene was a state of deadlock. When an old authority stumbles down and a new one has not established itself, there is an enormous latitude for the exercise of freedom including license. An extra-ordinary variety of experiments regarding both the subject matter and the form has been resorted to in the peculiar literary and cultural climate of the two decades after the Revolution. Though T.S. Eliot is still read, other influences like Camus, Sartre, Herbert Marcuse etc. have become progressively distinctive Philosophically,

LITERATURE

idealism has given way in most of the significant Nepalese literature to infinite variants of social realism, Freudism and existentialism. The concept of a novel, though still rare, is significant as a trend. The so-called 'dimensional' literature together with the very concept of dimension itself represents a groping after new forms and treatments which would better concretize modern complex experiences. During this period, other fine arts and specially music have passed subtly into poetry resulting in a considerable formal extension.

In this enormous flood of experiments many talents have drifted and sunk at different stages of their advance. Among the survivors who are fortunately considerable in number many speak with the authentic voice of the new generation. Those who carry forward the voice of the last generation have become fairly sifted from those who genuinely articulate the new sensibilities. We are too close yet to establish any satisfactory gradation among the new writers; and any such attempt must wait until a longer perspective is available. At the moment there seems to be no alternative to a highly subjective treatment. Even then the picture is less confused today than it was some years ago because we are now much clearer as to who are the authentic voices and who are not. We have, for example, no difficulty in recognizing the authenticity and genuineness in such voices as Mohan Koirala, Bhupi Sherchan, Parijat, Kali Prasad Risal, M. B. B. Shah, Tulsi Divas, Basu Shashi, Dwarika Shrestha, Shankar Lamichhane, Bairagi Kanhila and a host of other writers and poets who have sought through the pages of *Rupa-rekha* and otherwise to give expression to what they think of the world as they survey the scene through the window of Nepalese experience. Mention has been made of the 'dimensional' movement; and this movement which started in Darjeeling under Bairagi Kanhila and Ishwar Vallav and which makes a plea to view the whole of life, in all dimensions, has not gone much further than to suggest that modern sensibility must find a more complex form than traditionally available to express itself fully. In this sense, the position is not very different from either T.S. Eliot's or Mohan Koirala's. One of Bairagi Kanhila's poems called *Hat Bharne Manis* (Men who Fill the Bazar,) for example, ends with the following lines:

Ah ! death today went back from the bazar empty-handed !
Ah ! death today went back from the bazar empty-handed !
Ah ! death today went back from the bazar empty-handed !

Passing so narrowly by me
By the black car past that far
Death, today . . . passed right from near the edge of life.

While reading these lines, we are naturally reminded of T.S. Eliot who says:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but with a whimper.

The poem, *Hat Bharne Manis*, is difficult but repays study. The theme so popular among modern writers everywhere specially in the West is the utter futility and purposelessness of modern life, death in life so called. Mohan Koirala's poetry is equally involved but reflects greater grasp of what he sets out to do in relation to both the form and the subject matter. As Koirala is a difficult but very significant poet of the new generation, he deserves much fuller treatment than is possible in this survey. Whatever is attempted here is by way of introduction only.

Any body who wishes to make a serious study of Koirala's poetry is handicapped by the fact that his poems and prose writings are scattered, with one solitary exception of *Lek*, in different journals and periodicals. This is a pity particularly in view of his significance. We have in *Srashta ra Sahitya* an important interview between Koirala and Uttam Kunwar on various aspects of poetry. Speaking of the relationship between human good and poetry, Koirala observes:

“Is it not the man who writes ? Poetry is concerned with human good in a form made influential through artistically cultivated language. I am aware of many isms but I do not follow any because when we have an ism in poetry we lapse from literature into propaganda directed to the good of a few.”

He rejects metre and defends prose poems. The metre may have been a proper medium of expression in the nineteenth century but it is no longer so. Prose poems can express the subtlest and finest of feelings. He says:

“A prose poem like water in a cup has the capacity of holding the whole of the sky.”

LITERATURE

A poem called *Sarangi* which gives a feeling and intimate picture of Gaaine Sanhila's poverty and which is a comparatively easy piece to understand may be taken as an example of his style. By repeating the word, cold, twice in the very first line in the manner of *Hamlet*, he prepares a vivid setting for the subject of the poem. Each word gives a new detail to Sanhila's poverty; and beneath the bitter cold of poverty and winter his image takes shape, with numb hands and skeleton body, with a heart full of varied songs spawned and heaped at its bottom and with his life redeemed at dead midnight by the momentary vision of his wife and child long dead. The world with which he has to struggle is cruel, hitting him with hard stones and harder words. *Sarangi* is a powerful poem and the following lines are a measure of his success in concretizing a situation:

Gaaine Sanhilo on return home
Tries to sleep, alone, till midnight
for his dead wife on his falling asleep
Arrives to meet him in dream
With her former child
Like money for a moment at the counter of Indrachowk
To have only a glance beyond expectation
The little child comes into his arms shouting
His hut turns into a palace awhile with a bright lamp-stand

The flow is not interrupted by any pauses anywhere in between and even the two commas in the translation are additions. Koirala's more serious poems are *Surya-dan* and *Lek* to which readers are invited to go on their own. What he is trying to do may be expressed in his own words:

"I could introduce a style in the modern field. I have tried to change a new taste in the old poetic tradition."

Quite different is Bhupi Sherchan both in style and in philosophy. Bhupi, by and large, holds a Marxist view of history and literature. Unlike Koirala's, his poetry is deliberately addressed to the common people and his style is simple and direct. Metre to both Bhupi and Koirala is an unnecessary bondage. Bhupi's extremely sensitive mind is greatly tormented by the hypocrisies rampant in Nepalese society and also in the world. Let us take, for example, the following lines from his *Naya Varsha* (New Year):

Once again
The New Year has come

Once again
 In the new calendar on the wall
 I must hang the visa of my life
 Once again
 I must make a list of friends and comrades
 Once again
 Beneath flying aeroplanes loaded with deadly bombs
 And rockets
 I must write in the name of dear ones
 Greeting cards for success, peace and long life.

What a tremendous satire on the hypocrisies of modern life, hard-hitting because so fresh and direct ! It may be noted that Bhupi's poems are now available in a collection called *Ghumne Mech Mathi Andho Manchhe* (A Blind Man on a Revolving Chair).

Mohan Koirala's *Lek* reflects the importance attached to sex by the new generation of writers. The subject has been pursued by others like Shankar Lamichhane, Poshan Pande and Ramesh Vikal. Thus, literature based on sex has grown considerably in Nepal particularly since 1960. Like the *Shrinagar* movement of the Motiram age, this movement has also opened up a new dimension and produced considerable good literature in poetry as well as in prose. Again like its predecessor, in the absence of supporting intellectual and social climate, it has given rise to a lot of inferior literature exuding weakness and easy escapism. Sex is an explosive subject; and the written and unwritten moral taboo against it in traditional literature was harsh and unrealistic. It has always been recognized as important in life but Freud has raised its significance to a new level. Following this development, any serious view of life which aimed at totality demanded a revolutionary introduction of sex into literature. And sex so introduced as in the case of D. H. Lawrence added vitality to it. But it needs to be recognized that, accepted and introduced in this sense, it has been degraded and used as an end to pander to questionable tastes. In this connection, the following observation of Parijat deserves consideration. She says, "In creating literature one should be honest with sex. Vulgarity and obscenity should be avoided in the expression of sex... It is vulgarity and obscenity if one gives expression to it for excitement and entertainment alone. So literature should not be like this."

In poetry as well as novels Parijat seeks to embody her experiences, sex and all, in a total context. Her philosophical propensity to believe in the

LITERATURE

futility of life has been reinforced in recent years by her physical incapacity. She writes:

What is our fulfilment ?
What is my fulfilment ?
He who hangs himself on the rafters
Alive ignores a piece of earth
His fulfilment
But even in that hanging corpse
I cannot dare to give expression to myself
Wherever I go I find myself on a piece of earth
And this piece of earth
I do not place on a touchstone of fulfilment
For everywhere not knowingly
I arrive running aimlessly.

Though she has a feeling of greater fulfilment as poet, she has achieved distinction as novelist also. It is in the novels that she pursues her interest in sex in a manner that she believes necessary in a creative work. In *Mahattaheen* (Lacking in Dignity), she underlines the meanness and uselessness of life through an apparent chaos of sex. The novel is possibly a product of reflection by a sensitive mind on the current state of cultural psyche in Nepal as illustrated in a section of our literature in which writers have sought to dilute or redeem their acute sense of indignity and lack of respect for man implicit in the un-enthusiastic social climate of circumscribed freedom of today with an apparent defiance of conventional values by giving unorthodox though not always powerful expression to listlessness or over-indulgence in sexual matters. This novel is less satisfying than her earlier work, *Shirishko Phool*, which incidentally won the Madan prize and has been translated into English. Both the emaciated Sakambari and the middle-aged veteran named Suyogvir are individualized characters and therefore convincing. Her characters derive a great deal of life from the fact that she has an intense feeling of identification with them.

This survey of literature in Nepal is not meant to be exhaustive. I am acutely aware that many writers of distinction have found no place in the survey. The limited space and the extremely subjective approach forced by it are responsible for this shape of treatment. The significance of many who have been left out— Ramesh Vikal and Shankar Lamichhane among

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

others come to mind— to Nepali literature compares very well indeed with that of some who have been included. The object of the survey is not to give an exhaustive account of the literature of Nepal but to suggest the existence of it to those who are more deeply interested in our country and who wish to participate more intimately in our joys and sorrows.

(1972)

CHAPTER 9

Development of Political Institutions in Nepal Since 1951

—Dr. Prachanda Pradhan

I

The Setting

There are many ethnic groups in Nepal but a small and narrow socio-economic stratum controls the power-structure. The varied topography shows an equal variety of scales of development. Regional disparity and a basic southern orientation mark the economy.

The eastern part of Nepal is economically more advanced than the western part. The south, that is, the Tarai, which produces two-thirds of the total agriculture product, has only 40 per cent of the total population of Nepal. Most industries are located in the Tarai and Kathmandu Valley. The hilly and mountainous northern terrain accounts for 60 per cent of the population but produces only one-third of the total agriculture output. No industry of substantial nature is located in the hilly regions. In the south, many towns have developed near the Indian railheads and this region has a comparatively easy means of transport, whereas the people in the hilly regions have to traverse the difficult terrain on foot. As a result of the lack of means of transport and communication, economic activities in the north have been very limited and people from the hilly region go in search of employment down to India. It is estimated that nearly 500,000 people from hilly region of Nepal go to India annually. This drain of surplus manpower from

the hills has diminished the potential political and economic pressure upon the government in the short-run. However, the increase in the rate of literacy and consciousness among these people will be a major factor in making the government responsive to the problems of the hill people.

There is no inter-ethnic marriage, so social interaction among these different ethnic groups is largely lacking. In the absence of such social interaction, inter-ethnic relationships are based often on one group exploiting others. The Brahmins look upon the rest of the ethnic groups as their clients and the Chhetris see themselves as a superior caste with the responsibility of protecting the State. Thus, certain ethnic groups see themselves as leaders of society and others as followers. The major political and economic powers have been concentrated in Chhetri and Brahmin ethnic groups for centuries in Nepal.¹

Inadequate transport and communication, lack of social interaction among the ethnic groups, disparity in economic conditions among different regions have all contributed to a highly centralized political system in Nepal based in Kathmandu. The history of Nepal during the advent of the Shahs and later during the Rana period indicates the centralization of all power in the political system in one institution: Over-centralization has led to the imbalanced regional growth concentrated in Kathmandu which has been the nerve centre of the country.

Since 1769, the Shah Kings have run the administration of the country with the help of Bhardars (Counsellors). In 1846, power was transferred to the Rana Prime Minister, making the Shah Kings only the nominal heads of the country. This lasted until 1951 when the Rana family oligarchy was overthrown by a popular revolution. The monarchy was again reinstated as the real authority in Nepal.

II

Development of Political Institutions, 1950–1960

The impact of World War II and political changes in India and China forced the rulers of Nepal to redesign the political system. In response to the

1. This was true of even the Newar period in the Kathmandu valley. There are caste divisions within the Newar community itself and the ruling elite of the epoch came from the Chhetri-Brahmin sector of this community.

situation, the Constitutional Act of Nepal, 1948 was promulgated by the then Prime Minister, Padma Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana. It attempted to make the position of the family-held Prime Ministership the strongest one in the country. The role of the monarchy was virtually ignored and kept as it had been since 1846; it was given no responsible political role to play.

The Constitutional Act, 1948, had provisions granting fundamental rights and duties, establishing Local Governing Councils (Panchayats) and a bi-cameral legislature. This legislature had an upper house consisting of the elected members of the Rana family and leading civilian and military officers, and a lower house composed of members elected from an electoral college. It provided further for the appointment of two ministers from among the citizens in the council of ministers, and the formation of an independent judiciary, a Public Service Commission, an Auditor General and an Attorney General.

These features of the Constitutional Act were influenced by visiting constitutional experts from India during the drafting of the Act. However, none of its provisions was implemented and Prime Minister Padma Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana was forced to resign. Mohan Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana became the Prime Minister and he took a hard line. He did not try to solve problems in co-operation with the people of Nepal. Instead, he took the strategy of expanding Nepal's diplomatic relations with other western countries in addition to the United Kingdom. Through them he also tried to put diplomatic pressure on India so as to discourage her from permitting any political movement against Rana rule in Nepal to operate from Indian territory. Internally, Mohan Shumshere tried to suppress political agitators. Mass arrests were made and many were put in jail.

On 6 November 1950, King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah took political asylum in the Indian Embassy and later flew to New Delhi in an Indian Airforce Plane. The Ranas riposted by declaring the abdication of King Tribhuvan and by crowning Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva, the 3-year-old second grandson of King Tribhuvan, as the King of Nepal. Armed insurrection erupted all over Nepal, and India helped the political workers as well as King Tribhuvan. The final upshot was an agreement between King Tribhuvan, the Ranas and the Government of India, which provided for the return of Tribhuvan as the King of Nepal and the establishment of a democratic system.

After his return, in the proclamation of 18 February 1951 (Falgun 7, 2007), King Tribhuvan expressed his eager desire to constitute a Constituent Assembly elected by the people to frame the Constitution of Nepal. During the intervening period until the Constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly was ready, an Interim Government of Nepal Act 1951 was promulgated. The Act stated that no law would be enacted which was not in harmony with its provisions. The Act restored legal and constitutional power to the King. Other features providing for a Cabinet responsible to the King, a High Court, Directive Principles of State Policy, a Public Service Commission and an Auditor General were incorporated.

King Tribhuvan: the period of institutional initiatives:

King Tribhuvan first instituted a Rana–Nepali Congress Coalition Cabinet which did not last long due to the differences of opinion between the Rana bloc and Nepal Congress bloc. A Nepali Congress Cabinet with Matrika Prasad Koirala as Prime Minister and seven other Nepali Congress Ministers and 6 independents was then formed. This Cabinet was subsequently replaced by a Ministry of Royal Counsellors composed of independents.

At this time, the principal political parties were the Nepali Congress, the Praja Parisad, the National Congress, and the Gorkha Dal. These parties seemed to be more concerned with obtaining ministerships than with adapting their political ideologies to Nepalese problems. As a result, the parties were split.

It was typical of this trend that M. P. Koirala broke from the Nepali Congress, formed a National Democratic Party, and finally found the opportunity to form a Cabinet of the National Democratic Party, with five ministers. This Cabinet was again reorganized in 1954 with M. P. Koirala as Prime Minister and with two representatives from the National Democratic Party, two from independents, one from the Nepali Congress, one from the Praja Parishad and one from the All Nepal Jana Congress as ministers. Within a five year period, five cabinets were changed and experiments were made with one-party cabinets, independent Royal Counsellors and coalition cabinets of different parties.

Improvisations were also made with Advisory Assemblies. The first Advisory Assembly was formed in 1952 with 161 members, of which 14 were ministers and 47 were nominees of the King. This Advisory Assembly

was supposed to function as the legislative body, but took the role of only criticizing the activities of the government.

The second Advisory Assembly was formed in 1954, with 113 members. This was composed of party representatives, Bada Hakim's nominees and King's nominees. Special representation was provided to women, peasants, merchants, labourers, depressed communities and intellectuals. This Advisory Assembly also became only a forum for criticizing the government activities without lending parliamentary co-operation or making suggestions concerning the government programs.

The frequent change of the Cabinet and the ineffectiveness of the Advisory Assemblies strengthened further the power of the King. King Tribhuvan issued a royal proclamation on 10 January 1954 in which he declared that: (a) supreme rights in the legislative field should be vested in the king as long as the Constitution had not been framed by an elected Constituent Assembly; (b) meanwhile all judiciary powers should be vested in the King; and (c) all powers exercised by the ministers and their subordinates, according to the rules and laws enforced by the King or by royal authority, should always be regarded as proper and valid and as such should not be questioned in any court.²

King Mahendra's bid for Political Consolidation

After the death of King Tribhuvan in 1955, King Mahendra ascended the throne of Nepal. He started his political experimentations with a Council of Royal Advisors composed of five non-party members. During this time, he called a conference of all political, social and cultural organizations at the Royal Palace. One hundred twenty nine (129) organizations except the Nepali Congress, the Praja Parishad, the Nepali National Congress and the National Democratic Party, participated in the conference. King Mahendra made three important points in his opening remarks to the conference; (a) he would not let democracy lapse in the country, though he would in no case lay the country waste by repeating the so-called "democratic" experiments of the past four years; (b) the conference should tell him whether the Advisory Assembly should be continued; and (c) he attached the utmost importance to the holding of general elections as soon as possible. On the last day of the conference, the King summed up its major recommendations as calling for termination of direct rule, holding elections, continuation of the democratic system, and dissolving the Advisory Assembly.

2. Royal Proclamation on January 10, 1954.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

Before the general election of 1959, three more experiments were made with Cabinets and with Councils of Ministers, with direct rule in between when there was no Cabinet. The Cabinets were composed of party-men as well as of the King's nominees. The Praja Parishad Cabinet which was formed in 1956 had four party men and three King's nominees. The same practice of putting Royal nominees in new Cabinets continued until the formation of a Cabinet after the general election.

The third Advisory Assembly with a total membership of 91 including six members of the Council of Ministers convened its session in November 1958. The Advisory Assembly had a majority of independents. After a few procedural activities of the Advisory Assembly, King Mahendra prorogued it. Among other proposals, the Assembly proposed the postponement of the general election. Many social and small political organizations were in favour of this postponement. However, King Mahendra, in his Royal Proclamation of December 15, 1957, called for the general election on 18, February 1959.

In 1957, King Mahendra announced that the first election should be conducted for a Parliament, not for a Constituent Assembly as had been declared by King Tribhuvan in 1951. The logic advanced for this amendment was that traditionally sovereignty resided in the King. If the Constitution were to be drafted by an elected Constituent Assembly, that elected Assembly would be sovereign, and not the King. Therefore, to maintain the traditional principle of royal sovereignty, a Constitution Drafting Commission was formed in March 1958, and King Mahendra promulgated the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal drafted by it.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1959 had seventy-seven articles in addition to the Preamble and was classified into ten parts. The Constitution provided for a monarchy with emergency and residual powers, a Council of Ministers, a bicameral legislature, fundamental rights for citizens, the Supreme Court, the Public Service Commission, the Auditor General and elaborate fiscal procedures. The Constitution was based on a parliamentary system of government.

The preparations for the general election went smoothly and the country was delimited into 109 constituencies. The election commission had ruled that a party has to nominate at least twenty-two candidates—that is for approximately 20 per cent of the total number of constituencies in order

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS SINCE 1951

to qualify for recognition as a national party. Under this ruling, only seven parties were qualified: they were (1) the Nepali Congress, (2) the United Democratic Party, (3) the Gorkha Parishad, (4) the Communist Party, (5) the Praja Parishad (Tanka Prasad faction), (6) the Praja Parishad (B. Mishra faction), and (7) the Nepali Prajatantrik Mahasabha. The Nepali National Congress and the Tarai Congress put up only twenty and twenty-one candidates, respectively, and did not qualify.

The result of the general election of 1959 is given in the following table.

Table-1
Election Result of 1959

Party	Seats contested	Seats won	Percentage of total seats
Nepali Congress	108	74	
Gorkha Parishad	86	19	
United Democratic Party	86	5	
Communist Party	47	4	
Praja Parishad (Tanka P. Faction)	46	2	
Praja Parishad (B. Mishra faction)	36	1	
Tarai Congress	21	0	
Nepali National Congress	20	0	
Prajatantrika Mahasabha	68	0	
Independents	268	4	
Total	786	109	

Source: G. B. Devkota, *Nepalko Rajnaitik Darpan (Political Mirror of Nepal)*, (Kathmandu, 1960), p. 698.

After the general election, B. P. Koirala was invited to form the Cabinet, inasmuch as the Nepali Congress had won an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives. He formed a Council of Ministers of nineteen members; eight ministers and eleven deputy ministers.

A number of changes in the political scene could be seen during this time. The Prime Minister became a powerful one, and this weakened the once dominating role of the Royal Palace. The Nepali Congress government

moved forward with new proposals on tax policy, land reform, reorganization of administration, and district administration. However, the opposition parties were active on in criticising and did not propose alternative policies. New pressure groups based on traditional vested interests, like those of the landlords, became active against the policies of the government. Lawlessness increased in the districts.

On 15 December 1960, King Mahendra, according to article 55 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, suspended the Constitution, dissolved the Parliament and the Cabinet, and suspended the Fundamental Rights. After the takeover of December 1960, King Mahendra promised to restore that type of democratic system which would be suitable to Nepal—that is, a Panchayat system characterized as “rooted in the life of the people in general and in keeping with the national genius and tradition, and as originating from the very base with the active co-operation of the whole people, and embodying the principles of decentralization.”³

III

PANCHAYAT POLITICS 1960 ONWARDS

According to a Royal Palace note, the change of 1960 was inevitable for the following reasons.

“As a result of the predominance of party interest in the country:

- (a) there was political instability;
- (b) economic progress lagged;
- (c) a pessimistic outlook prevailed in the society;
- (d) groupism and partiality became rampant;
- (e) mutual leg-pulling took the place of national development;
- (f) the poverty and ignorance of the people were exploited to further party interest;
- (g) forgetful of the real interest of the nation, a handful of the people busied themselves with advancing narrow self-interest;
- (h) people had to suffer on account of failures in maintaining law and order;
- (i) slowly but steadily, healthy traditions and realities were forgotten and an artificial and unrealistic system was encouraged; and

3. *Constitution of Nepal, 1962, Preamble Para II.*

- (j) at length, despite the inherent goodness of the western parliamentary system, it had to be discarded because of its expensiveness for political parties, which made it impossible for them to meet their expenses without external financial support and thus naturally made them dependent upon others.

Not only did their party interests alone absorb their attention, but the vital interests of the nation were forgotten and national development, nationalism, national unity, independence and sovereignty were endangered and even the very existence of the country was threatened.”

It is clear from this note that the parliamentary system of government was rejected and denounced as unsuitable to the political soil and climate of Nepal. Consequently, new Constitution which was drafted by a Constitution Drafting Committee was promulgated by King Mahendra in 1962. In accordance with its innovative spirit new political institutions were created. A four-tier *panchayat* system was created with the expectation of ensuring active participation of the people at all levels of activity in the country. The Village Panchayat is the lowest unit of the panchayat system, with the District Panchayat and Zonal Committee at the middle, and the National Panchayat at the apex. The National Panchayat functions as the national legislature.

The constitution of Nepal, 1962, provides for the primary and paramount role of the Crown, supported by the subordinate roles of the Council of Ministers, the National Panchayat, the Supreme Court, the Public Service Commission, and the Auditor General. By the first amendment of the Constitution, in 1967, the position of Zonal Commissioner was formally established.

The Trend of Political Institution Since 1960

THE MONARCHY

In accordance with the Hindu conception of polity, the Constitution of Nepal, 1962, vests sovereignty in the monarchy of Nepal.

The sovereignty of Nepal is vested in His Majesty. These powers are exercised . . . keeping in view the interest and wishes of the subjects in accordance with the highest tradition of Shah Dynasty.⁴

4. *Constitution of Nepal*, 1962, Article 20 (2).

The institution of monarchy in Nepal has a continuous history from Yalamber to the incumbent King Birendra. The legitimization of the King's authority is primarily based on Nepalese customs and traditions, sanctioned by religion. Contemporary Nepal presents a unique admixture of Hindu and Buddhist religious practices. However, the Constitution of Nepal, 1962, has declared Nepal a "Hindu State".

In Hindu literature, Kings are represented as living gods. There is a belief among the rural population of Nepal that the King is a living god—Narayan. Kautilya, the Hindu political philosopher, indicated that the King and the kingdom are the primary elements of the State. The *Saptange Rajya* Theory (Seven elements of the State Theory) puts the monarch at the focal point in the polity and makes him the symbol of the State.

Mass political socialization in Nepal is influenced more by the religious epics than by political literature. The great Hindu epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* are the sacred books which inculcate Hindu political ideals among the people of Nepal. The *Ramayana* teaches the ideal of a king like Rama. The *Mahabharat* idealizes the institution of Kingship as the upholder of righteousness. Thus, political socialization leads to respect for the King and centers around maintaining customs and traditions.

In a message sent to be read at a Hindu Conference held in India in 1965, King Mahendra declared,

".....,every Hindu should take special pride in the fact that Nepal has always been successful in maintaining herself as a Hindu Kingdom. We Nepalese are making efforts to make Nepal a model Hindu Kingdom in the world. Today Nepal is the only independent and sovereign state which has declared itself to be a Hindu Kingdom. Nepal has today adopted the Panchayat system in order to be able to preserve the Hindu way of life in the modern world. This system is based on ancient Hindu Tradition and Polity."

The Panchayat system introduced by King Mahendra is considered to be deeply rooted in Nepalese customs and traditions. Consciously, therefore, the King appears to legitimize his authority on the basis of tradition. Since 1960, the King has put more emphasis on the importance of traditions and customs. Sometimes, the appeal to tradition and custom is intermingled with the theme of preserving national independence and sovereignty. In a

message to the National Panchayat, King Mahendra declared that the fundamental essence and principal objective of the Panchayat system are to keep in fact ancestral glory and pride of national sovereignty, independence, culture and tradition, and to create a partyless, healthy, clean and advanced society which is free from struggle and exploitation.

Keeping in view the latter aim, the century-old legal codes were remodelled in 1964 in accordance with the spirit of equality before the law. The new legal code abolished caste discrimination and social disabilities. However, Dharma Raksha Mandal (conference for the protection of religion) vehemently opposed the new legal code on the ground that its provisions were contradictory to Hindu tradition. Acknowledging the opposition from the religious organizations, which seem reactionary in spirit and form, the Special Complaints Department of the Royal Secretariat announced that the new legal code had not abolished the caste system. The announcement specified that the code permitted everybody to follow his religion according to tradition. It sought only to introduce equality before the law. The announcement added that those who indulged in action prejudicial to the social customs and traditions of others would be punished. This assurance from the Palace appeared to indicate that King Mahendra did not want to be deprived of the support of this conservative section of the population.

Out of the legitimation of authority sanctioned by tradition and customs of Nepal, the King has drawn incomparable political authority. He justified the introduction of the panchayat system in 1960 by saying that the parliamentary system was incompatible with Nepal's traditions, history and objective conditions. What was required, King Mahendra stated, was a new political system that conformed to the spirit of Nepal's tradition and culture.

The King in the political system of Nepal occupies the most vital role in the decision-making process. In analysing the political process in Nepal, Weiner observed that the King of Nepal became powerful because of the absence of growth of other political institutions. He concluded that while people of other parts of Asia were fighting against colonial governments in order to achieve independence, the people of Nepal had to overcome their own Rana Regime. The absence of a middle class, the lack of well-organized political parties, and the unsophisticated administrative machinery furthered the power of the King. "In this maze of uncertainty and ad-

ministrative inadequacy, power has been continually moving back toward the King, who is the only remaining unifying symbol.”⁵

During this period, King Mahendra established direct relations with the people through intensive tours of the country. He sent Royal Tour Commissions to different regions of the country to do on-the-spot studies of the situation.

In as much as there is no institutionalized opposition in Nepalese politics, the King himself seems on occasion to perform the curious role of a “opposition force”. He points out the deficiencies of the government, and consequently, the Council of Ministers resigns on the acceptance of those charges put up by the King. Rama Raja, who was elected by the graduate constituency of 1971, was not allowed to take his oath as member in the Rastriya Panchayat by decision of the Rastriya Panchayat which charged him as an anti-national. This situation led to a crisis both in the Council of Ministers and the Rastriya Panchayat; keeping in view that the situation developed out of unthoughtful handling of the Rama Raja case, King Mahendra pointed out the deficiencies of the Government. Accepting the charge of deficiency in the proper performance of governmental responsibility by the Council of Ministers, Prime Minister Kirti Nidhi Bista resigned from his post.

In sum, there are many factors that have helped the King to become the most powerful political figure of the country. He has become the source of law and the Constitution. His authority cannot be questioned in any law court. He is supreme in all fields of political life of Nepal.

Panchayat Structure

The Panchayat System introduced a four-tier structure of organization. At the bottom are the village panchayat and town panchayat. At the second tier there are 75 District Panchayats. Fourteen Zonal Committee form the third tier. The Rastriya Panchayat—a unicameral legislature—is at the apex.

(a) Village Panchayats:

Ninety-seven per cent of the total population live in the

5. Myron Weiner “The Politics of South Asia” in Gabriel A. Almond and James Coleman, eds. *The Politics of Developing Areas* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960). pp. 167-168.

rural areas. There are nearly 4,000 village panchayats. The Village Panchayat is supposed to be an organization to channelize the resources and energy of the village people for the planned development of their villages. Such a new organisation in the political structure was a new political institution which contracted to replace the political roles of pre-existing agencies, like the Zamindars, Patwari and Zimawals. These intermediary agencies used to function as the land revenue collectors for the central government but were not government employees. They did not have any responsibilities for the villagers.

Each village has now two structures: the Village Assembly and the Village Panchayat. The Village Assembly is composed of all adult members above 21 years of age within the Village Panchayat area. The Village Panchayat area is divided into wards, and each ward elects one representative to the Village Panchayat by secret ballot. The Village Assembly meets twice a year, and it is called upon to formulate the *general policy* of development and approves to budget. The Village Panchayat then implements the policy adopted in the Village Assembly. However, these structures are not yet well organized. These Panchayats do not have proper maintenance of records and they usually do not have even an educated secretary. Most of the Village Panchayats still require institutionalization within the village life of the people.

(b) **Town Panchayats:** There are sixteen Town Panchayats. A Town Panchayat is formed wherever there are more than 10,000 people in one area. Formation of a Town Panchayat is based only on population. In the majority of Town Panchayats modern facilities of life are still not available.

In the case of Town Panchayats no direct relation between the elected members and the town people are established. In the case of Village Panchayats, there is a Village Assembly which at least twice a year makes the Panchayat members answerable and responsible for the projects initiated by the assembly. In many ways, Town Panchayats are weak bodies. In the deliberations of the District Assembly, Town Panchayats are particularly weak and become a target of attack for the village people who have an overwhelming majority of representation in the District Assembly.

(c) **District Panchayats:** The District Panchayat is an important Panchayat unit from both political and administrative points of view. District Panchayats become influential especially during the election of the

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

members of the National Panchayat. In each district, there is a District Assembly which is supposed to meet twice a year. These Assemblies formulate the general policy for the District and approve the budget for the District.

(d) **Zonal Assembly:** The Zonal Assembly is formed out of representatives of the District Panchayats. By amendment of the Constitution in 1967, the Zonal Panchayat was abolished and a Zonal Committee was established along with the number of nominees to serve in it. The Zonal Committee has no standing except as the advisory committee to the Zonal Commissioner.

(e) **National Panchayat:** The Constitution of Nepal provides a national legislative body which is a unicameral legislature. This body known as the Rastriya Panchayat (the National Panchayat) stands at the apex of the four-tier structure of the panchayat system. The National Panchayat consists of 125 members. 109 among them are indirectly elected; 90 by the Zonal Assemblies⁶ and 15 by seven class organizations⁷; and four are directly elected from the Graduate Constituency⁸ made up of college graduates. The rest of the 16 members are nominees of the King.⁹

The proceedings of the House are kept secret, inasmuch as the business of the House is to be divulged to the people by the National Panchayat Secretariat. Members of the House are expected not to discuss or

6. 90 members shall be elected by the Zonal Assemblies. The quota to each Zonal Assembly is specified in the Constitution schedule 4. *Constitution of Nepal*, 1962, Article 34 (2, 3 & 5).
7. 15 members shall be elected from among the Class Organizations. There are seven class organizations (a) Nepal Peasants Organization which sends 4 members to the National Panchayat, (b) Nepal Youth Organization with 4 representatives, (c) Nepal Women's Organization with 3 representatives, (d) Nepal Labor Organization with 2 representatives, (e) Nepal Ex-servicemen's Organization with 2 representatives, and (f) The Nepal Students Organization and the Nepal Children's Organization which do not have representative in the National Panchayat. *Ibid.* Schedule 5.
8. 4 members from the Graduate Constituency shall be elected by the College Graduates of Nepal on the basis of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote, *Ibid.*, Schedule 6.
9. 15 per cent of total elected members of the National Panchayat shall be nominated by the King. *Constitution of Nepal* 1962, Article 34, Clause 12 Section (d).

expose or indicate by any means the proceedings of the House in Public. If members of the House violate this provision of the Constitution, they are subject to punishment. Thus there exists a big gulf in the public knowledge of the proceedings of the house. This provision has restricted the opportunity of the people to be educated in the public affairs. People are fed only such information as the authorities concerned deem fit for release. ¹⁰

By the amendment of the Constitution of Nepal, 1967, the provision of secret proceeding was somewhat relaxed. The Chairman of the National Panchayat has been empowered to issue, passes to people to observe the proceedings of the House. However, the entrance pass to observe the proceedings can only be issued to those people who have direct relation to the business of the House. The press is not allowed. The reason advanced to justify the secret proceedings of the House is to keep members from involvement in group politics and to prevent unnecessary influence on the members by the electorate. Thus the members of the National Panchayat are made representatives without a constituency.

In his message to the National Panchayat in 1963, King Mahendra expressed his views about how the National Panchayat should function. He declared that "the National Panchayat constitutes the top-most tier of the Panchayat system. There is no room for group politics or party politics in it. It symbolizes national sentiments and unity. Let every member of this body renounce the old evils of narrow party politics and work in the national interest ¹¹" However, it is not enough only to outline the rules for the National Panchayat's operation.

The functional character of the National Panchayat confirms the fact that it serves more in an advisory capacity than in guiding the policy of the government.

The functional character of the National Panchayat is determined by how the members are elected and how they behave in the legislature. The majority of the members of the National Panchayat are indirectly elected from the Zonal Assemblies. Since election is indirect, there is no opportunity for public discussion of national issues in a constituency. The results of the

10. Recently, suggestion has been made by some of the members of the Rastriya Panchayat that the proceedings of the House be open and the election of the members be direct.

11. *Nepal Press Digest*, Vol. XI, No. 4, Kathmandu, April 13-19, 1963

elections are determined not by the issues but by the personality and the influence of the candidates. A candidate for the National Panchayat does not have to be popular in his zone, the only thing he must do is to align himself with one of the strongest groups of the Zonal Assemblies.

Moreover, the National Panchayat lacks physical facilities. Neither does it have a well-equipped library, a good legislative reference service, or a body of consultants. These deficiencies contribute to the weakness of the highest representative institution of Nepal.

Council of Ministers

There is provision for a Council of Ministers in the Constitution of Nepal, 1962. However, the Constitution says that "The Executive Power of Nepal shall be exercised in accordance with this Constitution and other laws for the time being inforced by His Majesty either directly or through ministers or officials subordinate to him .¹²" The Council of Ministers used to be assigned only the job of aiding and advising His Majesty ¹³. His Majesty himself presides over the meeting of the Council of Ministers.

The Constitution provides that the ministers shall be appointed by the King from among the members of the National Panchayat ¹⁴, and the ministers shall be responsible to the king. However, the King has a free hand to choose ministers. The requirement that the ministers be members of the National Panchayat does not limit the power of the King to appoint the ministers of his choice, since, as noted above, he has power to nominate 15 per cent of the total elected members of the National Panchayat. Even a person who is not a member of the National Panchayat can be appointed as a minister if he can secure the confidence of the king.

An amendment to the Constitution in 1967 gave more power to the Council of Ministers to exercise supervision and control over the administration of the country in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and other existing Nepal laws and directives issued by the King from time to time. Following this amendment, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers was redesignated as Prime Minister. However, the King has continued to

12. *Constitution of Nepal*, 1962, Article 24 (i)

13. *Ibid*, Article 25 (i)

14. *Ibid.*, Article 26 (i)

preside personally over the Council of Ministers or to appoint another person to do so.

The Council of Ministers functions as the primary medium to carry the message of the King to the people and to the National Panchayat. It is the constitutional agency to implement the wishes of the King.

Secondly, the Council of Ministers serves a very important purpose of integrating the Nepalese people. Nepal, a country with multiple ethnic groups, needs an institution to represent the different ethnic groups. In the composition of Council of Ministers, ethnic and geographical representation have usually been given attention. The King has selected ministers who can solidify the ethnic groups of the different regions of the country. Due to the lack of easy means of transport and communication, the majority of the people are still isolated from political currents in the capital. A minister, therefore, is expected to bridge the gap between his particular region and the central government.

Thirdly, the Council of Ministers helps the bureaucracy to put its program through the National Panchayat. The Ministers answer questions in the House on behalf of the administration of the country. The proceedings of the House are so arranged that most of the bills which are introduced in the House are government sponsored bills.

Last but not the least, Ministers in the Council are employed to countervail the opposing forces against the government and they also play the role of checking and balancing different political groups and ethnic interests.

The Supreme Court

The Constitution provides for the establishment of a Supreme Court of Nepal. It consists of a Chief Justice and, unless a larger number is prescribed by law, not more than 6 other justices.

Article 71 of the Constitution of Nepal vests in the Supreme Court jurisdiction and responsibility in matters of enforcing Fundamental Rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution. Within this jurisdiction, it has the power to issue directions, orders or writs of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quowarranto, and certiorari. Thus, the Supreme Court can

Table 2

Ministers' geographic and ethnic representation from December 15, 1960 until 1972

Ethnic Groups ¹	Brahmins	Chhetriyas	Newars	Limbu & Rai	Gurung	Magar	Tharu	Giri	Marwar	Thakali	Tamang	Total
Mahakali	1	2										3
Seu		3										3
Bheri		3										3
Karnali		1										1
Rapti		1										1
Lumbini	3		1									5
Gandaki	2	1			3	1						6
Dhaulagiri		2								1		3
Bagmati	6	4	5									15
Narayani	2	2							1			5
Janakpur	3	2	1					2				8
Sagarmatha		4		5								9
Kosi	2	5	3	1								11
Mechi				2								2
Total	19	30	10	8	3	1		2	1	1		75

1 About the different ethnic groups of Nepal, see Dor Bahadur Bista, *People of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar), 1972.

2 The country is divided into 75 districts and 14 zones on the basis of the Report of the Development Districts and Zonal Demarcation Committee. See, *Anchal Ebam Vikas Zilla Vivajan Samiti Ko Pratibedan*, Kathmandu, 1962.

function as the care-taker of the Fundamental Rights. Besides this, the Supreme Court has appellate jurisdiction regarding civil, criminal and constitutional matters.

The Supreme Court shall not overrule its final decision, although it has the power to review its decision according to Article 72 of the Constitution. A petition for review of a case may be presented to His Majesty by the party concerned within 35 days after judgement is delivered. If His Majesty issues the command for the revision of that case, on the recommendation of the judicial committee appointed for the purpose, the Supreme Court may revise its previous decision and it finally decides in accordance with the law.

The Public Service Commission

The need for recruiting, examining, and appointing meritorious and efficient personnel in administration gave birth to the agency known as the Public Service Commission (Darkhasta Parishad) in the Constitutional Act of Nepal, 1948. It is not the provisions of the Act that one has to keep in mind, it is the environment one has to keep in mind in order to analyse the provisions of Act. During the Rana Regime, there was no tradition of rational and impartial recruitment. The Public Service Commission therefore is an innovation in Nepalese public administration.

The 1951 Revolution in Nepal brought change in the political system by establishing democratic institutions. The Interim Government of Nepal Act, 1951 established the Public Service Commission with the duty to conduct impartial examinations and to advise His Majesty's Government on matters of recruitment, promotion, transfer and disciplinary action. The Act further stated that His Majesty may make regulations specifying the matters on which, either generally or in any particular case, or in any particular circumstances, it shall not be necessary for the Public Service Commission to be consulted by His Majesty's Government.

The Public Service Commission came into existence during a period of political turmoil and confusion. The transition from the Rana administration to the hoped-for democratic system of government. Under these conditions, the Public Service Commission could not carry out its responsibilities. In fact, until 1956, there were no comprehensive rules and regulations governing the Civil Service of Nepal.

The Civil Service Act of Nepal, 1956, laid down the specific principles of recruitment, promotion, dismissal and disciplinary actions. Under this Act the Public Service Commission started to perform its functions of recruitment and consultation. However, when new Cabinets were formed the Public Service Commission was oftentimes ignored. Administrative staffs were changed along with changes in Cabinet. The instability of the Government produced laws and regulations limiting the functions of the Public Service Commission until it became a virtually ceremonial constitutional body.

The Public Service Commission could not make impartial recommendations for two reasons. First, the Chairman of the Public Service Commission is generally nominated by the King from among the incumbent bureaucrats. The Chairman's strong affiliations with his peer groups in the bureaucracy hinders his free & impartial exercise of the personnel functions of the Public Service Commission. Second, inasmuch as the chairman is directly appointed by the King, he tries to develop special personal with the secretaries in the Palace. Thus, the Public Service Commission may be unduly influenced by the two groups:

Political Organizations

After the introduction of the Panchayat System, seven class organizations were formed to develop class-consciousness among their members. These seven class organizations are (1) labourers' organization, (2) women's organization, (3) peasants' organization, (4) youth organization, (5) students' organization, (6) children's organization, and (7) ex-servicemen's organization. Student's organization and Children's organization do not have representation in the National Panchayat.

The class organizations have a four-tier structure in principle. Primary class committees are to be formed in Village and Town Panchayats. There are District, Zonal and Central Committees as well for each class organization. Every primary unit sends its delegate to the District Council which elects the District Committee of five members. The Zonal Committee is also formed by means of election. The member of the Central Committee of each organization are elected by the members of the District and Zonal Committees of the class organizations. In addition, there are two nominees of the government in the Central Committee.

Except in the Central Committee, the class organizations are not

“functional”. The Central Committees of the ‘class organizations are active only because of their potential for having their members elected to the National Panchayat. These organizations do not have clearcut functions to perform. The government often says that these class organizations are “non-political entities,” therefore, they are supposed to function only to safeguard the interest of their respective classes.

In general, class organizations are not important means of interests aggregation and interest articulation, because their members do not truly represent their class. For instance, landlords become active members of the peasants’ organization and are elected as their representative to the legislature. Class organizations have poor communication and little activity among the people and because of this (class) existence (organization), other kinds of organizations cannot be formed legally.

The class organizations at present are not fulfilling any substantial function except to run expensive and risky campaigns for election to the National Panchayat. Otherwise, they are not yet well organized for any meaningful activities that would enhance their internal solidarity and cooperation and their external effectiveness in promoting their groups interests.

Legally, political parties in Nepal have been banned since 1960. However, two political parties, the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party, are visibly active in neighbouring India, with headquarters in Varanasi. His Majesty’s Government of Nepal has frequently requested the Government of India not to permit these political parties to carry out their activities against Nepal. Political activities against Nepal from Indian territory were formally suspended following the Sino-Indian border crisis in 1962 in response to the appeal of Subarna Shumshere Rana. However, His Majesty’s Government of Nepal cannot ignore the impact of these foreign-based political parties.

Student movements within the country are frequently inspired by politicians who are in exile in India. Students who were brought under the class organization structure by the Constitution of 1962, succeeded through their agitations to secure an amendment to the Constitutions of Nepal 1967, which grant them the right to form independent student unions. The Tribhuvan University Student’s Union elections indicate the action of political parties in disguise. The formation of election panels are generally grouped

under democrats and communists. The independent candidates have very few followers. Thus, the student groups of Nepal also play an indirect role in the political system.

Army

In many developing countries the military is a separate and well-knit organization with its own goals & ethics. Being more exposed to technological and scientific development, and large, the military, tends to be an important and dynamic segment of society. It can influence politics in the country because of its ability to mobilize its forces and operate smoothly in carrying out its missions¹⁵.

In Nepal the role of the King is strengthened by his ability to control the military. The military is a loyal and well-equipped segment of society in comparison to other segments. In all kinds of political crises, the military arrested the top political leaders when the King declared a state of emergency. As a consequence of political uncertainty at that time, peace and order was threatened in many districts of Nepal and the Royal Army was primarily responsible for maintaining peace or order in those areas. The military of Nepal is therefore important in preserving the security of the country from internal disturbances.

Four functions of the Nepalese military are evident. The first is loyal since to the security where the police force cannot do the job alone. When natural calamities occur, the Army is sent out for rescue and relief operations. Sometimes, the army undertakes engineering projects, like road construction.

Besides 10,000 men on active duty, there are more than 100,000 retired servicemen who served in the Indian or British Gorkhas. Many of them have introduced innovations in rural Nepal: New ideas of hygiene and agricultural technology, they likewise reinforce on their example, the old idea that the results of any endeavor depend on the amount of work one puts into it. Thus, given their modern outlook and their experience, ex-servicemen have acquired an influential role in both social and political fields.

The Constitution of Nepal 1962, has granted the status of class or-

15. Lucian W. Pye, "Armies in the process of political Modernization", in Jason L. Finkle and Richard W. Gable, (eds.), *Political Development and Social Change*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.), pp. 381-383.

ganization to the "Ex-servicemen" with the right to send two representatives to the National Panchayat. The King of Nepal is quite successful in commanding the support of these disciplined ex-servicemen. Thus, with their help the King sends his messages to the villagers in the hinterlands and secures this loyalty and co-operation.

The Bureaucracy

Given the historical, political and economic setting of Nepalese society, public bureaucracy under the strong monarchy is not a neutral instrument: it is involved in the decision making process. However, in as much as the King of Nepal dominates the policy-making process in the country, the bureaucracy operates primarily to execute policies emanating from him and to defend them.

Such a role is unlike that in a parliamentary system where the bureaucracy tends to be neutral, the Ministers defend their policies. The function of the bureaucracy is essentially to execute the policies of the ruling party. In contrast, Nepalese political parties have no legal existence; consequently, the parliamentary concept of a neutral bureaucracy is irrelevant. As the most effective policy maker, the King needs an agency, the bureaucracy, for the realization of his will. It should be noted that because the political system has not developed strong interest groups or associations, with the possible exception of some conservative religious associations, and because it forbids political parties to function as such, the bureaucracy functions actively as an interest group by itself vis-a-vis the King and the ministers.

While the bureaucracy is weak in relation to the King, in comparison with other political institutions, it is strong. The bureaucracy has great power relative to the National Panchayats and the Council of Ministers. In effect, the National Panchayat has only advisory functions: by and large it performs the ritual function of legitimization of the proposals put to it by the bureaucracy and by the King. The National Panchayat functions on the basis of the information supplied to it by the bureaucracy. As mentioned earlier, the National Panchayat has not been able to establish its own research division, a good library, or consultation facilities.

The Ministers are weaker than the bureaucrats. As appointees of the King, Ministers can be removed by him at any time. Undoubtedly, the tenure of the Secretaries of a Ministry is fixed for five years. However, they are experienced in this kind of work and enjoy direct access to the King. If the

Secretaries feel that the decisions made by the Ministers are not sound or are not in accordance with the desires of the King, the Secretaries have a means of obtaining royal support and protection. The Council of the Ministers acts more as countervailing force to the political opposition. It integrates the different ethnic groups and geographical regions at the national level, but its administrative functions are minor. The Ministers who are picked by the King do not pursue their own philosophy, program, or manifesto. Whatever their service to the public is highly dependent on their ability to please the King and to remain in the Council of Ministers. They exist to implement the royal program. In this manner, their role is parallel to that of the bureaucracy. In this regard the bureaucracy has one advantage; it has continuity, whereas the Council of Ministers is quite often reshuffled. Continuity and stability greatly enhance the impact of the bureaucracy in the political process.

The higher echelon of the bureaucracy is composed of the influential members of Nepalese Society. It is composed of the elite groups who enjoy a monopoly over educational opportunity in a country where the literacy rate is very low and there are not many job opportunities available to the people outside the government. The education that a man achieves is also determined by the class in which he was brought up. Higher education, which is considered as one of requirements to be in higher echelon of the administration, is not available to all. Only the upper middle-class or the wealthy section of the people get the type of the education that is required for the higher echelons of the administration. The bureaucratic elite tends to have different values, norms and outlook compared to the rest of the bureaucracy and particularly in relation to the common people.

Looking at the power of the bureaucracy, the question arises: how can it be controlled? Who could control the bureaucracy except the King? This problem of keeping the bureaucracy politically responsible is not peculiar to Nepal. In most countries, whether developed or under-developed, the bureaucracy tends to become powerful. However, in the developed countries various institutions outside the bureaucracy, legislatures, political parties interest groups, and the press operate so as to control its power. But, as we have said, this is not the case in Nepal. Real control over bureaucratic operations can be managed when there are other counter-vailing institutions and interest groups active. In Nepal, interest groups have not developed

well yet. The Constitution of Nepal 1962 provides for different class and professional organizations but these organizations are not working independently except to perform the ritual function of lending the support of a rootless Central Committee to the government programs. Moreover, these organizations are controlled by the bureaucracy through financial aid as they do not have their own independent financial resources. In the case of other organizations, like the Federation of Commerce and Industry, professional organizations, like the College and University Teacher's Association, or the Bar Association of Nepal, they do not perform the functions of interest articulation. Due to the weakness of these institutions outside the bureaucracy, it furthers its power and influence.

What is the role of bureaucracy in the implementation of development program ? The Three Year Plan (1962 to 1965) was prepared and put into effect by the bureaucrats. The Third Plan (the Second Five Year Plan, 1965 to 1970) was also formulated and is being carried out through the bureaucratic machinery. Even the programs of the Districts are prepared by the central bureaucracy. Although top administrators keep saying that the Districts should initiate the local plans, these cannot be implemented without the financial sanction of the central government. It is the administrators who work in the palatial building of Singh Durbar who prepare the District plans and decides on the issues of implementation. Not being thoroughly familiar with local problems, they are often liable to misdirect the District authorities and slow down the pace of local development.

In 1967, the King proclaimed the "Back to Village Program". According to this program, village development is given first priority in national development. In this connection, many government departments proposed attractive plans and programs. For example, the Health Department of His Majesty's Government came out with a program to establish a health center in each Village Panchayat area by 1984. Whether this program, which sounds attractive in a country where the people are greatly in need of health service, will succeed remains to be seen.

A vital segment of the bureaucracy is the Palace Secretariat which became active in Nepalese administration since King Mahendra's rule began in 1955. For a while, during the Nepali Congress government of 1959-60, the role of the Palace Secretariat diminished, and the Central Secretariat became the nerve center of Nepalese administration. However, after 1960, the

Royal Palace Secretariat became dominant again; the Central Secretariat has played only a subordinate role. In fact, the Palace Secretariat overshadows the Central Secretariat and the foreign aid agencies.

One of the basic tenets of the Panchayat System is the central and dynamic role of the King. In this respect also the Royal Palace Secretariat takes an important role in administration. All official papers have to move through this Palace Secretariat to and from the King. The information to the King is readily made available by this Secretariat. The directions of the King are funneled through this Secretariat. Thus, the Palace Secretariat functions as the link between the King and the Central Secretariat and the Constitutional Agencies. In order to carry on these functions, the Palace Secretariat has been organized into various units: the Principal Military Secretariat, the Principal Private Secretariat, the Principal Personal Secretariat, the Press Secretariat, and thirteen other offices. ¹⁶

Outside of the Palace Secretariat Nepalese administration can be grouped into 3 tiers: the Central Secretariat, the Zonal Administration, and the District Administration.

The Zonal Commissioner is appointed by the King. It is a Constitutional position as provided by the first amendment of the Constitution of Nepal, 1967. The Commissioner reports to the Home and Panchayat Ministry, but he is responsible to the King. Formally, he is given authority over development activities in the Zone, and he has to maintain law and order within it.

The District Administration is headed by the Chief District Officer who belongs to the Home and Panchayat Ministry. He is expected to coordinate the development activities within the District, and to coordinate the activities of the field offices of different ministries with the centre. The Chief District Officer is given authority over both development and law and order.

In the 1970's Nepal is facing the problem of national integration, and the mobilization of economic social and political resources to cope with increasing population. The problem of national integration will become

16. *Nepal in Facts and Figures*, (Kathmandu: Press Secretariat, Royal Palace, 1966), pp. 9-10.

severe when the rate of literacy increases among the people and when the mass media spread their influence more and more throughout the country. In this changing context, the political institutions of Nepal should be able to integrate its multi-ethnic society, provide public services for its population and accelerate national development in its various phases.

Social, economic and political policies toward national integration and development should be devised. Social integration by means of inter-ethnic mobility should be encouraged. Economic integration by means of rational resource allocation in the economically depressed areas should be fostered. Mechanisms should be devised to make the voice of these people heard in the decision-making centres. Social and political mobilization for action benefiting these people is lacking.

As our brief review has shown, political institutions outside the Government, like class organizations, are virtually non-functioning at the district level, and the bureaucracy is highly centralized. The development of the country is directed and controlled largely by the government at the centre. Local administration and local political institutions are virtually inactive in drawing up or implementing development programs. The preamble of the Constitution forms local initiative and action. This principle ought to be realized in practice for the mobilization of the social, political and economic resources available outside of Kathmandu for the rapid development of the country.

(1973)

CHAPTER 10

Planning and Development in Nepal

—*Dr. Yadav Prasad Pant*

Nepal is one of the three land-locked countries of Asia. Due to its land-locked situation, historical and topographical features and other problems of development, the country presents its own distinctive and unusual problems in matters of development and planning. Its geographical (affinities) and other ties with adjacent countries has made it quite necessary that good trade relations be maintained always as far as possible with neighbours, more particularly with India. Its development plans and programmes have been greatly affected by various impediments emanating from transit difficulties.

Introduction

In the national economy, agriculture represents a source of living for about 93 per cent of the population. In 1969/70, the value added by the agricultural and forestry sectors accounted for about 68 per cent of the GDP at current prices. No other sector accounted for as much as 10 per cent, and only three accounted for five per cent or above; ownership of dwellings (eight per cent), cottage industries (seven per cent) and whole sale and retail trade (five per cent). In the absence of adequate statistics, estimates of national income have so far been made only in terms of probable orders of magnitudes. The relative shares of the major sectors show that between 1964/65 and 1969/70 the share of agriculture and forestry grew from 64 per cent to 68 per cent while dwellings declined to 8 per cent. There were no significant

changes in other sectors. In fact, it is estimated that GDP grew at an average of 2.2 per cent for the third Plan period (1965/66-1969/70); the target set for the achievement of a growth rate of 3.8 per cent in GDP and 1.8 per cent in per capita income was not realized. In the field of industry also, progress has not been satisfactory. Balance of payments statements have not been compiled due to the paucity of basic statistics. However, the fact that existing total official reserves can finance almost one year's imports is indicative of a favourable balance of payments situation.

Though monetary policy is becoming increasingly important, the predominance of the non-monetized sector places a limit on its effectiveness. In recent years under the aegis of the Nepal Rastra (Central) Bank, systematic steps have been taken to encourage commercial banking and other financial institutions. This sound development and a wide geographical coverage of commercial banking activities, particularly in agriculture, are prerequisites for accelerated and sustained economic growth. Though in recent years the fiscal position has been characterized by a steady increase in the regular budget surplus, it has been insufficient to finance growing development expenditures. The resulting overall budget deficits have been financed mainly by foreign grants and, to a smaller extent, by foreign loans. However, over the past 14 years, Nepal's planning experience roughly shows that it has not been possible to increase the average rate of growth of the GDP to any appreciable extent.

Early Planning Experiences

To give a proper idea of Nepal's development efforts, it is necessary to outline early planning experience within the broader framework of measures currently taken by the Government. Before 1951, any thinking along these lines was very much on an *ad hoc* basis, without any overall approach to the country's development. In fact, economic history before 1950 was almost a history of trade rather than of any co-ordinated efforts directed toward the country's development. Though all the vicissitudes of history for centuries, the life of the greater part of the population which was dependent on an agriculture which hardly changed. In some respects, it was only after Shri Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of Kathmandu Valley in 1768 that the political foundation of modern Nepal was laid and some specific changes were perceived to have clearly occurred in the politico-economic condition of the country.

The advent of Shri Jung Bahadur in 1846, the first Rana Prime Minister, ended a period of political instability and ushered in an era of stability. However, it is a matter of history that for more than one century the Rana rulers were generally content simply to administrate; they developed almost a negative attitude with regard to any systematic development of the country. One can perhaps deduce on the basis of the past that under the rule of the Ranas, Nepal did not have the type of economic policy which could possibly facilitate or encourage the country's economic development. Only a number of sporadic steps motivated by a short-term approach, were taken from time to time such as the founding of the first undergraduate college in Kathmandu in 1918 and the setting up of the first commercial bank in 1937.

Change in Attitude

Therefore, before 1951 the grinding poverty of the masses was indeed an unquestionable and palpable fact. The knowledge of the agricultural potential was deplorably low and the area under cultivation had even apparently shown an increase to a steady growth of population. The monetary and exchange situation was also worsening and the exchange rate of the Nepalese Rupee against the Indian Rupee was becoming unfavourable with a consequent rise in price levels.

In some respects, however the system of economic planning which will be discussed in the following lines can be regarded as a history of growth and change even before the adoption of the First Five Year Plan in September 1956. Apparently even under the old Rana regime, planning had been discussed. For instance, just before the Second World War, a Twenty Year Plan was announced. However, Nepal did not have any really systematic policy for development until the end of 1949. In October 1949, the Rana Prime Minister, Shri Mohan Shumshere, constituted a National Planning Committee which was entrusted with the task of preparing a Fifteen Year Plan of development, the sole objective of which was making the country completely self-sufficient. After a couple of months, a draft plan was presented; unfortunately, however, it did not consider available resources. It just broadly emphasized that due regard should be given to the National, regional and rural needs of Nepal, and that provisions for financing the plan should be adequately made. However, aside from these nominal efforts, until 1951 the Government primarily concentrated its efforts on strengthening the army

rather than developing the country's economy. As a result, in 1951, after the overthrow of the Rana regime, the country had to launch a programme of economic development almost from scratch.

After February 1951, a number of steps were taken to foster a climate of development and planning on a national scale; certain institutional measures were also taken in the following years. A separate Ministry of Planning was set up in 1952 for co-ordinating various developmental projects. In the beginning of 1952, the Prime Minister announced at a press conference that a planning sub-committee would be constituted to advise the Government on the problems and processes of development and to co-ordinate various developmental activities. Subsequently, a few individual projects were approved but a consideration of their overall effects on the economy as a whole was lacking.

Until the release of the draft of the First Five Year Plan in 1956, no appreciable progress could be recorded in the field of planning and development. It is quite true that even under Rana rule, the Government was committed in certain respects to a policy of directing economic activities to remove some of the defects and deficiencies and achieve some measure of co-ordination in particular economic and social activities. However, this piecemeal planning and the setting up of a few specific and *ad hoc*, but unrelated, advisory organisations were not in conformity with the objectives of sustaining comprehensive development. Besides, most of these paper plans or very rudimentary ideas about economic development lacked co-ordination with the overall national welfare. The efforts made were based simply on ambitious assumptions; they also suffered from lack of perspective and inaccurate practical observations. There was also little integration among the various developmental activities that had been envisaged and the size of the total planning effort had very little relationship with the volume of financial resources that were available in the country. It is against this background of Nepal's experiences in the field of development and planning that one can proceed to discuss the basic defects of economic plans so far implemented on some comparative basis and make suggestions for long-term strategy.

The First Plan

Broadly speaking, a development plan comprises certain factors such as a list of expenditures in the public sector, trends of development in the private sector and a long-range approach to basic government policy regar-

ding the fulfilment of the desired objectives. After the Second World War in many developing countries in Asia and Africa, a trend developed of formulating planning on sophisticated models designed for developed, western countries.

Nepal's first Five Year Plan was launched in September 1956, which, to quote the message from His Majesty, King Mahendra, "related to the necessity of a Five Year Plan for the country for attaining national self-sufficiency and establishing a welfare state." Obviously, in the virtual absence of the statistical data necessary for planning, no systematic planning techniques could be evolved in the formulation of the Plan. The Plan was a partial plan in the sense that it did not take any approach towards overall planning; it satisfied only one of the criteria for an economic plan—a broad list of expenditures in the public sector. The Plan was more or less a collection of public sector projects in different fields with some estimates of their costs.¹ The total financial outlay of the Plan was estimated at Rs. 330 million. During the Plan period, performance in some sectors such as village development, education and health was quite impressive, however the overall results were not satisfactory.

It is, of course, understandable that the farmers of the First Plan had to work under various handicaps. The administration was quite new to planning. The Government budgeting system had just been initiated and statistical information was very scanty. Even so, it was a good experiment in collective thinking and action. It certainly gave the necessary experience and the self-confidence born of experience to our planners. The First Plan, in fact, could be broadly regarded as providing a link between the pre-1956 and post-1961 period when a strategy for economic development started to evolve gradually.

The Second Plan

In December 1961, after the adoption of Panchayat Democracy, Nepal tried to move forward more vigorously to create a new society, devoid of exploitation and based on class co-ordination. A policy of decentralization was adopted to inculcate the panchayats with the principles of self-reliance and development to achieve the well-being of the common people. Due to these major political changes, after the completion of the First Five

1. The total outlays of the various plans are given in the Appendix.

Year Plan, there was a year's holiday in planning which was regarded as a period of consolidation and preparation for a more realistic plan in the future.

The Second Plan (1962-65) launched in 1962 was also a preparatory effort to create the basic pre-conditions for a comprehensive country-wide plan. It was, of course, broader in scope and aimed at laying the base for future economic progress. The level of development expenditure actually achieved averaged Rs. 200 million annually, compared with the Rs. 40 million annually in the First Plan. In general, in terms of the financial investment envisaged in the Plan, the objectives could have been attained; however in actually, only limited success was achieved. Thus the implementation of the Plan did not produce any marked impact on the economic condition of the common people, although its objectives were not limited merely to an increase in production. During the plan period, the national income was estimated to have risen by seven per cent, while at the same time population increased by six per cent.

The Third Plan

The Third Plan, launched in July 1965, was completed in July 1970. Its principal objective was to undertake a nation-wide Plan with long-term goals. This plan was broader in scope and investment in infrastructure was pursued vigorously, along with the development of productive sectors. In addition to the public sector, it also encompassed within its scope the local panchayats and the private sector. Formulated within the range of a 15 year perspective it marked a crucial period in the formulative stage of Nepal's development and planning process. It was more comprehensive with envisaged overall investment outlays averaging Rs. 500 million annually. The plan aimed at raising the country's national income by 19 per cent in five years. With the population assumed to be rising at the rate of two per cent per annually, this would raise per capita income by about nine per cent, or 1.8 per cent annually. The Plan was revised in September 1968 on the basis of experience gained in the first three years of the Plan period. The revision entailed some downward adjustments of targets even though the basic objectives and priorities were generally maintained.

It is roughly estimated that during the plan period, the rate of growth in the economy was only slightly higher than population growth. Still one should not ignore that in selected activities significant progress was achieved.

For example, consumption of power grew by more than 20 per cent annually during the Third Plan. Transport services during the period increased by almost an equivalent rate, communications by about 10 per cent annually, consumption of chemical fertilizers by some 50 per cent per year, and primary and secondary school enrollment by more than 10 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. Certainly, this represents progress. However, the total size of these activities was so small during the plan period that their impact on total production was quite limited or almost negligible. Whatever general growth occurred was probably due to traditional factors of increased labour force, additional land, changes in weather conditions and so on, and not due to any qualitative improvement, or any sizeable increase in the magnitude of factors of production.

The Fourth Plan

With the background of experiences gained in working on the first three plans, the Fourth Plan was drafted and adopted in July 1970. The objectives of the Fourth Plan, broadly speaking, are to maximize output, establish the pre-conditions for sustained and long term economic growth (development of transport and communications, electricity, power and so on), expand and diversify international trade, attain basic objectives of growth with stability by controlling price levels, make effective use of manpower and control population growth, create conditions conducive to the emergence of a society free from exploitation and mobilize internal resources more from additional revenues for investment in agriculture, industry and commerce. Obviously, some of these objectives are quite specific, while some are only generalized goals. As the Plan rightly emphasizes, "Economic development is a continuing process and its aim is to gradually increase the public welfare and to prepare the infrastructure needed for accelerating economic growth." Within this overall context, it is appropriate that one of the long-term objectives of the Plan has been to create conditions conducive to the emergence of a society free from exploitation. To that end, the Plan suggests that even the process of mobilizing internal resources should be undertaken more intensively than hitherto.

Selected Development Policies

A rapid survey of the planned development of the country over the past years affirms that Nepal's problems of policy formulation have been

quite difficult ones to solve. Essentially policies were not geared to realities in many respects. It is, therefore, pertinent to touch upon some of the selected development policies within the framework of the priorities mentioned in the current plan, as well as in past plans. Regarding the outlays and basic priorities, the Plan envisages a total expenditure of Rs. 3540 million as compared with Rs. 2500 million in the Third Plan.

In conformity with broad policy objectives, priority in the Plan has been given to the development of basic sectors like transport and communications for accelerating the rate of economic development. An all-round development in agriculture and industry is not possible unless there is an overall network of transport facilities. Secondly agricultural development helps to improve the standard of living of the majority of the people. Agricultural output provides even the raw materials required for the development of industries. Based on past experiences, it is fit that the Fourth Plan, which covers the first half of the "Development Decade" as designated by His Majesty, King Mahendra, gives greater recognition to the fact that both formulation and implementation should go side by side. The Plan accepts that isolated or *ad hoc* action alone on any of the segmental problems or action on one factor at a time would not lead to the desired results. Therefore, any development plan should include a co-ordinated programme for the modernisation of the various sectors of the economy.

Today in most countries, economic development is measured in terms of growth rate. This has been done in Nepal also, particularly in the Second and Third Plan, but the basic statistics for measuring the country's growth rate are almost completely lacking. Nepal's national accounts data have several short-comings; they are just a reasonable approximation of the rate of change in Gross Domestic Product and its sectoral composition. Again, whatever rate might have been projected in the past, the average rate of growth has been regarded as being just sufficient to keep pace with population growth or a little more. But still, this gives some direction and long-range vision to the development of the economy. That is why the Fourth Plan seeks to accelerate the rate of growth quite considerably, compared to past performance, to an average annual growth rate of four per cent. This calls for greater efforts on the domestic front as well as considerable improvements in the administrative capability of the Government machinery. Of course, the Plan also recognises that as "an estimation made on such theoretical basis is bound to contain several short-comings, its utility is, in fact,

controversial." However, it can give some indication to the direction that the economy has to move in the future.

Necessary Conditions

Why were the various periodic plans not able to be implemented satisfactorily ? There are many factors responsible for the slow growth of the economy, but one must first look at some of the basic pre-conditions and try to generalise them broadly. In the first instance, even with the statistical material available so far properly co-ordinated, at our present stage of development, it is still impossible to evolve any clear-cut development strategy which would indicate the most suitable pattern for the country's development and specify the means needed to ensure the projected type of development. In general, even in conditions more developed than ours, medium or long-term plans are just one way of defining the viability of a development strategy. Without defining an explicit strategy, planning loses its substantive forms and the entire emphasis shifts to methodological aspects to the detriment of actual implementation. This has happened in the past in a number of developing countries. In this respect even if a long-term vision is absolutely necessary to attain consistency in planned activities, there is a real need to move gradually towards more comprehensive annual plans.

In any country, practical economic conditions should be the criteria for planning. Elegant models are not enough. They need to be supported by good projects and their appraisal. That is why an annual plan regarding total investment with coherent project outlines is a useful and necessary instrument to close the gap between the longer and medium-term perspectives on the one hand, and the actual detailed decisions, projects and policies adopted on the other. Any plan needs to be judged not only by the contribution it is designed to make to the long-range growth potential of the economy, but also in terms of the adequacy of the solutions it offers to the more immediate problems. In this respect also, an annual investment plan is relevant to Nepal. As a matter of practice, when it is not possible to get either a perspective approach for the entire economy or have a detailed medium-term plan, the answer may be simply to have some clear perspectives regarding key sectors of the economy and to relate these to an annual operational plan. Such an annual plan for investment should comprise a number of elements and should be completely different from the annual budget, which comprises the revenue and capital parts of the budget. Planning almost becomes a

theoretical exercise with little relation to implementation value if proper regard is not paid to the realities of annual budgeting. A comprehensive annual plan exercise should contain mainly such elements as an evaluation of the past performance of the economy and some outline of the strategy for the following year's development; an indication of the principal objectives of the annual plan in relation to the medium-plan objectives; a determination of the physical targets to be achieved in major programmes in the public and private sectors and a framework of economic policies for realizing various objectives.

Secondly, the evaluation of the progress made in developmental activities is as important as their actual implementation. Many errors might have been committed in the initial stages of the developmental activities and there could have been unnecessary expenditures as well. It is, however, essential that such errors are eliminated gradually in the future. The periodic evaluation of progress is a means to identify such errors, and solutions to overcome them may be planned for accordingly. No doubt, in more recent years the Planning Commission has placed greater emphasis on this aspect. Still, it is necessary that arrangements be made to evaluate a major projects and provide advice and co-operation to the ministries and departments so that they can judge the progress made in their respective developmental activities also.

Since a plan is also essentially a "first approximation" in the absence of appropriate statistical data, a preliminary project report on feasibility may be prepared initially to determine the overall justification of the scheme. This is most important in developing countries because of the non-existence of certain basic instruments which are indispensable for completing the planning system. Both in Asia and Latin America, many of the overall plans that have been prepared incorporate projections based on the assumption of an improvement and on the anticipation of possible difficulties, but they often fail to specify the specific measures that may lead to the desired results. Therefore, it is imperative that only when a preliminary project or feasibility report has been prepared, examined and approved, should a scheme be included in the plan.

The role of the private sector in the implementation of a periodic plan also has to be properly ascertained. Of course, the policy of His Majesty's Government has been to provide greater incentives to the private sector

with a view to obtaining from it a greater degree of participation in the development of the country. This aspect has received even greater emphasis in the Fourth Plan. From time to time, the Government has taken various measures in this respect. Since, in the initial stages, basic consumer goods industries cannot be established because of the competitive price of imported goods, protection is given to these industries in various ways. The important measures of protection consist of facilities provided to import raw materials, a lowering of excise duties and an increase in import duties on similar commodities. In so far as the banks have not been able to help the private or public sectors, the Employee's Provident Fund has been helpful in meeting the financial requirements of the private or public sectors to some extent. The Provident Fund's only source of capital is the savings of government employees. While the Provident Fund has helped industries to obtain working capital, the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation has been helping the private sector to establish industries by providing it with long-term local and foreign currency loans, technical help, administrative and training facilities to employees and so on. Thus the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation has made some contribution to the economy in the development of the private sector though the working of the Corporation needs to be improved quite considerably. However, more facilities should be given to the private sector to make it more active and responsive to the development of the economy.

Past performance shows that in planned economic development, good policy formulation for promoting growth in the private sector has been lacking. We lack adequate knowledge about planning procedures for this sector, and thus close controls over the private sector as an integral part of planning have not been possible. It is very necessary that measures should be taken to make the performance of the private sector more fruitful in the total mix of the plan. We should study more thoroughly the machinery which presently exists for establishing relations between the public and private sectors, the methods which are being used for influencing initial policy decisions in the private sector and improvements which can be made to make the private sector programme conform to overall planning.

Major Constraints and the Outlook for the Future

Even if the pre-conditions for development (a few of which have been outlined above) are created, there are certain other problems which have to

be remedied. Presently, the major constraints to further economic development are: the limited absorptive capacity, primarily caused by institutional bottlenecks such as vested interests in the old feudalistic agricultural system; an insufficient agricultural marketing and credit system; a shortage of managerial capabilities; the limited amount of savings despite the significant progress achieved in mobilizing financial resources; the limited volume of exports; the population pressure which restricts the economic growth rate; the quality of the labour force in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors; the lack of transportation facilities which is the primary reason the Indian market is placed in a far more favourable position than that of the Nepalese Hill people in competition for the food surpluses of the Tarai; and the lack of consistency between the formulation and implementation of development planning.

To counteract the above constraints, in the overall context, His Majesty's Government has adopted certain measures within the framework of basic development strategy. The first strategic step was to create a political structure called the Panchayat System to provide for participation (through election) by the people at the national, district, and local levels in the process of government and economic development. This structure also provides the framework for the inclusion of public and private organizations, institutions and firms.

The second element of strategy has been the land reform programme. Land reform is intended to accomplish two important objectives: (1) giving the soil tillers the incentive to increase food production and (2) to open avenues of political participation to them thereby enabling them to support political change and to benefit economically from it. Basically, agricultural production results not from one source or factor; it is the result of the coordinated, co-operative efforts of land reform, co-operatives research, the supply of necessary inputs and other related services. Hence to achieve the common objectives, a more effective co-ordination of various aspects is necessary. Thus, in the years to come more realistic steps should be taken to expand agricultural output and gradually transfer human and capital resources from agriculture to other sectors.

Another element of strategy lies in tax and administrative reform now in the formative stages. This will place a strong revenue base under the Panchayat System and relate the professional administrative structure to elected officials at each level. A key to this portion of reform is a panchayat develop-

ment tax designed to significantly increase the total amount of land tax collected, and, at the same time, apportion a considerable part of it to the village and district levels. Though implemented on an experimental basis, this approach has not been followed up in recent years.

Again, to increase exports, it is crucial that the country stabilize the terms of trade. To this end, Nepal emphasizes economic activities with a comparative advantage, industries primarily related to the agricultural and forestry sectors. His Majesty's Government has also launched a Family Planning Programme which will reduce the population growth rate over the coming years. To develop the major non-farm components i.e., national highways and large hydro-electric power plants, consistent efforts are underway. Such projects will provide benefits upon completion beyond the country's borders. Finally, in the current Plan, greater emphasis has been placed on the fact that the formulation and implementation aspects should go side by side with a continuous evaluation of the implementation of projects at various stages.

Since the ultimate objective of all development is to raise standards of living with a view to increasing human welfare, social and economic development must have integrated approaches without any conflict. Broadly, there are three such related strategies which merit some mention. In the first instance, partially to offset the geographic concentration of resources, a comprehensive strategy for the development of hills must be formulated. While sizeable resources need not be diverted to the hills during the Fourth Plan, whatever activities are undertaken should be derived from this strategy and, more importantly, the foundation for future development should be started. In this respect, of course, the goal of having south to north development through comprehensive planning, as propounded in the current Plan, is of greater relevance. Secondly, greater emphasis must be directed toward the identification and measurement of the country's natural resources. Specifically, this means intensifying forestry resources assessment, soil analysis, ground water surveys and geological and mineral research. Thirdly, there must be a new strategy for the development of human resources. Though this involves several fields, the most important is education. Consequently, the educational system must undergo significant change, not only so that it facilitates and reinforces economic growth and development but also to avoid serious social instability.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

In order to achieve the objectives of the Plan over time, His Majesty's Government has taken a number of measures such as the strengthening of fiscal administration, changing the rates of savings and so on. As a corollary, we shall be in a better position to measure both our success and failure also. We can, perhaps, really plan only with a realistic appreciation of our economic potential and administrative capabilities. The problem of overcoming the inherent difficulties of developing a land-locked country are of great importance to Nepal's development both in the near future and in the longer run.

Today, the experiences of developing countries have increasingly shown that "practical flexibility" in keeping with changes in the economic situation and administrative capabilities should be the key note of planning. Planning authorities have to react to changes in the situation around them. This consideration should also guide Nepal in its future activities in development planning. At the same time, it is also necessary to watch carefully the budgetary position, that the primary policy focus is on the increase of total net domestic credit to the private and public sectors and that the resulting influence of such credit expansion on the net foreign asset position is directed to the country's long-term economic development. (The movement towards more conscious planning should be welcomed without any further delay). If development is to make sense as a desirable process, it can only be defined and likewise followed as a process which increases the supply of goods and services which gradually contribute toward stepping up living standards.

(1972)

CHAPTER 11

Land Tenure

—*Mahesh Chandra Regmi*

In Nepal, land ownership has traditionally been a symbol of social status, a means of economic security and a source of political authority. But it is not from these factors alone that a study of the forms and development of land tenure systems assumes importance in Nepal. Land tenure is an interesting and fruitful field of study also from the viewpoints of social, economic and political history. An analysis of land tenure policies can help us to a considerable extent in understanding how political unification and expansion were achieved during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, how the Rana regime sustained itself for over a century, and why, after democracy was achieved, it has been considered necessary to overhaul the land system in order to strengthen the democratic foundation of the society.

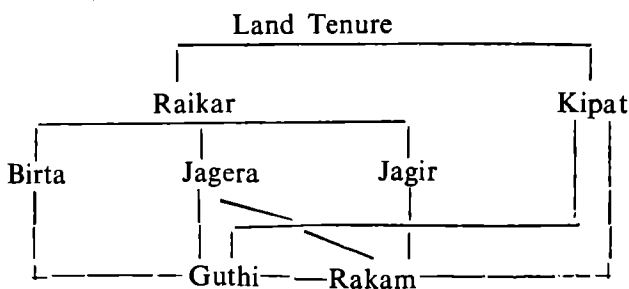
Forms of land tenure in Nepal are usually classified as Raiker, Birta, Guthi, Jagir, Rakam and Kipat. Raikar denotes land in which the state has traditionally exercised its rights of ownership and taxation. Birta tenure emerged when the state divested itself of its ownership rights in favour of individuals in appreciation of military or other services, or for purely personal considerations. A similar divestiture, when made in favour of individuals or institutions with religious and philanthropic motives, led to the emergence of Guthi tenure. Religious considerations have invested the Guthi system with considerable sacrosanctity, with the result that lands once bestowed as Guthi have seldom been resumed by the state. Individuals, too, endowed their Birta lands as Guthi, usually with religious motives but occa-

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

sionally also to retain the lands in the family, since Guthi lands are non-alienable, or to safeguard them from governmental confiscation or encroachment. In addition, Raikar lands were often assigned as emoluments to government employees and functionaries of different categories under Jagir tenure, while lands not so assigned were known as Jagera. Rakam tenure emerged when the traditional obligation of the people to render labour services on a compulsory basis was compensated in the form of allotments of Raikar or government-endowed Guthi lands.

The Raikar, Birta, Guthi, Jagir and Rakam land tenure forms in Nepal thus emerged from the basic principle of state ownership of the land. In contradistinction, Kipat means communal tenureship, under which lands in certain geographical areas are held only by members of particular communal groups, subject to the reversionary rights of the community. Several communities of Mongoloid origin owned lands under the Kipat system in both the eastern and western hill regions. At present, however, this form of land tenure is limited to the Limbu community in the far eastern hill region.

The inter-relationship among these land tenure forms may be schematically represented as follows:



Raikar and Kipat are thus the basic forms of land tenure, from the legal and administrative viewpoints. The Raikar system is based on the theory of state landlordism, while Kipat represents a customary form of land tenure which has gradually been adapted into the state tenure system. Raikar land was known as Birta when alienated by the state in favor of individuals, as Jagera when its revenues were reserved for the use of the state, and as Jagir when it was assigned as emoluments of office to government employees and functionaries. Guthi tenure originated from the alienation of Jagera, Birta or Kipat lands by the state or by private individuals for religious and chari-

LAND TENURE

table purposes. Compulsory labour tax, which gave rise to Rakam tenure, used to be imposed only on Jagera, Guthi, Jagir and Kipat lands.

It is significant that none of these land tenure systems are of recent origin of Nepal. They had already been established more or less in these forms at the time of Nepal's political unification during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Political unification had little impact on these basic forms, for the Gorkhali rulers generally avoided measures which might disturb the traditional systems and institutions of the people and thereby alienate their sympathies towards the new regime. During the post-unification period, the main objective of land tenure policy was to administer the areas incorporated into the kingdom, bestow largesses on different categories of people and extract revenue directly or indirectly to further the objective of territorial expansion. With the possible exception of Kipat, existing land tenure forms contained nothing to hinder the implementation of these policies.

In fact, land grants under the Birta and Jagir systems formed the bed-rock of the political and administrative set-up introduced after political unification. Large areas of lands were appropriated as rewards or emoluments to civil and military officials, members of the nobility, Chieftains of vanquished principalities and others. New factors thus emerged to supplement the social and religious aspects of the Birta and Jagir systems and give them an added importance as an instrument to promote the political, economic and administrative objectives of the government. The low level of monetisation of the economy and problems involved in the collection, storage and disposal of agricultural rents over vast areas made it difficult for the government to utilize land as a direct source of monetary revenue. The primary fiscal importance of land therefore consisted in the possibility of assigning it in consideration of emoluments to government employees, particularly the military. The ubiquitous yearning for the privileges of land ownership naturally enhanced the popularity of such assignments. Various measures were therefore taken from time to time to increase the area available to the government for the purpose of making such grants and assignments. This policy resulted in the expansion of particular forms of land tenure at the expense of others, albeit without any change in the basic character of the land tenure system. Best areas of agricultural lands were thus converted from Raikar into Birta and Jagir. Large areas which had been utilized as Birta, Guthi or Kipat without proper authority were resumed as Raikar for eventual assignment as Jagir.

The emergence of the Rana regime in 1846 heralded a new phase in the history of Nepal's land tenure systems. Land grants under the Birta system began to be made on an unprecedented scale to enrich members of the Rana family and their relatives and favourites, thanks to the combination of political power with the insatiable prurience of successive Prime Ministers, since they did not benefit from the accumulations of their predecessors because of the absence of a system of succession by primogeniture. In an attempt to maximize the area available for appropriation as Birta, the Rana rulers undertook measures to uncover defects in title and thus resume existing Birta holdings as Raikar. The enactment of legislation denying the right of inheritance in the case of all grants that did not specifically provide it was of special importance in this context. However, the Rana regime followed a double-edged policy with regard to the Jagir system. Its interest in increasing revenue in cash conflicted with the assignment of lands as Jagir. But since such assignments constituted a privilege, the regime was unwilling to abolish the system altogether. Consequently, Jagir land assignments were made on an increasingly selective basis, and the Jagir system occupied a much less important position in Nepal's land system towards the end of the Rana regime than it had in 1846.

Meanwhile, the nature of individual rights on Raikar lands underwent a basic change during the Rana period owing to a number of economic and demographic factors. According to Nepal's first Legal Code, promulgated in 1853, individuals who cultivated Raikar lands enjoyed only occupancy rights. Such rights, though inheritable, were not alienable, and hence fell short of full-fledged property rights. They were subject to several conditions such as the continued payment of taxes due to the state. No individual was entitled to hold Raikar lands in any area while personally residing elsewhere. Moreover, individual occupancy rights on Raikar lands were periodically redistributed among local inhabitants on the basis of the size and working capacity of the family. These legal provisions presupposed conditions in which cultivable land was fairly abundant. They did not take into account the labor and capital invested in the reclamation of new lands, nor of the scarcity value of lands of superior location or productivity. But the mere fact that the occupant had invested labor and capital in making his plot of land productive led to the emergence of a diluted form of property rights. The law did not take cognizance of such rights; however, they possessed exchange value for any person who preferred to pay the value of the investments rather than personally go through the pioneering venture of breaking

LAND TENURE

new lands, even if such lands were available in a favorable location. It is the emergence of this exchange value that may be regarded as the beginning of the process of the evolution of private property rights on Raikar lands in Nepal. Available evidence indicates that extra-legal transactions in such occupancy rights were quite common. The process of granting official recognition to such transactions began in 1888 and culminated with the enactment of legislation in 1923 providing for their registration. Subsequently, residential restrictions on occupancy rights were abolished, and mortgages permitted.

Concomitantly with these developments, important changes occurred in the structure of the land tax system. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, payments due to the state or to assignees in several hill regions, including Kathmandu Valley, were generally assessed in kind at half of the gross produce. Subsequently, the desire of Jagirdars to appropriate cash incomes from their lands and to charge rates higher than those permitted by this ceiling resulted in the progressive commutation of in-kind assessments for purposes of collection. The process acquired an institutional character in 1910, when the commutation rates were fixed on a semi-permanent basis. The rates then fixed remained substantially unchanged until recently. The trend of the post-1910 period was one of steadily rising prices, which soon outpaced the fixed commutation rates. A similar situation emerged in the Tarai and some areas in the hill region where in-kind assessments had traditionally been unknown or abolished in favour of cash assessments. The assessments rates remained fairly static, while prices gradually increased. In both cases, therefore, the incidence of the land tax declined in proportion to the rise in market prices. In other words, a more or less rigid tax structure, combined with the rising prices of agricultural produce, increased the profits of cultivation. The cultivator was now able to meet his tax obligation with a smaller portion of the produce than before.

The declining burden of land taxation consequent to the rising prices of agricultural produce had a far-reaching impact on the land tenure system. The cultivator became able to transfer a portion of his increased profits to others in return for the capitalized value. People who paid this capitalized value and thereby acquired the right to utilize the alienate portion of the profits of the cultivator represented an intermediary class between the state and the actual cultivator. This class was composed of the former cultivators when they sublet their holdings and remained content with the margin of profits over and above the customary share of the actual cultivator, or of

new persons to whom the cultivators sold this margin at its capitalized value while themselves continuing as cultivators. As a result of these developments, possession of Raikar land implied the right to appropriate rents from the actual cultivators without any personal obligation to render physical labor or live on the land. Occupancy rights on Raikar lands were prized not because they provided an opportunity for personal labor or subsistence but because they created a new avenue for profitable monetary investment. Raikar landholders, though still "holding" lands under the state, became renters and *de facto* owners. But the emergence of a non-working intermediary class of land interests between the state and the actual cultivator was virtually ignored by existing land tenure legislation. The government was concerned not with people who actually cultivated the land but with those who were responsible for the payment of taxes.

The downfall of the Rana regime in 1951 thus brought to the fore a number of problems in the field of land tenure. The egalitarian ideals which the advent of democracy brought in its wake highlighted the need to protect actual cultivators from insecurity of tenure and exaction of arbitrary rents and other payments. From the fiscal view point, it became necessary to put an end to a situation in which approximately one-half of the total agricultural area was under Birta or Jagir tenure and hence fetched little or no revenue. The need for improvement in the condition of the peasantry and for reforming the land tenure system so as to maximize revenue from the land, thus constituted the *raison d'être* of land tenure policy. To achieve these ends the Jagir system was abolished in 1952, and the Birta system legally in 1959. The Rakam system became defunct when compulsory labor was abolished in 1951. Legislation conceding the status of owners to Raikar landholders controlling rents and granting security of tenure to cultivators was first enacted in 1957.

Since 1963, the emphasis of land tenure policy has shifted from mere regulation of rents and protection of tenancy rights to the diversion of inactive capital and manpower from agriculture to other sectors of the economy in order to accelerate the pace of national development. The goal is to give impetus to the industrial development of the nation, so that tenurial reforms constitute only a secondary aspect of current land policy in Nepal. Consequently, recent land legislation has failed to make any basic change in the existing structure of landownership and tenancy. The 1964 Lands Act thus prescribes ceilings for both ownership and tenancy holdings and the re-

LAND , TENURE

distribution of surplus lands among tenants currently cultivating them, to members of their families, to owners of adjoining holdings, or to other landowners, in this order of preference. Landless persons come at the bottom of the list, for the goal is to consolidate existing holdings rather than to create new uneconomic holdings. The imposition of ceilings and the acquisition of surplus lands has therefore had little effect on landlordtenant relations. Moreover, except in Kathmandu Valley where rents have been fixed at specific rates, the traditional practice of assessing them at half of the gross produce was retained. The rate has been recently changed to half of the main crop, which has been considered too high in other countries to be effective in stimulating increased agricultural production.

In the sphere of tenancy rights, the 1964 Lands Act has prohibited the eviction of tenants except through a judicial decree; and only the event of default in the payment of rent, failure to cultivate the land properly, or discontinuation of cultivation for more than one year, except in unavoidable circumstances. Only actual cultivators have been recognized as tenants, so that sub-letting is no longer possible. The right of tenants to alienate their holdings has been taken away. In fact, tenancy rights are not even inheritable, contrary to custom, for in the event of the tenant's death, the husband, wife or son, "whosoever is trusted by the landowner," will be designated his successor. The law does not prescribe the course of action to be taken in case the landowner considers none of them trustworthy.

These legal provisions aimed at controlling rents and protecting tenancy rights have proven largely ineffective. It may be pertinent here to quote from Daniel Thorner's analysis of the futility of trying to improve the condition of the peasantry under the present land holding system:

"If you do not totally reject the principle of non-working landlords, you cannot prevent the village oligarchs from acting as landlords. As soon as you leave the door barely open for property income to non-working proprietors—which you do when you permit land ownership to exist unassociated with labor in the fields—you allow all the evils of concentration of power at the village level to come trotting back in. As long as some peasants are without land or very short of land, they will be at the mercy of those who are allowed to

have land without working it. The whole world of organized subterfuge, with which so many villages are already replete, will continue unabated.”¹

Meaningful reforms in the land tenure system can therefore hardly be expected in the absence of measures to eliminate the intermediary landowner. On the contrary, recent land reform measures have only strengthened the position of landowners as rent-receivers without giving them commensurate obligations.

Moreover, any attempt to reform the land tenure system must aim at reducing the social and economic gulf between landowners and tenants. From this viewpoint, the 1964 Lands Act is indeed a big disappointment. The discriminatory treatment which it has shown between landowners and tenants is indicated by the provision that a landowner may own as much as 25 bighas of land in addition to separate home sites in the hill region, Kathmandu Valley and the Tarai. The ceiling in the case of a tenant is approximately only one-sixth, without any provision for home sites. Moreover, landowners are entitled to compensation for the surplus lands acquired from them, but tenants enjoy no such consideration. Landowners have even been permitted to resume specified areas of land for residential purposes, notwithstanding the fact that a tenant may be displaced and thus even lose his means of livelihood as a result.

The existing anomalies in respect to land tenure policy stem also from the fact that the government does not seem to have envisaged any model form of land tenure for eventual adoption. The abolition of the Birta and Jagir system may lead one to suppose that it is intended to remodel the land tenure system on the Raikar model. However, the term Raikar, which, incidentally, has never been legally defined, actually denotes not only lands used for governmental purposes or cultivated personally by the owner but also those owned by non-working landowners and cultivated through tenants. No restriction exists on the emergence of tenancy on lands now cultivated by the owners themselves. At the same time, tenancy is not permitted at all on still another category of Raikar lands, which are reclaimed under resettlement projects and allotted to individual settlers. It appears essential to precisely

1 Daniel Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India* (New Delhi: Delhi School of Economics, 1956.)

LAND TENURE

define these different categories of tenurial relationships so as to achieve the final objective of modelling them on the owner-cultivator pattern.

At a time when the entire social, economic, political and administrative framework of the nation is being remodelled on the Panchayat pattern, it may not be illogical to suggest that land tenure systems too should be adjusted accordingly. It is therefore suggested that a new form of land tenure, to be called Panchayat tenure, should be introduced. Every local Panchayat should acquire the ownership of agricultural and pasture lands situated in the area under its jurisdiction. Lands in excess of the ceilings prescribed in recent land reform legislation may be taken up in this manner with immediate effect on an experimental basis. The Panchayats will then pay taxes on such lands to His Majesty's Government and realize rents from the individuals utilizing them. At present there exists a class of intermediary interests appropriating agricultural rents, some of whom are absent landowners. Local Panchayats may acquire their ownership rights with the compulsory savings collected by them under the land reform program. This will be a good investment, for lands thus acquired will yield rents to the Panchayat. If the rate of such rents is reduced to 25 per cent of the main annual crop, instead of 50 per cent as at present, both the cultivator and the Panchayat will benefit. The process will have a cumulative effect, for a portion of the profits can be plowed back to finance the purchase of additional lands.

The categories of lands that will be acquired in this manner will depend upon how rapidly the government is determined to change the nation's agrarian system. If it is necessary to proceed cautiously, Panchayats need not immediately take over all lands situated in their areas. Panchayat tenure, once established on any plot of land, will not revert to the old system. A progressively larger area will therefore accrue to Panchayats in the course of time. It is also possible that owner-cultivators may wish to sell their holdings to Panchayats. In any case, this class should not be permitted to alienate its holdings to others under this scheme. Under the Panchayat land tenure system, Revenue Offices will have their burden considerably lightened because they will be dealing with only about 4,000 "landowners" all over the country. Considerable resources will be available for agricultural and other development from the rents accruing to Panchayats. Increased agricultural production will be largely channelled towards automatic investment and not be consumed by a class whose role in the agrarian economy has been neutralized by the 1964 Lands Act. Moreover, the disappearance of village land

magnates will have a beneficial effect on the political structure and working of the Panchayat system itself.

(1972)

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CHAPTER 12

Agriculture in Nepal : Some Viewpoints¹

—*Ratna Shumsher J.B. Rana*

That agriculture is the backbone of Nepal's economy needs hardly to be emphasized, for it provides employment for almost 93 per cent of the total labor force. With 66 per cent of the gross domestic product and about 60 per cent of total export earnings coming from the agricultural sector, economic development in Nepal virtually means agricultural development—a viewpoint which is also recognized by the Fourth Plan (1970—1974)². Thus, what happens in this sector will ultimately determine the overall economic growth of the country. The purpose of this chapter is to review the present state of development in agriculture and to indicate certain policy directions for further growth. However, since one cannot pursue such a discussion very far without a growing sense of incompleteness, only certain issues will be touched upon.

Present Agricultural Patterns

Cultural practices in Nepal reflect the tremendous population pressures on the land. Less than one-eight, or about 12 per cent, of Nepal's total land area is under cultivation. This amounts to roughly two million

1 The help of Yadav Singh Thapa in computing index numbers is gratefully acknowledged. All statistical information referred to in this essay was obtained and computed except otherwise mentioned on the basis of information contained in the following: Ministry of Land Reform, Agriculture and Food, Agriculture Economics Section, *Progress Report* (1967–68) (Kathmandu: Singha Durbar Secretariate, HMG, 1968).

2 National Planning Commission, *The Fourth Plan* (Singha Durbar Secretariate, HMG, 1970).

hectares. Much of this land is marginal, easily eroded, of low productivity, and short of moisture, or a combination of all three. About 58 per cent of the total cultivated area is under irrigation and only 30 thousand hectares, or about 10 per cent of the cultivated area, is multiple-cropped with two harvests or more per year. Continuation of the traditional method of land utilization is major factor in making Nepal's agriculture one of the least productive in the world.

Most of the cultivated land is customarily tilled on a family basis. The average size of family holdings in the hills is very small, ranging from 0.4 to 0.6 hectares. In the Tarai, the holdings are comparatively larger averaging from three to five hectares. For the country as a whole, the average size of holdings amounts to roughly 1.5 hectares. Until recently, many of the cultivators were tenants. It is estimated that as much as 60 to 70 per cent of the land in the Tarai was cultivated under tenancy³. While tenancy was predominant in the Tarai, the proportion of owner-cultivators was much higher in the hills. According to one estimate, only 17 per cent of the cultivated area was under tenancy in the hills compared to 32 per cent in the Tarai as early as 1962⁴. High rents and absentee landlordism were quite common, in addition to fragmentation of holdings.

Cereal grains are the principal crops produced in Nepal. More than 60 per cent of the total cultivated land is under paddy production, primarily in the Tarai. Maize is planted in about 24 per cent of the cultivated area. Planted mainly in the hills, wheat and millet account for about seven and six per cent of the cultivated area, respectively. Wheat is a major crop in the Western Tarai while paddy occupies a similar position in the Eastern Tarai. Barley and buckwheat are the main crops at higher elevations. Substantial quantities of paddy and some maize are sold by cultivators in the Tarai. There is hardly any surplus production in the hills. Thus, in the hills only a small amount of the foodgrains produced are marketed.

In so far as cash crops are concerned, jute, sugarcane and tobacco represent the main crops. These are planted in about 27,000, 7,000 and 2,000 hectares respectively and mainly grown in the Eastern Tarai. Oilseeds

3 Y.P. Pant and S.C. Jain, *Agricultural Development in Nepal* (Bombay: Vora & Co., 1969), p. 52.

4 Puspa R. Mathema, *Agricultural Development in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Shanti Printing Press, 1969), p. 130.

AGRICULTURE

with an estimated area of 90,000 hectares are also important as a commercial crop in the Tarai and to some extent in the Inner Tarai as well. Some sugarcane and oilseeds are also grown in the hills, mainly for local consumption. Almost half of the jute produced in Nepal (15,000 tons) is processed in our jute mills; the rest being exported to India. Most of the sugarcane produced is presently transported to Indian Sugar Mills located along the border. Before the completion of Janakpur Cigarette factory, major portions of the tobacco crop were also sold to Indian factories.

Potatoes are grown in almost every part of the country for local consumption. Potatoes are cultivated on a commercial basis in some areas of the eastern hills and in the Kathmandu Valley. It is estimated that roughly 20,000 tons are exported to India annually. Truck farming on a large scale is practised only in the Kathmandu Valley; vegetable growing in other areas is limited only to kitchen gardens, grown purely for household consumption. Citrus fruits are produced in some areas of the hills; their export to India is estimated at 800 tons annually.

Cattle are raised in all parts of the country as an integral part of the household economy. The cattle population was estimated at 1.3 million in 1962. In the Tarai, cattle are raised primarily as a source of manure, whereas in the hills and mountains, livestock are raised both for manure as well as for cash income. In the higher elevations and the Tarai, fodder conditions are more favourable than in the hill districts. The main livestock product is ghee (clarified butter) which ranks second to foodgrains among agricultural products in export value. It is estimated that about 3,000 tons of ghee are annually exported to India. Some small-scale cheese producing projects have also been initiated. Roughly 40 per cent of the cheese produced is also exported to India. Recently, there have been substantial gains in the poultry industry which is mainly confined to the Kathmandu Valley.

In the hill and mountain regions, subsistence farming is predominant. In the Tarai the surplus in foodgrains and oilseeds, primarily mustard, is substantial. On the whole, Nepal has at present a surplus in foodgrains production, although regional variations of large proportions exist⁵. There

5 For details, see Ratna S. Rana and Tulasi R. Joshi, "Nepal's Foodgrains Surplus and Deficit Regions," *National Geographical Journal of India*, XIV (June-September, 1968), pp. 165-175.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

are major dislocations of supply and demand, not only in terms of various parts of the country, but also in terms of seasons between the planting and harvesting of crops.

Yield and Production

Needless to say, one of the fundamental problems of agriculture in Nepal is its low productivity in terms of yield. Most crop yields are one-fifth to one-half of those achieved in the developed countries. There are many reasons for such poor yields which need not be mentioned here. What is of concern is that the yields have not improved significantly over the years as may be seen from the table below:

Table 1
Yield Trends of Various Crops, 1961/1965 — 68 (K/hectare)

Crops	1961/62	1965/66	1966/67	1967/68	percentage change in 1967/68 over 1961/62
Paddy	2010	1968.4	2006.3	1961.9	-2.39
Maize	1967	1902.2	1831.1	2016.1	2.48
Wheat	946	1483.0	1496.0	1266.6	+31.39
Millet	1312	1200.0	1200.0	1200.0	-8.54
Sugarcane	19886	14769.2	14700.0	15218.5	-23.47
Jute	1236	1209.3	1200.0	1067.2	-13.63
Mustard	553	529.9	573.1	595.1	+7.60
Potato	6628	6595.2	6976.7	7325.5	+10.52
Tobacco	830	1100.0	650.0	675.0	-18.61

Source: Ministry of Economic planning, Central Bureau of Statistics, *National Sample Census of Agriculture: Yield Data of Principle Crops, 1961*, (Kathmandu: HMG 1965), pp. 6,11; And: U.S. AID/Nepal, Program Office, Economic Planning Section, *Economic Data Papers—Nepal, II: 1* (Kathmandu, August 1969), p. 37.

The above table shows that Nepal is still far behind in yield take-off, i.e., a sustained rise in yields per unit of land. Raising yields requires capital

AGRICULTURE

to change the technological relations between inputs and outputs and to maintain a certain quantum of various inputs to sustain yield take-off. Failure to achieve such a take-off, particularly when the population is estimated to be increasing at a rate of 2.2 per cent annually can be very serious, as food output per person will obviously decrease. Because the rural population is likely to increase rapidly for some time, output per person in agriculture will begin to decline. With the greater part of the population still at the subsistence level, the capital needed for yield take-off may not be forthcoming, thus a per capita increase in agricultural productivity for the total population will be exceedingly difficult to achieve. Given this predicament, we are faced with the necessity of achieving concurrently take-off in yield per unit of land as well as in income per person.

In certain areas of agricultural production, some progress has been made, particularly in wheat, millet and sugarcane. Table 2 presents the production trends of various crops. Most of the growth in cereal grain production occurred in the eastern hills and the inner and western Tarai. The increase in cash crop production was mainly confined to the eastern and central Tarai as a result of the establishment of cigarette and sugar production industries in these areas.

Table 2

Index of physical output of various crops, 1964/65 — 1969/70
(Base year 1964/65 = 100)

Crop	1964/65	1965/66	1966/67	1967/68	1968/69	1969/70 (Preliminary estimates)
Paddy	100.00	100.27	91.12	100.73	105.48	109.51
Maize	100.00	100.12	96.38	102.34	105.21	107.59
Wheat	100.00	116.66	126.19	150.79	180.16	191.75
Millet	100.00	190.49	190.49	176.45	175.70	184.34
Barley	100.00	107.69	107.69	100.00	110.48	112.86
Sugarcane	100.00	152.38	116.67	132.86	148.99	157.60
Oilseed	100.00	100.75	109.01	109.79	111.36	116.85
Potato	100.00	96.90	104.95	110.20	101.20	102.32
Tobacco	100.00	94.53	55.73	57.87	67.48	67.48
Jute	100.00	99.81	98.94	101.77	—	123.67

Source: Economic Analysis and Planning Division, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, HMG/ Nepal.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

Although production of some individual crops increased significantly during the 1964/65 — 1969/70 period as may be seen from the above table, there were also decreases in the production of some crops, notable in mustard, maize and oilseeds. Consequently, total agricultural production increased by only 14 per cent during this period which gives a simple linear growth rate of around three per cent annually. Table 3 gives the index of total agricultural production.

Table 3
Index of Agricultural Production in Nepal, 1964/65 — 1969/70
(Base Year 1964/65 = 100)

	1964/65	1965/66	1966/67	1967/68	1968/69	1969/70
Production	100.00	102.66	96.29	105.15	110.55	114.55

Source: Economic Analysis and Planning Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Price used is wholesale for the year 1964/65.

However encouraging the production trends, it is noteworthy that, to the extent the data are correct, foodgrain production has increased at a slower rate than population since 1960. Total crop production has grown at a slightly higher rate than population and it appears that the increased output of potatoes, wheat and millet in the hills has enabled Nepal to maintain or even to increase exports of rice and jute to India. Furthermore, it appears that much of this gain in agricultural production has been accomplished not because of an increase in yields, but because of an increase in the area under cultivation. According to one analysis, approximately 61.23 per cent of the increase in output between 1965 and 1968 was attributable to the extension of the area under cultivation.⁶ Since further prospects for bringing additional new lands under cultivation at reasonable costs are very limited, increased production, therefore, must be achieved by raising yields. Unless due efforts are made to curb the population growth rate and accelerate agricultural development, Nepal's apparent advantage as a surplus producer of foodgrains may soon vanish as it becomes deficit in foodgrain production.

6 Ratna S. Rana "Regional Variations in the Growth Structure of Crop Production in Nepal," *The Himalayan Review*, (1971), pp. 20—27.

Development Plans

Shortly after the overthrow of the Rana regime, the Government of Nepal decided that drastic economic changes were essential for the development of the country. It also decided to design and implement programs for planned economic development which gave birth to the First Five Year Plan (1956–1961). Since then agricultural development which aims at increasing production by raising per hectare yields has been emphasized. In the First Plan period, 31 per cent of the total plan budget was allocated to development in this sector. During the Second Plan period (1962–1965), emphasis was given to bringing about institutional changes in traditional agriculture in addition to attempting the implementation of land reform programs initiated earlier. In the Third Plan (1966–1970), topmost priority was given to agricultural development which envisaged increasing the production of foodgrains by 15 per cent and that of cash crops by 73 per cent. However, a review of the progress made at the end of the plan showed that production of foodgrains had increased by only 10 per cent and that of cash crops was much below what was anticipated.⁷ The reasons for this shortfall in agricultural production are many. One is that the targets set were extremely ambitious when compared to available resources, both physical and human. Another reason is the lack of organized implementing machinery which created problems in proper coordination among the various projects. This fact is also acknowledged by the Fourth Plan.⁸ The gap between plan goals and the achievement of those goals has been eloquently presented elsewhere and need not be discussed here.⁹

The Fourth Plan (1970–1974) which is currently underway has allocated 26 per cent of the total plan outlay for development in the agricultural sector and envisages increasing the production of cereal grains by 16 per cent. In this sector the current plan has two broad objectives. First, increasing production of crops at a rate of three per cent per annum by increasing yields and second, enabling as large a section of the population as possible to share the benefits of the development, thereby creating the necessary preconditions for generating momentum in the developmental process. Fulfilment of these objectives depends primarily on achieving organization in the implementing apparatus, the “linchpin” of development planning. The

7 *The Fourth Plan, op. cit.*, 1970, p. 5(3).

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 5(7) — 5(11).

9 Pashupati S.J.B. Rana, “Coordination: Some Examples of Problems Arising from a Lack of Coordination” (Kirtipur: CEDA Jan. 1971), p. 25. mimeo.

three per cent annual growth target in agricultural production appears rather ambitious. An erratic performance in agricultural production has characterized past plans and unless there are some unforeseen break-throughs this target may be difficult to achieve.

Institutional Aspects

In order to achieve the objectives of the plans, a number of institutions have been expanded or established since 1960 to stimulate a more rapid growth in agriculture. The Government has set up organizations for education and research, horticulture, livestock, fisheries and agricultural extension to perform research and service functions on farming problems and to extend information to farmers. The Agricultural Extension Department has posted a District Agricultural Development Officer (DADO) in several districts and a varying number of Junior Technical Assistants (JTA) in each district. Yet, extension services do not seem to have produced any significant results, particularly in the hill districts. The foremost reason for this is not only that the number of JTAs is few, but they are also inadequately trained and have little relevant experience to extend to the farmers.

For solving the problems of agricultural credit two institutions have been established. One of these is the Agricultural Development Bank, formerly known as the Cooperative Bank which was organised in 1963. Initially it provided loans to the farmers through various cooperative institutions. At present it provides banking services in the rural areas and grants loans to the farmers for the purchase of various agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, seeds and insecticides. Another credit agency is the Land Reform Saving Corporation which was established in 1966. This agency receives deposits from the Ward Committees and attempts to utilize savings collected under the compulsory savings scheme which was initiated under the land reform program, primarily as a tenancy reform measure.¹⁰ This scheme attempts to institutionalize rural credit by collecting from individual farmers savings which are used in setting up a revolving fund for the purpose of making credit available at a two per cent interest rates.

This scheme is an excellent approach to the extent that it curtails excessive social and ceremonial expenses and develops a saving habit among

10 B.P. Dhital, "Compulsory Savings Scheme in Nepal: An Experiment for Mobilizing Rural Capital", *Report of National Seminar on Land Reform* (Kathmandu: Land Reform Department, 1970), pp. 46 — 54.

AGRICULTURE

individual farmers thus mobilizing domestic resources for financing agricultural development programs. However, neither the compulsory savings scheme nor the Agricultural Development Bank have so far provided an adequate substitute for traditional credit sources. The Ward Committees cannot provide enough loans because of inadequate savings collected, while farmers can no longer obtain the desired credit from village money lenders. At present, the operation of the Agricultural Development Bank is mostly confined to Tarai districts. Not only are funds inadequate to meet credit needs, but a real problem involved is that fairly large amounts of land holdings or other assets are required as collateral to qualify for any credit. This being the case, the services rendered by this bank benefit only those few individuals who are already well-to-do and have relatively small credit needs.

Land Reform programs which strive for maximization of agricultural production and an equitable distribution of what is produced, have had some desired effects in removing revenue collecting intermediaries debt interception and land distribution, but there are still problems surrounding tenancy regulations, tenancy rights and the implementation of land reform provisions.¹¹ It is debatable as to whether land reform programs have contributed to increase in agricultural production.

Cooperative societies, one of the allied institutions for agricultural development, were also created by an executive order in 1959. For some time, emphasis was placed on farming credit cooperatives, but during the Third Plan period the emphasis shifted to forming multi-purpose cooperatives. However, despite much effort to give momentum to this cooperative movement, progress faltered. The main reason was that cooperatives were started before there was any need for them. Such institutions can function well, and are required, only when there is an increase in production beyond the subsistence level. Perhaps another reason is that cooperatives should be formed on the initiative of the people, while in Nepal, the initiative came from the Government.¹²

The Agricultural Supply Corporation, which was organized in 1966 is involved in the wholesale distribution of improved seeds, fertilizers and farm implements. It has headquarters in Kathmandu and has only five branches and ten depots so far, all of which are mainly located in Tarai. By 1969,

11 Nava Raj Chalise, "Land Tenure and Tenancy in Nepal," *Report of National Seminar on Land Reform*, (Kathmandu: Land Reform Department, (1970), pp. 39-45.

12 Mathema *op. cit.*, p. 163.

this corporation had distributed over 12,000 tons of fertilizers and 1500 tons of improved cereal seeds through a system of 44 cooperatives and 215 private dealers.¹³ However, these amounts of technological inputs are not sufficient to increase agricultural production significantly. Furthermore, the fertilizer supply is limited under present Indian quotas. It is estimated that fertilizer requirements to increase yields substantially in the projected area of commercial crops will be five times the quantity presently used.

Implications and Conclusions

Because of these problems noted above briefly, there has not been any significant change in the condition of agriculture despite over a decade of developmental efforts. As the Fourth Plan notes, "Although a number of development works have been undertaken in different sectors of the economy, there has not been virtually any noteworthy change in the basic condition of agriculture."¹⁴ It seems the basic problem is that the farmers have been forgotten while efforts have been concentrated on projects and programs which, though intended to reach farmers, did not for one reason or another. The Fourth Plan recognizes the farmers' role in attaining the goals of agricultural development,¹⁵ but the question still arises as to what has actually been done to induce farmers to adopt those practices and utilize those inputs which would increase agricultural output. The answer is that not very much has been done. It is high time that fragmented and piece meal approaches are put aside and attention is focussed on the farmers.

Farmers are often alluded to as uninnovative and unreceptive sorts who require extensive personal development before they can really be expected to accomplish much on their own. There is some truth in this of course, but to argue a massive expansion of social overhead as a necessary prerequisite for an accelerated output expansion is to counsel despair. There is no lack of selfinterest among Nepali farmers; most are shrewd and pragmatic in their approach to the soil. What is to be understood is that just this much intelligence and an appetite for self-betterment are not enough to make them receptive to new practices to increase agricultural production. There are many variables in the average farmer's situation and it is difficult for the

13 S.B. Pradhan, "Agricultural Supplies— Their Importance in the Agricultural Development in Nepal," *Report of National Seminar on Land Reform* (Kathmandu: Land Reform Department, (1970), pp. 68 — 75.

14 *The Fourth Plan*, *op. cit.* p. 5.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 5(2).

AGRICULTURE

farmers' to isolate from the variety what a successful neighbor does differently. The farmer's natural conservatism is reinforced by the fact that he risks his family's subsistence when he is innovative. This is why he has to be shown the results, and be firmly assured before he changes his old ways.

This being the case, the present extension services leave a good bit to be desired in creating awareness of improved practices. Not only does expansion in agricultural output depend on getting thousands of farmers to accept many little things, such as use of fertilizers, green manuring, crop rotation, better seeding and better management, but also on getting several of these things done in concert. All of these things need to be done concurrently as the returns, if all of them are thus pursued, will far exceed the output increments that would result if they were undertaken on a piecemeal basis. This implies that extension workers should be in a position to provide the farmers simultaneously with all of the critical supplies and facilities needed to implement the adoption of a concerted set of new practices. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Nepal.

The struggle to achieve rapid economic development is surely going to be won or lost in the field of agriculture. Of all things, success in this sector may be difficult to bring about, for agricultural development is in a sense a "remodelling project" which calls for overhauling traditional society itself. To get farmers to work harder, adopt new techniques and thereby produce more and market more of what they produce, there are two means. The first approach is to prod, inform, teach and otherwise manipulate the individual farmers into changing their present ways; the second approach is to condition the farmer by restructuring his environment in a manner calculated to harness his latent motivations to the cause of expanded output. Either way, the predominant concern is to reach out and down to the individual farmer.

(1972)

CHAPTER 13

Industrial Policy : The Problem Child of History and Planning in Nepal¹

—*Dr Prakash C. Lohani*

Development of Industry and Commerce has been one of the most important objectives of His Majesty's Government during the Third Five Year Plan. To this end the Plan sets targets in many industrial sectors and promises to exploit most the local raw materials. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the performance of the industrial sector in the Third Plan, and to examine briefly its causes. This will be done in two steps. First, the industrial development of Nepal will be presented in an historical context. This will be followed by an analysis of the performance of the industrial sector in the Third Plan. It is our view that a discussion of the historical context will provide additional meaning to the industrial development pattern observed in the Plan.

After the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana to power in the mid-1840's, any prospect of technological innovation and industrial development in Nepal vanished rapidly. Jung Bahadur's descendants ruled the country as huge private monopoly and isolated it from the industrial revolution going on in the West. Education and innovation were discouraged and blind loyalty and obedience from the masses to the whims and wishes of the oligarchy was expected. No significant, conscious attempts were made to modernize social and economic institutions or change the nature of technology

¹ The author wishes to express his thanks to Dr. Ratna Rana for helpful comments and suggestions.

used in production. Thus no efforts were made to organize new industries that made use of the new technology rapidly being developed in the West.

At the turn of the century the British in India extended their railway network to Nepal's southern border. Suddenly the Rana government found that it could earn more revenue in the region bordering India by clearing forests and producing grain for export. For the peasant too, it now became profitable to engage in extensive production because the surplus could be transported to India by rail and sold at competitive prices. This had the effect of gradually monetizing the region's economy since the farmers sold their crops for cash.

Thus we can see that the development of commercial and industrial enterprise in Nepal, particularly in the Tarai region, started after the construction of railways in the bordering states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.² In 1907 for example the Indian railway network was extended to Raxaul which is directly across the border from Birgunj in the central part of the Tarai region. This new development had two significant effects. First, surplus grain from the surrounding region, particularly Bara, Parsa and Rautahat started passing through Birgunj enroute to Raxaul. Naturally, commodity trade flourished. Second, the increase in grain trade created new purchasing power and led the way for a growth in import trade, particularly in essential consumer items like cloth and sugar. Thus imports from India increased, and Birgunj became a central place providing goods and services for people in the surrounding region. A similar pattern can also be observed in the growth of Biratnagar another important trading and industrial centre just across from the Indian town of Jogbani which is linked by the railway to the rest of India.

The growth of trade and to some extent small scale industries could not, however, be maintained in the new Tarai towns after the extension of the Indian railway across the border. Grain surplus passing through the new towns increased, but at a decreasing rate over the years. This was bound to happen for three socio-economic reasons. First, agricultural technology was then even more primitive than it is now. Therefore, once the potential agricultural surplus for the given level of technology was exploited further in-

2 Pashupati S. J. B. Rana, *Trade* (Kathmandu: CEDA mimeographed paper, 1972), pp. 3—4 (See also chapter in this book.)

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

creases in production were at best very slow and came primarily through the reclamation of waste-land and forest areas. Second, as indicated previously, economic development was not then a national goal. The socio-economic structure was essentially feudalistic, and entrepreneurship among the people was frowned upon. The ruling class was not only afraid of technical innovation, but also feared changes in the values and aspirations of the common man. It recognized that the development of industries would create conditions favourable to the formation of organizations which would lead to a new awareness among workers regarding the sharing of political and economic power. Therefore, no efforts were made to start consumer goods industries that could have potentially exploited the new monetization of the regional economy and the increased purchasing power of the people. Third, a trade treaty was signed with British India in 1923. The treaty allowed for practically unrestricted import of British goods to Nepal. Naturally it had the effect of discouraging the establishment of new industries and the continued operation of ancient handicraft and cottage industries. Thus the windfall trade gains from the extension of Indian railroads to a few points along the country's southern border were not able to generate forces of long-term growth and the region's economy finally seems to have followed the path visualised in the Ricardian Theory of the Stationary State.

The Period Between 1935—1949

In 1936 the first Nepal Companies Act was established and the Government began to advocate a somewhat liberal policy in the establishment of relatively large manufacturing units. The outbreak of the Second World War gave added impetus to this trend. The war created a serious shortage of consumer goods and primary raw materials like jute. The Tarai towns close to the Indian rail-heads, primarily Birgunj and Biratnagar, seem to have benefitted from these changing attitudes and political conditions both at home and abroad. A whole set of new industries opened during this period. Most notable among these were two cotton mills, two match factories and two jute factories.

The first few years of the postwar period saw a boom in the promotion of new companies, particularly rice mills in Birgunj and Biratnagar. Most of the entrepreneurs, however, were inexperienced in management. In their over enthusiasm for profit and growth they neglected the financial

and marketing aspects of their industries. Thus many of them failed to operate successfully and went into liquidation. In this context, it is worth noting that the two cotton mills, one in Birgunj and the other in Biratnagar, which represented a major portion of industrial investment between 1936 and 1945 went into liquidation right after the end of the war.

The Period Between 1950—1959

No new industrial venture of any significance came into existence during this period. Nevertheless, some major developments in building physical and economical infrastructure necessary for future industrialization did take place. First, the Tribhuvan Rajpath from India to Kathmandu, the capital city of the country, was opened via Birgunj. Before the construction of this highway it was difficult to import surplus grains from the Tarai region and manufactured consumer goods and industrial raw material from India into Kathmandu. A whole range of mountains had to be crossed by porter, or by horse before one could reach Kathmandu from the southern flatland of the country. Secondly in 1959 the Nepal Industrial Development Corporation was formed with the objective of promoting industrialisation through rendering financial and technical assistance to private entrepreneurs and industrialists of the country. This was a significant step towards creating financial institutions capable of supporting new programs of industrial development. Thirdly, in 1957 the industrial policy of the country was declared and the Industrial Factory and Factory Workers Act followed in 1959. In the areas of developing cottage industries, Ford Foundation technical assistance was obtained in 1954 and efforts were made to establish and expand training institutions around the country. Fourthly, the Rapti Valley program was started in the early 1950's³ even though it has now been abandoned, it did help to open up the Inner Tarai region of the country, an area that was previously unsuitable for human habitation because of malarial conditions. Thus new rich farm areas were brought under cultivation and some new towns with potential for industrialization did grow. Hetauda, lying 50 miles north of Birgunj, is a case in point. Finally, it must also be pointed out that in 1950, Nepal signed a trade and transit treaty with India. It assured a virtual domination of Nepal's economic life. In this sense, the policy of colonial exploitation was eagerly accepted by India in her economic relations with Nepal.

³ This is a multi-dimensional regional development program similar to the Tennessee Valley Project in the U.S.A.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

The Period Between 1960—1969

The treaty of 1950 was replaced by a new one at the end of 1960. This treaty allowed Nepali products free and unrestricted access to India and accepted the principle of non-reciprocal tariff in view of Nepal's backward economy. This was a significant achievement over 1950.

The 1957 industrial policy of the country was replaced by a new policy in 1960. It was amended in 1961, 1963 and 1965. The first two amendments made it easy for the NIDC to finance hotels in the country. The last amendment was concerned with new tax breaks. In general, the industrial policy of the country classifies industries into different categories according to the scale of operation, i. e. small, medium and large, and promises numerous incentives including a ten year tax holiday. In terms of priority, the industrial policy as stated in the Third Five Year Plan gave top preference to industries that would exploit most of the country's industrial and commercial raw materials and help reduce imports from other countries. Thus industries like paper, sugar, cement and plywood were promised liberal financial incentives and physical facilities.

Ironically, in the private sector, the 1960's saw the development of industries that have been given the lowest priority in the country's economic plans, i. e. stainless steel and synthetic nylon plants. In the public sector a few large scale manufacturing units have opened primarily with foreign assistance. The most notable are: (1) the Birgunj Sugar Factory in Birgunj, (2) the Agricultural Tools Factory in Birgunj, (3) the Janakpur Cigarette Factory in Janakpur, (4) the Bansbari Shoe Factory in Kathmandu, and (5) the Bricks and Tiles factory in Harisidhi. The first of these three factories was opened with Russian aid, the remaining were financed by Chinese aid.

Industrial Development Targets and Achievements in the Third Plan

In this section the pattern of industrial development observed in the Third Plan will be carefully analysed. First, the magnitude of gap between the targets and achievements in the Plan will be presented. Secondly, the reasons for the gap, if it exists, will be explored providing purely economic explanations supplemented by relevant socio-economic considerations that might have contributed to the observed pattern of industrial investments.

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

The Target-Achievement Gap

Table 1 below presents the performance of the industrial sector during the Third Plan:

Table 1

Product	Unit	Base Year 1965/66	Third Plan Target 1969/70	Actual Achie- vement 1969/70
Jute	(Metric Tons)	17,325	30,000	15,000
Sugar	"	9,912	43,000	24,000
Cement	"	—	60,000	—
Paper	"	—	15,000	—
Paint & Varnish	"	—	1,000	—
Soap	"	—	23,000	300
Cotton Textiles	(Metres)	—	18,000,000	—
Brewery	(Litres)	—	1,136,000	Under Construc- tion Cap: 600,000 Litres
Shoes	(Pairs)	29,838	—	60,000
Processed Leather	(K. G.)	56,979	—	160,000
Cigarettes	(Thousands)	635,964	—	2,000,000
Matches	(Gross)	564,595	—	500,000
Stainless Steel Utensils	(K. G.)	232,000	—	7,250,000
Liquor	(Gallons)	30,564	—	52,747
Industrial Estates		3	8	8

The 18 million metre output of cotton textiles was supposed to have been manufactured by two new cotton textile factories which were never built.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

The Third Plan promised five new industrial estates in the following areas: Dharan, Pokhara, Nepalgunj, Chandragarhi, and Krishna Nagar. So far no industrial estates have been established in any one of the locations mentioned. It was a display of 'outstanding failure'. For a discussion of industrial estates in Nepal see: CEDA, **Industrial Estate Administration: A Report of a Seminar**, (Kathmandu: CEDA, 1970.)

Sources: National Planning Council. **The Third Plan (1965—70)** (Kathmandu: HMG), Chapter XIII.
National Planning Commission **The Draft Fourth Plan** (Kathmandu: HMG), Section 15, p. 5. (in Nepali.)

Three observations on Table 1 are now in order. First, there is a phenomenal gap between the plan targets and actual physical achievements in both the expansion of existing industries and the establishment of new ones. The jute industry in the country, for example, is over twenty years old. Jute constitutes 86 per cent of Nepal's exports to third countries and therefore is its primary source of foreign exchange earnings. Yet it is interesting to note that its output level at the end of the Third Plan was below the pre-plan level. In the case of cement, paper, solvent extract, cotton textiles and paint and varnish the third plan target has remained only in the books. This is a dismal performance record that is doubly disappointing especially in view of the industrial policy statement in the plan which clearly maintains that "first preference will be given to such industries as timber and plywood, paper, sugar, cement, lime and mica.⁴ Secondly, the shoe and cigarette industries have flourished and their achievement is encouraging. It is, however, to be noted that production targets for these industries are not even specified in the Third Plan. Thirdly, a few industries producing stainless steel utensils and nylon suitings based entirely on foreign raw material like imported stainless steel sheets and nylon yarn registered great progress. There was, however, no mention of these industries in the Third Plan of the country. Most of them have now been shut down for two reasons: First, the government has reluctantly come to realize that they contribute very little to the long-term growth of the country. Second, the Indian Government has refused to accept these products as being of 'Nepal origin'.

4. The Third Plan, *op. cit.*, pp. 94.

In general, it seems clear that the Third Five Year Plan targets for industrialization were never implemented seriously by His Majesty's Government. Almost all industries that were accorded high priority are yet to be established. A few industries of import substitution nature like leather and cigarettes did flourish. But their progress was the result of foreign aid negotiation that was totally independent of the Plan. This is clear from the fact that Plan targets were not even specified for these industries. Finally, the growth of stainless steel and nylon industries dramatized vividly the government's weakness in the area of policy implementation.

Disturbing Implications

The failure of His Majesty's Government to implement its industrialization plans and policies has serious and disturbing implications for the future economic growth of the country. First, it has created an uncertain climate and among entrepreneurs a lack of confidence in the government itself. Second, it has eroded the confidence that the common people had in the government a few years ago. A brief discussion of these two interrelated points will clarify this further.

An economically underdeveloped country is a national unit that has a relatively stagnant technology and a rate of increase in net capital formation that is barely enough to sustain an increasing population at a mere subsistence level. Development in this context implies an increase in net capital formation and an increase in labour productivity at a rate that is substantially higher than the increase in population. One can of course dispute this definition for it concentrates only on production as an index of development and ignores other vital considerations like distribution of national income and increase in employment. While this objection is valid, there is no reason to think that these other considerations are necessarily incompatible with the objective of maximizing production, for the distribution and employment conditions can very well be looked upon as constraints maximization functions. In this approach the choice of technology and the problem of maintaining balance between the rural and urban sections of the economy, emerges as part of the solution to the maximization problem under consideration.

Increase in net capital formation and an increase in labour productivity, however, require deliberate planning and an institutional mecha-

nism that has the authority and organization to implement them in actual practice. In countries with centralized state planning, successive iterations between planning agencies and production units are usually the answer to assure consistency among sectoral plans keeping in view the recognized constraints that the state has decided to accept both with regards to technology and the distribution of national income.⁵ Planning agencies such as the State Planning Committees in the Soviet Union wield a wide range of power over the implementation of the program. This is made easy by the so-called "conjectural planning method" which basically assures that control information regarding the plan and its implementation constantly flow to the Planning Committees for necessary correction.

Since one of the objectives of planning is to manipulate the structural parameters of the production function, the need for consistency among various sectors in the national plan and a mechanism to assure its implementation is also equally important to the "mixed economies" as it is to the centrally planned economic system. In mixed economies, however, the state allows the private sectors to operate. The general philosophy is that there is no inherent contradiction in the simultaneous working of the private and public sectors since there are numerous areas in the economic system where they can complement each other. On the other hand, it is quite apparent from development literature that co-operation between private and public sectors should take place under a planned framework. In fact, one notes in most development strategies a strong bias for general equilibrium planning. This usually implies that at least during the precondition and take-off stages in an economy the government has to take the role of leading investor. It must also decide on national priorities, determine the nature of relevant constraints to be used in formulating the plan and decide to what extent sectoral imbalances are to be tolerated, for there are bound to be leading and lagging sectors even in the most balanced plans.

Planning in a mixed economy then requires strong economic leadership from the government. It has to act as the innovator and investor and must provide leadership to the forces of change struggling to create the necessary conditions to accommodate the rising aspirations and new demands

5 A. K. Sen, "Interrelations Between Project, Sectoral and Aggregate Planning, (Paper presented in the ECAFE Seminar, Dushambe, USSR, 1970.); See also: Anatoly Yefomor and Alexander Anachishkin, *State Planning: Aims, Ways, Results* (Moscow: Novatsi Press Agency), pp. 67— 84

of the people. This is not at all an easy task for the government. After all, it is a mechanism that reflects through its decisions not just the progressive's view of this world; it can also act as the stronghold and haven for those to whom the past is the only guide to the present and the future. Especially in the developing countries that have yet to establish institutional mechanisms that can entertain novel perceptions and solutions to the new social demands and hopes, the influence and power of various interest groups in the government become one of the most important factors for the success both in planning and its implementation. In particular, the values and norms inherent in the governmental decision-making structure at any point in time do not originate in a vacuum. They indicate in a significant way the existing pattern of distribution of economic and political power in the country. These values and norms influence the structure of the distribution mechanism that allocates economic rewards and determine over time the capability of the given political economic system to integrate conflicting forces towards the achievement of its manifested goals.⁶

The government is supposed to provide economic leadership and help develop private industrial initiative in the economic system. If it fails to adopt fully the values and norms consistent with the basic economic of efficient resource allocation, it will erode dangerously and finally destroy the efficiency of different sub-systems in the general economic system. For instance, an industrial bank may be established with the stated objective of helping the industrial sector. However, the determinant institution of economic development, the government, primarily reflects the underlying political and economic strength of the dominant interest group or groups. Consequently whatever its overt design in its actual working the industrial bank will tend to work in the interests of those groups who control the government and through it the industrial bank. So, a contradiction will arise between the overt aim, to serve the whole industrial sector, and actual practice, its working in the interests of that part of the sector that belong to the dominant groups. When this happens contradictions in policies and actions, which in the final analysis would point out to the need for a change in the existing sharing of political power are likely to result.

The discussion above has direct relevance to the observed pattern of industrial failure in the Third Five Year Plan of Nepal. Today no indus-

6 Prachanda Pradhan, "Role of Bureaucracy in the Development of Nepal," *Nepal Review*, 1:7 (May 1969), pp. 296-299

trialist in the country takes the government pronouncements on industrial plans and policies seriously. For the manifested goals of the political system as reflected in numerous philosophical manifestos by political leaders of the country never reflect the actual dynamics of vested interest cliques and their ability to block the entry of new information in the political system that may be vital for any serious corrections.⁷ No wonder then that we still have an overflow of foreign consumer goods in the country even though government policy statements declare a total commitment to help develop consumption goods locally. Some results of these contradictions are tragic. The Royal Drug Laboratories in Kathmandu manufactured tooth paste and sold it successfully for. The same item was imported in huge quantities from China, however, and cheap imported tooth paste put an end to the infant native product, which was in no position to compete with it. Similarly, the Sugar Factory at present finds itself in deep financial crisis. Indiscriminate issuing of import license in 1967/68 resulted in huge overstocking of sugar by private traders, who bought it with the hope of ultimately selling it in India. Since then however Indian sugar prices have fallen and the imported sugar is sold on the Kathmandu market while the Birgunj Sugar Factory sinks increasingly deeper into debt.⁸

A slightly different example in this context is the Sajha Transport Organization which has now been absorbed by the Nepal Transport Corporation. The STO was promoted by the government as an institution founded on the basic economic philosophy of the Panchayat System. The public was asked by the government to participate in this venture. The sales pitch was successful to a remarkable degree and many Kathmanduites invested their hard earned savings in shares. After a few years, however, it became all too clear that no serious thinking had been done to implement the new Panchayat economic philosophy in a political setting where the relationship of responsibility to authority remained essentially feudalistic and only quasi-bureaucratic. Thus, the organization became nothing more than an open field where competing vested interests and cliques battled for influence and privilege without concern for the shareholders and their interests. For the majority of the shareholders, any serious action against the organization would have been an unthinkable attack on the economic philosophy of the

7 Prakash C. Lohani, "Preliminary Observations on Structure and Functions in the Panchayat System," *Vasudha*, XIII: 9 (Aug.— Sept. 1970), pp. 9—16.

8 Prakash C. Lohani, *The Birgunj Sugar Factory*, (Kathmandu: CEDA mimeographed paper, 1970.)

Panchayat System. Finally, one fine morning Sajha Transport Organization went bankrupt. The shareholders lost a substantial portion of their investment and lost confidence in the government as an innovator and a promoter. The most tragic part of this episode was the fact that the government did not even bother to inquire into reasons for the failure of STO. An inquiry should have been conducted if not for the shareholders, then at least to salvage what little remained of an economic philosophy considered to be the cornerstone of the Panchayat System.

Examples such as those discussed above are too numerous to mention them all here. The intention is simply to illustrate the contradictions in policies and actions that have done such an effective job of discouraging investment in priority areas while encouraging at the same time the channelling of resources in ventures that assure quick profit at the expense of society and the national objective of economic growth.

In the general context of economic growth the distortion of investment flow has meant that the government has failed to promote the growth of genuine private industrial leadership in the country. Lack of confidence in the government's ability to bridge the widening gap between policies and actions has basically increased the risk of industrial investment in areas that exploit most of the country's local resources. This is an unfortunate development, for government leadership in a mixed economy is needed to create an investment climate conducive to the establishment of industrial ventures. This climate together with the establishment of new institutions that inform, advise and provide financial help to prospective industrialists encourages the flow of surplus resources from agriculture to industry. In Nepal a few financial institutions for industrial promotion have surely opened. But the political structure does not utilize and act upon control information relevant to its manifested objectives when vested interests clash with the interests of the society as a whole. This, of course, drastically affects the efficiency of the new institutions and leads to the observed gap between policies and actions. The end result is exactly the opposite of what government leadership for private industrial promotion is expected to achieve.

In the context of the Third Plan, the failure of the government to create an atmosphere conducive to private industrial leadership has had two significant effects. First, prospective industrialists with investment resources have been discouraged from taking the initiative in industrial ventures with relatively long gestation periods. It seems reasonable to assume that

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

actual private investment has been far below potential in the Third Plan period. Secondly, even those who have decided to invest their money have been indirectly encouraged to select areas that are relatively unproductive from the view point of national benefit. Thus investment in land speculation a certain import-export trade that thrives only at the expense of the nation's industrial policy, and an outflow of capital to foreign countries seem to have increased.⁹ The latter can be explained by the fact that most people engaged in trade with countries other than India are suspected of being Indians even though import licenses are issued only to Nepalis. Many of these Indians are said not to be welcome even in their own country. The profits gained by selling imported consumer goods, therefore, are more than likely exported from Nepal.¹⁰ This is a cost of the government's incompetence that the country is being forced to pay.

For the small savers who do not have the resources needed to engage in land speculation or the import-export trade, the increase in banking facilities has come handy. The irony, however, is that commercial banks find themselves confused and bewildered because of the lack of investment opportunities. As of January 1970, 33 per cent of the total bank assets consisted of cash and a balance with other banks.¹¹ Obviously this paradox, a condition of surplus capital available in an economy unable to achieve a real growth rate in gross domestic product of 4 per cent— would not have emerged if the gulf between government policies and actions had not occurred.

The apparent trends in the growth of the country's industry and commerce have implications that go beyond the economic domain. A nation state after all is much more than just a collection of a people engaged in production. It is an organic whole, a thriving and living entity with capabilities to resist or respond to internal or external dynamic forces. In this sense, the structuring of the social system and the maze of complex interrelationships between the subsystems are of immense interest to us. Parts of the social structure that are meant to be contributing to the maintenance of

9 Investment in land speculation need not necessarily be considered in a negative sense. The point here is simply that the lack of an atmosphere encouraging long-term industrial investment may be diverted funds from this sector to land speculation.

10 Under the foreign exchange bonus program of HMG exporters of certain specified items are allowed to retain as much as 50 per cent of the hard currency earnings. This has encouraged exports even at a loss, since it can be more than compensated by importing consumer goods where profit margins are high.

11 Nepal Rastra Bank, *Quarterly Economic Bulletin*, IV (July 1970), Table 8.

functional unity in the system may have long outlived their utility. A feudal economic system for example may require a specific political decision making structure to maintain a functioning system. However, if the components of the systems are changing in their scope and objectives, and the interrelationships between various subsystems remains static, they become dysfunctional and the system may disintegrate.

The political and economic changes in Nepal, should therefore be considered with the notion that structural changes, whether economic, political, or cultural can be dysfunctional and not help in the attainment of the generally accepted goals of social and economic development. The performance of the industrial sector in the Third Five Year Plan is indicative of the fact that the patterning of structural units in the political and economic system may be beginning to be dysfunctional in the light of the overall objectives of the system. This is bound to have a demoralizing and disintegrative effect on the national life.

Concluding Remarks

Reviewing the history of industrial development in Nepal, it becomes clear that industrialization was never an objective of the Rana family who ruled up to 1950. A deliberate effort to achieve development would have required new institutions and the adoption of a new set of values that were rationalistic in spirit and content. This was not the case under the Rana oligarchy. There simply was no such thing as an industrial policy during this period.

Since 1950 the country has been going through a rapid process of change. The role and function of the government has greatly expanded in scope, and social and economic priorities have set an entirely new direction. It is natural that under these conditions structural components that contributed to functional unity under Rana rule would be found inefficient and dysfunctional for the realization of the new set of social preferences and aspirations. However, as we look back upon the overall institutional changes that have taken place in the social system, it is quite easy to see that the underlying interrelationships among components of different subsystems, political as well as economic are still strikingly similar to those under the Rana family rule.

The fundamental fact which emerges here is that the performance of the industrial sector should not be analyzed within the framework of a

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

development model which emphasizes the paucity of capital as the major constraint in the system; a functional analysis of Nepal's institutions explains better its present dilemma.

Finally a note of cautions optimism may be added here. The fact that contradictions in policies and actions are continuing to plague the system seems to have been realized even in the highest circles in the country. On Pausa 1, 2027, King Mahendra, in a speech regarding the need for establishing an "Investigation Centre" pointed out that occasional inconsistencies in government policies and actions have been noted. It is encouraging that the existence of the problem has been recognized by the King himself. This must be considered a positive development, for the solution to a problem first requires the humility to admit its existence. At this stage of our economic and political development, what is needed on the part of Nepal's leaders and people alike is the candor and boldness to admit that mistakes have been made by all concerned. Future historians will recognize this when they review the history of Nepal's industrial development during the last decade.

(1971)

CHAPTER 14

Trade

—*Pashupati Shumshere J.B. Rana*

Historic Setting

As the geographical and cultural area that was later to become Nepal emerges from the mists of early history, the role of trade comes sharply into focus. In the seventh century A. D., the establishment of an empire in Tibet coincided with the opening of a new Trans-Himalayan trading route to the north of Kathmandu. This new and shorter route between the rich cities of the Gangetic plains and the Chinese urban centres quickly captured the Trans-Himalayan traffic.¹ Whenever political conditions in Tibet and Nepal permitted, it became the preferred highway of Trans-Himalayan exchange.

By a curious quirk of ecology, this system of trade came to affect the whole pattern of Nepalese development. Since winter snows closed the Himalayan passes and malaria and monsoons made the jungle belt to the south impregnable in summer, traders had to find a resting place for their goods in between. In summer when the Himalayan passes were easiest to cross, traders from the north would come down to the river valleys of the middle hills of Nepal and wait there till the end of the monsoons made the Tarai jungles to the south passable for the journey to India.² Similarly, traders

1 K.M. Sharma, (untitled, unpublished Master's Thesis, Berkeley: University of California), Chapter 1.

2 Harka B. Gurung, "Geographic Setting, *Nepal, A Profile*" (Kathmandu: Nepal Council of Applied Economic Research, 1970), pp 10—11.

bringing goods from India during the winter (the best season for travelling in the Tarai) would have to wait in these valleys for spring to open up the Himalayan passes. The passes at Kuti and Keroung, which were both on the Kathmandu route, were the easiest for crossing the Himalayas. As a consequence the vast majority of this Trans-Himalayan traffic passed through the Kathmandu Valley. Nurtured by the rich alluvia shed by these cross-continental flows of trade, the civilization of the three cities of the valley took on a unique flavour. It also made the valley a permanent goal for the ambition of the nearby princes, who saw in the trade of these cities a means to provide themselves with an affluence they could barely dream of. This pattern of trade, with breaks during times of instability³ on either side of the Himalayas, seems to have prevailed up to the eighteenth century.

Ironically the unification of Nepal under the Gorkha flag coincided with a change in this ancient trade system. The fierce military activity and the long economic blockade of the valley that preceded the establishment of Gorkha rule there disturbed and deflected the flow of Trans-Himalayan trade through Nepal. Also in the nineteenth century, the steamship began to provide a cheaper and safer means of transport for trade between India and China. So this ancient source of prosperity for the Nepalese valleys began to dwindle, changing the whole entrepot basis of their economy.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the building in India of a whole network of railways along the southern borders of Nepal. It now became possible to exploit the forest and landed resources of the Tarai to a degree previously unforeseen. It is no coincidence that many Rana palaces, much larger and more luxurious than those of the Malla period or the early Shah period, were built at the turn of the century.⁴ Due to the railways, the revenue from the forests and lands given as Birta⁵ grants to the Ranas paid much more than the same grants had to their predecessors. In this period large scale imports from European markets began and luxury goods from the west became the fashion for conspicuous consumption by the aristocracy. Without the growth in revenue (both private and state, the line is difficult to draw during this period) such developments would not have been possible.

³ Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴ Govinda Prasad Lohani, "Nepal ma Bhumi-Sambandhama Sudhar tarfa Bhayeko Gatibidhi Ra Ajasammako Upalabdhi ("The Activities so far completed toward Land Reform in Nepal and Achievements up to this day"), (Nepal: His Majesty's Publicity Department, 1967), p. 8.

⁵ See Chapter on Land Tenure in this book.

TRADE

There is no doubt that the opening of the Indian railways along the Tarai, where the majority of Nepal's natural resources were concentrated, gave the whole subsequent development of the Nepalese economy a southward orientation. By 1900 the economy of Nepal had become in effect a tributary of the imperial economy of British India and the exploitation of the Nepalese economy by the colonial system to the south established a pattern of exchange that still prevails. At that time Nepal's primary products, timber and other forests products, flowed south to supply the needs of the imperial economy, and cheap, British manufactured goods flooded Nepal depressing native cottage industries and crafts. Today, Nepal serves as a vital market for Indian manufactured goods, while Nepalese agricultural products are essential to the deficit Indian states of Bihar and Bengal.

The decline of trade between Tibet and India followed soon after the decline of the Trans-Himalayan trade with China. This trade had been of major importance during the pre-Shah period when Nepal imported bullion from Tibet and supplied minted coins in return, and it remained of considerable importance even during the 19th century. But the building of roads and railways in British India had already begun to create more competitive routes through Sikkim for the Indo-Tibetan trade. The Younghusband expedition in 1904, which established British trading posts in Tibet, served only to confirm that the major volume of this trade would flow through the Darjeeling-Sikkim areas. The Keroung and Kuti passes to the north of Kathmandu were limited to mere Tibeto-Nepalese trade. Even Tibetan trade, important for the wool and salt it supplied to Nepal, has declined in recent years with the tightening of borders that followed the establishment in the 1950's of firm rule by the Republic of China over Tibet. As a result of these developments, trade with the north was reduced from the vital role it had played all through Nepalese history to a mere 1.5 per cent⁶ of total Nepalese trade in 1963/64, trade with India having grown to 98 per cent. So the establishment of the Indian railways at her southern borders changed both the volume and direction of Nepalese trade and brought about a secular shift of focus in economic activity from the middle hill-regions to the Tarai.

This change also had a significant impact on the composition of trade. Although there is no clear evidence of the commodity composition

6 Nepal Rastra Bank, *Quarterly Economic Bulletin*, IV:2 (1970), pp. 56—57.

of trade in the early period, the very nature of the entrepot trade implies that the goods exchanged over such large distance were comparatively high in value and low in weight tending to luxury wares, rare goods and works of craftsmanship. The authorities on the period, such as Kirkpatrick,⁷ seem to indicate that this trade was mainly in non-agricultural commodities. Nepalese worked metal goods, ivory and wood work also played a notable role in this trade, especially in exports to the north.⁸ With the decline of the entrepot trade, however, agricultural commodities came to play an overwhelming role among Nepalese exports, and the vast majority of Nepal's imports become processed goods. This gave almost monopoly control over her trade to one partner, India.

The establishment of the Indian railways, providing access to a large and well connected market and the supply centres at the Indian ports, made these railheads the foci of trade. The Nepalese towns like Biratnagar, Nepalgunj and Janakpur which grew up opposite the Indian railheads spread their trade-links right-up to the northern hills. So trade flowed vertically from north to south. Whether it was the foodgrains and forest products of the Tarai or the ghee and herbs from the hills, they would be exchanged at the nearest Indian railhead for such manufactured items as cloth, kerosene, cigarettes and so on. Large-scale trading establishments on both sides of the border took up the role of organising this flow. There was virtually no flow of east-west trade within Nepal. Indeed, even to travel from one part of Nepal to another, it was often simplest to come south and use the Indian railroad for east-west travel. Trade for the most part played a marginal role in an essentially subsistence economy as far as the majority of the population was concerned. And this trade was so closely integrated with the trade to and from India along the arterial veins of the Indian railways that, with the exception of internal flows to Kathmandu from nearby areas, the line between internal trade and trade with India is hard to draw.

Recent Developments

An analysis of Nepal's trade today is essentially an analysis of her trade with India. It is an irony of her situation that the small size of her domestic market means an autarchic pattern of development is not a viable option. This dependence on trade reinforces India's monopoly position in the Nepalese market.

7 Colonel Kirkpatrick, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (New Delhi: Manjusiri Publishing House, 1969). pp. 203—210).

8 Sharma, *op. cit.* pp. 58—59.

TRADE

While the very small size of Nepal makes trade essential, the landlocked position of the country chokes its ability to trade. Not only is it landlocked, but landlocked in an extreme fashion. Other landlocked countries—Switzerland for example—may choose among several avenues of access to the sea through different countries. Thus the competition between the several countries offering transit facilities provides most landlocked countries with the ability to bargain for easy terms of transit. But in Nepal's case even the building of the Kodari Road from Kathmandu to the Chinese border has not altered the Indian monopoly over access to the sea. For the distance through China to any seaport means Calcutta is still Nepal's only viable access to the sea.

It is perhaps this peculiar feature of Nepal's geopolitical location that accounts for the minor role that trade presently plays in the national economy. In 1961-62, when the gross domestic product was 3,682 million rupees, visible exports to India with the addition of exports to other countries came to only 296,975,000 rupees or about 9 per cent of the gross domestic product. Even if a value were to be imputed to 'invisible' earnings (earnings from the export of services and other such non-goods transactions) from India total export earnings would still not be more than 11 per cent of the gross domestic product.⁹ Assuming constant terms of trade, a

⁹ All statistics, unless otherwise stated, are from the Rastra Bank. The writer is much indebted to the ready help of its research section and particularly to that of Mr. Harihar Dev Pant.

1961/62 Visible exports to India	268,89,000
Visible imports from India	439,661,000
Deficit on Balance of Trade	175,768,000
Increase in I.C. holdings	5,702,000
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Invisible earnings from India	
Deficit + Increase in reserves	181,470,000
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Aid receipts = Rupees component of American Aid + Indian Aid = Rs. 44,849,000 + Rs. 40,900,000	85,749,000
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Other invisible earnings from India	
Rs. 181,470,000—85,749,000=	95,721,000
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Total Exports = (Visible exports + Invisible exports net of aid) to India + exports to rest of world net of aid= Rs. 263,893,000 + 95,721,000 + 33,082,000=	392,696,000
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Exports as % of G.D.P. = 392,696,000/3,682,000 × 100 = 10.75	

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank.

5 per cent increase in the G.D.P. through trade would require nearly a 50 per cent increase in exports. This means that though in the long run the size of Nepal requires very large increases in her exports as a proportion of gross domestic product, the immediate contribution of growth in this sector to a rise in the national income is likely to be small.

Balance of Payment Crisis

The problem with trade however arises not so much in terms of its low capacity to contribute to the growth of national income but in avoiding the balance of payments crisis which is building up in Nepal's trade relations. The major objective here will be to analyse the available statistics and to work out the components of this crisis in order to see how it can be avoided. It must be remembered, however, that due to the primitive state of data the statistics present only a partial picture. They must be regarded only as indicators of the larger picture. Still, for all policy purposes they are the best available indicators. Let us examine the story they tell.

Although the Nepalese government has not made any explicit acknowledgement of the impending balance of payments crisis, during the sixties it explicitly enunciated the goal of diversification of trade. This can be seen as an attempt to regain the economic independence that Trans-Himalayan trade had provided Nepal in the early 19th century. With the technological revolution in transport systems that had taken place in the last two centuries it was inevitable that in addition to renewing trade with China, Nepal should try to develop new markets in hard-currency countries. For Nepal has direct access by a land route only to Tibet. As far as all other Chinese markets are concerned her traffic has to pass through an Indian seaport. So we can consider Nepal's attempts to diversify her trade under one rubric. The underlying object of diversification was to end the economic dependence on one single country, India. And only if this dependence has successfully been diminished can Nepal's trade diversification policy be called a success.

In the period between 1956/57 and 1963/64 Nepal's imports from India rose by Rs. 4,29,755,000. In the same period her exports to India rose by only Rs. 191,520,000. The deficit in her balance of trade thus rose from Rs. 72,396,000 to Rs. 310,631,000.¹⁰ In the same period Nepal's Indian

10. Nepal Rastra Bank, *Quarterly Economic Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, pp. 61—62.

currency reserves continued to rise (with the exception of 1963) and the balance of payments was in her favour despite the rising deficits on trade. With the understandable exception of the extraordinary situation between revaluation and devaluation¹¹ of Nepalese Currency, this broad trend has continued. This means that the whole burden of maintaining an equilibrium in the balance of payments, a burden which quadrupled in the period between 1956/57 to 1963/64, was borne entirely by 'invisible' earnings from India.

In 1961/62 out of the total estimated 'invisible' earnings of Rs. 181, 410,000 the rupee component of US Aid¹² and Indian Aid accounted for some Rs. 86 million or roughly 48 per cent of invisible earnings¹³. The other items of invisible earnings are probably; (1) remittances by Gorkhas and other Nepalese working in India, (2) interest on Nepalese investment in India, (3) a small item on Tourism and lastly, (4) what we might call leakages and miscellaneous (none of these four items are statistically separated). None of these up to now has represented a particularly dynamic item except possibly the last two. On the other hand, Indian Aid has risen tremendously in the last few years, so that the major burden for financing the deficit of trade with India rests with aid money. For instance in 1961/62, without aid, Nepal would have lost Rs. 80,047,000 from its reserves of Indian currency instead of gaining Rs. 5,702,000 as it did.¹⁴ By 1967/68 Indian Aid had nearly doubled to Rs. 158 million and Rs. 102 million of this was necessary to maintain a favourable balance of payments.¹⁵

Secondly, if we examine the nature of Nepal's exports to and imports from India, there are other worrying features. The components represented

11 In 1966 when India devalued her currency, Nepal decided to maintain her currency at par. However, since Nepal was heavily dependent on trade with India the resultant drain on her reserves forced Nepal to devalue in 1967. The drain on reserves during the 18 months was due to fears of devaluation, the increased trade deficit and large-scale smuggling of Indian goods. At any rate this drain was an unusual feature.

12 By an arrangement with India, US Aid uses its accumulated PL 480 funds in India for its aid to Nepal. Thus a very large proportional US Aid came to Nepal in the form of Indian Rupees upto FY 71-72.

13 Nepal Rastra Bank, *Quarterly Economic Bulletin, op. cit.*

14 Likely deficit in absence of aid in 1961—62 = I.C. aid Receipts—Rise in I.C. Reserves, i.e. Rs. 85,749,000 — 5,702,000 = 80,047,000.

15 In 1967/68: (a) Rise in I.C. Reserves	Rs. 55,931,000
(b) Rupee Aid	Rs. 158,300,000
Likely deficit in absence of Aid = (b) — (a)	Rs. 102,369,000

in the foreign trade figures supplied by the *Rastra Bank Quarterly Economic Bulletin*, No. 4 can be classified for this purpose into two groups. Food, crude materials, animal and vegetable oils and fats can all be grouped under primary products. The rest, all manufactured and more sophisticated goods, can be grouped together under another heading. The point is that as per capita income rises in the process of development the demand for primary goods does not rise as fast as the demand for manufactured and sophisticated goods.¹⁶ This, in fact, is not only proved by Nepal's experience but accounts for the slower growth of exports as compared to its imports.

This trend has been worked out based on a three year's moving average as shown in tables 1 and 2. Primary products formed 94.3 per cent of Nepalese exports in 1956/57 (see table 1, column 7). The low-income elasticity of demand for primary products (as well as the inelasticity of supply to price rises in at least the case of foodgrains due to feudal modes of production) which formed such a large proportion of total exports accounts for their slow rate of growth. So, despite the fact that the role of primary products in total exports had declined to 85.6 per cent in 1964/65, this was still sufficient to dampen the rate of growth of exports. On the other hand, manufactured and sophisticated goods formed 67.4 per cent of imports from India as long ago as 1956/57 (see table 2, column 7). The high income-elasticity of demand for these goods accounts for the swift growth in imports. Despite their large size at the start, manufactured imports continued to grow at a rate faster than that of total imports and by 1965/66 accounted for 76.2 per cent of total imports. The lesson at any rate is clear. Both in exports and imports primary products grew at a rate slower than the growth of total trade, whereas manufactures grew at a rate higher than that of total trade. The high proportion of manufactured goods among imports and of primary products in exports thus leads one to expect a progressive rise in the trade deficit.

The only reason this trend did not turn the balance of payments severely against Nepal was a movement of the terms of trade in favour of Nepal's primary products during the sixties, which counter-balanced the rise in the volume of demand for manufactured imports. The price of food grains nearly doubled between 1963/64 and 1967/68, whereas the price of manufactures only rose 25 per cent in the Indian index for wholesale prices. It is plain that without this movement of the terms of trade in Nepal's favour,

¹⁶ Harry C. Johnson, *Money, Trade and Economic Growth* (London:Allen and Unwin, 1962) p. 81. (For a theoretical formulation of this).

there would have been a serious deficit in the balance of payments. Now with India's green revolution there is every ground to fear that a sustained increase in her domestic supply of food grains will cause the terms of trade to move against Nepal. Many Nepalese economists also expect a rise in the domestic demand for food grains to cut into the supply of exportable food grains. If both the volume and the price of Nepal's principal export are liable to drop in the future, there are further grounds for fear that Nepal's Indian currency reserves will face a heavy drain in the seventies.

Re-exports

In the last few years, another factor that may have supported Nepal in its attempt to meet the steadily rising sum of Indian imports is the re-export to India of imports from third countries. These became possible after the introduction of the import entitlement scheme in 1962/63. The scheme in its original form enabled Nepalese exporting goods to hard-currency countries other than India to receive an 'import entitlement' from the government of up to 90 per cent of the value of the goods exported. The receipt of these 'import entitlements' could use them to import practically anything they wanted. For, although this scheme tried to encourage export of Nepalese manufactured goods and the import of 'development goods', the definition of development goods and of the 'incentives' to manufacturers was extremely loose in the period between 1963 and 1970. As a result, manufacturers could export anything whether they manufactured it or not. Also, the list of 'development goods' that could be imported with the import entitlement of hard currency, included luxury items. A ludicrous situation developed. Because of India's virtually closed market to foreign luxury goods there is high demand in India for these luxury goods. So traders used their import-entitlements to buy luxury items which they introduced (or smuggled, depending on the type of goods) into India and sold at great profit.¹⁷

17 For example: Nepalese manufacturer X exports Jute (Which costs Rs. 150 to produce) at a price of \$10, or Rs.100. From the exchange earnings of \$10 the Nepal Rastra Bank gives the manufacturer an import entitlement for \$9 worth of goods and Rs.10 in Nepalese currency. X then sells this import license to Merchant Y (who is probably an Indian with a network of contacts in Hong Kong, Singapore and other places) for Rs. 180. Y then uses this import license and adds to it from his own reserve of undeclared foreign currency holdings in a foreign bank to import goods worth nearly \$200 which he then underinvoices and imports under the import license for \$90 worth of goods. He then sells these goods in India for Rs. 600, thereby making a net profit of Rs. 310. (Where, as in the case of the major stainless steel and nylon yarn factories, the same party exported jute and imported nylon yarn and steel sheets, they could afford to sell jute at even 50 per cent of its production cost).

Due to this loose implementation neither the export of Nepalese manufactures to third countries, nor the import of goods for high-priority fields was achieved by the import entitlement scheme. Rather, industrial investment moved into areas such as the importation from third countries of stainless steel and nylon yarn which are given minimal processing and then re-exported to India. The discovery of another highly profitable operation led to another misuse of Nepali import regulations. As in other countries, Nepalese were permitted to receive goods as gifts from abroad worth up to 1000 rupees without obtaining an import license. A group of traders, ironically enough Indian traders, used this gift parcel regulation to develop a systematic means of importing large quantities of hard-currency luxury goods which they then sold to India at the customary high profit.

While in the short-run these re-exports helped Nepal to support its balance of payments with India, their long-term effect was unhelpful to say the least. As of 1971 a major part of the expansion of Nepal's exports to third countries was only possible because they resulted in the profitable re-export of third country imports to India. New export markets have been found, but the dependence on the Indian economy has not diminished. Although exports to hard-currency countries rose from about 5 million to 95 million rupees between 1963/64 and 1967/68, jute and raw jute goods accounted for 82 million rupees or 86 per cent of exports in 1967/68.¹⁸ Now, Nepalese jute is sold abroad at a price well below its production cost. It is only the enormous profits of re-exporting foreign goods to India that makes it possible to sell jute at such a loss. The import entitlement gained from the export of jute makes it possible to export to India goods which find such a high-priced market in India that they earn a profit several times the loss in jute. The whole growth of Nepal's exports to hard currency countries thus rests on a precarious base. As the arrangements under the new 1971 Treaty of Trade and Transit with India have curtailed the possibility of re-exporting foreign goods to India, the growth of exports to hard currency countries may well be curtailed commensurately.

The underlying objective of the diversification started in 1961 was to end economic dependence on trade with one country. At the end of a decade of diversification it is found that the vast majority of Nepal's exports to third countries are totally dependent on what it can trade with India. Clearly, the policy of diversification has not achieved its purpose.

¹⁸ 1963/64 Exports to areas other than India + Tibet = Rs. 4,870,000
 1867/68 Exports to areas other than India + Tibet = Rs. 94,848,000

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank.

TRADE

Apart from this, there are other major long-run disadvantages. These arise from the fact that the incentives given by the government have distorted the pattern of trade and investment and channelled investment capital and trading enterprise into areas which have no prospects for growth and provide few indirect benefits and minimal social gains. These areas are those such as stainless steel and nylon yarn which were mentioned above. In both these industries neither the source of the raw material, nor the market for the product made from these goods is Nepalese. The value added in the processing done in Nepal is minimal. Consequently, while the private gains to the entrepreneurs were enormous, the opportunities provided for employment and income and the indirect benefits to associated areas of the economy are just as minimal as the value added. As these industries were only profitable due to loopholes in the Indian economic structure, their present debacle after India took a strong line against them should have been foreseen. Instead, for five years or so, capital whose social gain to the country could have been higher in almost any other industry with long-term prospects, has been channelled to these fields. On top of this the enormous profits both in these industries and in the 'thousand-rupee parcels' have caused Nepali exporters to find markets for goods at well below their production cost. Had traders instead been encouraged by government policy either to find markets for those goods whose production costs in Nepal are likely to be competitive with the rest of the world such as paddy, vegetable oil, malt etc. or to work at reducing the production costs of goods so that they could sell abroad at competitive costs, there would have been no danger of so many critical years of diversification efforts going to waste.

Indeed a major criticism of government trade policy in the sixties would be that it induced a false sense of growth and a complacency based on the mistaken belief that Nepal was achieving a growing degree of economic independence. Looking only at the aggregate figures for export to third countries and watching the rising currency reserves, this belief was understandable. It is only a commodity analysis of third country exports and an understanding of the working of the import entitlement scheme that reveals the continued dependence on Indian trade, just as understanding the role of foreign aid figures in the balance of payments shows a growing dependence on rupee aid. Thus, a superficial analysis probably induced a sense of complacency and caused the government to persist in this policy instead of laying some firm and lasting foundations for a deliberate, long-term national effort which alone could end Nepal's economic dependence

on a single country. There is however no eluding the fact that this superficial analysis served the interests of those reaping the benefits of this type of trade and that it was deliberately fostered and popularised in the government by the proponents of these interests.

Present Position and Future Strategies

No clearer confirmation of the failure of trade policies in the sixties and of the continued growth of dependence on India can be provided than the long-drawn negotiations for, and the final conditions that Nepal accepted in the 1971 trade and transit treaty with India. The sixties had indicated, that despite grandiose declarations of trade and transit facilities to Nepal, a highly general treaty like that of 1960 was of little use. India had the upper hand in practice by virtue of her monopoly of Nepal's transit facilities and her far stronger trading position. She could always interpret the vague sections to suit her particular policy towards Nepal at any particular time and to deny Nepal the benefits implied in the grandiloquent statements of the treaty.¹⁹ So it had been Nepal's aim to obtain whatever benefits or rights she got in a detailed and hard form. Secondly, she was determined to get permanent acknowledgement of her transit rights in the fullest form.²⁰ Failing to obtain her objectives after protracted negotiation, Nepal broke off talks at the end of 1970. But, when Nepal finally signed the treaty in August 1971, she still had not achieved these two principal aims. The real bone of contention in transit, the right of overland passage to other countries (principally to what is now Bangla Desh and was then East Pakistan), was hedged with qualifications²¹. All the provisions of the document were no less vague and general and consequently no less dependent on India's goodwill than those in the 1960 treaty. It is true that there were some limited gains such as the right to operate trucks and barges in the port area, the provision for container-truck traffic, facilities at Haldia, facilities at Indian ports for Nepalese ships etc., but these did not constitute the achievement of Nepal's declared aims. At the end of the gruelling 1970/71 poker game it appeared that India had well estimated her own strong hand and the cards in the hands of the Nepalese player.

19 B.B. Thapa, "Panel Discussion," *Trade and Transit: Nepal's Problems with Her Southern Neighbour* (Kathmandu: CEDA, 1970), p. 28.

20 This indeed was the objective of demanding two separate treaties — a permanent one for transit and a five year treaty for trade.

21 L.N. Mishra, letter of exchange dated August, 31. *Nepal's Treaty of Trade and Transit With India* (Kathmandu: Trade Promotion Centre, (1971), p. 42.

TRADE

The real point was that Nepal's dependence on India does not result from, and could not be remedied by mere legal instruments. The dependence went deep into the economy and was a structural factor. As long as Nepal exports her raw materials such as wheat, ghee, oilseeds etc. to India and buys them back in processed form (as flour, refined oil etc.) from India; as long as she is dependent on India for basic consumer items such as cloth, basic development goods such as cement and even for service industries crucial to development activity such as the construction industry, mere legal texts will not liquidate her dependence. In the middle sixties political circumstances favoured Nepal. The government missed this chance to lay the firm industrial foundations for a significant degree of economic self-reliance. In 1970-71, when Nepal's political bargaining position was no longer so good,²² the economic failures of the sixties were bound to take their toll on Nepal's treaty aims.

Towards Solutions

While it is easy to diagnose Nepal's trading problems, it is much harder to prescribe solutions. No national resource survey has yet been undertaken, nor has there been any rigorous analysis of comparative costs of production in nearby areas or in relation to the world market. One obvious, urgent step towards a solution is to undertake such studies. In the absence of such studies one can only point toward the general lines of a solution. For the sake of brevity those areas where government action has been successful will be omitted. Only those areas that need action or remedial action will be considered.

In any attempt to formulate a solution, the major variable is the treaty with India, which will regulate not only the direct trade with her but also accounts for the vast bulk of Nepal's trade and, by means of the terms of transit through India, most of Nepal's trade to all other countries. Other important variables are the emergence of Bangla Desh and access to the Tibetan market by means of the Kodari Road. Still another means of eluding transit through India is the development of goods which can be exported by air transport. Apart from these external variables, there are the whole range of policy instruments for giving incentives to exports and export producing industries. The goals of trading strategy, which have to be considered in rela-

22 Pashupati S.J.B. Rana, "India and Nepal, The Political Economy of a Relationship," *Asian Survey*, XI (July, 1971), pp. 645-660.

tion to these variables, are to avert the impending balance of payments crisis with India, to enlarge the existent hard-currency markets for our exports and to find new ones and to find and establish new lines of production for exports. The goal can then be defined as the maximum degree of product and market diversification commensurate with balancing our payments with India.

The emergence of a new state with friendly relations to India directly to our south is a golden economic opportunity for Nepal. As soon as the railway lines over the narrow strip of Indian territory connecting Bangla Desh with Nepal can be rejoined, it will be possible to send sealed wagons to Chittagong harbour. Sealed wagons will mean that such goods need not pass through Indian customs but can be sent straight to Bangla Desh and via Bangla Desh to the rest of the world. This development will end India's historic monopoly over Nepal's access to the sea. A competing transit route may also, as in the case of Switzerland, provide numerous benefits. Nepal needs to pursue this possibility with the utmost energy. Indeed, there may be higher returns for Nepal on investing in this railroute than on most internal transport projects. In the meanwhile sealed container trucks to Bangla Desh may well provide a viable temporary means of getting a new access to the sea. Nor are the potentialities of Bangla Desh as a new trading partner to be ignored. Studies to find a possible basis of commercial exchange should be started immediately.

The economy of the northern districts of Nepal had historically been closely interlinked with Tibet, even to the extent of cattle and horses on both sides grazing in Tibet in summer and in Nepal in winter. The gradual closing off of intercourse with Tibet has had a deleterious effect on Nepal's northern area. At the same time the new network of transport that the Chinese government has developed all along the Nepal-Tibet border and the new road links between the Tarai and Tibet through Kathmandu and Kodari have created a new opportunity for trade. It is probably easier for China to supply most of northern Nepal with several of the goods to supplement its subsistence economy such as salt, wool etc. near the border points than it is for Nepal. Similarly it is likely to be cheaper for Tibet to buy such Tarai products as sugar, rice and vegetable oil from Nepal than from the distant production centres in inner China. Both studies and efforts to develop an exchange on these lines should have large payoffs. Another way in which exports to Tibet could be paying would be on a barter basis of exchanging these goods for imports from other parts of

China. After all, since Indian currency is not convertible and Nepal's export earning from India can only purchase Indian goods, all trade with India is also tantamount to barter trade. If barter trade with China gives Nepal the same prices for her exports but a lower price for imports than India, then barter trade with China is self-evidently more profitable. Since in recent years many Chinese articles have come to Nepal at considerably lower prices than Indian goods, the possibility of large scale barter trade with China is worth exploring.

To export goods profitably by air, you have to have very high value per unit weight. Precision goods such as transistors, complex electrical equipment, watches, jewellery or industrial diamonds are all low in weight and high on value. Nepal's great potential in the field of skilled handiwork has been amply demonstrated by its curio industry and the craft goods to be seen all over Kathmandu. There should be a fair degree of substitutability of these skills to newer lines of handiwork. The cost of such handiwork is so high in the more developed countries and so cheap in Nepal that even with transport costs added, this handiwork could probably be sold at thirty to forty per cent below the prices of such goods produced in Europe. A programme of training in the skills needed for precision goods and modern jewellery could also absorb the plethora of low-level high school graduates that is becoming a major problem of manpower policy. Such skills could provide a white-collar job with adequate remuneration and prestige if the social ranking of such craft jobs were equated with economic reward from them. A determined effort towards establishing new industries in precision goods and jewellery should form a part of the government policy for overseas exports.

Today the vast majority of Nepal's exports to all other markets except India remains jute and jute products. Apart from tourism no other sources of hard-currency earnings have shown any dynamism. A true diversification of trade implies not only finding new markets but also new goods to sell. So, if exports to hard-currency markets are to be really boosted, an extremely complex task faces Nepal. New lines of production have to be studied and established, new and reliable market contacts to be found. Such a task involves technical and marketing know-how that is probably unavailable within the country and managerial know-how that is scarce. Judicious foreign collaboration at the earlier stages, which provides for the phased hand-over of managerial control and the transfer of technical skills within a stated period of time, may well be the strategy to overcome this gap. (One minor but vital corollary that emerges from this is that the deve-

lopment of negotiating skills in personnel in the industrial and economic departments may have a high marginal return. Nepal's ability to get the best terms in foreign collaboration is likely to be crucial to the success of the export marketing strategy suggested above.)

Apart from these a major strategy for both diminishing Nepal's dependence on Indian imports and for increasing exports is to create a whole range of processing industries. This would mean increasing the number of traditional smallscale industries like the rice and oil mills as well as encouraging the establishment of such processing units in those areas where they have not come up such as flour mills, ghee refineries etc. The value added to national income in each of these line could be as high as 40 per cent and would certainly not fall below 15 per cent. In the traditional areas modernisation of these industries with a view to high quality production for hard-currency markets is necessary. This will mean close vertical integration between industry and agriculture-along the lines that the new initiatives in the jute and tobacco boards indicate for other areas such as rice, malt from barley etc. Equally needed is the establishment of such industries as paper mills, cement factories, medicinal plants etc., to exploit other plentifully available raw materials in non-traditional areas. However, the problems in this area have arisen not so much from a lack of realization but from the contradictions in government policies and inherent defects in its policy-instruments.

Myrdal makes an interesting distinction between the 'discretionary' and 'non-discretionary' operational control over the private sector²³, which may be of great interest for Nepal. He points out that the looser the definition of policy, that is the more the policy is left to the discretion of officials, and the larger the leeway for administrators to interpret policy for the use of such controls as licences the greater the chances of corruption, delay and monopolistic tendencies. Administrators normally argue in favour of larger areas of discretion on the basis that since many contingencies cannot be foreseen flexibility is required. Such flexibility however leaves much room for corruption. Where corruption is possible, to extract underhand payment, decision-makers are likely to delay projects, decide against good projects and to create many other deviations from the optimum path of development. A 'non-discretionary' system of controls while it suffers from rigidity will at least be clear-cut. Entrepreneurs will know in detail what categories of projects will receive licences and what are the requirements

23 Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, II (New York: Penguin, 1968), p. 90.

and conditions under which they can get a given degree of incentives. In the case of processing industries, indeed, since such a large scale development of such units is required and since one major bottleneck is the paraphernalia of licensing, the possibility of delicensing major categories of such industries needs to be examined carefully. This paper then recommends firstly a 'non-discretionary' system of operational controls to discourage their misuse and to speed up industries. Secondly, it suggests delicensing on a trial basis in certain limited areas. Equally important is the question of a coordinated set of policies. The declared aim of industrial policy in the sixties was to encourage processing industries, the manufacture of exportable goods and of basic and consumer items for the domestic market. Yet the misuse of one policy, the import entitlement scheme distorted the whole pattern of incentives so completely that it turned away investment from these desired areas. The chapter on industries has also indicated how the policies of such other agencies as the customs department or the National Trading Company have often affected the trade policies of the government deliteriously. A well coordinated framework of policies working unitedly in the same direction is crucial to trade as much as to industry. The fundamental aim of these policies must be to carry out changes at those points in the structure of our economy, where we are unnecessarily dependent on India.

Despite all these policies, trade with India will still remain the major portion of our total trade in the visible future. Nor is this necessarily a cause of chagrin. For, in the long-run the availability of the vast Indian market can be of enormous advantage to Nepal. In terms of transport cost Bangla Desh, Tibet and India are the only likely markets for any heavy products. India and Nepal have an open border and full convertibility and the deep inter-linkages between the two economies make it difficult to alter these administrative arrangements. To undertake a pattern of investment that goes against the comparative costs of production in surrounding Indian areas cannot be profitable in the long-run. An authority on regional development has argued that Nepal's comparative advantage vis-a-vis India lies in hill agriculture.²⁴ He has pointed out that the rich markets of the towns of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are much nearer to the Nepalese hills than the hilly regions of India. So orchard, livestock and herbal produce from Nepal could take advantage of these transport costs and using the

24 Harka B. Gurung, "Rationale for Hill Area Development," *Nepal Industrial Digest*, 5:1 (1971), pp. 17-23.

open border and absence of customs on agricultural produce compete effectively in these areas with Indian products. A major shift of investment to the accessible areas in the hills to encourage such production may then prove highly profitable. The development of horticulture, herbal farming and processing industries for their products would also shift back the focus of economic activity to its historic origins in the middle hill regions. At any rate any strategy aimed at the Indian market must work on the basis of comparative costs.

Another neglected area is tourism from India. Tourism is visualised essentially as the attraction of visitors from hard currency areas. Yet both our balance of payments needs and the proximity of a large middle-class market in India mean that Indian tourism can have high returns. The expansion of cheap hotels, motels and hill stations would also serve to alleviate the regional disparity that concentration of tourist traffic in the capital is causing.

Another major gap in Nepal's efforts to develop exports has been the lack of enterprise, managerial and technical know-how and market contact. The lack of an entrepreneurial and managerial group in Nepal was a crucial factor in the failure of the sixties, and unless this gap can be overcome in the seventies Nepal will neither win markets abroad nor meet her balance of payments crisis with India. These entrepreneurial and technical resources and above all market contacts are now available in India. At the same time the present high level of taxation in India is creating a community of interests between Indian enterprise and Nepal. Indian enterprise is looking for opportunities for investment in places where there is more incentive. Nepal is the only country with which Indian currency is fully convertible. So while it is in the interests of Indian capital to invest in Nepal, Nepal can use the managerial entrepreneurial and marketing know-how that Indian investors can provide. This can help Nepal both in the Indian market and abroad.

Joint enterprises with India are indeed the logic of the 1971 treaty. Yet joint enterprises are double-edged endeavours that could if mishandled increase the control of India in the Nepalese economy. While it is true that the organisational bottleneck is the principal one which Nepal must break; she must not, in employing Indian know-how to break this bottleneck, become even more dependent on India. To avoid this first, in all ventures substantial Nepalese participation must be required. Secondly, over a certain period,

TRADE

say three to five years, the technical skills and managerial control must be transferred to Nepalis. The training, understudy and handover to Nepalese managerial and technical cadres must be written into the project agreements. So, if the terms on which these joint enterprises are established insure the security of long-term Nepalese interests, they might become the catalytic agents for Nepal's export drive.

Conclusion

The development of both Nepalese civilisation and the Nepalese state were strongly influenced by the cross-currents of trans-Himalayan trade. Only in the last two centuries did the trading system undergo a transformation that eroded its channels to the north and made Nepal heavily dependent on its southern neighbour. Ironically the attempt in the sixties to break this economic dependence on India ended in only reconfirming these bonds. If she is not to repeat her failures, Nepal must undertake a radical structural change of her economy and produce goods for which permanent markets in countries other than India can be found. In pursuing this strategy she must try to use the proximity of the Indian economy, so that what appears today to be a liability can in the future be turned into an asset.

(1971)

Table 1
FOREIGN TRADE
EXPORT

Fiscal Years	* <i>"Primary Goods"</i>		** <i>"Manufactured Goods"</i>		<i>Total</i>		(2) <i>as</i> percentage of (6)
	Actual Figures	Three Years moving average	Actuals	Three Years moving average	Actuals	Three Years moving average	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1956/57	89,304	...	6,168	...	93,472
1957/58	66,705	90,107.3	6,602	5,463.7	73,307	95,571.0	94.3
1958/59	114,313	102,536.7	3,621	5,123.7	117,934	107,660.4	95.2
1959/60	126,592	147,871.0	5,148	5,266.0	131,740	153,137.0	96.6
1960/61	202,708	185,226.7	7,029	17,006.0	209,737	202,232.7	91.6
1961/62	226,380	222,119.3	38,841	32,084.3	265,221	254,203.6	87.4
1962/63	237,270	240,793.3	50,383	40,555.0	287,653	281,348.3	85.6
1963/64	258,730	293,193.3	32,441	46,602.0	291,171	339,795.3	86.3
1964/65	383,580	315,914.0	56,982	53,032.3	440,562	368,946.3	85.6
1965/66	305,432	...	69,674	...	375,106

* 'Primary Goods' include : 1. Foodstuff 2. Inedible crude materials (except fuels) 3. Animal & vegetable oil & fats.

**'Manufactured Goods' include : 1. Beverage & tobacco, 2. Mineral Fuels, lubricants etc. 3. Chemical & drugs, 4. Manufactured goods classified by materials, 5. Machinery & Transport equipments, 6. Misc. manufactured articles, 7. Miscellaneous

Table 2
FOREIGN TRADE
IMPORT

Fiscal Years	<i>Primary Goods</i>		<i>Manufactured Goods</i>		<i>Total</i>		(4) as percentage of (6)
	Actual Figures	Three Years moving average	Actual	Three Years moving average	Actuals	Three Years moving average	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1956/57	60,301	...	109,590	...	169,891
1957/58	58,294	59,967.7	100,062	123,912.3	185,356	183,880.0	67.4
1958/59	61,308	67,829.3	162,085	155,262.7	223,395	223,092.0	69.6
1959/60	83,886	77,000.3	203,641	223,967.0	289,527	302,967.3	74.6
1960/61	85,807	90,157.3	312,175	286,483.7	397,982	876,641.0	76.1
1961/62	100,779	109,007.7	343,635	374,132.7	444,414	482,140.3	77.6
1962/63	137,437	127,153.7	466,588	423,845.0	604,023	580,998.7	76.9
1963/64	143,245	160,611.0	461,312	515,205.3	604,557	675,816.3	76.2
1964/65	201,151	174,746.7	617,716	560,391.0	818,867	733,137.7	76.2
1965/66	179,844	...	602,145	...	781,989

Source : For columns 1, 3 and 5 Central Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Commission as mentioned in Nepal Rastra Bank, *Quarterly Economic Bulletin* Vol. V, Mid January 1971, No. 2.

CHAPTER 15

FOREIGN POLICY

—*Rishikesh Shaha*

Factors of Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of a country is conditioned by several factors. Its geographical position constitutes the most important of them all, because it is the most permanent and the least variable of all factors. It is not possible for countries to live in isolation or seclusion from their neighbours. Neighbouring countries, their political and economic systems, their beliefs, their religious and cultural aspirations are bound to have an impact on a people's life. Besides the geographical and strategic factors, there are political obligations, economic necessities and historical bonds, such as those of race, religion and culture, which have a large say in the shaping the foreign policy of a country. History is inseparable from its geographical setting. History is not only a function of natural conditions but also of man's faith, ideas and morals. There are always circumstances and limits set by climate and history, economics and culture, on a nation. These material facts, along with the psychological and objective factors in the make-up of the people, inspire its hopes and fears from generation to generation. Time and men themselves cannot altogether change them; certain trends continue to exist and we have to appreciate and follow them. Foreign policy does not merely concern itself passively with regulating relations between different countries, but has also a positive significance in promoting international peace, cooperation and welfare. However, the primary object of foreign policy of every country is to protect its political freedom and territorial integrity.

Geographical Features

Speaking in terms of geopolitics, Nepal has a protuberant form rather than a compact form. She does not possess geographical individuality as her

geography has always been conditioned by her history. Nepal's border on the south is contiguous to the Indian plains and the natural barriers of mountains on the east and west continue into the adjoining Indian territory. With India, Nepal has no formal boundary treaty and delimitation of her boundary with British India goes back to the nineteenth century following the war of 1814-1816 between Nepal and British India. The delimitation was conducted in a haphazard manner in the presence of both Nepalese and British officers along Nepal's 500-mile long free and open border with India on the south. Wherever possible, the midstream is supposed to be the dividing line. Whenever the river changes its course, it causes the problem of redefining the boundary. Where there have been no rivers, boundary pillars have been set up much on the same line as the markers found along the US-Canadian border.

To the north, the Himalayan range constitutes a natural frontier in depth. There are several passes across the range, fourteen of them in general use. One of these passes is the Kuti Pass through which runs a Chinese-built motorable highway connecting Kathmandu with Lhasa. In other places rivers have cut right through the main range of the Himalayas in deep gorges. It was only in October 1961 that the Nepal-China boundary treaty was signed following the demarcation of the boundary line and the setting up of the boundary pillars along the northern frontier wherever possible.

To the west, the Mahakali river forms a natural frontier with India. On the east, the rugged bulk of Kanchanjunga and the Singali range separate the Nepalese territory from that of Sikkim. South of the Sikkim line, the less formidable foothills of the Himalayas and the Mechi river demarcate Nepal's eastern border from the Darjeeling district in West Bengal. It is noteworthy that India's narrow corridor into Assam which passes between East Pakistan on the south and Sikkim and Bhutan on the north touches at this point on the southeast corner of Nepal. In view of India's strained relations with China and Pakistan, geopolitical considerations involving Nepal have acquired added importance in recent times.

Nepal has no outlet to the sea save across India and is dependent on India for trade and transit facilities. The Himalayas, situated to the north, have, of course, proved to be a great physical and climatic barrier and have made Nepal and the Indian subcontinent a separate political and economic unit different from the rest of northern Asia. "Ministers come and ministers

go", says Nicholas John Spykman, "even dictators die but mountain ranges stand imperturbed."

This does not, however, mean that there has been no physical contact or intercourse of trade and culture between Nepal and Tibet across the Himalayas. There are several passes on the northern border of Nepal which cross the Himalayas into Tibetan territory, but they have so far proved useful for purposes of local transit rather than for international trade and commerce. The Nepal-Tibet border has even been crossed by Buddhist and Christian missionaries and Nepalese and Chinese armies, while several batches of emigrants might have also trekked across the Himalayas to settle down in the beautiful valleys enclosed in the great barrier of the Himalayas.

Again, the revolutionary changes effected by modern technology in the geographic strategy of the globe have made it possible to overcome the topographical barrier to a large extent. The geopolitical structure of a given age measures up to the prevailing state of technology. With the rapid strides of modern science and technology, the Himalayas may cease to be the formidable obstacle to expansion and integration as they have ever been in the past. It is geography among other factors that decides a nation's war potential, organizes its defence and alliance system, distinguishes its likely friends from its potential foes, and finally determines its place and action in international politics.

Historical Perspective

Nepal presently faces one of the classic questions in foreign policy and international relations: how does a small country, situated between two great and powerful neighbours in a strategic region of the world, maintain her independence? Nepal's geographical position in the Himalayan region of Central Asia, bordered on the north by Tibet under Chinese suzerainty during most of the 19th and the 20th centuries and on the south by British India, later the Republic of India has taxed to the utmost her skill and resources in manipulating her relations with her neighbours. Nepal's problem in this respect has been further complicated by the fact that empires have risen and fallen both to the south and to the north of her borders throughout history. Until the first decade of the present century, the threat posed to India by the expansion of Czarist Russia into Central Asia had rendered Nepal's position all the more delicate. The original British view that any invader who could bring Nepal under its control would have surmounted the primary obstacle

to entry into India still persists in the ruling circles of India.

Nepal's own solution to this precarious situation has been summed up in the following words by Prithvi Narayan Shah (Ca. 1769–1775), the founder of Modern Nepal:

“The Kingdom is like a yam... between stones. Maintain friendly relations with the Emperor of China, great friendship should also be maintained with the Emperor beyond the Southern Seas (i.e. the British), but he is very clever. He has kept India suppressed, and is entrenching himself of the plains...one day that army will come. Do not engage in offensive act Fighting should be conducted on a defensive basis.”¹

Before the Rana period and also during it to an extent, Nepal followed a policy of physical isolation and exclusion of foreigners on the one hand and balance of power on the other. It was the established policy of the Nepalese government to keep itself and its people free from contact of any nature with British India as far as possible. Nepal also from time to time sought to play off her southern and northern neighbours against each other in order to avoid being absorbed into either country. From this point of view, the isolation policy proved to be more successful in the long run than the policy of balance of power which could not be effectively pursued after 1846 as a result of the rapid decline in China's power and prestige following the Opium War (1840–1842) and the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1865). During the period before 1846, however Nepal's semblance of vassalage to China helped deter the British from absorbing the buffer state of Nepal into the British empire in India. Even after the serious decline in China's power, and long after the establishment of the system of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers in Nepal, who followed a policy of conciliation and cooperation with the British, the Nepal government would talk about their-obligation towards China whenever they had any difficulty or difference with the British. For instance Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana (Ca. 1846–1877) after 1858 turned to China for a while to show his displeasure with the British government apparently because the latter had not granted his request for the retro-

1 Yogi Narahari Nath and Babu Ram Acharya, ed., *Rastripita Shri 5 Bada Maharaja Prithvinarayan Shah* [Father of the Nation, Five Times Illustrious Great Maharaja Prithvinarayan Shah] (Kathmandu: Prithvi Jayanti Samaroha Samiti, 1951), pp. 15–16.

cession of all land ceded by Nepal to Britain under the treaty of 1816. The British had also shown a lack of warmth to his idea of usurping Kingship. However, the British did not mind his overtures to China because they knew that China was no longer in a position to create difficulties for the British in the Himalayan area. Even Chandra Shumshere who later as Prime Minister became the greatest ally and friend of the British was reported to have openly said to the British envoy of the time as late as 1886 that Nepal was subordinate to China, and was in no way so to the British government of India.

Nepal's pride in her apparent vassalage to China arose from two considerations. The first was that it connected Nepal with a great country whose power and affluence the Nepalese were prone to overestimate for a long time. Second, in cultivating greater intimacy with the Chinese, the Gorkhas, in view of the growing might of the British in India, were guided by the practical consideration that when it came to the questions of choosing between subservience to the Chinese or the British the former was preferable inasmuch as the distance between the two countries and the slackness of the Chinese administration were apt to allow them greater freedom in managing their affairs. Furthermore, in history, whenever the army had come to Tibet for its protection against Nepal or even for punitive action against the Nepalese, the Tibetans had always had more to lose than the Nepalese.

Nepal has always been intimately connected with historical changes and developments in India and China. In her long and chequered career as an independent state, she had many times repulsed invasions from the south and the north and has thus proved herself worthy of her independent existence. As compared to her colossal neighbours she was nothing in respect of size, power or wealth, but she proved to them by her fighting prowess on the battlefield that the risk and cost of preparations involved in subjugating her would outweigh the advantages to be gained by her actual conquest. Emperor Ch'ien-lung who had had reports of the difficulties faced by the Chinese soldiers in the war of 1791-1792 during his reign was reported to have, at the time of abdication in 1796, advised his successor 'not to interfere without absolute necessity with the affairs of the Gorkha King.' J.W. Fortescue in his history of the British army has this to say about the general character of the war of 1814-1816 between Nepal and British India: "The enemy is brave and elusive and knows well how to turn to the best account the advantages offered to him by the ruggedness of his country." Referring

to the fact of Ochterlony's success at arms in the Churiaghati pass, which forced the Gorkhas to sue for peace with the British, the same historian writes: "Small wonder if the general (Ochterlony) ascribed his success to great good fortune as well as the most persevering labour, the greatest exertion and the most persevering fortitude."

Nepal has, at times, bowed down to a large and better equipped military force, but she had never allowed an enemy to plant himself permanently on her soil. Once in the distant past she acknowledged the suzerainty of Tsrong Tsang Gampo, the famous Tibetan King, who had extended his sway even over far away China. Twice in recent and modern history she accepted defeat at the hands of China and British India in 1792 and 1816 respectively. But in spite of her temporary defeats on the battlefield, she has never let a foreign power meddle with her way of life and her internal affairs. 'Friend by necessity we may choose to be but the status of a slave we shall never own' this has been the watch-words of Nepalese statesmen and military leaders in the grave hours of national emergency. History shows that Nepalese leaders have been highly sensitive to the question of national independence and sovereignty and despite their internal differences, have always stood solid in defence of their freedom and frontiers.

After the decline of Chinese power in the latter half of the nineteenth century Nepal was not in a position to pursue a balance of power policy as there no longer existed an approximate balance of power between Nepal's two neighbours, China and British India. After 1850, Nepal could not have maintained her independence without the concurrence of the British Government in India. As we shall see later, Nepal was lucky not to have been absorbed into the British system of subsidiary alliances with Indian states in last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century and could thus avoid being brought under the doctrine of lapse later. This point is particularly important because the internal situation in Nepal at the time was so conducive to the application of the principle of alliance and the doctrine of lapse. Again later in the century, Nepal was never brought under the British paramountcy in the way in which the Indian states—big and small—were. Nepal's geographical position, the ruggedness of her terrain, and the reputation of her men in fighting seemed to have made the British leave her alone.

The British government in India followed the same kind of policy

FOREIGN POLICY

towards Nepal as towards other frontier states such as Afghanistan and Iran. Thus Nepal became an integral part of the "buffer state" system developed on the Indian borderland, designed as the first line of defence against any power particularly Russia, that might cherish designs on India. British policy in relations to the "buffer" states was not to incorporate them into the Empire but rather allow them a full measure of internal freedom or autonomy in exchange for a preponderant influence in these countries' foreign policy. However, it is to be noted that Nepal on her own declared war and concluded peace with Tibet in 1854-56 and continued the practice of sending the quinquennial embassies to China until 1912 when Nepal herself discontinued the practice without reference to the British.

The most important reason why Nepal was not brought under British rule was that after 1860, the British got everything they wanted from Nepal without having to exert themselves further. The Rana rulers of Nepal became convinced that Nepal could not withstand the British in a trial of strength and made themselves so useful to Britain even as rulers of an independent country that there never arose any real need for the British to bring Nepal under their direct rule. Nepal proved to be a source of British military strength in Asia, and the British empire found the services of Gorkha troops invaluable at times of crisis. For upwards of a century, Nepal had diplomatic relations only with Britain and Tibet and in 1934, London became the only capital in the world where Nepal maintained a permanent diplomatic representation.

This state of affairs continued until 1947 when the British withdrew from India and the probability of the assertion by China of her suzerainty in Tibet loomed large on the horizon. The government of the Ranas at the time did not enjoy popular support and was a house divided against itself. Their fear and suspicion of the new Indian leaders inclined them to look for support elsewhere but when they found that it was not forthcoming from anywhere, they concluded a new treaty with India in 1950. The following excerpt from the late Prime Minister Nehru's speech in the House of People in December, 1950 reflects his concern for the situation in Nepal at the time:

"Our interest in the internal conditions of Nepal has become still more acute and personal, because of the developments, across our borders, to be frank especially those in China and Tibet. Besides our sympathetic interest in Nepal, we

were also interested in the security of our own country. From time immemorial, the Himalayas have provided us with a magnificent frontier. Of course, they are no longer as impassable as they used to be but are still fairly effective. The Himalayas lie mostly on the northern border of Nepal. We cannot allow the barrier to be penetrated because it is also the principal barrier to India. Therefore much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot allow anything to go wrong in Nepal or permit that barrier to be crossed or weakened, because that would be a risk to our own security.”

If one ponders the above lines carefully, one is inclined to feel that even Prime Minister Nehru was thinking of the security of India along more or less the same lines as the British Indian government of old. But, he had a dilemma inasmuch as he had all his life championed the cause of freedom and national independence of all nations big and small and also because, when in office as Prime Minister of India, he had also acquired a deep concern for the security of India's frontiers. In his relations with Nepal as with other countries on the periphery, he found it difficult to resolve the above dilemma in a practical and expeditious manner. It may be that Nehru in spite of his idealism, vision and basic distrust of the outlook of the members of the old Indian civil service could not prevent his policy from being influenced by them in the process of its implementation in practice. Looking back on the years 1947 to 1955 and on India's record in this field, one can merely regret that India could not formulate a well informed and imaginative policy towards these countries on the periphery including Nepal, showing due regard for the nationalist aspirations of these countries themselves and also their basic desires and urges for economic development. Nehru's leadership in India was not lacking in imagination and vision and was quite capable of articulating the kind of policy suggested above, but its implementation in practice was hindered by the ingrained attitude and outlook of the Indian civil service who continued to look at the problems through British glasses, and also by the traditional patterns of behavior and attitude of the Indians living in those countries as merchants, traders, money lenders and landowners.

Nepal's closed door policy with regard to the outside world underwent a noticeable change after India became free. As the British were trans-

FOREIGN POLICY

ferring power to Indian hands, the Ranas, out of their natural fear and suspicions of the new Indian rulers, who were natural allies of the democratic forces in Nepal, sought to secure international contacts in the interests of conserving and protecting their future political stakes. But the fate and fortune of Ranaism had been closely bound up from the very beginning with those of British imperialism in India. Prior to the conclusion of the treaty of 1950 between Nepal and India and even after that, mischievous propaganda was set afoot by the interested parties about the possible designs of India against Nepal, yet it did not cut much ice with people anywhere, because free India's sympathy for the nationalist and democratic aspirations of Nepal was too well known to be misconstrued.

The Ranas refused to change with the times and associate the people with the administration in a larger measure than before, despite India's well-meaning advice in this respect. Free India was committed to a policy of helping the cause of nationalism and democracy in Nepal. The movement for democracy in Nepal had in a real sense its origin on Indian soil and, to a large extent, the Indian nationalist movement served as a model and inspiration to the Nepalese. Many a Nepali had cast in his lot with the Indians in their struggle for freedom.

The democratic movement in Nepal itself had to be organized under serious limitations. The leaders had to be away from the main sphere of political action, and there was little or no opportunity for them to have open mass contact in those early days.

The events of the fall and winter of 1950-1951 that led to the abolition of the rule of hereditary prime ministers and culminated in the Royal proclamation pledging constitutional rule to the people brought Nepal into the world picture in the context of the changing pattern of politics in South Asia. The process of change Nepal in 1950-51 was accelerated by China's establishment of control and authority in Tibet where China was theretofore said to have had merely a shadow of sovereignty which was sometimes described as suzerainty. India's moral support for the cause of a broad based regime in Nepal as against the narrow and parochial rule of the Rana family autocrats was based on the consideration that a democratic Nepal would be a greater asset to India and the world than an autocratic Nepal in facing the global challenge of communism and that of Chinese communism in this case.

Starting in 1947, Nepal decided to give up her traditional policy of isolation and exclusion of foreigners. She chose to expand her diplomatic relations with other countries and fully participate in international life. Like India, Nepal characterises her foreign policy as independent rather than "neutral" because the concept of neutrality in international law presupposes a state of belligerency and bears no application in times of peace. Furthermore, Nepal has not, unlike Switzerland, decided on a policy of permanent neutrality in event of war between other countries and has undertaken military obligations under the United Nations Charter. Hence her insistence on an independent foreign policy of judging every international issue on its merit without consideration of anybody's fear or favour and without committing herself beforehand to the support of one bloc or the other. Thus non-alignment with any one of the international military power blocs is the logical corollary of her independent foreign policy. However, it goes without saying that in actual practice the conduct of independent foreign policy is influenced by "such considerations as would prevail in international life in any case," to borrow an expression from the late Dag Hammarskjöld. In this vein, King Tribhuvan B.B. Shah Dev (1911-1955) declared in 1954 that:

"It is an undeniable fact that no nation can in the context of the modern world have an isolated existence. The age demands that all nations, big and small, must draw close together and contribute to the welfare of humanity as a whole. It follows therefore that we must develop good and friendly relations with nations of the world without attaching ourselves to any particular power group. In such a policy alone lies our welfare."²

A second change in Nepal's foreign policy since the political revolution of 1951 was often described by the Nepalese as "special friendship with India" and interpreted by other powers as "paramountcy of India's interest and influence in Nepal." India's influence in Nepal remained dominant up to 1955 because the King and the political elements that came into power were obligated to India for her support of their bid for power in Nepal. Again, there were certain practical considerations that favoured a foreign policy for Nepal compatible with that of India's. But, during this period, India was not too willing to let Nepal expand her diplomatic relations and contacts with other countries or to let her fully participate in international life. India

² King Tribhuvan B. B. Shah Dev, (Speech), *The Statesman*, 18 June 1954.

FOREIGN POLICY

adopted an excessively paternalistic attitude towards Nepal which aroused genuine suspicion in the minds of the Nepalese about India's real intentions. Other foreign powers also tended to recognize in practice India's special relations with Nepal. India also controlled Nepal's trade and tariff policy through the commercial treaty of 1950. China, Nepal's powerful neighbour to the north, had not begun to assert her position in Nepal vis-a-vis India for some time even after 1955 and the Chinese ambassadors of the time, who were concurrently accredited to Nepal and to India would not mention Nepal independently of India in their public and private utterances even inside Nepal. The Nepalese at the time even acquired a feeling that the Chinese government consulted with the Indian government in every matter relating to Nepal, and that China and India must have struck a secret deal between themselves as to their respective area of influence at the time of the relinquishment by India of certain privileges and interests in Tibet inherited by her from the British.

But all this changed dramatically after King Mahendra's accession to the throne in 1955. Nepal before his time had diplomatic relations only with Britain, India, the United States and France, and even the United States did not maintain a residential embassy in Nepal. The US ambassador to India was concurrently accredited to Nepal. Nepal gradually extended her relations to other countries in the world including the Soviet Union and her closer neighbours, China and Pakistan. All of them started with having concurrently accredited ambassadors to Nepal and India, and subsequently maintained their own embassy establishments at Kathmandu. Today it might appear easy for a sovereign and independent country, as Nepal has been, to have diplomatic relations with any country. But in view of the special circumstances dictated by Nepal's geographical position, historical background and economic dependence on outside assistance, it was by no means an easy task.

Furthermore, the expansion of Nepal's foreign relations has brought upon her new obligations and responsibilities which she has successfully discharged so far. Nepal's capacity for discharging these new commitments was fully tested at the time of the border incident near the Korla Pass in Mustang on the 28th of June, 1960 and during the crisis created by the India-based border raids and hostile expeditions in the years 1961-62 following the Royal take-over in December 1960. It is interesting to note in this connection that Marshal Chen-yi, Vice-premier of China in charge of Foreign Affairs,

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

offered Nepal support on the 5th of October 1962 in the event of aggression against Nepal much in the way Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India, had at the time of the Korla Pass incident stated that India would regard the invasion of Nepal as the invasion of India. The difference, however, lay in the fact that in the latter case Prime Minister B. P. Koirala felt so embarrassed as to state in public that Nehru's assurance did not imply that Indian troops would march into Nepal without Nepal's request. The successful conclusion of the boundary treaty with the People's Republic of China in October 1961 and the conclusion of the trade and transit treaty with India in 1960 and its subsequent revision in October 1963 are the positive gains of Nepal's successful foreign policy of non-alignment, of peace and friendship with all countries. Thus Nepal has moved from a position of utter reliance and dependence on India for matters of foreign policy and aid, to a position of relative freedom in manipulating foreign aid and policy matters.

Nepal's desire to remain neutral in disputes and armed conflicts between neighbours such as India, China and Pakistan is understandable and commendable. Her stand on the Indo-Chinese armed conflict in 1962 and on the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965 proves her well-meaning intention. Even when Gorkha troops recruited from among the Nepali citizens for the Indian army were thrown into battles against China and Pakistan, they for one appreciated Nepal's helplessness in the matter because of her commitments in the past and did not question Nepal's basic intention. But, good intentions may not always be the best guarantee of a country's security because intention is a matter of subjective interpretation by other parties most concerned. Therefore, even in pursuing this kind of well intentioned neutral policy difficulties may arise from Nepal's international obligations and internal policy, and serious misunderstanding may be caused in the minds of her neighbours unless Nepal makes a timely demarche to remove doubts about her stand on a similar situation in the future. If Nepal feels that a specific understanding with India on mutual security and defence is no longer necessary, she has to seek release from obligations acquired by her through the exchange of letters accompanying the 1950 treaty of peace and friendship with India, which obliges both Nepal and India to devise effective countermeasures to deal with any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. Further, the existing tripartite agreement on recruitment of Gorkhas for the Indian and British armies needs revision.

Some critics have said that Nepal has reverted to the policy followed in

the earlier part of the nineteenth century of playing off China against the ruling power in India, with a view to reducing the extent of foreign interference in Nepalese foreign and domestic affairs.

But the maintenance of a balanced relationship with her big neighbours is not merely the essence of Nepal's traditional foreign policy; it also conforms to the basic requirement entailed by the sub-system of the regional balance of power between India and China in the present day context. Of course in view of the mid-twentieth century reality of power-politics, it is not enough for Nepal to depend solely on the traditional policy of balanced relationship between two big neighbours. The regional balance within which Nepal exists is itself a subsystem of the global balance of power. In response to changed circumstances, Nepal has sought to reinforce her traditional policy of balanced relationship between two immediate neighbours by expanding diplomatic relations not only with all the major powers but also with other small and medium size countries in the world system. The pattern of foreign aid in Nepal more than anything else reflects its interest and efforts in balancing foreign aid and influences.

Politics of Foreign Aid

The points I wish to make at the very outset are: first, foreign aid directed to assisting economic development is only a small fraction of the total figure that is mentioned as aid; second, the portion that is channelled through the multilateral agencies in a genuinely disinterested manner is very much lower than even the above small fraction and third, for the foreseeable future, aid will continue to be used more as an instrument of policy in international relations than as anything else. There seems to be at least for the present little or no hope that the major potential donors will adopt such a mechanism as the International Monetary Fund's special drawing right (SDRs) to ensure automatic release of funds to the deserving poor at regular intervals, thus relieving them of the agonising sense of uncertainty involved in making long-term economic plans as a result of the legislative procedure of annual appropriation in donor countries.

During the period immediately following independence of a large number of countries in Asia and Africa, the leaders of the newly emerged nations for the satisfaction of their "national" as well as individual egos laid so much emphasis on "aid without strings" that the true and complex nature of foreign aid itself was gradually lost sight of in the process of pro-

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

paganda. Despite vociferous statements by the leaders of both aid giving and aid receiving countries that foreign aid and trade had nothing to do with politics, aid and trade negotiations and transactions were not always conducted at a purely economic level. As there is nothing sinister or invidious about foreign aid and trade being politically motivated, the only rational approach will be to look at them in their proper perspective. The desire on the part of the leaders of the new nations to appear fully independent in the eyes of their own people rather than in relation to other countries of the world and the competition among the aid-giving countries to be less vulnerable to the charge of interference than other rivals have encouraged the continuance of the myth about "aid without political strings." Against this background I shall attempt to analyse the role of Foreign aid in Nepal in such a way as to illustrate its relationship with economic development in the midst of the interaction of domestic and foreign policies on matters which are not even related to economic or developmental aspects of aid.

The table below shows the flow of aid (grants only) into Nepal in the last few years by major donors:

Year	Donors					Total
	India	U. S. A.	China	U.S.S.R.	Others	
1964-65	62.7	65.5	12.1	0.5	0.2	141.0
1965-66	93.0	57.9	16.2	5.0	3.2	175.3
1966-67	77.6	34.9	24.6	4.9	0.2	142.2
1967-68	95.9	32.2	26.2	3.1	0.7	158.1
1968-69	106.5	38.5	37.6	1.2	2.1	185.9
1969-70	139.56	43.7	48.5	4.5	7.5	243.7
1970-71	125.36	59.73	47.17	2.75	35.67	270.68
1971-72	109.27	45.20	53.11	5.00	47.61	260.19
1972-73	110.52	56.81	50.06	2.50	71.17	291.06

Source: *Annual Economic Surveys*: Ministry of Finance., H.M.G.

In addition to the major donors mentioned above, there are 15 or 20 others contributing smaller amounts of aid. It is difficult to have long range planning when each of 20 foreign donors insists on following its own approach to the point of retaining the peculiarities of its own accounting procedure. This is not likely to be compatible with the interests and needs of Nepal. In such a situation as described above, however much the Nepalese may claim to determine their own developmental priorities, they are determined

FOREIGN POLICY

actually by foreign donors. The only freedom that Nepal may exercise as the last resort is to turn down the offer of aid itself. But having embarked upon her development programme relatively late and from a very low base, Nepal will need technical expertise and external financial assistance for a long time to come.

The role of foreign aid in Nepal's road-building projects illustrates the relationship between foreign and domestic policies and probably a good deal more. It is only natural for the Chinese and the Indians to be interested in the roads connecting Nepal with their own territories and also in those that make a quick push towards each other's territories. The Indian aid for the construction of the Kathmandu-Raxaul road (Tribhuvan Rajmarga) and the Chinese aid for the construction of the Kathmandu-Kodari road (Arniko Rajmarga) can be easily explained in these terms. The Chinese do not mind working on the roads in the north near Mongoloid-type people and are inclined to favour labour-intensive projects which will enable them to use local people and their own in sufficient number. The Indians are also interested in using their own people on projects in the north where they might see for themselves what the Chinese are up to. The Nepalese government and the army at the centre in Kathmandu would prefer to have a net work of roads to facilitate the movement of troops in the hinterland with a view to dealing with situations of domestic unrest effectively should the necessity arise. It shows that the construction of a road is not always dictated by the deliberate and purposeful choice of the recipient country but by an interplay of a number of factors, the chief among them being foreign policy considerations and interests of the aid giving countries.

The construction of the East-West Highway in Nepal also highlights the issues involved in the above situation. The late King of Nepal initially gave a call for the execution of the above project entirely on the basis of Nepal's own efforts. Because of poor planning and ineffective supervision, a good deal of popular enthusiasm, efforts and resources was wasted and the project had to be abandoned in the end despite the fact that it was specially undertaken by a high-power East-West Highway Committee, consisting of all Cabinet Ministers with His Majesty the late King Mahendra himself as its Chairman. After this Nepal approached China for the construction of the Janakpur-Biratnagar sector of the East-West Highway through the Nepal Tarai. China expressed its willingness to construct it. After China had actually signed an agreement to construct this section of the road, India,

who all along had shown no interest in the construction of the Nepal's East-West Highway, came forward to construct most of the remaining sectors of this road. Then the Nepalese government requested the Chinese government to undertake another road in place of the Janakpur-Biratnagar sector of the East-West Highway and India is now working on most of the sectors of the East-West Highway because it does not want the Chinese to be working too close to its border.

The figures show that America was spending more than India on development programmes in Nepal from 1951 to 1965 and spent altogether 114 crores 10 lakhs (1,14,10,00,000) of Nepalese rupees by the end of March 1971.

India, whose interests in Nepal are more vital than that of any other country had topped the list of donor countries since 1965-66 and had spent Rs. 125 crores by the end of March 1971.

China has started aiding Nepal only from 1956 and has so far spent approximately 23 crores 70 lakhs (23,70,00,000). If aid were to be considered an index to the aid giving country's influence in Nepal, United States should have had more influence than any other country in Nepal. But a close examination of Nepal's foreign policy through the years will reveal that Nepal has in practice given greater weight to the attitude of India and China rather than to that of the United States in making foreign policy decisions. This may have been so because of the predominant influence of the regional balance of power between India and China as a factor in shaping Nepal's foreign policy.

The pattern of interrelationship between foreign aid and influence in Nepal becomes all the more complicated when we take into account the fact that there was a stage in the evolution of Nepal's foreign policy roughly speaking from 1955 through 1958 when China would not mention Nepal independently of India. Strangely enough, during that period India tended to be more apprehensive of the growth of American rather than Chinese influence in Nepal, despite the fact that India and USA, the two largest democracies in the world should have had a common interest in the growth of democracy in Nepal. This may be partly explained by the prevailing bitterness towards the United States in India because of the US move to include Pakistan along with other countries in the Baghdad pact and the SEATO as a part of the US policy to contain communism in Asia. This

FOREIGN POLICY

also furnishes an example of how the state of power relations on a global basis can affect international competition in terms of aid and influence even in a remote small country like Nepal.

On the whole, China seems to have gained in Nepal by the default of others without doing much on her own. However, since 1966 there has been an appreciable increase in China's foreign aid grant to Nepal. In terms of aid given, China was behind India and the US till 1967-68 but next only to India from 1968-69. It is yet to be seen whether the 1969-70 distribution pattern of foreign aid and grant in Nepal will stabilise because of the influence of the regional balance of power between India and China in the present context of the global power relations between the US and the USSR.

The interests of the super powers in Nepal— the USA and the USSR— seem to be on the decline at least for the present, as the competition between India and China for influence tends to intensify. Russian aid to Nepal has been nominal all through notwithstanding the fact that USSR has been the fourth on the list of the donor countries Britain, with which Nepal had allied herself in the two world wars, and which still recruits soldiers from Nepal for her troops, maintains only a minimal interest which is connected to the supply of Gorkha soldiers. With the increase in the number of foreign residential missions in Nepal, more and more countries came forward to "aid" Nepal in some way or the other. But their aid has not been substantial enough as to produce a significant change in the pattern of aid and influence as outlined above.

Recent Developments

The outcome of the crisis and armed conflict of 1971 in the Indian sub-continent has merely served to reinforce the fact that the regional balance of power in South Asia is subject to the global balance of power between the United States of America and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This change in international politics does not relate to the basic character of the global power balance but merely reflects the transfer by one of the super-powers Soviet Union of her support from China to India in the Asian Context. Throughout the fifties Soviet Union supported China and America supported democratic India to counterbalance communist China in Asia. At present, India seems to enjoy Russia's support to counter China's influence in South Asia. What will America do in the changed situation is not clear except that it is vitally interested in preventing dismemberment of West

Pakistan. Although it is too early to speculate on what shape the power configuration will take in the Asian mainland, it will not be incorrect to assume that both the super powers along with China are at least for the present basically interested in the maintenance of peace and stability in South Asia notwithstanding China's strident mood and gestures and the signs of naval confrontation between the super-powers at the height of the Bangla Desh war and crisis.

To return to the regional scene, the changes in Nepal's neighbourhood are represented by the rise of two independent and sovereign states of Bhutan and Bangla Desh to the south and to the south east respectively. Nepal will have to define her relations with both the countries in the changed context of regional politics in South Asia. The rise of Bangla Desh as a result of India's determined and armed support to the principle of popular legitimacy is a phenomenon to be reckoned with.

The security, independence and integrity of Nepal hinges on the existence of cordiality between India and China and, of course, also on a balance of power in the broader world sphere. One can very well imagine how expertly Nepal must walk the diplomatic tightrope when relations between these two neighbours, whose friendship and goodwill she values so much, show signs of strain. Nepal knows that Lord Curzon's theory of buffer states has become outmoded, and recent events on the other side of the Himalaya have reinforced the lessons of geographical determinism. If and when a clash between the giants becomes inevitable, a small country situated between them cannot cushion the blows, but instead may itself be crushed. India and China hold a unique position in the continent of Asia. Strategically, Nepal is so situated that their attitude must be taken into account in consideration by Nepal of any major problem relating to defence, trade, industry or economic policy. Nepal's freedom of choice is in fact limited by the expedience of power politics. Whatever concessions may have been temporarily acquired by Nepal from India and China through the clever manipulation of her strategic position they will not amount to much in the long run in the absence of a peaceful and lasting compromise binding on all the parties concerned.

The great question before Nepal is whether a small country situated between two giants can, in the context of the mid-twentieth century realities of power politics, evolve a relationship with her neighbours that is basically different from the old and outmoded one of the buffer state. Can a relation-

FOREIGN POLICY

ship be established that, in actual practice, conforms to the standards of equality and freedom for every sovereign nation, as envisaged in the United Nations Charter, within the framework of increased international cooperation and harmony ? Nepal believes in the pursuit of peace and in an ethical approach to the problems of foreign policy. The geography of peace is determined by the fact that contiguous countries are economically interdependent while the geography of war is guided by the consideration that the neighbour is the most frequent and the most likely aggressor. Again, Nepal has never succumbed to the temptation of playing a grandiose and spectacular role in world affairs, as in recent times rulers of many countries even smaller than Nepal have. There is no doubt that Nepal's strategic position in the world is such that it can always offer her this temptation, but Nepal has so far conscientiously refrained from aspiring to too large a role for herself in world affairs, a role which is not warranted by her size and power.

Conclusion

The Sino-Indian hostilities of 1962 enhanced the importance of Nepal for both India and China, and forced Nepal to become circumspect and non-aligned in its relationship with them. Previously, Nepal had refused to consider itself a buffer state in the military sense. But now it inescapably found itself in the role of an ideological buffer.

King Mahendra's decision to establish diplomatic relations with Peking in 1955 had no doubt been precipitated by the need to regularize relations with Tibet following its annexation by China. However, disenchantment with the paternalistic attitude adopted by the Government of India towards Nepal during the early post-1951 period was perhaps a more important factor influencing this decision.

To the Nepalese, disenchanted with India, China was the obvious country to turn to, and wishful thinking attributed to China all the qualities which were found lacking in India. China's response was eager; consequently Nepal-China relations grew in scope and warmth, although an effort has been made to confine them to the official level. There has been no serious attempt in Nepal to probe Chinese intentions and designs. Obviously, China is judged only by what it does in relation to Nepal.

On the other hand, what perturbs the politically conscious Nepalese is the impression created by the Indian Press and Indian politicians that

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

Nepal is some kind of an area of Indian influence and that India must oversee Nepalese independence and sovereignty. There was a time whenever the Government of India did not seem to regard Nepal as an equal and independent country. In September 1951, the Chinese Premier, Mr. Chou En-lai, suggested a tripartite conference of China, India and Nepal to discuss the question of Tibet. However, India ignored the suggestion without even condescending to inform Nepal about it. Nepal's fear of India was strengthened by the cultural definition of Greater India during the first flush of India's independence. The state of relations between India and Bhutan at the time aggravated Nepalese fears even further.

During Mr. B. P. Koirala's parliamentary regime, Nepal sought to align its foreign policy more closely with India's, although Premier Koirala did not fail to reaffirm Nepal's sovereign status and neutrality in the Sino-Indian dispute. After the royal take-over, Indo-Nepalese relations were subjected to considerable stresses and strain mainly because of India's adverse reaction to the King's action and Nepal's unhappiness over the activities of the self-exiled Nepali Congress rebels in India. This drifting apart led, among other things, to Nepal's deliberate attempts to diversify its economic links and seek new ones with China and Pakistan. Nepal considered this move an unexceptionable exercise of its sovereign rights, but India misunderstood it mainly because of its strained relations with Peking and 'Pindi'.

Historically, Nepal's relations with India have been much more intimate than with China. But while China is judged by its overt actions, in the case of India what Nepal thinks India is doing is more important than what India actually does.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China has presented an image of reasonableness. Over economic and boundary issues, it has been generous. It even tendered an immediate apology and paid compensation when some Nepalese were killed in the course of a border incident in June, 1960. During King Mahendra's visit to China, Mr. Mao Tse-tung spoke to him of the possibility of a big country like China injuring the feelings of its small neighbours such as Nepal out of sheer ignorance and arrogance. According to King Mahendra, Mr. Mao Tse-tung gave him full assurance that China would be more than careful to respect Nepal's national sentiments. Thus China won over Nepal, while Indian economic and political poli-

FOREIGN POLICY

cies continued to be regarded by the Nepalese as inimical to their independence and sovereignty to which India had always paid lip service of course.

The Sino-India armed clash of October, 1962, caused grave concern among the Nepalese people about China's intentions towards neighbouring countries, despite China's generosity over its boundary problems with Nepal.

Nepal reacted by refusing to take sides and by bringing pressure to bear on both countries to solve their differences peacefully. But an effort was made to keep open the option to get closer to India in the event of a Chinese threat to Nepal's own territory. Except for this mental provision for a hypothetical situation, Nepal's policy of freeing herself from India in every possible sphere continued. India was expected to adjust to this inevitable trend.

Understandably, Nepal's policies caused considerably concern and debate in India, especially after November, 1962. Misunderstandings between the two countries mounted particularly after Marshal Chen-yi's statement of October 5, 1962 that China would come to Nepal's assistance in the event of aggression from India. Nepal's friendly relations with China were noted by the Indian Press with growing alarm, whereas Nepalese political leaders considered them as nothing more than a routine renewal of Nepal's age-old economic and cultural ties with China. The Indian Press failed to understand that Nepal was trying to assert its national identity and to extricate itself from the need of relying either on India or on China. It is noteworthy that during this period Nepal established diplomatic relations with a large number of countries.

India's surprise and disappointment over Nepal's reaction to the Chinese attack on India added to Nepal's fear of and resentment against India. India felt perturbed that its sizable economic and political aid had generated no goodwill or gratitude in Nepal; on the contrary, Nepal was drifting away from India, and wooing her enemies, China and Pakistan. The asylum and encouragement given by India to Nepalese rebels whose avowed purpose was to overthrow the post-1960 regime, hurt Nepal the most.

Naturally, both sides over-stated their case, magnifying isolated de-

velopments. Unfortunately, there was no determined attempt on either side to clear the misunderstanding. India was apparently preoccupied with bigger problems, and Nepal was no more anxious to end the unhappy trend. (In retrospect, it seems also true, ironically, that the Sino-Indian conflict helped to jolt both India and Nepal into a sense of reality with regard to their mutual problems).

What the Sino-Indian hostilities taught Nepal was that she should so orient her policy as to develop her national identity. Only by doingso, could Nepal stay away from the conflict herself, and follow a policy of friendship with other countries. Nepal's policy of friendship with China will continue, but there need be no alarm in India.

Nepal's strategic location has afforded her a scope for manoeuvring its external relations within certain limits. These limits are in practice set by what India and China consider to be their minimal interests in a given situation. As long as Nepal keeps herself within these limits, she is free to manipulate in any way she likes, her relations with her immediate neighbours and other countries. Indeed Nepal's success in the conduct of foreign policy depends on her ability to assess in practical terms what India and China are prone to regard as their minimal interests in a particular matter at a given time and, on the basis of this assessment, to strive for concessions and gains from all parties, which may prove conducive to Nepal's national interests. However, if Nepal feels tempted to go beyond the practical limits to her capacity to manoeuvre, she will court real danger. The late King Mahendra's success in gaining concessions for his country from all concerned is sometimes ascribed to his policy of emphasizing relationship with one or the other of Nepal's immediate neighbours as demanded by the exigencies of the situation. But the risk inherent in such a policy of performing balancing feats, as it were is that of overreaction by either of Nepal's neighbours to a real— or imagined threat to what she regards as her minimal interests. However, the late King Mahendra's skill in manipulating external relations was characterised by a rare sense of restraint and prudence which never allowed him to go beyond the limits that were safe for the country.

(1972)

CHAPTER 16

THE INTELLECTUAL IN NEPALESE SOCIETY

—Kamal P. Malla

We are not the doctors, we are the disease.

A.I. Herzen

This is an essay in enquiry into the poverty of intellect in Nepal. Such an enquiry has become somewhat urgent, because 'intellectual' is one of the most overworked words in recent Nepalese writing. Here I merely propose to examine the substance behind this shadowy and ambiguous term. Before putting the vague word under the microscope I, however, feel tempted to make a few commonplace observations about the Nepalese society of which contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia are an offspring and in which they were brought up. The Kingdom of Nepal, as it is today, came into being only a couple of centuries ago. Within the present political boundaries the face of the land presents one of the most bewildering and rugged topographies on the surface of the earth. Three-fourths of the country are covered by intractable mountains, punctuated by pockets of isolated valleys and transversal river-systems. This wild and amazingly unyielding topography has for millenniums shaped the mode of living and thinking—the ecology of Nepalese people. It was not for nothing that, prior to the advent of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his military campaigns, the face of the land was politically fragmented like a page of graph and was littered with mushroom Baisi and Chaubisi principalities. Even today—two hundred years after the founding of the unified Kingdom—the people of Nepal are almost as divided by the conspiracy of geography, reducing the physical, social and cultural mobility

among them to a terrifying minimum, as they were in prehistoric days of the Kingdom. For one thing, the feeble modernising changes that had come in Nepal roughly since the 1850s or the more visible changes that are taking place since the 1950s have been confined to the urban population of Nepal. These changes have rarely percolated through the cities and towns to the small villages and sparsely populated hamlets of the hills, to the river basins, valleys or to the plains of rural Nepal. The 1961 Census Report¹ shows that only 3.6 per cent, (3,36,222) of Nepal's total population (94,12,996) live in towns. The rest (i.e., 96.4 per cent or 90,76,774 people) live in the villages. According to the Report there are only sixteen towns in Nepal with five thousand or more population. The Report defines the town as 'a place with urban surroundings, i.e., with high school, college, offices, headquarters, communication systems, mills or factories'. Out of these sixteen towns three are in the Valley of Kathmandu, including of course, Kathmandu the capital with 1,25,000 souls; eight are in the Tarai plains, close to the Indian borders. Only Pokhara and Palpa are in hills. 96.4 per cent of the Nepalese live in the villages. They live in social groups where primitive agriculture is the only way of life, and kinship, tradition, religion and attachment to one's home are invariable principles of social ethics. The picture of Nepal is less simple and monolithic than it may appear from these commonplace observations. The picture is more variegated as the people inhabiting the land belong to different ethnic stocks and speak some 36 different languages, most of these not too comprehensible to one another. Nepalese society is not only multi-ethnic, but also multi-lingual. There are some twenty-five autochthonous languages. Altogether these are spoken by 3.8 per cent of Nepal's total population. Nepali, which is the national language and *lingua franca* of the non-Nepali speakers, is the first language of 51 per cent of Nepal's total population. Then of the remaining ten major languages of Nepal, Maithili is spoken by 12 per cent, Bhojpuri by 6 per cent, Tamang by 5.5 per cent, Abadhi by 4.7 per cent, Tharu by 4.3 per cent, Newari by 4 per cent, Magar by 2.7 per cent, Rai-Kirat by 2.6 per cent, Gurung by 1.7 per cent and Limbu by 1.5 per cent of the total population. If language is an index of culture-pattern—both material and nonmaterial, these figures alone would show a rich profusion of diversity in Nepalese society.

For the emergence of intelligentsia as a class nothing is more impor-

¹ Central Bureau of Statistics, *The 1961 Census Report* (Kathmandu: H.M.G.), Part II. (For other figures in this paragraph, the *Census Report* is my main source.)

tant than the growth of cities and a pre-existing literate population sharing a culture of accessible language. Yet in Nepal if one had to go back further in history, outside the Kathmandu Valley there were only three regional belts which showed some sporadic phases of cultural efforts. These were Janakpur—the traditional home of Maithili culture; Kapilbastu in the Lumbini Zone, and the Karnali basin with its medieval kingdoms of *parbatia* Mallas. However, none of these culturebelts has a history which maintains continuity with the present. It is only in the Valley of Kathmandu, with its unbroken historical continuity, where one could see a microcosm of the culture—formula, though already in a fossilized state. It is only the Valley of Kathmandu which seems to have a cultural continuity with the present, consistently based on a broader literate population than elsewhere in the kingdom. In the culture—formula or the power—structure of the Kathmandu Valley, more important than either the settlement pattern or the linguistic diversity is the stranglehold of religions and of their priesthood through caste stratification. The priesthood of both Buddhist and Hindu orders have laid down rules for God-fearing Nepalese, not only for life here, but also for life hereafter. In the last millennium in Nepal there must have been men and women who, in moments of terrestrial euphoria, could have forgotten to fear God, but there was perhaps none who did not fear the priest. The priesthood through the rigid caste-system, so magistrally codified by Jayasthiti Malla and given legal authority by Maharaja Jung Bahadur,² has been a formidable factor in the social and cultural life of the Sanskritized Nepalese population. This includes the whole of Nepali-speaking society—the Hindu and the Buddhist Newars and other Sanskritized aboriginals and autochthonous tribes. Though understandably and consistently tolerant towards the co-religions of Buddhism, Bonpo or Shamanism, the power-elite in Nepal has been zealously Hinduist. No wonder that in Nepal only those sections of the population who have assimilated the Sanskrit language (i.e., the Nepali-speaking Brahmins, the Newari-speaking Brahmins, Joshis, Maithili or Bhojpuri-speaking Brahmins—so powerful as court-ideologues in the Malla courts) constituted the traditional intelligentsia. For before the advent of Bhimsen Thapa the languages which served to sustain cultural and intellectual activities in the Valley of Kathmandu were mainly Sanskrit, Maithili and Newari.

Under the caste structure the Sanskritized Hindu or Buddhist priest-

2 Dor Bahadur Bista, "Hindu Kingdom and Its Social Aspects," *Nepal, A Profile* (Kathmandu: Nepal Council of Applied Economic Research, 1970.)

hood constituted a class of intelligentsia in their own right. This class has been in existence around the Nepalese courts at least as early as the Lichchavis. Apart from their Sanskritization three things seem to distinguish this class: (1) their association with the Court, where they occupied a pride of place as a matter of course, (2) their orthodoxy which they perpetuated in society through their association with, and influence in, the Court, as well as through their authority over the plebeian rituals (birth, initiation, marriage, purification, death etc. and other routine worship), and (3) their intellectuality. It would, therefore, be a great mistake to assume that the function of priesthood in Nepal has been merely to perpetuate itself, by becoming a great ritualistic force, almost always working hand in hand with whatever powers there be in the temporal realm. The traditional Nepalese scholarship was mainly the output of the Sanskritized priesthood in Nepal, and it had left its imprint in India, Tibet and China. In the 10th–11th century Magadha (North India) Nepalese scholars like Ratna Kirti, Virochan, Kanakshree were said to be great names at Vikramshila Mahavihara (University).³ In the 11th century Nepal the scholarly achievements must have been very high to entertain someone like Bageswarikirti, who later on became a *Dwarapundit* (Head of the Department) at Vikramshila Mahavihara. His disciples there included scholars like Niropalsi Sen (Bengal) and Marpa (founder of Kagya cult in Tibet). At any rate, in the cities of the Kathmandu Valley (mostly in Kathmandu and Patan) there still exist several *bahals* (vernacular for *Vihara*) or quadrangles of civic settlement which were, once upon a time, centres—not only of traditional learning of Buddhism, Philosophy, Rhetoric, Grammar, Medicine, Occult, Sanskrit, Pali, Literature—but also centres of apprenticeship in Painting, Casting, Jewellery, and other ancestral arts and crafts. In the wake of the Muslim invasion in North India, Pundit Buddhashree, an outstanding Nepalese Dean of Mahasanghik Sangha of Vikramshila Mahavihara, came back to Nepal with a great many of his books and disciples. It was not an isolated instance, but it was a moment in Nepalese history which naturally reminds us of the Renaissance in Europe. (Incidentally, very few of the extant Nepalese manuscripts go further than the 13th century A.D.) While in these quadrangles (*bahals*) Vajracharyas and Shakyas (the Newar Buddhist priests) were the main tutors, in the *Varnashram* system of Hindu education the tutors were mainly Brahmins—the Newar Brahmins, the Joshis and Acharyas, then the Maithili and *parbatia* Brahmins. Morally and intellectually,

3 Surya Bikram Gewali, "Nepal—A Centre of Learning," *Navin Shikchya*. 4:5. (in Nepali.)

the rest of the Sanskritized Nepalese society had been, more or less, in their grip, which for a long time to come was the grip of tradition. For prior to the advent of modern education of Western inspiration the most influential and articulate section of the society had been either the direct heirs to the traditional priesthood or the sections who had felt their presence and had accepted it as a part of the eternal scheme of creation. Thus the Brahmin ascendancy in the socio-cultural life of Nepal was almost a historical necessity. Here I use the word 'Brahmin' purely as a synonym of the traditional intelligentsia. The Brahmins were not only the scholars who "annotated and embroidered the sacred texts which guided man's actions towards the highest stage of being (or) . . . taught the young and counselled the aged to ascend to the experience of absorption into the sacred. There can be no doubt about the *extraordinary intellectual* gifts of the Brahmins. Below the remarkable powerful minds which have created Indian philosophy, on the lesser peaks of analysis, commentary and annotation, the Brahmin mind has developed a subtlety and ratiocinative acuity which is not surpassed in world history. They have been man of exceptional cultural refinement and intellectual accomplishment"⁴. In Nepal a lasting monument to their scholarly accomplishment is the great library of 24,000 manuscripts, originally collected in 1885 by Maharaja Bir Shumshere J. B. Rana. The library is a monument, not only to the achievement of traditional Nepalese scholarship, but also to the limitations of the tradition. Today a bulk of these manuscripts are becoming more and more esoteric, partly because of a bewildering variety of their scripts and their languages (like Sanskrit, Maithili, Newari, Tibetan and Chinese), but mainly because of the antiquated nature of their approach, outlook and of their subject-matter. Without the help of a small band of dedicated and well-trained experts these manuscripts are likely to become as inaccessible and perhaps as irrelevant as the Dead Sea Scrolls or hieroglyphs on the tomb of Tutankhamen. At bottom, the nature of traditional Nepalese scholarship is derivative. The aesthetics of the embroidery, illustrations and scripts apart, much of it is exegesis, gloss, commentary and annotation on the authoritative texts. The tradition here is the tradition of transmission of the sacred text, the tradition of conservation or ritualistic continuity rather than of creativity, non-conformism, questioning and criticism. The preponderance of the textual over the critical, of the spiritual over the material, of the abstract over the concrete, of the magical over the empirical, of the didactic over the creative—more than anything else, characterises the tradition of Nepalese

⁴ Edward Shils, *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity, the Indian Situation* (The Hague, 1967), pp. 20-21.

scholarship. In a sense, a living contact with this tradition had broken after the rise of the Gorkhali power. What continued was more a routine contact with the past rather than a creative renewal of the tradition to suit the altered contents of Nepalese life after 1769.

In 1769 the Gorkha ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah defeated the warring Malla Kings of the Valley of Kathmandu and annexed it to his extended kingdom. With a deep political foresight he made Kathmandu his new capital. Six years later, when he died in 1775, the succession to the throne developed in many cases on minors whose mothers invariably became the regents. With little experience of statecraft and politics, the Queen-Mothers could easily be swayed. As a result, throughout the period of regency (from 1777 to 1845) there was internecine power-strife for succession. Then there was the war with China in 1790, the war with British India in 1814. With the rival houses of Thapas and Pandes—not to mention the other *bhardar* families—striving to come closest to power at least nine governments were formed between 1837 and 1846. 'The conspiratorial activities reached the climax with the assassination of General Gagan Singh under mysterious circumstances.'⁵ This ultimately set the stage for that fateful mid-night of September 15, 1846 when Jung Bahadur and his brothers staged the carnage of Kot—cleanly washing the power-hungry Nepalese court with a warm blood-bath of true blue blood.

Culturally the British presence in the Indian subcontinent for 190 years did not affect Nepal very much. Yet the British attitude to Nepal was simply indefensible. This is so, not because the British 'intervened' in Nepal's internal affairs, but because they showed a cold and consistent indifference to developing Nepal on modern lines. Till 1923 the British were having the advantages of a colony from Nepal without having to run its administration. The British patronage of Jung Bahadur and his successors, the flattering reception that the former had in England during his European tour were certainly glorious phases of Nepal-Britain relationship. Yet Nepal has nothing for which she should be grateful to the British presence in the sub-continent. In India the nationalists have always raged against their colonisers, yet the Indian indebtedness to Britain is likely to remain a very complicated chapter in her history. For it was the British who laid the first foundations for India's

⁵ Chitta Ranjan Nepali, *The Shah Kings of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Ministry of Panchayat Affairs, Dept. of Publicity, 1965), pp. 13-14.

colossal efforts at modernisation. In India the British left an infrastructure for the modernisation of culture—both material and non-material. They left India with the Indian Civil Service, which is one of the best in Asia: they left India with the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, among others—with a framework of modern academic pursuits and aspirations; they left India with the largest literate population of Asia and Africa outside of Japan; they left India with the longest journalistic experience of any country outside the West; above all, they left India with a network of railways which is probably, outside Japan, the longest in Asia. The British left India after awakening her into literary, social and cultural consciousness of her own greatness. (Think of the Bengal Renaissance, for instance). Indology—not to speak of Western sciences, empirical studies Linguistics, Sociology and Anthropology—great legacy of the British. In India the like English language has been an effective is a instrument of the modernisation of vernacular literatures. English has been an agent of the cultural and psychological metamorphosis of many an Indian mind. Nepal had remained almost totally unaffected by, and deprived of, all these cultural impacts of the British in India.

The actual reason was not merely the British unconcern. The reason was, in fact, the deliberate and unenlightened policy of Jung Bahadur and his successors who under the stewardship of the British in India, had pursued a policy of absolute concentration of power in the family and of total abstinence from political-cultural contacts with the rest of the world. But this policy of ruling inside a cultural iron curtain was not that easy to stick to the letter—at least not for the ruling family. For as soon as he had consolidated his position in the power-politics of Kathmandu, Jung Bahadur left for Europe in January 1850. He was visibly impressed by his British and European tour. Consequently, he imported many erstwhile fads into Nepal. (There was that famous story about the national anthem). He imported the idea of reorganizing Nepal's ancient army, the taste for Western domestic aesthetics, including the Western-style palaces. In many ways, the construction of the Thapathali Durbar was the beginning of the end of the traditional Nepalese arts and culture. Jung Bahadur was not very highly literate, but he certainly was an astute man to be able to see the secret sources of the British power. In order to dive deeper and drink more wistfully from this fountain of world power Jung Bahadur saw the need to learn the English language. After 1850 such an initiation became a clan-need for sustaining and perpetuating the ascendancy of his family. Thus as soon as Jung Bahadur came home, in 1853 on the groundfloor of the Thapathali Durbar he set up a small class under the

tutorship of a certain Mr. Canning.⁶ Mr. Canning used to give lessons in English, Mathematics and History to Jung Bahadur's brothers and nephews upto Grade VIII. Here in the Groundfloor of a Rana palace started the nucleus of modern education of Western inspiration. After almost thirty years of nomadic and fugitive existence these private lessons later became Nepal's first English school, and sometime in 1889 it came to be housed in the Durbar School (so-called because of its origin in a Durbar or palace). The high portals of modern learning in Durbar School, however, were not open to the plebeian offspring prior to 1876. The first Nepalese who went to Calcutta and got through the Entrance Examination was Chandra Shumshere J. B. Rana. That was as late as 1884. For decades the school population composed mostly of the *Sat Bhai* and *Satra Bhai Khalak* and their lesser progeny.⁷ Nepal became a centre for Patna S. L. C. Examination in 1924, and it was only in 1933 that she instituted her own independent S.L.C. Board.

Of the several marvellous things that Jung Bahadur brought home with him, there was a hand-operating printing press, the so-called Vulture Press⁸ (a wing of vulture used as a trade-mark of the manufacturer—V. & J. Fizzins Makers). The Vulture Press of 1851 put an end, though not yet too effectively, to the manuscript age of Nepalese writing. By 1870 there were just two hand-operated printing presses in Nepal—used mostly for publishing laws, Acts, statutes, stamps and official proclamations. During the early part of the *ancient regime* there were about half a dozen printing presses in Nepal—owned either by the member of the ruling family or by the family of the Royal Preceptor. It was only in 1912 that the first electrically operated printing press was established in Nepal. Only about 1893 Pashupati Press—the first public-owned printing press in Nepal—started to operate, and by the end of 1950 there were less than ten public presses—most of them only very small affairs. A prerequisite basis for the emergence of modern intelligentsia is the

6 Gunadev Bhattarai, "Durbar High School", *Shikchya Samachar*, 1:2, pp. 8-9. (in Nepali.)

7 Baburam Acharya, "The History of Education in Nepal," *Navin Shikchya*, 4:4, pp.5-12, 4:5, pp. 5-14 (in Nepali.) See also: Purna Harsh Vajracharya, "The History of Education in Nepal," *Education Quarterly*, III:4 (Dec. 1959); and: Kedar Nath Shrestha, "The Development of Education Under the Rana Regime," *Education Quarterly*, XI:1, pp. 25-30.

8 Grishma Bahadur Devkota, *History of the Printing Press and Journalism in Nepal* (Kathmandu, 1967), Sections 2 and 3. (in Nepali.)

printing press with a largescale production and consumption of the printed word. Yet in Nepal the first book to come out of a printing press was probably *Sanskrit Prabeshini* by Pundit Naradev and Moti Krishna Sharma, published in 1902; the first printed periodical, *Sudha Sagar* came out only in 1898, and the first newspaper—*The Gorkhapatra*—came out only as recently as 1901 (Vikram Era: Monday, Jestha, 3, 1958). The tradition of the culture of the printed word does not have a terribly long history in the Nepalese languages.

Much earlier in this enquiry I have already mentioned about the language situation in Nepal today. The Census Report shows that Nepali (it used to be called Gorkhali till 1934) is the first language of 51 per cent of Nepalese population. The earliest extant epigraphic evidence of Nepali goes back to a copper plate inscription of Punya Malla—dated A.D. 1337.⁹ In the Kathmandu Valley Nepali had also been in frequent use in the later Malla period, mainly as a vernacular. For prior to the advent of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepali was more a vernacular than a key medium of intellectual pursuits. Sanskrit, Maithili and Newari were more often used, both in inscriptions and manuscripts, than Nepali. It was subject to the neglect of scholars who preferred Sanskrit to all other languages used locally. Before Bhanu Bhakta Acharya (A.D. 1814–1868) and Moti Ram Bhatta (A.D. 1866–1896) Nepali was subject to a great deal of dialectal uncertainty and inflections. In the creative use of Nepali the period before Bhanu Bhakta as well as the period after him is no doubt significant, yet it was only after the establishment of the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashani Samiti in 1913 that some nascent and consistent efforts were made to make Nepali a full-fledged language. *Sharada*, the first Nepali literary monthly of any influence, came out in 1933. It was, in fact, this literary monthly which nurtured the first founding fathers of modern Nepali literature as Devkota, Sama, Bhikchhu and Siddhicharan. Thus, although Nepal has today about 60 printing presses (40 of which are in the Valley of Kathmandu), hundreds of periodicals and newspapers, a sizable publication of books it is a very recent phenomenon with an inhibited history going no further than 20 or 30 years. Though Nepali has been the court language for a couple of centuries, the flowering of Nepali, too, is an equally recent phenomenon.

In many ways, Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere J. B. Rana's

⁹ Balkrishna Pokharel, *National Language*, (Kathmandu: Educational Enterprise, 2022), p. 13. (in Nepali.)

rule in Nepal was an eventful one. It was he who ended slavery in Nepal—again as recently as 1925. In retrospect his efforts to modernise Nepal—his politics apart—were not despicable. He introduced electricity in Nepal and made it accessible for public consumption in 1917. He constructed a public reservoir and supplied filtered drinking water; he introduced Nepal's first narrow-gauge railways—which still manage to work as Nepal's only railways. None of these philanthropic gestures is likely to be remembered more gratefully by every new generation of the enlightened Nepalese than the establishment of Nepal's first modern college. In 1918 Prime Minister Chandra, after inaugurating the Tri-Chandra College, is reported to have said, 'This is the beginning of *our* end'. Nepal was having her first rudimentary post-school artefact on modern lines when the whole of Western Europe was already shaking with the Bolshevik Revolution. Originally affiliated to Calcutta University, Tri-Chandra College¹⁰ was at first only an Arts College, and Science classes were added to it much later in the 1930s. The first graduates of this college, Mr. Daman Shumshere, Principals Bhairab Bahadur Pradhan, Prasanna Man Singh Pradhan are still with us. In many ways, the 50-year old history of this college is the history of the academic legacy of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia. Because prior to 1951 this was the only institution of higher education in the kingdom. Almost everyone who is today in the higher echelons of power and influence in the civil service, teaching, army, journalism, literary profession, management was educated either at Tri-Chandra College or in one of the north Indian cities like Patna, Banaras, Lucknow, Allahabad and Calcutta. Tri-Chandra College has been an under-graduate college, and under the then prevailing political atmosphere the erstwhile academic community of the college—which certainly had on it a galaxy of brilliant luminaries like Sardar Narendra Mani Acharya Dixit or Professor Ram Prasad Manandhar—was nothing if not solely based on routine class-room teaching, with no extra-mural identity. In the groves of Nepalese academe as elsewhere in Nepal the climate was not too congenial for an independent growth of the intellect. The first man among the Nepalese academics to go to India (because prior to the mid-1950s rarely did a Nepalese go elsewhere) for research and do a Ph. D. was Professor Narayan Bahadur Manandhar¹¹ who like the first graduates of Tri-Chandra College, is till in our midst—though retired. Talking of the cultural anthropology of contem-

10 Ashutosh Sen, "Tri-Chandra College," *Education Quarterly*.

11 Bhagwati Prasad Shrestha, *A Book of General Knowledge*, (Kathmandu: Nepal Bhasa Parisad, 1960), p. 67. (in Newari.)

porary Nepalese intelligentsia, it may be worth remembering that Nepal's first and only university was incorporated by law only as recently as 1959. By that time India's modern universities had already celebrated their first centenary. Before the incorporation of Tribhuvan University every Nepalese aspiring for an M.A. or M.Sc., for an M.Com. or M.Ed. used to trail down to the plains of India and suffer two or more Indian summers in Banaras, Patna or Calcutta. Even today all our young men and women doing technical courses like Medicine, Agriculture or Engineering go mostly to India. Thus, the 'modernised' academics of Nepal have hardly any history, except of non-achievement.

As I shall, when I examine the contemporary situation, have many more details to add on the quality of educational opportunities for the Nepalese at home, in India and overseas in last two decades, here I merely wish to confine myself to 1. the traditional system of education prevalent before 1950, and 2. the nature of the Civil Service before 1950. I wish to say a few words on each, because this will give us an insight into the nature of the establishment to which the present day Administrative-Judicial-Technical-Foreign Services are heir. Outside the free-floating literary profession, outside teaching, journalism and management, the HMG Services absorb nearly 2033 officers of gazetted rank under regular budget and some 900 more under non-recurrent development budget. In order to understand and evaluate the situation of Nepalese intelligentsia it is necessary, not only to know the composition, attitude and value-system of this huge establishment which swallows a great assortment of Nepal's literate output, but also to assess the inheritance to which the whole set-up is an inescapable heir. Before I take up this I shall, however, say one or two things about the traditional systems of education which have co-existed in Nepal with Western-styled education. There is first the ancient tradition of Sanskrit scholarship which has maintained a ritualistic continuity with the glories of Nepal's intellectual past in a sort of academic orthodoxy, training people in Grammar, Philosophy, Logic, Literature, Astrology, Mathematics and Mythology mainly on the basis of the interpretation and transmission of the sacred texts. This education has been a preserve of the Brahmins, and it is intensely loyal to the ancient Hindu ideals. It has continued fitfully but unabated among Brahmins, both practising priests and non-practising ones. The products of this education have been passionately loyal to whatever powers there be in the realm. Perhaps the one isolated occasion when the scholars in this tradition had deviated from this

timeless loyalty was in 1947—during the so-called Jayatu Sanskritam movement¹². Today this education is generously patronized by the government through scholarships, free-studentships etc. It is imparted by pundits of stupendous scholarship who work in Bhasa Pathshalas, the Sanskrit Colleges and the University Department of Acharya. Here education is in the authentic and great authoritarian tradition of Guru Kula, where whatever the teacher teaches is to be taken for granted as knowledge par excellence. The relevance of this tradition to our enquiry is that it has produced one of the most articulate sections of Nepal's intelligentsia. Their contribution—especially in the fields of language, religion, history, culture and Nepalese antiquity, has been substantial. They have laid far too many solid bricks on the theoretical foundations of Panchayat ideology mainly as unacknowledged court-ideologues publicizing the Hindu basis of Nepalese culture, the role of the Crown in Nepalese life, or exhorting the materialistic Nepalese youth on ancient Vedic ideals of plain living and high thinking. This system of education, this outlook on life has, for centuries, laid the foundations for an island of indigenous intellectual culture—unaffected by all waves of change in the Nepalese mind.

I do not however, know what ratio of people in the pre-1950 or post-1950 administrative or other establishments were the products of Sanskrit education. But there certainly was an overwhelming number of Kazis, Sardars, Mir Subhas, Khardars, Ditthas, Mukhiyas, Naib Ditthas, Bahidars, writers, Naibwriters, that is to say, the Bhardars and the Rakamis in the pre-1950 stratification of the Civil Service who were mostly the products of Shrestha Pathshalas¹³. The best I can do in this connection is to quote an expert on Nepal's Public Administration:

“One must get through this (the Civil Service examination called Nijamati pass) examination to apply for a job in the Government during the Rana regime, free competition was not known. It was not important whether a person was qualified for the job or not. The ability to please the people in key positions in the government counted as the qualification for appointment in the Government Service. . . . The person who has a Civil Administration Education,

12 Bala Chandra Sharma, *A Historical Outline of Nepal*, (Varanasi, 2026), p. 410. (in Nepali).

13 Mangal Krishna Shrestha, *A Handbook of Public Administration in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Panchayat Affairs, Department of Publicity, 1965), pp. 1–8.

which is only secondary level, can get an appointment and rise to the post of Kazi, the highest post in administration open to the non-ruling population of the country."¹⁴

Among the elite of the pre-1950 Nepal Civil Service there were, apart from the intensely clerical-minded and loyal people filtered through the Nijamati Pass, a liberal sprinkling of Matriculates, B.A.s and a few M.A.s in the top echelons. This weltering establishment, together with such limbs of power and moral authority as the Raj Guru, was an inseparable part of the mincing machine called Ranarchy.¹⁵ It was nothing if not hostile to every spark of creative urge and independent intellect—let alone the emergence and autonomous growth of intelligentsia as a stratum of society.

The most ineradicable single blot on the cultural history of Nepal is, therefore, the dark night of the Nepalese soul—a century of family rule when the common man was denied even civic rights. What is interesting to note is, not that every organized civic effort, whether cultural, educational or literary, was nipped in the bud, but that with the first signs of social awakening the anachronistic priesthood felt its position more shaky than did the ruling Prime Minister himself. The earliest instance of such a confrontation between tradition and non-conformism was almost an archetypal situation. Under the influence of the Arya Samajist Swami Dayananda, young Madhav Raj Joshi (the late Shukra Raj Shastri's father) came to Kathmandu in 1896 to establish an office of the Arya Samaj. Although the orthodox Brahmins of Kathmandu feebly protested against Madhav Raj's foolhardiness, because of the indifference of the then Prime Minister Bir Shumshere J. B. Rana, nothing serious happened to Madhav Raj. But a little later, in the high-noon or the mid-night of Ranarchy, in 1905 Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere J. B. Rana organized a colloquium between Madhav Raj and the Brahmin Pundits of his court including of course, Raj Guru Prayag Raj.¹⁶ In logic and ratiotiative power young Madhav Raj proved better than the hoary pundits. For sometime even the Prime Minister was over-whelmed. He started praising the young man. But in no time the Raj Guru persuaded the

14 Prachanda Pradhan, "Socio-Economic Ecology of the Nepalese Bureaucracy," *Vasudha*, XIII:3 (Feb.-March 1970), pp. 9-16.

15 D.R. Regmi *A Century of family Autocracy in Nepal*, (Varanasi, 2nd, ed., 1958); and: D.R. Regmi, *Whither Nepal*, (Kathmandu, 1958), see particularly the Chapter "Nepal in Retrospect."

16 Bala C. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 399-400, 404.

Prime Minister, elaborating upon the allegation that Madhav Raj believed that Lord Pashupati was merely a stone image and that if Madhav Raj's Arya Samajist cult became popular the common man would run amok with individualism and insist upon political freedom. Immediately, poor Madhav Raj was whipped in front of his opponents; he was then taken on a humiliating round of the city and imprisoned for two years. One of his two supporters—a Buddhist by faith—was compelled to pay the penance of a daily visit to Lord Pashupati ! Almost three decades later the situation had not changed for the better. To give another classic example, in 1937 Madhav Raj's son Shukra Raj Shastri (who, together with some other colleagues like Ganga Lal and Kedar Man Vyathit had formed a clandestine organization called Nepal Nagarik Adhikar Samiti—Nepal Civil Liberty Association) was lecturing at Kathmandu on Karma Yoga in the Gita. He was arrested on the charge that he preached the precepts of the holy Gita without being a Brahmin. I do not wish to go into the details of the history of social, cultural and political awakening in the twentieth century Nepal. Not that it is very long, but that there is not much point in exhuming all the dead; a few should suffice. The monolithic Rana Establishment—with its major supporting limbs like the Army, the priesthood and the Civil Service, created a belated glacial age in the intellectual history of Nepal. Till 1950 there was not any perceptible thaw in Nepalese society, in spite of a sporadic episode or two. The non-conformist young men who were the major actors in these sad, stormy and tragic episodes were mostly educated either in Kathmandu (Durbar School-Tri-Chandra College), or in the cities of north India. There were also the Nepalese infantrymen who fought in the World Wars and saw that they too could achieve something under congenial circumstances. At a later stage of the political eruption young Nepalese who had participated in the Indian movements or had come in contact with and under the sphere of influence of the great leaders of India came to assume the leadership of the mass upheaval. When the disgruntled Ranas—too long deprived from the roll to power—too joined in, it was high time that the anachronistic regime collapsed.

The above account is, of course above the past which is oppressively present as a backdrop of the history just behind the post-1950 decades. It is an account at once revealing and relevant to understand the contemporary intellectual situation and the claims—at times absurd and megalomaniac of the Nepalese intelligentsia. The commonplaces of our geography, ecology, history, culture, evolution of power and the inhibited growth of other institutions like modern education and stream-lined public administration are the

burden of the past—a truly burdensome inheritance to which the Nepalese intelligentsia today are an inescapable heir. I began with the commonplaces, because they make a safe beginning. The story above is sad, because it shows, among other things, that the Nepalese intelligentsia are not only an inhibited phenomenon—whose growth is as late and fresh as the growth of an overnight fungus. They are also a displaced stratum of society, because by their training and education (as against their upbringing and origins) they have suddenly been compelled to live in the latter half of the twentieth century without due ceremony. They woke up one fine morning from the sleep of the Middle Ages and found themselves exposed to the neon lights of an electronic age.

The post-1950 decade in Nepal is characterized, in the first place, by a sense of release and emancipation of the intellect from a century-old political and priestly yoke, and in the second place, by an unprecedented expansion of intellectual and cultural opportunities. The decade can aptly be called a decade of extroversion. For it was a decade of explosion of all manner of ideas, activities and organized efforts. It was a decade when the pre-existing narrow stratum of the intelligentsia was frantically active and vocal—socially, culturally and most important of all politically. It thoroughly exposed the social attitude and the political immaturity of the Nepalese intelligentsia, and the fluctuation—till the end of the decade—seemed to be more and more to the left. By and large, they were critical of the existing order, institutions, traditions and value-systems. In fact, the up-and-keeping among them professed Marxism, Progressivism,¹⁷ Humanism or Liberal Democratic ideals in broad daylight. In these multifarious activities they brandished their particular shade of ideology with very little inhibition. Numerous social, literary and cultural organizations like the Students Unions and Federations, the Youth Organizations, the Peace Committee, Study Circles, Debating Societies, Literary Associations, Art Societies, Journalists Unions, Writers Unions, Cultural Associations etc., came rapidly into being one after the other (or one *against* the other). Everyone tacitly assumed that they should show some or other political leaning before they had any right to survive. Apart from this broad spectrum of nebulous activities, in the ranks of the newly formed political parties there were several talented people working in multiple capacities. On February 19, 1951 Nepal's first public-owned Nepali language daily *Awaj* came out. It was followed by a spate of dailies, weeklies, monthlies and other party periodicals and literature in

17 Govinda Prasad Lohani, Krishna Chandra Singha Pradhan, *et al* in *Pragati*.

Nepali, Hindi, Newari and English. As a matter of course many of these were victimized by infant-mortality, which takes a toll of so many of Nepal's grey little magazines after a brief and pallid existence. By the end of the decade, at least in a city or two in the kingdom, the intelligentsia had made their presence felt in the community.

The picture will, however, remain incomplete if no mention is made of an equally rapid swelling of the rank and file of the Nepalese intelligentsia. Prior to 1950 Nepal had only one college, six high schools, and about 200 primary schools. These were the only perennial sources—other than the indigenous centres of learning like *Shresta Pathshalas* or *Bhasa Pathshalas*—of recruits to the class of intelligentsia. But with the opening of the decade the schools and colleges began to multiply almost at a geometric rate, so that by the end of the decade there was already sizeable literate population in Nepal. Although not all of them were members of the intelligentsia they certainly formed a broad base and reliable audience for potential intellectuals. For one great prerequisite for the emergence of intellectuals as a class is the broad base of a literate audience—a sort of consuming intelligentsia, as it were. In the meantime, the aspiring Nepalese continued to go to India for higher education and technical courses, because the pre-1959 Nepal did not have a university of her own. Every year Nepalese scholars left the country in sizeable numbers to do post-graduate work in India, Britain and the United States, under the Colombo Plan Scholarships, the British Council Scholarships and the Oregon University Contract Program. In the latter part of the post-1950 decade most of the Nepalese scholars went to India under government grants or on the Colombo Plan Scholarships, and most of them did a Master's programme. Only an exceptional few went to India to do research in the early fifties, and the first one in this generation was, I believe, Y. P. Pant (Ph. D., Banaras, 1952). In the 1950s the number of the Nepalese to go overseas—as compared with those who went to India—was microscopic. The first few to go and get a research degree from Britain were Dr Dhruva Man Amatya, Dr and Mrs Balaram Joshi, Mr Trilokya Man Shrestha and Mr Upendra Man Malla (I understand that the first person to go to Britain under the British Council Scholarship was Professor Yadu Nath Khanal, 1952).¹⁸ Similarly, the first batch of six (?) to go to the U.S.A. under the Oregon University Contract Program left Nepal in 1955. Most of them worked for an M.A. or M. Ed. or

¹⁸ In a private conversation Professor Y. N. Khanal supplied me with this detail.

M.S. The next batch of the Oregon University alumni in Nepal—this time with a research degree—returned home as recently as 1962, when Messers Trailokya Nath Upraity, Panna Lal Pradhan, Krishna Prasad Sharma, Shankar Prasad Pradhan, and Dibya Deo Bhatt got a Ph. D. in their respective fields of learning.¹⁹ In giving the foregoing details I am *not* assuming that it is necessary to have high academic qualifications in order to become an intellectual, or that every one who has high academic qualifications is necessarily an intellectual. What I certainly am assuming is that in sketching a sociological account of the Nepalese intelligentsia, the nature of educational opportunities, its history—both quantitative and qualitative, is one of the most infallible indexes to the culture of the contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia. For example, these nascent beginnings made in the fifties show that, not only higher education and training in the modern academic milieu, but also academic pursuits on the modern lines of research and scholarship, are very recent phenomena in Nepal with hardly any precedence in our history. Undoubtedly the number of the people who have gone abroad for study, training and research either in the Indian subcontinent or overseas (this now includes some 40 countries) has gone up. Between 1961 and 1968 some 2,519 had been ‘abroad.’ In 1970 alone 53 scholars have been decorated with the Mahendra Vidya Bhushan.²⁰ Today Nepal has a university of her own with a decade-long history of teaching, and network of 40 affiliated colleges spread all over the kingdom. Nevertheless, the history of Nepal’s modernized academics is a history of less than a decade. More than anything else, it is a history of a simple numerical explosion of the school-college-university going population. By 1968 there were 11,802 young men and women²¹ in the colleges and the university of Nepal. By 1968 these institutions had a total Faculty strength of 720 persons. Notwithstanding these impressive figures, the 1961 Census Report tells us that out of every hundred Nepalese ninety-two can neither read nor write. Nepal spends only 6.5 per cent of her total annual budget on education,²² on which another country like Thailand spends 20 per cent of hers. Materially and intellectually there is no ‘climate’ in the university or elsewhere in its 40 tributary centres of higher learning. Here teaching is

19 Checked personally by the author with one of the group.

20 *The Gorkhapatra*, Falgun 8, 2026 (i.e. Feb. 19, 1970).

21 Ministry of Education, *Educational Statistical Report 1966-67*, (Kathmandu: HMG, 1969.)

22 *Ibid.*

mainly a means of livelihood rather than a way of life. In the shady groves of these academes very little work of intellectual consequence goes on outside the regular traffic of class room teaching—except for an unflinching manufacture of unemployable graduates.

In the growth of the institutional complex which helped the recent numerical flowering of Nepalese intelligentsia it is not just the growth of the educational institutions which deserves mention. Nepal's literary and journalistic elite, her administrators, lawyers, diplomats, artists, unaffiliated scholars, archaeologists, historians also saw a slow and steady growth in their numbers and their institutional affiliations. For instance, in the post-1950 decades journalism has flowered considerably in quantity. Though the quality of Nepal's periodical literature may not be comparatively speaking too high, or the remuneration for the regular and free-lance writers not very steady, there are at least a large number of publications in three or four languages, which the literary and journalistic intelligentsia share both as producers and consumers. In 1957 (Vikram Era: Ashad 9, 2014) the Royal Nepal Academy was incorporated by law, and it has since patronized and employed some poets and writers and sponsored their works. The Gorkhapatra Corporation—with its popular and esteemed quartet of publications in Nepali and English—or the Rastriya Sambad Samiti, among other corporations, employs some bright young men. Then there is the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting, the Panchayat Philosophy Committee, which patronize a large scale literature on the Panchayat System which, I understand, is a lucrative application. In Nepal publishing—except for school textbooks—is almost non-existent. A few daring publishers like the Sajha Publishers, the Madan Puraskar Guthi and others like Voice of Nepal are encouraging the writers and poets, scholars and historians to get their works published without any financial involvement. Besides, there is a large number of public organizations devoted to literature like Nepali Sahitya Sansthan, cultural organizations like Nepal Association of Fine Arts, or small circles of scholars devoted to research in Nepalese history, culture and antiquity, like Itihas Samshodhan Mandala, or devoted to research in economic and social life of Nepal, like the Forum for Social Studies, Council of Applied Economic Research. Apart from these, there are financially secure centres of research activity like the Centre for Economic Development and Administration, or resourceful but unexplored avenues like the Nepal Radio which has hitherto been merely a source of entertainment and publicity.

THE INTELLECTUAL IN NEPALESE SOCIETY

However, none of these institutions or professions absorb as many highly gifted and educated Nepalese as His Majesty's Administrative or other Services and subsidiary establishments do. Some of these Services were organized and streamlined only as recently as 1962. At the invitation of His Majesty's Government the UN Inter-Regional Adviser in Public Administration, Mr. McCrensky, was in Nepal from November 4 -18, 1968. To prepare the *Proposal for Unified Civil Service for His Majesty's Government of Nepal* ²³ Mr McCrensky was supplied with the following data on Nepal's Public Administration by the Administrative Management Department, HMG:

Total Civil Servants in Nepal	25,315
Total Gazetted Officers	2,033
Total Gazetted Officers in the non-Technical Services	1,101
Total Gazetted Officers in the Technical Services	932

The dimensions of the HMG establishment are likely to bulge, not thin down in the future. Here in the ranks of 25,315 or 2,033 men are some of Nepal's most brilliant men belonging to two or three different generations—all enmeshed in the daily round of Singh Durbar bureaucracy and routine details of advice and administration. It was, I think, in 1955-56 that the first few academics like Professor Yadu Nath Khanal and Dr Y. P. Pant migrated from the groves of academe to the corridors of power. Since then every year more and more highly educated and gifted young men are attracted by the magnetism of power into its field of operation. Some, like Dr Dhruva Man Amatya, have returned like the prodigal son; others, like Mr Pashupati Shumshere, have been ejected as antibodies in the arteries of power. Yet many, like Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, have found Singh Durbar congenial for a full flowering of their talents. Just as in the fifties Khanals and Pants entered the maze with little qualm similarly in the sixties Dr B. P. Shrestha, Dr Harka B. Gurung *et al* have been lured into the edifice of planning as neo-Brahmins, while other brilliant youngmen, like Dr M. Mohsin and later Dr Jagadish P. Sharma, are instituted as court-ideologues of the System. Besides, there is a host of highly polished diplomats, like Mr Kula Shekhar Sharma, Mr Bala Chandra Sharma, studious and efficient secretaries, like Mr K. B.

23 Edward McCrensky, "Proposal for a Unified Civil Service for His Majesty's Government of Nepal," *Nepalese Journal of Public Administration* 1:1 (Dec. 1968), pp. 47-55. (pertains to Administrative Management Dept., HMG).

Malla, Professor Y. N. Khanal, Mr R. C. Malhotra, outstanding forensic brains, like Attorney General Mr Shambhu Prasad Gyawali, or seasoned scholars like Mr Keshar Bahadur K. C. in the Establishment—all of whom show a great preoccupation with the culture of the printed word and things of the mind. Yet, by and large, in relation to the rest of society (as against the state) the huge institution of public administration in Nepal is nearly inarticulate. The decision-makers in Nepal may be creative—they may generate ideas, and once they are generated the decision-makers ideas, and once they are generated the decision-makers may translate them into reality. Yet institutionally a civil servant *qua* civil servant is *less* intellectually independent than a non-civil servant as a citizen. When he has to choose between the security of tenure and an articulate conscience, a civil servant is likely to find his conscience an expensive thing, and presumably many would prefer not to have it at all. What comes conveniently in between is the Civil Service Code. ²⁴

This brings me close to the 1960s. The most primary prerequisite for the emergence of a truly independent intellectual class is, not just the growth of cities with university, college, libraries, journals, theatres, cinemas, radios etc., but also a sufficient degree of *economic independence*, so that the intellectuals can live up to their ideals and convictions without fearing social and economic persecution.²⁵ In Nepal except for a few self-supporting intellectuals like Mr. Mahesh Chandra Regmi or erstwhile politicians like Dr D.R. Regmi or 'affluent aristocrats' like Mr Soorya Prasad Upadhyaya or Mr Rishikesh Shaha, nearly every one of the established names in the creative and influential fields are in the full time service of the establishment. Almost all creative and influential intellectuals in Nepal are economically dependent in one way or the other on the Government. One plain, but primary, reason for the poverty of intellect in Nepal is the poverty of the intellectual. The intellectual, as well as the non-intellectual, has to scrape a living. The intellectual may not live by bread alone, but he has to live, like others, supporting a family with a host of dependants and economic liabilities. In Nepal, because of an inhibited growth of other institutional complex (like industry, for instance), in eight out of every ten instances the intellectual scrapes his

24 Robert K. Merton, "Role of the Intellectuals in Public Bureaucracy," *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York, Free Press, 1965), pp. 207-224, and p. 212 footnotes.

25 Egon Ernest Bargel, "The position of Intellectuals in a Class System", *Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1962), pp. 278-288.

living by serving in the governmental or semi-governmental establishments. The Government and its established networks are the only *jajmans* of intellectuals in Nepal. This economic bondage of the intellectuals makes their convictions an expensive luxury. This normally settles their attitude towards society in general and the Establishment in particular. Thus the most conspicuous single feature of the intellectual life in Nepal in the 1960s is its neutralization, its introversion and identification with an in-built nationalist ideology and aggressively pro-Establishment attitude. Till 1965-66 there was hardly any piece of evidence to show that intellectuals in Nepal could be critical of the temporal world. Just as in the fifties it used to be considered respectable to be critical of the Establishment, in the sixties it became respectable to be plainly uncritical of the Establishment. In fact, even some erstwhile Marxist pundits and left-wing intellectuals had made public recantation of their leanings and professed their faith in the official line. After 1960 not only did the writing of an articulate section of the Nepalese intelligentsia become visibly uncritical of the Government, but also a large number of them were recruited to popularize the System as popular exponents on its economic, political, social, cultural and spiritual aspects. The old Ministry of National Guidance, the Ministry of Home and Panchayat Affairs, the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting, the Panchayat Philosophy Committee, not to mention a number of Government-aided active Panchayat Study Forums, have in the past decade or so sponsored a sizeable quantity of indigenous literature on the System. The rise of Panchayat ideology has given, in a sense, unsought for opportunities to the writers who have a gift of phrasing.²⁶ In all likelihood, some of them would have, under a different political set-up, written equally good books on the ruling ideology. Though a few, like *A Planned Democracy*, are cogent and persuasive, much of this literature is totally inaccessible to the common man. As far as *he* is concerned the only proof of the pudding is in eating it, and ninety-two out of every hundred Nepalese cannot eat any verbal pudding at all. The ideological ramifications apart, for them the Kingdom of Heaven shall not be brought on the Nepalese soil by verbal magic alone.

It is here that in Nepal one sees a situation almost parallel to what Julian Benda in France had called *trahison de clercs* (i.e. the betrayal of the intellectuals).²⁷ Here I see the need to be explicit about the basic role and

26 One or two members of the Panchayat Philosophy Committee have a facile command over their language. Seem for instance, the writings of Mr Poorna Bahadur 'Manav'-a deposed member of the Committee.

27 Julian Benda, *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, (Boston, 1955).

function of the intellectuals in a traditional society like ours. We may begin by distinguishing between the term 'intelligentsia' and the term 'intellectual.' 'Intelligentsia' was a term first used in Czarist Russia in the nineteenth century to refer to 'those who have received a university education which qualified them for professional occupations. Subsequently, its connotation had been extended by many writers to include the disgruntled educated class in professions or outside them, but who have enlightened ideas and are critical of the social order.' The class in Russia was represented by such giants as Belinsky and Herzen. 'The intellectuals, on the other hand, are generally regarded as comprising the much smaller group of those who contribute to the creation, transmission and criticism of ideas; they include writers, artists, scientists, philosophers, religious thinkers, social theorists, political commentators.²⁸ A direct concern with the non-material culture of a society is their distinguishing feature.

In Europe, the origins of the modern intellectuals have generally been placed in the medieval universities. The intellectuals established themselves as critics of society by their opposition to the ruling class and to the Church of the *ancien regime*. It is in this role, as critics of society, that the modern intellectuals in the West have won their place. Thus the primary function of the intellectual class is to serve as a kind of permanent opposition in society by its radical criticism of actual institutions, values, behaviour, and attitudes, including outworn traditions. The intellectuals, unlike the rest of their society, are qualified to withdraw themselves and meditate and evaluate the actual in terms of the ideal. The role of the intellectuals is primarily to evaluate the realities of their society. In Nepal this is where, because of the economic poverty and bondage of the intellectuals, they seem to have failed their society and betrayed their 'class obligations'—if they feel they have any. An intellectual is not just a latter-day variation on the ancient Brahmin priest: his function in society is not ritualistic. Though a great many of his species do occupy high posts as experts, technicians, planners, advisers, ideologues and functionaries in the service of the Establishment, modern intellectuals, unlike the proverbial philosophers who have merely *interpreted* the world in several ways, must help society to *change*, not to stagnate. What we have in Nepal, however, is not an articulate class of intellectuals who are willing to fill in the critical-evaluative role; what we have is only a class of white-collared proletariat who work, not for wages, but for salaries of different scales.

28 T. B. Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, (Pelican, 1967,) pp. 69-111.

THE INTELLECTUAL IN NEPALESE SOCIETY

The basis of all intellectual culture is honesty or the integrity of effort. The tenor of Nepalese civic life, however, is such that it is extremely unlikely to promote either of these ethical bases of all intellectual culture. For instance, reading some asserted species of the literature on the Panchayat System makes one believe that for the vocal few preoccupied with writing on the System it is not so much a matter of intellectual commitment as of convenience. No wonder that for them the only way 'to strengthen the System' (or other indigenous values and institutions) is *just* to go on praising them verbally, although nobody really knows who consumes the end-product, or for whom the literature of eulogy is produced. One could just as well say that they are 'committed' to the weather. The social observers (who have no axe to grind) wonder if in the future the ability to churn out such literature, irrespective of their quality, is to be the only qualifying test of a man's intellectual abilities or of his worth and usefulness to the System. In the long run, incompetent publicity may do greater harm to our institutions than inadequate publicity. Compared with some esoteric ideological expositions, not to speak of the literature of eulogy, an empirical field-study on the *actual* working of some town panchayats, or a pilot survey of the day-to-day operations of some village panchayats or class-organizations, is likely to be more effective for *evaluating* the System and, if only the decision-makers are willing to face the findings, orient the System on this basis.

In the post-industrial societies in the West intellectuals are recruited increasingly from several different social strata. This is, perhaps, why they are said to be *freischwebende intelligenz*,²⁹ to be socially 'unattached' or 'free-floating'—free in the sense that they are not guided by any class or caste prejudices; free in the sense that they are guided, not by sentimental slogans or demagoguery, but by clear reasoning. Sociologists like Gaetano Mosca and Karl Mannheim pin their faith on the intellectuals as the bridging force between the class-divisions. The main prerogatives of the intellectual class are said to be 1. objectivity of outlook, and 2. freedom from allegiance, except to reason and truth, except to the intellect. In the foreseeable future intellectuals in Nepal are, however, quite unlikely to fulfill this second role. In Nepal intellectuals, as well as the broad stratum of the intelligentsia, have come almost entirely from the upper castes—the Brahmins, Kshtriyas and the upper caste Newars. They constitute more than 80 per cent of Nepal's intellectual

29 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1936).

and power—elite,³⁰ and in a profession like teaching there are more than 40 per cent Brahmins and Kshatriyas, some 33 per cent upper caste Newars. In a society where, however, modern the culture of most intellectuals may be, most of them live their daily lives in a 'a vital domestic culture of kinship, tribe and religious outlook' it is impossible to view them as 'a class above all classes, a caste above all castes, a community above all communities'—with on prejudices. To overcome the culture of kinship few try and possibly none succeeds completely. In many cases the prejudices and allegiance are merely rationalized under the cloak of nationalistic and similar other jargons.³¹ Thus, in the second role expected of intellectuals the Nepalese breed bare extremely unlikely to fit in: the backdrop of their history and their social allegiance are both against it.

Finally, by definition the intellectuals should be *primarily* (but not exclusively) preoccupied with the culture of ideas, ideals, with the creations of and things of the mind. By this I do not mean that they should be otherworldly, impractical, anti-empirical in their pursuits. Perhaps a host of modern intellectuals betray in their worldly make-up a streak of the medieval monk, but a typical modern intellectual is not a latter-day variation of the world-renouncing fakir. The intellectual is very much of this world, but unlike others he lives by some ideals and convictions. His idealism, intellectuality and integrity of effort characterize him as much as his attainment in terms of his influence and prestige in society. In Nepal, however, the literate section of the population shows, not only a great dearth of idealism, or a universal paucity of effort, application and dedication, but also an endemic infection with the virus of plain materialistic success. Success—measurable material success, success by hook or by crook—this is the law, and for the poverty-stricken Nepalese 'making money' is the only visible end for which life seems to be worth living. To him the eternal choice is between 'making oneself' and 'remaking society' and making oneself is invariably synonymous in Nepal with making money. Even those who are still suffering from a hangover of 'obsolete' idealism find themselves already trapped between their idealistic values and aspirations *and* the realities of the society to which they must accommodate themselves. Hemmed in on all sides by the *nouveau*

30 Pashupati Shumshere J. B. Rana, "Towards an Integrated Policy of National Integration," *Vasudha* XII:8 (July-Aug. 1969), 7-14.

31 Take for instance, the attitude of Nepal's respectable intellectuals towards the minority languages and cultures of Nepal—which seems to me to be a test case, a sort of litmus paper.

riche of a developing society the Nepalese intelligentsia is becoming increasingly materialistic in its value-system, and like mercenaries who fight for money, they measure success—just as other members of their society do—in terms of cash income reinforced concrete edifices, cars, foreign liquor, pieces of furniture, advantageous marriages, overseas travels and so on. Besides, in Nepal the literate folks as well as the illiterate ones pin greater faith on connections, influence and the ability to please than on personal striving, integrity and achievement. They are not to blame, particularly when the latter never count in Nepal before the former—such is the reward-system, in Nepal. They are not to blame if in our acquisitive society, dreaming of easy success, of what that great American, Dale Carnage, calls ‘the short-cut to distinction’—Ambassadorship, Ministership, Secretaryship—for such are the ultimate aspirations of our elite, they prefer applying themselves to please the powers that be, to applying themselves to the lone pursuits of a non-material culture where success is always a matter of achievement. (In the post-industrial societies the status of an intellectual is always an achieved one). The prospects of easy money and overseas travels are not always in this line. While this is the social milieu of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia, paradoxically enough, Nepal is one of the few countries in Asia where literate members of the population are greatly flattered when someone calls them ‘intellectual.’ They see their own shadows almost invariably larger than life-size. Compared with their attainments, qualitative or quantitative, the claims of the literate Nepalese to intellectuality sound megalomaniac. Contemporary Nepalese intellectual culture is a little too meagre, in fact so meagre that even the few genuine scholars have no special reasons to be self-congratulatory. Take, for instance, any field of intellectual application. How many readable books and papers have been written by Nepalese in last twenty years on, say, the economic problems of Nepal ? Half a dozen by Dr Y. P. Pant, a few by Dr-B. P. Shrestha and a few more by the textbook economists. Compared with the international standards of academic scholarship one would not know where our textbook economists stand or what degree of originality is there in their approach. How many books and learned papers are there on such vital, fertile and unexplored fields of Nepalese life as Art, Architecture, Religion, Culture, History, Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, Political evolution, Languages and Literatures ? Where there are a few, as on History by such established names as Dr D. R. Regmi, they are more a monument to personal perseverance than to the originality of approach or an abiding scholarly passion for minutiae, for accuracy of language

and exactitude of details. Even on our own history and culture what do we have other than fugitive writings of the late Historian-Laureate Kharidar Babu Ram Acharya, the publications of Itihas Samsodhan Mandala, the books of Surya Bikram Gewali, Balachandra Sharma and Yogi Narahari Nath? By and large the attainments of Nepal's haloed intellectuals are limited to the columns of the *Gorkhapatra* or *The Rising Nepal*. Our scholarly tradition has not outgrown the *Vasudha-Nepal Review* or *Ruprekha Himani-Madhuparka* stage, and it is these grey little magazines, these cheerless periodicals and dailies which nurture our minds. A serious and unsparing self-examination should have left no room for the curious sense of self-importance which nine out of every ten intellectuals in Nepal unfailingly betray.

This almost suffocating milieu is vitiated by a great deal of inbreeding among the Nepalese intelligentsia. For as far as the general culture of the Nepalese intelligentsia is concerned, on either extreme end of the spectrum there are two parallel and mutually inaccessible cultures: 1. The traditional Sanskritized, Hinduistic, spiritualistic, didactic, introvert, and aggressively nostalgic and nationalistic intellectual culture of the pundits, and 2. the Westernized, a modern jargon-ridden, empirical, critical, at times sophisticated, extrovert intellectual culture of the neo-Brahmins, the modernized experts, advisers, technicians, economists, writers, commentators, journalists and academics. In one case it is Sanskrit which is the cultural feeder, in the other it is the English language—paradoxically neither of which is the languages spoken by the Nepalese as their first language. The Hindu pundits, though insistent upon the revival of Sanskrit, condescend to use heavily Sanskritized Nepali. The 'modernized' elite use English, and they use it as competently as they would have done Nepali. Their use of English, though far from being impeccable, is an open and inviting field for socio-linguistic enquiry—deserving a separate study. Since the culture of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia, except in the case of artists, painters, sculptors who are not terribly numerous, is predominantly the culture of the printed word, I shall just mention a few things as to the possibilities and limitations of both Sanskritized and modernized language-cultures. As far as creative work and intellectual discourse are concerned there are three³² languages in use in Nepal. 1. Nepali 2. Newari, 3. English. Of the three Newari is limited almost entirely to 'creative' writing among the Newars, and because of inbreeding and state negligence it is,

32 Babu Ram Acharya, "Nepal, Newar, and the Newari Language," *Nara Kunja* 5:1 (Baishak 2026). (in Nepali)

though culturally a rich and significant language, not likely to be very important for the non-Newari-speaking population of Nepal. And the Newars themselves as a people are almost finished. The position of Nepali is different, first because it is the national language and secondly, because it is a language spoken by more than half of Nepal's total population. Politically, the future of Nepali is nothing if not bright. Its journalistic and creative possibilities³³ are immense. Creative writers, journalists, teachers, textbook writers, historians are increasingly using Nepali for their work. However, the 49 per cent of the non-Nepali speaking population of Nepal are likely to find its everyday use almost a necessity for survival, while its increasing Sanskritization—by creating an emotional barrier—is likely to put them in a socially disadvantageous status. As a medium of scientific, technical and modern intellectual discourse there are almost insurmountable limitations in the intrinsic potentialities of Nepali, because the paradox about Nepali is that the more staunchly nationalistic we become about its use in higher discourse the less it sounds like the Nepali language. This may be one of the several reasons why the English language has been used even by those intellectuals whose first language is Nepali. In fact, more Nepali-speaking writers have used English than the writers speaking other minority languages. The sociological reasons for the use of English may be too many, and I do not wish to go into them in this enquiry. Although all Nepalese writers using English are fitfully aware of the fact that no one speaks English in Nepal as his mother tongue, that their readership is extremely limited, or that their own English is not impeccable, they continue to find it a convenient medium of written discourse—in the case of the non-Nepali speakers, perhaps a little more convenient than Nepali. Some of them are genuinely handicapped, either by their educational history, or by their ethnic origins, but others use English simply because of its prestige value. In any case the use of readable English—as against the use of English—is likely to remain a minority phenomenon in Nepal. The producers and the consumers of English writing in Nepal are nearly the same people.

Whatever be the social origins, the antecedents, the culture, education and profession of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia, they are likely to

33 See Uttam Kunwar's *Writer and Literature* (in Nepali) and also *Ruparekha* (a Nepali monthly), The Writers Number, Nos. 100–101 to have an idea of the range and the nature of the use of the Nepali language among the Nepalese intelligentsia., particularly for the available information on the social backgrounds they come from.

remain a shadowy and insubstantial phenomenon--merely a band of economically castrated and socially limping angels beating the drums of their respective fads. In the recent past even the few stray intellectuals with us have tended to be less radical critics of their society than earlier. They have tended to be more concerned with solving the kind of short-term, specific problems which arise out of their complete identification with the establishment. Of the rest, who are not-too-understandably impatient to be admitted into the pantheon, most lack character and distinction, integrity and effort, and their numerical presence, like the presence of monks in medieval monasteries, is merely ritualistic. Because of their ineffectuality and moral impotence the secular thoughts of common run of Nepalese folks are 'concentrated mostly on wages, salaries, and profits, on idle obnoxious forms of recreation', and above all, on the deadly rate-race for connection, influence and power. The word "intellectual", like other status-symbols like the cement-cube of a bungalow or the ownership of a car, may add an additional ring of halo round one's head, but the moral justification for its overuse may need a close collective self-examination among the class of aspirants. The last word has already been said on this subject in an editorial of Kathmandu's leading English language daily, and I see nothing more befitting to use as a conclusion to my enquiry into the poverty of intellect in Nepal, than an acknowledged quotation from the forthright editorial of *The Rising Nepal*:

"Though few can be called intellectuals, in the true sense of the word, it is no shame not to be one. It is even better, and more honest, than being a pseudo-intellectual".³⁴

Naturally, it will be fruitless to hunt for Russels, Sartres, Gramscis, to invent Herbert Marcuses, Noam Chomskys, or to institute Galbraiths, Marshall McLuhans: we have none, except decent, and respectable cogs in the wheel of Nepalese society, persistently striving towards the beatitude of an exploitationless state.

(1970)

³⁴ *The Rising Nepal*, (Feb. 3, 1970).

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

COUNTRY DATA—NEPAL*

Area	Population (est.)	Population Density (1971)
141,000 Sq. Km.	12.039 Million (Mid 1973) Rate of growth: 2.07 per cent	82.07 per Sq. Km.

Population Characteristics ¹	(1971)	Health (1972/73)
Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000)	42	Population per physician
Crude Death Rate (per 1,000)	20	39,000
Distribution of Land ownership	(1962)	Education (1970)
Percentage owned by top 1% of owners	20	Adult Literacy rate% 11.8
Percentage owned by bottom 55% of owners	14	Primary School enrollment % 32

* This data is compiled by Mr. Suresh P. Sharma, CEDA

1. Estimated

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

APPENDIX A

GDP PER CAPITA in 1968/69 at 1964/65 Constant Prices : Rs 605

Annual rate of growth of GDP at 1964/65 constant Prices : 2.7 Per cent

GDP Distribution By Sector (in Million Rs.)

(at Current Market prices.)

Sector	1964/65	65/66	66/67	67/68	68/69	69/70 ²
1. Agriculture	3,915	4,694	4,218	5,217	5,890	6,563
2. Mining	1	2	1	1	1	1
3. Manufacturing	83	98	104	137	212	278
4. Construction	123	106	118	134	144	192
5. Transport, Communication and Services	91	93	102	120	141	168
6. Cottage Industry	392	469	422	522	589	656
7. Financial Institutions	69	80	82	87	106	128
8. Ownership of Dwellings	634	569	683	698	714	729
9. Public Administration and Defence	82	101	143	154	166	199
10. Public Utilities	4	5	8	10	11	15
11. Wholesale and Retail Trade	309	299	248	247	358	274
12. Services	170	177	204	219	235	256
Total	5,893	6,795	6,333	7,546	8,567	9,449

<u>Money</u>	July <u>1969</u>	July <u>1970</u>	July <u>1971</u>	July <u>1972</u>
Money Supply (In Thousand of Rs)	699,355	762,325	793,534	855,771

2. Provisional

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Transactions in Convertible Currencies (in Million Rs)

	1966/67	1967/68	1968/69	1969/70	1970/71	1971/72
Receipts:						
Exports	57.3	88.8	136.8	108.8	87.4	89.4
Invisible	41.2	62.7	78.6	100.4	106.4	129.5
Miscellaneous	23.7	58.9	47.2	71.6	61.6	82.0
Total	122.2	210.4	262.6	280.8	255.4	301.9
Payments:						
Imports	51.1	78.2	76.2	134.7	79.3	113.4
Miscellaneous	20.4	35.1	40.4	54.3	92.0	140.5
Total	71.5	113.3	116.6	189.0	171.3	259.9
Surplus:	50.7	97.2	146.0	91.6	84.1	47.9

Gross Official Reserves in Million Rs)

July 1967	July 1968	July 1969	July 1970	July 1971	July 1972
382.2	601.6	784.9	904.2	1020.7	1104.0

Government Finance (in Thousand of Rs)

	1970/71	1971/72 ³	1972/73 ¹
Government Revenue	459,698	518,101	600,98+
Government Expenditure	769,500	928,810	1267,534

1. Estimated

3. Revised estimate

NEPAL IN PERSPECTIVE

APPENDIX A

Foreign Assistance To Nepal, By Major Donors ((Rs. Million)

Donor	1968/69	1969/70	1970/71 ^a
India	106.5	139.6	126.0
China	37.6	48.5	60.0
USA	38.5	43.7	59.0
USSR	1.2	4.5	3.5
Others	2.1	7.5	22.3
Total	185.9	243.8	270.8

Sources

1. Fourth Plan, Kathmandu, National Planning Commission, 1972.
2. Agricultural Statistics of Nepal, Kathmandu; HMG Food and Agriculture Ministry, EAPD, 1972.
3. Quarterly Economic Bulletin, Vol, VII No. 3, Mid-April 1973, Nepal Rastra Bank.
4. Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu, Nepal.

3. Revised Estimate

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX B
NEPAL'S PERIODIC PLANS
(In Millions of Rupees)

Item	First Plan (1956-1960)				Second Plan (1962-1965)				Third Plan (1966-1970)			Fourth Plan (1971-1976)			
	Plan Outlay	% of Outlay	Expenditure (actual)	% of Expenditure	Plan Outlay	% of Outlay	Expenditure (actual)	% of Expenditure	Plan Outlay	% of Outlay	Expenditure (actual)	% of Expenditure	Plan Outlay	% of Outlay	Expenditure
1. Agriculture															
Irrigation & Forest (including drinking water)	103.5	31	46.7	21	97.1	16	91.3	15	377.5	22	397.7	22	1171.8	33	—
2. Trans. & Commn.	111.5	34	94.9	45	143.5	24	93.5	16	615.0	35	873.3	49	1252.0	35	—
3. Indus. & Power	55.0	17	29.8	13	193.0	32	107.6	18	399.0	23	86.6	5	720.0	20	—
4. Social Services															
(Including sports)	44.0	13	37.2	18	78.7	13	95.3	16	272.5	16	239.0	14	381.5	11	—
5. Miscellaneous*	16.0	5	5.9	3	87.7	15	209.1	35	76.0	4	182.4	10	14.7	1*	—
Total	330.0	100	214.5	100	600.0	100	596.0	100	1740.0	100	1779.0	100	3540.0	100	

* Includes buildings, information and broadcasting, administrative improvement etc.

* Includes statistics only.

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INDEX

INDEX

- Administration, 161-165; *see also*
Civil Service
- Advisory Assemblies, 142-144
- Agricultural credit, 198-200
- Agricultural Development Bank, 198-199
- Agricultural Supply Corporation, 199-200
- Agriculture, 191-201, 204;
crop yields, 194-195; extension services, 198-201; institutional aspects, 198-201; plans, 197-198; production trends, 196
- Architecture, 92-99
- Army, 160-161
- Arniko, 71, 94
- Art, 79-92, 98-99; bronze art, 85-88; painting, 88-90; stone art, 79-84; terracotta art 84-85; woodwork, 90-92
- Aryans, 2, 3, 5-6, 35, 36-39, 67-69, 77
- Authorship, 287-289
- Baisi and Chaubisi Kingdoms, 2, 50, 52-53, 57, 76, 263
- Balance of payments, 168, 224-228, 295
- Bhils, 4
- Bhot* Valleys, 28, 31
- Bir Library, 12, 267
- Birgunj Sugar Factory, 207, 213
- Birta *see* Land tenure
- Brahmanism, 67, 72, 76
- Brahmins, 2, 19, 22, 36-39, 75, 77, 265-267
- Buddha and Buddhism, 6-12, 39-43, 65-69, 71-74, 76-77, 80, 82, 86-89, 93-94, 101-102
- Bureaucracy, 161-165; *see also*
Civil Service
- Cash crops, 192-193
- Caste system, 36-43; *see also*
Ethnography
- Cereal grains, 192
- Chen-yi, 251-252, 261
- Chepangs, 4
- Chhetris, 2, 22, 36-38, 40, 42, 52, 75
- China: art and architecture, 89, 94, 96; relation with Nepal, 48-49, 57-59, 242-247, 249-262; trade with Nepal, 221, 223-224, 232-233; treaty with Nepal, (1961, 1963) 252
- Chou En-lai, 260
- Chure Range, 26-32, 65
- Civil service, 157-158, 273-276, 281-282; *see also* Bureaucracy
- Cooperative societies, 199
- Council of Ministers, 154-156
- Culture, 65-79, 264-269
- Damai, 3, 37, 75
- Danuwars, 38, 77
- Devaluation, 225
- Development Decade, 174
- Dhimal, 77
- District Panchayats, 151-152
- Domestic savings, 18
- Dun* Valleys, 27, 32,
- Economic conditions, 17-23, 167-169; *see also* Planning
- Education, 270-280, 293
- Educational institutions, 280, 282-283
- Election, 144-145
- Ethnography, 4-12, 35-43, 140; *see also* Caste system
- Exports and imports, 179, 223-228, 233-234; statistics, 238-239, 295

- Fiction, 127, 131, 137
 Finance, 295
 First Plan, 170–179; agriculture, 197
 Foreign aid, 225, 253–257, 296;
 road-construction projects, 255–
 256
 Foreign policy, 14–16, 241–262; his-
 tory, 243–253
 Fourth Plan, 173–175, 177, 297;
 agriculture, 191, 197–198, 200

 Geopolitics, 14–17, 241–243, 257–259
Gopalraj Vamshavali, 6–7
 Gorkha and Gorkhalis, 2–3, 10,
 12–13, 36, 47, 52–57, 76, 79, 98,
 103–104; armies, 38, 40, 55, 98,
 109–112, 245–246, 252, 257
 Government *see* Political Institutions
 Gross domestic capital, 18
 Gross domestic product, 167–168,
 174, 215, 223–224, 294
 Gurkhas *see* Gorkha and Gorkhalis
 Gurungs, 3, 5, 40, 42–43, 50, 67, 76,
 103, 105, 107, 109, 117
 Guthi *see* Land tenure

 Hayus, 4
 Himalayan people, 41–43, 77, 104–105
 Himalayas, 1–6, 8, 13, 35, 39–40,
 56, 59–60, 219–220, 242–243
 Hindu, 2, 3, 10, 47, 50–51, 103;
 deities, 9; religion *see* Hinduism;
 worship, 8
 Hinduism, 3, 5, 37–43, 49, 67–77, 102
 History, 2–17, 47–63
 Housing pattern, 41–42, 92

 Icons of deities, 80–82, 84
 India, 2–3, 6–13, 20, 36, 40, 42, 65,
 268–269; relations with Nepal,
 47–51, 59–63, 241–262; trade with
 with Nepal, 219–239; treaty with
 Nepal, 206, 228, 230–231, 236, 252
 Industrial estates, 208–209
 Industrial policy, 203–217; history,
 203–207; problems, 210–217
 Industries, 207–210
 Intellectual culture and intellectuals,
 263–290
 International Monetary Fund, 253

 Jagir *see* Land tenure
 Jirels, 40
 Jute industry, 209

 Kami, 3, 37, 75
 Kathmandu and Valley: art and
 architecture, 79–99; culture 3–12,
 66, 73–74, 77; history, 15–17, 20,
 22, 38–41, 44, 47, 49–55, 58;
 language, 101–104, 110–111, 116;
 literature, 119–138
 Khasas, 2, 5, 6, 9–12, 36–37, 75–76;
 language, 103–104, 108–109, 111
 Kipat *see* Land tenure
 Kiratas, 5–8, 40, 43, 47, 52, 67–68,
 72, 101, 109, 121
 Kodari Road, 223, 231–232, 255
 Koirala, B. P. , 145–146, 252, 260
 Kols, 4
 Kushans, 37


 Lahure-dai, 13
 Lamas, 42, 74
 Land cultivation, 191–192
 Land reform, 21–22, 178, 186–189,
 199
 Land Reform Saving Corporation,
 198
 Land taxation, 185–187, 189
 Land tenure, 181–190
 Lands Act, (1964), 186–189

INDEX

- Landscape, 30–33
- Languages, 13, 35, 39–42, 68, 101–119, 264–265, 288–289; Census data, 105, 117–118; diversity, 101–104; genetic relationships, 106–107; history, 101–104; Indo-European, 106–119; policy, 115–117; Sino-Tibetan, 107; unity, 111–117
- Lepcha, 40
- Lichchavis, 6, 47–49, 67–72, 80–82, 86, 93, 101–102, 119–120
- Limbus, 4, 56, 68, 76, 107, 109, 117, 182
- Literature, 13, 119–138, 271
- Livestock and livestock products, 193
- Lumbini, 7, 65–66, 75, 101
- Magars, 3, 5, 38, 43, 50, 52, 67, 76, 103, 105, 109, 117
- Mahabharat Lekh, 26–29, 31–32, 76
- Maithili language, 73, 103, 105–106, 108, 115–118, 121
- Majhis, 77
- Mallas, 6, 9, 49–55, 70, 73–76, 83–84, 90, 99, 102–103, 119–121
- Manjushri, 4
- Manusmriti, 42
- Mao Tse-tung, 260
- Marwaris, 38
- Migration, 4, 5, 42–44, 139–140
- Modernisation, 18–23
- Money supply, 294
- Mongoloid Peoples, 2, 4–6, 11, 36, 39, 41, 67–68, 77, 101, 182; languages, 109–110
- Muslim invasion, 51, 74, 94; persecution, 2, 9; power, 50–51; rulers, 50
- Nagas, 4
- National Panchayat, 152–154
- National Planning Committee, (1949), 169–170
- National Trading Company, 235
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, 247–248, 252,
- Nepal Companies Act, (1936), 205
- Nepal Industrial Development Corporation, 177, 206–207
- Newars, 4–5, 9–11, 39–41, 42–44, 69–70, 72–75, 265–267; language, 101–105, 107, 110–111, 115–117, 120; literature, 119–121
- Newspapers and periodicals, 271, 277–278, 288
- Pahar* zone, 27–28, 32–33
- Paintings, 88–90
- Panchayats and Panchayat system, 146–155, 158–165, 171, 178, 189–190
- Per Capita income, 168, 294
- Physical setting, 31–33
- Planning, 167–180, 210–212, 297
- Poets and poetry, 122–137
- Political institutions, 139–165
- Political organizations, 158–160
- Political parties, 142–145
- Population, 45, 167, 172, 174, 264, 293
- Provident Fund, 177
- Public Service Commission, 157–158
- Publication and publicity media, 114–116, 270–271, 280
- Raikar *see* Land tenure
- Rais, 4, 41, 56, 67, 76, 109, 117
- Rajputs, 3, 38–39, 50, 52–53, 90, 95
- Rakam *see* Land tenure
- Rana regime, 3, 11, 15–16, 20–22, 60–63, 140–141; education, 108, 110, 268–272; foreign policy, 244–245, 247, 249; industrial policy,

- 203-204, 216; land tenure, 181, 184, 186; planning, 169-170
- Religion, 65-79
- Rivers system, 28-30
- Royal Drug Laboratories, 213
- Royal Nepal Academy, 112-115, 280
- Sajha Transport Organization, 213-214
- Sakas, 27
- Sanskrit University, 13
- Santhals, 4
- Sarki, 2, 37, 75
- Satars, 4, 77
- Second Plan, 171-172, 297; agriculture, 197
- Shah, Bahadur, 57-58
- Shah, King Birendra Bir Bikram, 17, 23, 148,
- Shah, King Girban Yuddha Bikram, 60
- Shah, King Mahendra Bir Bikram, 143-150, 153, 163, 171, 174, 217; foreign policy, 251-257, 259-262
- Shah, King Prithvi Narayan, 2, 3, 10, 15, 53-58, 76, 98, 168; *Divyopadesh*, 122, 244, 263, 268
- Shah, King Rajendra Bikram, 60, 61
- Shah, King Ran Bahadur, 57, 73
- Shah, King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram, 3, 62-63, 141-144, 250
- Shah, Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram, 141
- Shah, Queen Rajendra Lakshmi, 57
- Shah rulers, 2, 47, 52-57, 70, 90, 98, 119-120, 268
- Shamanism, 12, 76, 265
- Sherpas, 5, 41-42, 109-110
- Shiva and Shaivism, 8, 70, 71-73, 80
- Sikkima and Sikkimese, 1, 56, 59, 103, 242
- Siwalik ranges, 76
- Statistical data, 293-297
- Stupas and Stupa worship, 6-8; Swayambhu Stupa, 7, 93
- Sunuwars, 40
- Supreme Court, 155, 157
- Swayambhu Purana* 4, 7
- Tamangs, 5, 11, 40-41, 67, 76, 107, 109, 117
- Tarai, 17, 20, 23; agriculture, 192-193; history, 49, 52, 54, 56, 60-61, 65-66; language, 105, 108, 116, 118; people 13, 38-39, 44-45; topography, 25-27
- Tantrism, 71-73, 84, 89
- Temples, 91-98
- Thakalis, 42
- Thakuris, 2, 9, 36-37, 48, 75
- Tharus, 4, 38-39, 77, 105-106, 117
- Third Plan, 172-173, 297; agriculture, 197; industrial development, 207-210, 212-216
- Tibet, 26, 29; art and architecture, 85, 89, 94, 98-99; Culture, 65, 71, 74; relations with Nepal, 48-49, 52-53, 57-59, 61, 242-243, 247; trade with Nepal, 221, 224, 232
- Tourist trade, 236
- Town Panchayats, 151
- Trade, 15-17, 38, 53-57, 219-239; history, 219-222; barter trade 232-233; policy, 228-237; routes, 219-223
- Trade and Transit Treaty with India, 228, 230-231, 236
- Tribhuvan University, 13, 273
- Tri-Chandra College, 61, 272, 276
- Vajrayana, 7, 9, 72-73, 83-84, 88
- Vegetable farming, 193
- Village, Panchayats, 150-151
- Vishnu and Vaisnavism, 3, 8, 71-72, 80, 86
- Vrahmus, 4
- Zonal Assembly, 152

NEPAL ORIENTATION MAP

 Land over 10'000 feet



NEPAL

PLANNING REGIONS



SCALE : 1" = 32 Miles



INDEX

- International Boundary - - - - -
- Zonal Boundary - - - - -
- District Boundary - - - - -
- Regional Development Area Boundary - - - - -
- Development Centre +
- Zonal Headquarter *
- District Headquarter
- Nagar Panchayat △
- Tarai Districts ▨
- Hill Districts ▩
- Mountain Districts □