

RISHIKESH SHAHA

HEROES
AND
BUILDERS
OF
NEPAL

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

HEROES AND BUILDERS OF NEPAL



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RISHIKESH SHAHA



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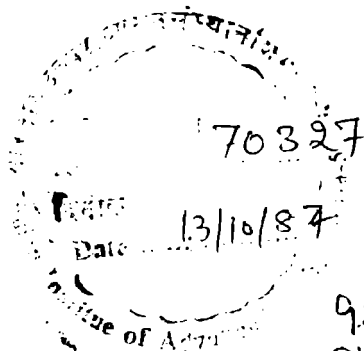


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*Message from
His Majesty King Mahendra of Nepal*

This small book by Mr 'Rishikesh Shaha on the heroes and builders of Nepal will, I believe, give the students of Nepal and all those interested in Nepal a fairly good idea of the gallant and glorious tradition to which we of this generation are fortunate heirs. It should fill a long-standing gap in our courses of studies in English. I hope the example set by Mr Shaha will inspire many other promising writers in our country to produce books, including textbooks, in English, highlighting the beauties of our country and the achievements of Nepalese people, in the past and at present, in various fields.



By courtesy of Dr. H. B. Gurung

To

my dear son Shriprakash

and Nepali boys and girls of his age

in the hope that this book will create in them an awareness of their great inheritance and induce them to emulate the examples of our national heroes in their own lives.

‘Every nation or group of nations has its own tale to tell. Knowledge of the trials and struggles is necessary to all who would comprehend the problems, perils, challenges and opportunities which confront us today.’

— WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

‘The stories of past courage cannot supply courage itself. For this, each man must look into his own soul.’

— JOHN F. KENNEDY

Preface to the First Edition

Just a word about how this book took shape. I had to pen these pages in a rather hurried manner to satisfy the growing curiosity of my boy to learn more about our past and our national heroes. I thought that I owed it to him to do this because I had seriously neglected my responsibility for educating him in our national history. To accomplish my purpose readily, it occurred to me to render into English Shri S. B. Gewali's book *Nepali Birharu*, which I had myself read with great profit as a boy. I have made a few additions here and there. Otherwise, the basic pattern remains the same.

Some of my friends in the teaching profession saw the typescript and felt that it might be of use to a larger audience. Hence, I have decided to bring it out in its present form.

This book has been divided into two broad sections, dealing first with ancient and medieval heroes and second with builders of modern Nepal.

Never before in its history has Nepal won as much international recognition of its independence and sovereignty as during King Mahendra's rule. In the sphere of domestic policy, King Mahendra has, by his bold and calculated actions, sought to prove that national unity and the power of the Crown hang together, and that 'both can only be served by offering, for a price, even justice to all men, and enforcing it by royal authority'. His force of personality and far-sighted statesmanship have created in us a new awareness of our national life and purpose. If this book enables our young people to acquire, in however small a way, a feeling of this new con-

sciousness, the author's efforts will not have been in vain.

Let me also take this opportunity to record my humble thanks to His Majesty King Mahendra for the favour he has done me by reading the book in typescript and by offering valuable suggestions along with a message.

I am greatly indebted to my old teacher and friend Shri S. B. Gewali for the permission he gave me to model this book on his. My thanks are also due to several other friends who have assisted me in different ways in giving the book its present shape but have chosen to remain anonymous.

Lastly, I shall fail in my duty if I forget to mention and thank warmly my friend, Miss Elizabeth Hawley, of *Time* and *Life* magazines and Reuters news agency, who took unsparing pains to revise the typescript and rearrange the paragraphs in such a manner as to give a new coherence to the narrative as a whole. All opinions and conclusions expressed in this book, however, are entirely my own.

RISHIKESH SHAHY

Kathmandu
April, 1965

Preface to the Second Edition

THE author is most grateful to the members of the press and the public and also to his friends in the academic circles for the warm welcome they have given this little publication. Their kindly interest and generous gesture have encouraged the author to put forward the present revised edition. The author has corrected some factual errors which had crept into the original edition and has also sought to improve on the language and construction of the text. He has also added a few important details here and there. The author wishes to express his thanks to his friends, Mr and Mrs Fred Gaige of the University of California, Berkeley (U.S.A.) for their painstaking assistance in preparing this edition.

RISHIKESH SHAHA

Kathmandu
September, 1969

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Introduction

NEPAL'S history extends over a period of more than two thousand years. In its long history dynasties have risen and fallen and various peoples have become dominant at different times. The Lichchhavi, the Thakuri, the Malla and lastly the Shah dynasty have played their parts. Peoples like the Kirats, the Newars, the Brahmins, the Thakuri and the Khasa Kshatris, the Magars, and the Gurungs have moulded the pattern of Nepali culture according to their own genius. Outstanding men like Manadeva, Amshuvarma, Jayasthiti Malla, Jayakshya Malla of the Nepal Valley, Prithvi Malla of Dullu and Jumla in western Nepal, Mukunda Sen and Lohan Sen of Palpa and Dravya Shah and Prithvinarayan Shah of Gorkha in central Nepal have left the indelible stamp of their personalities on the history of their country. Nepal's national life today is the sum total of the achievements of all these dynasties and peoples. The martial spirit of the Kirats, the artistic and business skills of the Newars, the tenacity of the Magars and the Gurungs, the political enterprise of the Kshatris and the intellect of the Brahmins, have all become a part of the Nepali national heritage.

Nepal's geographical frontiers also have changed from time to time with the circumstances of its history and the shift in the centre of political gravity. The Nepal Valley, because of its accessibility, temperate climate and fertile soil, has remained at the centre of the political stage most of the time. This, however, does not mean that it has always been the pivot of power. According to the Hindu Puranas, Nepal was bounded on the east by the Kosi

River, on the west by the Trisuli River, on the south by the Chisapani River and on the north by the Shivapuri Hills. In ancient Sanskrit literature Nepal is sometimes referred to as the land lying between Kartripur (modern Garhwal) and Kamarup (modern Assam). Manadeva, the Lichchhavi ruler of Nepal, and his predecessors claimed to have conquered Mallapuri in the fifth century A.D. and set up victory pillars there.

In the fourteenth century A.D., Prithvi Malla of Dullu and Jumla extended the bounds of his kingdom to include the whole of western Tibet and a large portion of what is now western Nepal. In the fifteenth century, Jayakshya Malla, at the zenith of the Malla kingdom, subjugated other hill rajahs, including the king of Gorkha on the west. He extended his kingdom northward by a distance of seven days' march as far as Shekar Dzong, an important trade mart on the Kathmandu-Lhasa route. In the plains, Jayakshya conquered Mithila and Gaya on the east, reached Bengal and penetrated south of the Ganges. In the sixteenth century, Mukunda Sen and Lohan Sen of Palpa expanded their kingdom far into what is eastern Nepal today.

It was the Gorkhali conquest during the last quarter of the eighteenth century that gave the entire territory comprising present-day Nepal a single name and strong central government. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Nepal's boundaries for a time extended as far as the Sutlej on the west and the Teesta on the east. After the war of 1814-16 with the British, Nepal was reduced to its present frontiers between the Mechi River on the east and the Mahakali River on the west.

Modern Nepal is situated between longitude $80^{\circ} 15'$ and $88^{\circ} 10'$ and latitude $26^{\circ} 20'$ and $30^{\circ} 10'$. The country has an area of 54,517 square miles. Its greatest length

measures 514 miles, and it varies in breadth from 80 to 120 miles. Nepal borders on Tibet to the north, where the Himalayas and the marginal mountains of Tibet make a natural frontier, and to the south it has a free and open border of over five hundred miles with India. To the east, it touches Sikkim, from which it is separated by Kanchenjunga and the Singhalila Ridge. South of the Sikkim line, the lesser foothills and the Mechi River constitute Nepal's border with the Darjeeling district in West Bengal. Nepal's westernmost boundary is the Mahakali River which drains only a narrow strip of westernmost Nepal, and west of the Mahakali lies Kumaon Himalaya in Uttar Pradesh.

Nepal presents extreme climatic contrasts. It has within a narrow width of one hundred miles all the climatic zones of the earth: tropical, temperate and arctic, each zone with a remarkable variety of flora and fauna. Within this one hundred mile width are found dense tropical forests studded with dry boulder-strewn riverbeds, fertile paddy-green Himalayan valleys, barren wind-swept Alpine highlands and majestic snow-clad peaks of the high Himalayas including Sagarmatha or Mount Everest (29,028 ft.).

The country has four distinct physical zones: (1) the low-lying belt of the Tarai varying in breadth from ten to thirty miles, (2) a sandstone range of downs along the whole length of the country with an altitude of not more than three hundred to six hundred feet above its immediate base and two thousand to three thousand feet, above sea level, (3) the hill country beginning roughly where the Himalayas rise to the north, and varying in height from four thousand to ten thousand feet, and (4) the mountain region comprising the country beyond the third zone which is for the most part unexplored and

inaccessible. The hilly region from Kumaon to Sikkim has four natural divisions, created by the mountain ridges of Nanda Devi, Dhaulagiri, Gosainthan and Kangchenjunga, running almost parallel to each other. Surrounded by mountain barriers, each of these divisions forms a large self-contained river basin, sloping towards the south and watered by the streams from the neighbouring mountain glaciers. These basins are named after the rivers by which they are drained: (1) the western division or the Karnali basin, (2) the central division or the Gandaki basin and (3) the eastern division or the Kosi basin.

Nepal is completely landlocked: the nearest seaport from anywhere in Nepal is more than three hundred miles away. Its distance from the sea largely accounts for its backwardness in trade and development during the last century.

We have seen that Nepal's political boundaries have not remained constant. They have changed with the frequent rise and fall of empires both to the north and to the south of her borders, resulting in successive waves of immigration into the present-day territory of Nepal. Nepal has also faced invasions from the north and the south. Noteworthy among the invasions from the north are those by Tsrong-sang-gampo, the renowned and powerful king of Tibet, about A.D. 640, and by Ch'ienlung, the Manchu emperor of China, in 1792. The most important invasions suffered by Nepal from the south are those by the Muslims under Sultan Shamsuddin Iliyas of Bengal in A.D. 1349, and by the English in 1814. Though Nepal may have temporarily bowed down to the superior might of invaders, it has never allowed them to plant themselves permanently on its soil. It must be noted that Nepal has maintained a separate entity under the most trying circumstances.

From the very beginning, Nepal has been inhabited by diverse peoples with different racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Because of the physical divisions of the country these peoples have developed in some degree of isolation from each other. Nepal's north-south river systems and rugged transverse ridges have hindered the development of east-west communications. If various areas of Nepal are not readily accessible to one another, even in our modern age, one can imagine how very much more difficult it must have been for people to move about in earlier days.

Yet they did move. Nepal was constantly subjected to pressures of immigration of peoples both from the north-east and the south-west. It has offered shelter to waves of immigrants for at least two millenniums and perhaps longer than that. Within historical times, they have entered Nepal to escape from enemies or to seek economic and political security. The concept of 'racial purity' is nothing more than a myth in Nepal. The country is inhabited by a mixed race of people of both Mongoloid and Caucasoid stocks. There also exist to this day remnants of indigenous communities whose habitation predates the advent of the former two elements.

Elevation—which is to say, the type of agriculture conditioned by altitude—determines the ethnic character of Nepal's population which is nearly as diverse as its terrain. The Sherpas and Tamangs, who are most akin to the Tibetans, live in the northernmost region of Nepal. The Gurungs and Magars live in the mountain valleys in central Nepal, the Gurungs preferring the slightly higher altitudes. The Rais and Limbus, collectively known as the Kirats, live in the same belt in the eastern region of Nepal. The Khasas, Thakuris and Brahmins, whose original homes are said to be far-western Nepal, are scattered along

the middle belt of the country together with the occupational castes like the Kamis, Damais and Sarkis. The Newars are concentrated in the Valley of Kathmandu. The Tharus live in the areas of the inner Terai and all along the Terai belt; in the far-eastern Terai, we also find the Rajbamsis and Satars. Along the southernmost border next to India, we find people who pronouncedly resemble the Indians on the other side in every way. These are the Rajputs, Brahmins, Kayasthas, Yadavs and a number of occupational castes of the Terai. In addition, the Sunwars, Danwars, Murmis, Majhis, Dhimals, Chepangs, Kusundas, Rautyas, and Pohres are also important because of their more or less primitive ways of living and because of their interesting communal life and organization. Nepal's population also consists of a small section of Muslims both in the hills and the plains.

The physical divisions of Nepal correspond roughly to the broad scheme of its well-marked racial and religious zones. The real highlands show the marked influence of Bon, a primitive religion of Tibet prior to Buddhism, which in effect amounts to worship of spirits, animals and elements of Nature. The midlands or the hilly regions, consisting of the fertile mountain valleys, show the effect of the steady penetration of Hinduism from the south. But also included among the people in this area, as among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, are the Buddhist sub-groups who practise Mahayana or Tibetan Buddhism. The lowlands or the Terai are even more pronouncedly Hindu if we exclude the few aboriginal tribes living there.

In Nepal, religion has always been considered a matter of personal conviction and choice rather than of habit or inheritance. There are many instances of three generations of a dynasty being devotees of three different kinds of gods. This fostered a large measure of religious tolerance

and made religious persecution alien to Nepali tradition. Elsewhere much blood has been shed in the name of religion, but here Hindus, Buddhists, Tantrists and Bonpo have lived as good neighbours in peace and friendship through the ages.

Even the rigid caste system of Hindu India showed a remarkable flexibility when it came into contact with the liberal religious tradition of Nepal, where the so-called untouchables have been the votaries of some of the holiest gods and goddesses. The intricate texture of Nepali religious culture is woven from the main strands of Hinduism, Buddhism, Tantrism and Bon. The influences of these various religions are harmoniously blended in Nepali religious life.

Tantrism is based on a class of texts called *Tantra*, works of revelation. It prescribes rites by which *Atma Jnana* (ultimate knowledge) or Buddhahood (Enlightenment) can be attained in this life. Tantrism came to influence Hinduism and Buddhism through the introduction of an esoteric system of rites. Hinduism as influenced by Tantrism took the form of ritualistic worship of *Shakti* as a symbol of female creative energy. Thus the pre-Aryan elements of Hinduism such as the worship of *Shivalinga*, the pillar of Shiva, and *Shakti*, the mother goddess, came in handy for Tantrik purposes. The ultimate object of those initiated in the practice of Tantrik rites was to merge their individual self into the universal or divine self, that is to become one with God. It symbolized in the abstract the union of the male and the female cosmic principles—*Purusa* and *Shakti* manifesting in the creation of the world (*lila*). The union also evoked a sense of divine unity by underlining the sexual dualism of the deity. This conception of 'oneness' is not only confined to Nepali and Tibetan Bud-

dhism, but is also familiar to the philosophical tradition enshrined in the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*.

Tantrism at its best preached that like *yoga* or spiritual discipline, the path of *bhoga* or sensual enjoyment could also lead to the union of the 'substance' with the 'essence' or the identification of the *Atma* with *Brahma*. But in practice it had adverse effects on public decency and morality. In the *Puranas* also, each god has a *Shakti* assigned to him. Principal among the *Shaktis* is Parvati, the consort of Shiva. She is most widely worshipped in the form of Kali or Durga as a mother goddess. Pictures and images of Uma Maheshwara show the Hindu god Shiva in the company of his *Shakti* as Uma. Although Buddhism is reputedly free from ritualism, yet under the influence of Tantrism, it developed into the ritualistic cult of one's union in Buddhahood with his female partner *prajna* or gnosis. For example, the conception of the *Yidam Samavara* or *Hevajra*, so commonly reproduced in Nepali bronzes and paintings, visualizes the *Heruka* or fierce aspect of Buddha Akshobya in union with his female partner, Vajrabarahi.

Tantrik rites, in the hands of unscrupulous practitioners, degenerated into a form of black magic or sorcery and were practised to appease a Genii or the evil spirit of power for sordid and sinister purposes. This led to the subsequent decline and death of Tantrism.

The Nepalese have been able to fuse their divergent religious beliefs and practices in a remarkable way. We find the images of the Hindu gods in the environs of Buddhist *Chaityas* (shrines) and the figures of Buddha in the precincts of Hindu temples. Hindu and Buddhist religious festivals are occasions for common rejoicing. The king of Nepal is a Hindu, but he presides over the big Buddhist festival, the *Samyak Puja*, which is held once

every twelve years. The beliefs of the Bonpo have also been considerably modified by their living contact with Hinduism and Buddhism, which in their turn have not remained wholly unaffected by the Bon faith.

Professor G. Tucci, a famous Italian orientalist, has made the following observation on the interrelation between these various religions and cultures: 'Hinduism has penetrated slowly from India, has prospered and has made itself at home. But it has been a superficial conquest only, in the sense that while it has assimilated native beliefs and given its own names to local cults, it has in fact adapted itself to a primitive religious world wherein the terror of men faithful to the cruel mother-hood of the world holds sway.'

The similarity between Buddhist and Hindu legends relating to the origin of the Nepal Valley emphasizes the essential harmony in religious outlook. These legends are based on the fact that the Nepal Valley was once a lake surrounded by mountains. According to Buddhist religious lore, a Buddha of a former aeon foresaw the future destiny of Nepal and made a pilgrimage to the lake to cast a lotus seed into its waters. A miraculous lotus blossomed in the middle of the lake, and a shaft of light, purer and more serene than the rays of the sun, issued forth from its centre. This is how the Adi-buddha, the primordial Buddha, the Buddha from before all time, the self-existing one, the god of no-matter, was manifested directly in essence.

Aeons passed and it became customary for the Buddha of each aeon to visit the lake on pilgrimage. Even the name of Sakyamuni occurs in legends before Gautam Buddha was actually born. It is said that Sakyamuni in a previous incarnation as Mahasattva performed a great act of self-immolation in feeding a starving tiger on his own body. The Buddha of the third aeon prophesied that

a Bodhisattva would appear and cause land to rise above the waters.

Bodhisattva Manjushri sensed that the Deity had spontaneously manifested itself on the waters of the lake. Manjushri left his home behind seven walls in far-away China. From the north-east he came through the mountains surrounding the lake. With a single stroke of his mighty sword, he cut the pass of Kotdwar through which the River Bagmati now flows out of the Valley. Thus did land appear, and the fair Valley of Nepal came into existence.

Even to this day once a year Nepali women of Kathmandu maintain a vigil during a particular night in winter when Manjushri is supposed to return to Nepal. And on the following day both men and women pay their homage at a shrine, which contains footprints in stone, presumably of this first traveller.

Although a Hindu version of this legend is also available, it does not change the character of the story relating to the origin of the valley. The Hindu *Puranas* ascribe the feat of cutting the gorge and draining away the waters to Vishnu in his Krishna manifestation.

Because of the easy amalgamation of Hindu and Buddhist influences, so prevalent in Nepal, both these legends have gained wide currency. It may be noted that the early Buddhists to a large extent identified Vishnu with Buddha in order to gain support against the Shaivas. Even Shiva came to be closely identified with Buddha in the gradual process of religious evolution. In the light of these facts, it may be seen that the two readily accepted legends of the origin of the Nepal Valley are not so different as they seem to be at first.

This process of fusion has been clearly analysed by Dr. Stella Kramrisch thus: 'By their own myths the two great

religions of Nepal (Hinduism and Buddhism) convey the same inner experience of reality. They have their own gods with their specific shapes to which India had given names and form. They came to Nepal ready-made and Nepal infused them with the faith of its people so that the gods of Hinduism and Buddhism became identified with one another or assumed one another's qualities and attributes. Avalokiteshwara and Shiva coalesced in one image called Lokeshwara. To worship Buddha is to worship Shiva, says the *Nepali Mahatmya*, or text which guides the Brahman pilgrim through Nepal.'

Nepali art reveals the same trend towards synthesis as is apparent in Nepali religious tradition. Stone pillars on which Vishnu is represented as sleeping on the Serpent of Eternity or seated on Garuda, the mythical sun-bird, are a common sight in the Kathmandu temples. These pieces of sculpture are not merely relics of old Vaishnavite culture but also symbolic representations of the story of the origin of the Nepal Valley as enshrined in popular religious tradition. In painting, the frontispieces of most of the *Vamshavalis* (genealogical chronicles) show the Buddhist *Chaitya* (shrine) of Swayambhunath by the side of a lotus in full bloom, followed by the image of Pashupatinath enclosed in a semi-circle of flowers with the rising sun and the waxing moon on the right and the left. It is said that the *Chaitya* of Swayambhunath represents the god of no-matter which symbolized the original religion of Nepal; other symbols are indicative of the historical sequence in which Nepali religious culture developed. Most of the temples, both Hindu and Buddhist, are done in the famous pagoda style, regarded as Nepal's contribution to world architecture. The pictures on the frontispieces of the *Vamshavalis* and the pagoda style in temple architecture emphasize the sum-total of influences on

indigenous tradition, and are emblems of the essential unity of Nepali religious culture.

Religion has not only been the main source of inspiration and motifs of Nepali art but has also imbued it with a synthetic spirit. Nepali tradition in sculpture, painting and architecture, while reinforcing the same kind of harmony in the general outlook on art and life, demonstrates the process of adapting to a Nepali pattern techniques arising from different sources. This is all due to the eclectic quality of Nepali civilization which has enabled the Nepalese to absorb healthy influences from outside and cast them in the Nepali national mould. Nepal has shown remarkable skill in this respect and thus the final product has always borne the unmistakable stamp of Nepali genius.

The original place names of the Nepal Valley were non-Aryan, but its religion was mainly Shaivism and the rites were addressed to that particular form of Shiva called Pashupati, who is still the protecting deity of the country. Buddhism continued to penetrate into the Valley through its intellectuals, who were closely connected with the Buddhist universities and art schools of Bihar and Bengal. From Nepal Buddhism made its way to Tibet, where it became dominant.

For a long time Nepal supplied teachers and artists to Tibet. Tibetan abbots and princes sent for Nepali artists, sculptors and craftsmen to beautify their temples with frescoes or to cast statues or to copy early Buddhist manuscripts for monasteries. Tibetan monks learnt Sanskrit from Nepali teachers of Buddhism and translated into their own language the masterpieces of Buddhist ritualistic literature. Nepal has thus served as a high-road for influences from the south passing through it to the north. Professor Tucci, the accepted authority on Indo-

Tibetan cultural relations, refers to the role of Nepal in this respect: 'Nepal was to bring this task of mediation between Indian and Tibetan cultures to perfection through the centuries.'

Situated between the two vast land belts of Asian civilization, India and China, Nepal has been a meeting-ground of influences from both these civilizations. While the Nepalese have retained physical features and other traits from the Mongoloid stock of the north, they have been influenced culturally much more from the south. When Muslim empires replaced the Hindu kingdoms in the wake of Muslim invasions of India in the ninth century and in the centuries following, Nepal became a political sanctuary for many fugitive Hindu chieftains. The Malla Dynasty which ruled the Nepal valley from the thirteenth century until 1768-1769 and the present Shah Dynasty are said to have been founded by emigrant Hindu chiefs, keen on protecting their religious integrity from the inroads of Muslim power in India. Under such circumstances, it was no wonder that the rule of the Mallas and the Shahs led to a distinct Sanskritization of Nepali culture, at least at the official level, if not on a comprehensive popular scale.

The process of Sanskritization has been a dominant social phenomenon in Nepal for many centuries. From the Thakalis in remote central Nepal to the Magars, Gurungs, Rais, Limbus and Sunwars in the middle belt and further down to the Tharus at the base of Siwalik foothills, the people of Nepal have been gradually but steadily brought under the influence of this dynamic cultural force. As further evidence of the impact of this phenomenon, it may be pointed out that during the Rana period, some of the more pronounced Mongoloid ethnic groups like the Tamangs and Thakalis had applied to the

government for initiation into Hindu religious tradition through acceptance of Brahmins as priests and restrictions on beef-eating.

The history of Nepal from the earliest times abounds in examples of indigenous tribes making false pretence to recent descent from some worthy Indian lineage. This is partly a result of the higher social status attached to it and partly because of their natural desire to associate themselves with the culture and tradition of the socially and politically dominant groups.

The process of Sanskritization had been aided by enforced imposition of Brahmanic social systems and codes of behaviour by successive regimes in Nepal. It is interesting to note that the most important of these social codes were formalized during the administration of three of the outstanding men in Nepal's history—Jayasthiti Malla of Kathmandu (1382–1395), Ram Shah of Gorkha (1606–1633), Jang Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister of Nepal (1846–1877). All of them were orthodox Hindus and sought to codify the structure of Nepali society both Hindu and non-Hindu—within a basically orthodox Hindu framework.

The legal and social code introduced by Jayasthiti Malla under the guidance of five Indian Brahmins conformed to the rules of conduct laid down by Manu, the ancient lawgiver of the Hindus. The Newar population of Kathmandu valley was initially divided into sixty-four sub-groups purely on the basis of their occupations and crafts. In due course, the sub-groups acquired all the decadent features of the Hindu caste-system. At the time of Jayasthiti Malla, the Buddhist components of the Newar population were, as a rule, given the same social rank as their Hindu counterparts. The Buddhist clergy was put on an equal footing with the Brahmins or Kshatris,

depending upon their status at birth. This social code governed Newar society not only during the Malla period, but operates to this day with a few modifications.

Ram Shah's code achieved the same results in consolidating the social system in Gorkha as did that of Jayasthiti Malla in Kathmandu. A system of four castes (*Varnas*) and thirty-six sub-castes (*jats*) was introduced in Gorkha. The latter figure is apt to be symbolic because the code does not seem to specify anywhere the actual number of sub-castes. However, the caste-Hindus, who found themselves in a minority, were forced to relax the rigid rules of their caste-system in order to accommodate the majority tribal population. A legal code based on Shastric injunctions, but modified with due respect for tribal tradition, was introduced by Ram Shah, as also were standardization of weights and measures, fixation of pastures and rule for the use of water for irrigation. Ram Shah's code covered a wide range of social and economic relations. As it was the first codified system in the hills, it produced a tremendous impact on the surrounding areas as well.

Both the Jayasthiti Malla and Ram Shah codes were limited in their scope and application. The unification of Nepal under the Shah Dynasty necessitated a comprehensive legal and social code applicable to the whole country. Initial measures in this respect were adopted during the reign of King Rana Bahadur Shah (1777-1799) and by Mukhtiyar Bhim Sen Thapa at the time of King Rajendra Bikram Shah (1816-1847). But the distinction of completing the task goes to Prime Minister Maharaja Jang Bahadur Rana during the reign of King Surendra Bikram Shah (1847-1881). *Mulki Ain* or the legal code under Surendra Bikram was based on a few cardinal tenets of Brahminic belief relating to inter-caste

relations and caste-pollution. It does, however, allow each of the ethnic groups to follow its own tradition as long as it is not in direct conflict with the basic tenets of Hinduism. The Raj Guru or the Royal Preceptor armed with the arbitrary power of dispensation and excommunication, i.e. authorizing people to dispense with the observance of religious rules, and punishing them for their non-observance, became a firm part of the establishment.

However in 1963, a new version of the *Mulki Ain* was introduced by King Mahendra to bring it in line with fundamental rights of equality and freedom as given in the 1962 Constitution of Nepal. The new *Mulki Ain* modified most of the caste, marriage and social laws. King Mahendra's declared objective has been the development of Nepal on modern lines. The pressing need for the modernization of Nepal seems to have checked the tendency towards Hindu orthodoxy. The most dynamic aspect of current cultural development is in the area of conflict between Sanskritizing and modernizing processes. Younger intellectuals tend to reject those traditional Hindu concepts and values which come into conflict with their distinctly 'modernist' orientation whereas the masses of the people are still steeped in their age-old mental stupor.

This situation is further aggravated by the ever-widening gulf of difference between a few thousand of the modern educated elite and the vast majority of the people in basic thinking and outlook on life and development, religion and morality.

However, it should not be difficult for us to resolve this conflict practically and expeditiously if we only care to learn useful lessons from our past history. Historically speaking, Nepali national genius has always been characterized by the quality of eclecticism. There is no reason

why we should not be able to assimilate the best influences of modern culture into our national tradition. All we have to do is to supplement what is good in our past with what may be found useful and beneficial in the present-day scientific and technological civilization.

This, then, is Nepal's heritage—this is what Nepal has been over the centuries. Now let us hear the tales of the men who were prominent in shaping this heritage.

PART I
HEROES OF ANCIENT AND
MEDIEVAL NEPAL

Relations with India

JANAKA

IN Southern Nepal, there is a holy place called Janakpur. Every year on the occasion of Ramnavami a big festival is held there, and devout Hindus come on pilgrimage to remind themselves of Nepal's ancient glory. The memory of King Janaka and his daughter Janaki is so deeply embedded in the cultural tradition and thinking of Nepal that it does not seem to matter whether the account of the former's association with Janakpur was real or symbolical, to begin with. Even in the absence of sound anthropological and historical evidence, Janakpur has continually served to stir popular imagination with miracles and events, celebrated in the *Ramayana*, the oldest Hindu epic.

Janakpur today is merely a township with several tanks and ponds. But in ancient times it was Mithila, the capital of the famous kingdom of Videha, belonging to the dynasty of Janaka. It was a big city covering an area of seven yojans or fifty-six square miles. It was beautiful, for its architects had planned and laid out the city with great skill. There were four entrances leading into it; each was a township with a huge market-place. There were broad avenues, beautiful gardens and ponds almost everywhere, with cows grazing in the pastures on the banks of the ponds. The streets carried a heavy traffic of horse-drawn chariots. There were huge mansions. The people of the warrior class paraded the streets with their standard

bearers in front of them, they themselves dressed in the skins of tigers they had killed in the neighbouring forests.

Janakpur was then a great centre of learning for the whole of India. It was said to resound with the echoes of Vedic hymns. Groups of learned Brahmins, their bodies painted with sandal paste and adorned with Varanasi silks and jewels, were to be seen holding numerous religious discussions. Janakpur had become a centre of Aryan learning because the kings of Videha were themselves highly learned, and they had great respect for other scholars whom they encouraged to come from all parts of India and settle down under their royal patronage.

Among these kings of Videha, Sirdhwaj Janaka was well renowned. He was a great philosopher, and at his court were many scholars, philosophers and sages, led by Yajnyavalkya and his teacher, Aruni. Janaka's priest Sadananda was very learned. Their philosophical discussions are described in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

Sirdhwaj Janaka had no fondness for his immense wealth and power. He was, in fact, of such a philosophical nature that he once coolly remarked when his palace was on fire, 'Fire has failed to burn anything of mine.'

The great Janaka of Videha once performed a sacrifice attended by the most learned Brahmins or teachers from far and near. Janaka wanted to find out which of these Brahmins was the most learned and offered the winner a prize. One thousand cows were herded together and sheets of gold were tied to each pair of horns. Whoever proved himself to be the wisest was to take possession of the entire herd.

Yajnyavalkya, confident that none would excel him in argument, told his pupil to lead the cows to his hermitage. This incensed the other Brahmins; they plied Yajnya-

valkya with question after question, but Yajnyavalkya silenced them by answering them all.

One of his questioners was a woman, Gargi Vachkanavi. She stood up in the assembly and held a philosophical discussion with the redoubtable Yajnyavalkya until the latter protested, 'O Gargi, do not ask too much about God, lest your head should be cut off. You are asking too many questions about God, about whom we should not inquire too closely.' In other words, he was asking Gargi not to presume to define God. Gargi kept quiet for a while, but later she stood up again and spoke, 'Venerable Brahmanas, I shall ask two questions. If Yajnyavalkya can answer them, I shall reach the conclusion that none of you will defeat him in any argument concerning Brahma or the soul or the universal self.' Yajnyavalkya did answer both of her questions and qualified for the prize. This incident eloquently testifies to the high position, and intellectual attainment of women in ancient Nepal.

After Sirdhwaj Janaka, many others from his family ruled in Videha. But Karal, the last king of this dynasty, became notorious for his misbehaviour, and this spelled the end of the rule of his dynasty in Videha. The rule of the Vrijji Kshatriyas was established in its place.

The Vrijji confederation had eight clans or branches. Among them, the Videha clan held sway in Janakpur. The Lichchhavi clan carried on the government to the south of Janakpur with its capital at Vaishali. From about the beginning of the second century A.D. a branch of the Lichchhavis ruled the Valley of Nepal for a few hundred years under a strong monarchy.

Videha bordered on the kingdom of Kosala; the holy Sadanera, or the Ghagra River, formed the natural frontier between the two kingdoms. Kosala was ruled

by kings of the Ikshwaku clan. While Sirdhwaj Janaka ruled in Videha, Dasaratha was the king of Kosala, and Dasaratha's eldest son, Rama, was married to Sirdhwaj Janaka's daughter, Seeta. Seeta and Rama were a worthy couple, for Seeta embodied all the finest qualities of womanhood and Rama was the ideal prince. The people of these two countries were very pleased with the relations established between them as a result of the marriage between Rama and Seeta. To this day we remind ourselves of the ideal life of Rama and Seeta by recalling the name 'Seeta-Rama'.

The *Ramayana*, one of the great Hindu epics, is the story of Rama and Seeta and of their fight against Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, modern Ceylon. We are told that Rama was helped by monkeys in south India under the leadership of Hanuman, the great hero of the monkeys. According to some, the story of the *Ramayana* is in fact a story of the struggle of the Aryans against the people of the south. Whether or not the *Ramayana* has any great historical authenticity, it is full of interesting stories and anecdotes which are more familiar to Hindus than the Bible stories are to Christians.

BUDDHA

To the east of Kosala, there was in ancient times a republic of the Sakyas known as Kapilavastu. The republic was situated between the Gandaki and the Rapti rivers. The Sakyas were the Kshatriyas of the Ikshwaku clan, and they had set up their own republic after they had severed their connexions with the kingdom of Kosala. Their land

extended northwards as far as the Himalayan ranges, and in the south it included a grove of sal trees known as Lumbini. It was in this grove that Buddha, founder of the Buddhist religion, was born. Lumbini is called Rupandehi these days and falls in the Bhagwanpur area of the Palhi-Majhkhand district of Nepal.

The Sakyas ran their own government. Under the protection of a tall wooden building known as Samstha-gar, all the Sakyas used to gather together, conduct the business of state, dispense justice and discuss all kinds of matters. Their leader was elected by the majority and was called Raja. To the Sakyas, the Raja was someone whom they had made chief for a temporary period like the President of a republic, the Roman consul, or the Greek archon. The office of Raja was neither hereditary nor was it held for life.

A man named Suddhodana was one of the elected kings of the Sakyas in the sixth century B.C., and his consort was Mahamaya, a highly religious woman. When Mahamaya became pregnant, she dreamt of a white elephant with a lotus flower held in its trunk entering into her body. Those who realized the significance of this dream knew that Buddha would be born of her.

A few months after her dream, Mahamaya set out for her paternal home in Devadaha. On the way her labour pains suddenly started, and Buddha was born under a huge sal tree in Lumbini. Mahamaya died five days after the birth of her great son.

The son was called Siddhartha as a child. His boyhood days were spent happily, for Suddhodana brought up his only son in great comfort, and he was lovingly cared for by his stepmother, Prajapati. Siddhartha married Yasodhara, a girl of many graces. In due course, they had a boy. Siddhartha thought that the child would

ensnare him in the bondage of the world, and called him Rahul, meaning 'the cause of bondage'.

One day when he was twenty-nine years old, Siddhartha went out in his chariot to have a look around the town. Soon he came across an old man in the street, and on seeing the old man, Siddhartha asked his charioteer, 'Who is he?' The driver of the chariot replied, 'He is an old man. Everyone who is born into this world has to grow old.'

Next Siddhartha saw an invalid suffering from disease. On being asked by Siddhartha who he was, the driver of the chariot answered, 'He is a diseased person. Everyone with a body is a prey to diseases.'

Then Siddhartha came across a dead body being carried on the shoulders of some men. He said to the driver of the chariot, 'What is that?' The charioteer's answer was, 'It is a dead man; everyone who is born must die.'

These sights of old age, disease and death caused Siddhartha great concern. He began to think how to free men from these afflictions. He still had his mind set on this problem when he returned to his palace of earthly pleasures. He decided that very night to renounce the world and go in search of a remedy for man's suffering.

He told his charioteer, whose name was Chhandaka, to get the horses ready. He took a lingering look at his sleeping wife and son. Then he walked out of his palace and set forth on his horse, Kantak, in search of a cure for worldly sin and sorrow.

Siddhartha's abandonment of his home is known as *Mahaviniskramana* or the Great Renunciation. Early in the first morning, he reached the bank of the River Anoma in Magadha and dismounted from his horse. He handed over his princely robes and other regalia to Chhandaka and

put on the robe of an ascetic and cut his hair. After bidding Chhandaka good-bye, he went to Rajgriha, the capital of Magadha. King Bimbisara of Magadha asked Siddhartha to enlist in his army, but Siddhartha refused and continued on his journey.

On the way, he learnt the methods of meditation from Alar Kalam and Uddak, but he was still not satisfied and went on to Uruvilva (Gaya), where for six years he practised hard penance in a forest. Five other hermits meditated there with him. But he became dissatisfied even with this severe penance and engaged himself in more serious meditation. He lived on such a meagre diet that at one time he nearly died. His five companions, having decided that he was dead, departed from the forest leaving him behind.

Siddhartha then realized that nothing was to be gained by simply mortifying the flesh, and he gave up the path of self-mortification. He started living on what he was given by the simple country-folk, and concentrated on the thought of relieving the world of pain and distress.

It was on the day of the full moon in the month of Baisakh. Siddhartha was sitting cross-legged under a banyan tree with the firm resolve that he must attain supreme knowledge that day. A girl by the name of Sujata made an offering to him there of rice cooked in milk. Siddhartha took his bath in the River Niranjana and ate the rice. After that he had a little rest and then went to sit under a pipul tree. While he was meditating there during the night, he at last attained supreme knowledge and became Buddha, or the Enlightened one.

Soon after he attained knowledge, he went to a place called Issipattan (Sarnath) in Kashi. There he met the five companions who had deserted him at Uruvilva and preached to them his first lesson, which is called

Dharmachakra pravartana or the Working of the Wheel of Religion.

While Buddha was in Issipattan he acquired several disciples, and a monastery was established there for his followers. From Issipattan, Buddha sent his disciples out amongst the people to spread his religion, and he himself started journeying into different parts of India and beyond, preaching his religion. He preached for forty-five years.

In his teachings, Lord Buddha laid stress on Four Noble Truths: (1) there is suffering, (2) there is a cause of this suffering, which is ignorance, (3) this ignorance can be removed, and (4) the way to remove this cause is the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path is the Right Life conceived of as divided into eight essential facets: (1) Right Understanding, which means, in essence, the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, (2) Right Aspiration, (3) Right Speech, (4) Right Conduct, (5) Right Livelihood, (6) Right Effort, (7) Right Mindfulness, and (8) Right Concentration.

Lord Buddha threw the burden of responsibility for one's elevation or degradation, happiness or misery, squarely upon his or her own shoulders. He believed in salvation by merit, not in salvation by grace. He taught that the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path represent laws which nobody can disregard without inviting trouble; that every trouble is the result of ignoring one or more of these fundamental laws. He classified his teachings under three headings: (1) *Prajna* (Intellectual Principle), (2) *Shila* (Moral Principle), and (3) *Samadhi* (Spiritual Principle). This corresponds to *Jnana* (Intellectual Principle), *Karma* (Moral Principle), and *Bhakti* (Spiritual Principle), upon the synthesis of which Lord Krishna lays so much emphasis in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

As Buddha went about preaching his religion in this manner; people built for him and his disciples monasteries and rest-houses. One of these was built in the forest of Jetvana, near Shravasti, by a rich merchant of Shravasti whose name was Sudatta Anathapidaka. The forest of Jetvana had belonged to a prince of Shravasti named Jeta. When Anathapidaka had first requested the prince to sell the forest to him, the prince, to discourage the merchant, said he was willing to sell it only if Anathapidaka would cover the entire area of the forest with a layer of gold. To the prince's surprise, Anathapidaka accepted this condition. The prince temporarily backed out of his deal to sell the forest, but was in the end compelled to keep his side of the bargain. Anathapidaka was finally able to build a huge monastery there. Buddha preached many a sermon from this monastery.

In his eightieth year, in the course of his wanderings Buddha reached Pava in Mallapuri. There a blacksmith by the name of Chunda offered him a meal. After this meal, Buddha became ill. He went on to another place in Mallapuri called Kushinagara where he took rest under a sal tree. His illness grew worse, and he realized that his end was drawing near.

Buddha gathered together all the monks who were there, and preached to them his last sermon. 'It is for the last time I have called you,' he said. 'Everything in the world has its own span of life. Do your duty without giving way to idleness. It is the last lesson of one who is departing.' With these words, Buddha renounced his life for *Mahaparinirvana*, or the Attainment of the High State of Desirelessness.

There are four main centres of pilgrimage connected with Buddhism. These are Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha; Gaya, where he attained supreme knowledge or

bliss; Sarnath, where he preached his religion for the first time; and Kushinagara, where he passed into the state of desirelessness. Buddhists think it is their sacred duty to visit these pilgrimage centres. The Nepalese take justifiable pride in the fact that Lumbini lies in Nepal.

Despite the fact that great men do not belong to any particular country but to the world as whole, there has been controversy whether Gautam Buddha was a hillman or a dweller of the plains, and sometimes, whether he was Nepali or Indian. Vincent A. Smith, who is considered an authority on Indian history, is of this opinion: 'I think it highly probable that Gautam Buddha, the sage of the Sakyas, and the founder of historical Buddhism, was a Mongolian by birth, that is to say, a hillman like a Gurkha with Mongolian features, and akin to the Tibetans.'

Of many men of action and learning who spread Buddhism abroad in the world, Ashoka, the Maurya emperor of the third century B.C., was by far the greatest. It is said that in his younger days Ashoka was a blood-thirsty tyrant; but the Kalinga war, which he himself perpetrated, changed the entire course of his career. The sight of the misery which followed in the wake of the war left the same impact on his mind as old age, disease and death had done on the mind of his master, the great Buddha. Ashoka thought, 'It is cruel to conquer by war. I shall from now on renounce war as a means of conquest. I shall preach the welfare of the entire world and establish the tradition of conquest by religious truth.'

With this firm resolve, Ashoka accepted the Buddhist religion. He preached its gospel of universal love in countries far and near and won the hearts of men.

Ashoka sent out emissaries to preach the Buddhist religion. Mahendra, his son or younger brother, and his daughter Sungha-mitra were sent to Simhaladwipa

(Ceylon), Majjhim, which means 'second or middle' in Pali and, therefore, his second son, came to the Himalayas. Ashoka himself visited the main centres of Buddhist pilgrimage. Lumbini was of course one of these, and here he set up a stone pillar and a huge wall to indicate the spot where Sakyamuni Buddha was born.

After worshipping at the shrine of Buddha's birth, Ashoka went to pay his respects to the stupa of a previous and mythical Buddha, named Kanakamuni, and there also he set up a stone pillar commemorating his visit. The pillar stands to this day in a village called Niglihava near Lumbini.

In 1894, Dr. Alois Anton Fuhrer, a German archaeologist, found this pillar for the first time on the banks of Nagali Sagar near Niglihava. When he informed the Nepal government of his discovery and of his interest in continuing on-the-spot investigation into the subject, he was asked by Kathmandu to meet General Khadga Shamsher, Governor of Palpa, at Niglihava some time in the winter of 1895 and make arrangements with him for the continuance of the research. It is by one of the curious accidents in the history of archaeology that the remains of Lumbini were discovered that year. Dr. Fuhrer went to see the Governor at Niglihava as prearranged. For some reason, the meeting could not take place there. By sheer accident, the Archaeologist was received by the Governor at a place called Paderiya, fifteen miles east-south-east of Niglihava. In the following words, Perceval Landon gives a vivid description of the circumstances and surroundings in which the great Lumbini monolith of Ashoka was first discovered:

'On the following day, 1st December 1895, close to the General's camp there was discovered, in a thicket rising above the level of the surrounding fields, the great

monolith of Asoka. A little Hindu shrine and a mass of early brick-work is still known by the name of Rummindē—a natural modification of the old Lumbini. Not far away flows the Oil River. The pillar was deeply imbedded in accumulated debris, and it was not until several feet of earth were cleared away, the inscription of the Emperor was discovered. Then it was at once clear that the pillar marked the position of the Lumbini Garden, where, according to the definite statements of the earliest Buddhist pilgrims and chroniclers, Prince Gautama was born.' The inscription runs as follows: 'King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods'—this was the personal formula generally used by the Emperor Ashoka in his inscriptions—'having been anointed twenty years, came in person and worshipped here, saying, "Here Buddha, the Sakya ascetic was born," and he caused a stone capital in the shape of a horse to be constructed and a stone pillar to be erected, which declares, "Here the Blessed One was born"'. King Piyadasi exempted the village community of Lummini from taxes, and bestowed wealth upon it.'

In the course of these pilgrimages, Ashoka once visited the Valley where the present capital of Nepal is situated. In the ancient city of Patan he erected five stupas, four of which still survive as reminders of his visit. He was accompanied on this trip by his daughter Charumati, who married a Kshatriya by the name of Devapala and remained in Nepal. She built a monastery for monks in Devapattan (Deopatan). Though modern historical research does not believe that Ashoka visited the Kathmandu Valley, yet the above account is endorsed by common hearsay and at least by one old Sanskrit genealogy.

Ashoka died in 232 B.C. after having ruled strenuously for forty-one years. Although he was such a staunch

Buddhist, he maintained complete religious freedom in his kingdom. He insisted that the followers of different religions should live in peace with one another. H. G. Wells writes in his *Outline of History*: 'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star. From the Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine or Charlemagne.'

MANADEVA

'My darling child, your father is dead. Now it is idle for me to live. My dear, rule the country and let me follow my husband and lord in death. Bonds of innumerable desires and pleasures tend to tie me, I who am without husband, to worldly enjoyment which is but an illusion or false dream. I shall go now.' Queen Rajyavati breathed a long sigh of relief and with tears in her eyes spoke thus to her son.

Manadeva, prostrating himself at her feet, replied, 'Mother, happiness will have no use for me after you have gone. I do not seek happiness in life. You will go to heaven only after I renounce my life.' For he was devoted to his mother; she was a goddess to him, and he considered it his duty to obey her and please her.

The son's appeal had an immediate effect upon her.

Rajyavati did not burn herself with the dead body of her husband. While observing the vows of widowhood, she assisted her son in carrying on the burden of administration.

Manadeva was very handsome. His body had the colour of gold, and his eyes were like *Nil-kamals* or blue lotuses. With broad shoulders and shapely arms, Manadeva looked attractive to everyone. Moreover, he was as talented as he was handsome. He loved his subjects and protected the poor. He was brave and resolute. In spite of all this he was not at all vain. By always smiling as he talked, Manadeva inspired confidence in his visitors.

Rajyavati's husband had been Dharmadeva, a fifth century A.D. Lichchhavi king of Nepal. He was renowned for his valour, having conquered several kingdoms and set up his victory pillars there. Manadeva was worthy of his father. He had learnt the science of warfare in battles fought by his father's side, and he sought to follow his father's example on the battlefield. He took leave of his mother Rajyavati to go to war with rebel feudatories.

He went first to attack them in the east. He defeated them there, but he pardoned those who repented their past action and he returned their lands to them. Next, after he had returned from the east, he learnt of a rebellion in the land of the Mallas in the west. In ancient times Mallapuri was situated on the bank of the River Gandaki to the north of Bihar. Manadeva immediately dispatched an army under one of his uncles to attack Mallapuri. He himself set off at the head of a hundred elephants and countless cavalymen who together looked like the surging tide of an ocean. He crossed the Ganges, conquered Mallapuri and returned to Nepal with immense treasures. His kingdom extended in the west as far as Mallapuri across the Ganges; to the east, the land of the Kirats was also under his sway.

Manadeva was a devotee of Vishnu. He erected an image of Garuda or Eagle, the king of birds and the conveyor of Vishnu, on the top of the stone pillar set up by him in the temple of Changu Narayan. On three sides of this pillar his poetic engraving survives to this day. In the name of his mother, he set up images of Vishnu in different places in Nepal. He dedicated two famous images of Vishnu Vikranta in extended posture, one in Pashupati and one in Lajimpat, in the second half of the fifth century A.D. Both of these show Vishnu in his manifestation or 'descent' (avatar) as a tiny Brahmin boy pervading the cosmos in three strides, stepping out from the tiny piece of land—just enough to stand on—that he had begged the Demon King to give him. Manadeva set up many stone slabs and had them covered with religious inscriptions and beliefs.

Although Manadeva himself was a Vaisnava, he had the highest esteem for the Buddhist religion. Religious tolerance was one of the characteristics of Manadeva, as it was of other kings of Nepal. At the time of Manadeva learning was widespread in Nepal, and Sanskrit was learnt even by the common people.

Before Manadeva, Nepal had been divided into a large number of feudal principalities each of which was sovereign within its own area. Manadeva belonged to the Lichchhavi clan which originally dwelt in the land of the Vrijjis, the region now known as the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar to the north of the Ganges. Their capital was Vaishali. The Lichchhavis were governed by an assembly of notables, presided over by an elected chief. According to Vincent Smith, good reason exists for believing that they were hillmen of the Mongolian type akin to the Tibetans. They certainly followed the Tibetan custom of exposing the bodies of the dead, sometimes hanging them

on trees, and their judicial procedure in criminal cases was exactly the same as that of the Tibetan. The first Tibetan king is said to have belonged to the family of Sakya the Lichchhavi, a kinsman of Gautam, the sage of a different branch of the Sakyas.

Since the Lichchhavi clan was related to the Vrijji confederation, it is likely that in the beginning unstable conditions prevailed throughout Nepal, as was the case in other areas ruled by other clans of the Vrijji confederation. But the credit for uniting these feuding principalities into a kingdom under a strong monarchy belongs to Manadeva. It was only during and after Manadeva's reign that Nepal had a single seat of authority exercised from what came subsequently to be known as 'Mana Griha' or Mana's Palace. It was not until his time that Nepal had her own coins, 'Mananka', with figures of Mana embossed on them.

Mana Griha served as a model for the temple of Changu Narayan and other palaces built after it, and it was mentioned as the seat of royal power in the inscriptions of his successors until 'Kailash-Kut-Bhawan' and 'Bhadradhibas Bhawan' were built later in the time of Amshuvarma and Narendradeva respectively.

According to some Indian historians, twenty-nine Kirati kings had ruled in Nepal when the country was conquered by a Kshatriya prince named Nimisha from India. The fifth and the last king of his dynasty was overthrown by Lichchhivas who had come from India in about A.D. 111 at the time of invasion of northern India by barbarous hordes from Central Asia. A Lichchhavi princess was married to Chandra Gupta I at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., and some Indian historians claim that Nepal had to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Gupta Empire under Samudra Gupta because Nepal is mentioned among his tributaries.

According to some other historians, Samudra Gupta mentioned Nepal not as one of his tributaries but as one of those kingdoms that maintained friendly relations with him. Samudra Gupta himself was very proud of his Lichchhavi lineage. Their association with the Lichchhavis seemed to fill the Guptas with a sense of pride. A coin with the portraits of Chandra Gupta and Kumari Devi on one side has *Lichchhavya* engraved on the other side. Samudra Gupta, who is sometimes described as the Indian Napoleon, proudly called himself *Lichchhavi-dauhitra* or the maternal grandson of the Lichchhavis. Further, King Manadeva claims for his forefathers great victories and the erection of victory pillars during the reign of the powerful Indian emperor. It seems likely that Nepal was not a colony of the Guptas, in the ordinary sense of the word, although it may have acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of the Gupta Empire when its power was at its zenith.

It is well-known that with the decline of the Gupta Empire, the Lichchhavis became very powerful. Under Manadeva, who reigned towards the fifth century A.D., their sway extended well beyond the Valley of Nepal both to the east and to the west.

Relations with Tibet And China

AMSHUVARMA

THE famous seventh-century Chinese traveller Huien Tsang mentions in the account of his travels in India a king of Nepal who reigned not many years before the journey of which he writes. The king, named Amshuvarma, he says, was widely renowned for his bravery, learning and piety.

Amshuvarma had been at first not a king but a powerful minister in a land torn by internal strife. About the beginning of the seventh century A.D., he usurped the power of the throne as *mahasamanta* or chief feudatory. He then married the daughter of the legitimate Lichchhavi king, Shivadeva, established a dual monarchy and founded a new dynasty of his own as Vaisya-Thakuri. Vaisya was the name of his own Rajput clan.

Amshuvarma was a man of learning as well as of action. He fought victoriously in many battles, but he was also well-read and had a deep respect for other scholars. Being interested in spreading education among his people, he did much to fight the ignorance of his subjects.

Amshuvarma was a benevolent monarch. He writes on one of his stone pillars: 'I am always thinking of how I can make my people happy.' Many drinking fountains were set up during his time which are still in existence even today.

The early part of the seventh century in Nepal was a period of great architectural and sculptural achievement.

Amshuvarma created an atmosphere which must have stimulated all the arts. For his own residence he built a beautiful palace known as Kailash-Kut-Bhawan at Madhelakhu in the vicinity of the temple of Pashupati-nath. It had residential quarters for ministers and other officers around it.

Amshuvarma was a man of religious temperament. He was constantly engaged in the study of religious books. As he had a profound knowledge of religious lore, he was very eager to make sure that temples and monasteries would be properly maintained. He therefore set up generous trusts to meet their expenses.

Hindu and Buddhist religious institutions received the same kind of assistance from Amshuvarma. He was a large-hearted and liberal king. He looked upon Hindus and Buddhists alike without discrimination.

Amshuvarma had a daughter named Bri-btsum or Bhrikuti who was as beautiful as she was talented. Tsrongsang-gampo, the famous king of Tibet, had received accounts of her charms and beauty and therefore married her. Later he also married the Chinese Princess Wen-Cheng.

The marriage of Tsrongsang-gampo with Nepali and Chinese princesses led to the opening of the routes from China to India by way of Nepal. At the time when Huien Tsang and his party were returning to China by way of the Pamirs, a Chinese mission of twenty-two men led by Li-I-Piao and Wang Hsuan Tse was proceeding towards India by the new route which had never before been used for the journey between Nepal and China. The party of Princess Wen-Cheng had followed it as far as Lhasa. South-west of Lhasa it reached the Himalayas and crossed the Kerung Pass, which was the way the entourage of the Nepali princess had come. The opening of this route must

have greatly stimulated the growth of commercial and cultural intercourse between these countries since the early Chinese pilgrims to India like Fa-Hsien and Huien-Tsang had preferred the great length and hazards of a journey across the Gobi Desert to the risks encountered by crossing the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau directly.

After the two princesses came to live in Tibet, Buddhism spread rapidly throughout the country. The Nepali princess Bhrikuti was said to have brought with her from Nepal a miraculous sandalwood statue of Tara (Saviouress) and also a begging bowl of lapis lazuli that once had belonged to Lord Buddha himself. She was accompanied to Lhasa by many Buddhist scholars, painters and religious teachers. Under their influence many monasteries were built in Tibet and a large number of Buddhist scriptures translated into Tibetan. Because the Tibetan people received their religion and culture from these two princesses, devout people in Tibet to this day worship them as incarnations of stars. The Nepali princess is adored as Green Star and the Chinese princess as White Star.

NARENDRADEVA

'SEATED on the throne is Narendradeva, bedecked with diamonds, pearls and other jewels, wearing ear-rings of gold and with an amulet in Buddha's likeness dangling on his breast. In the midst of his court, men sprinkle scented water and scatter flowers. On the king's right and left, courtiers are seated on the floor. Behind the throne,

countless soldiers stand at arms.' Such is the description of Narendradeva and his court given in Chinese Tang annals based on the account of Wang Hsuan Tse.

It was Narendradeva who initiated formal relations between Nepal and China for the first time. In the year A.D. 651 he sent an ambassadorial mission to China with all kinds of gifts, and succeeded in establishing cordial relations with the Chinese court. These relations continued to exist in some form or other until 1912, when a republic was established in China and the practice of sending gifts and embassies was automatically discontinued.

A few years before Narendradeva's time, King Harshavardhana ruled in northern India. He had established friendship with China. Chinese and Indian emissaries used to travel back and forth between the two countries by way of Nepal. After Harshavardhana's death, an ambassador from China, Wang Hsuan Tse, arrived in India with a large entourage. The ambassador was attacked by Arunaswa, who had usurped the throne after Harshavardhana's death. He put the emissaries to death or consigned them to prison and confiscated the gifts they had brought. But Wang Hsuan Tse and one of his colleagues managed to escape and reached Narendradeva's palace in Nepal.

Tsong-sang-gampo, the king of Tibet, and Narendradeva, the rightful king of Nepal, helped the Chinese emissary with troops to attack the impetuous Arunaswa. Narendradeva sent seven thousand cavalymen to the aid of the Chinese ambassador, who led an assault on the usurper, captured him with his family and carried him off to China. Friendship between Nepal and China was thus firmly established. The latter was grateful to Nepal for help in the crisis and for the vindication of its honour. A few years later the same Chinese ambassador

again passed through Nepal on his way to visit centres of Buddhist pilgrimage in India.

At the time of Narendradeva, Nepal was a prosperous and powerful country. The contemporary descriptions of grandeur at the royal court attest to it. Narendradeva's palace, called Bhadradhibas Bhawan, was beautiful. It was a seven-storeyed building roofed with plates of copper. Its metal work, balustrades, screens and beams were decorated with precious stones. The columns in the halls were also inlaid with precious stones, and in the four corners of the ground floor there were crocodile heads of gold with water flowing out of their mouths in a continuous stream.

Dr. Stella Kramrisch, ruling out the possibility that the above account by Wang Hsuan Tse exaggerated either the number of storeys or the decoration of the towering structure, makes the following comment on the art that had astonished the Chinese visitor:

'To decorate metal sculptures with precious stones is neither decadent, "late" nor barbaric. The mellow and deep glow of cabochon-cut spinel rubies, the blue freshness of turquoise, the light of rock-crystal, and the gleam of the pearl exceed in effect the inlaying of metal with metal, as of bronze with gold, silver or copper, which are seen in Indian and Nepali metal images of the seventh century. Polychromy, not only by means of pigments made from stones and metals but by the original substances, is part of the sculpture of Nepal. This must have astonished the Chinese envoy in the seventh century, much as it does western taste today.'

In those days as now, the Nepali people lived in houses of wood. Their walls were painted in bright colours and were decorated with murals and friezes. The people were very fond of festivals and celebrated them by playing a

great variety of native musical instruments. They were also well-versed in astrology and astronomy and could draw up lunar calendars on the basis of calculations of the various phases of the moon.

Nepal had grown into a thriving centre by serving as a gateway from India to China for merchandise and for scholars on their missions to spread knowledge and culture. Nepal also served as a gateway for Chinese and Tibetan trade and knowledge. Fascinated by glowing descriptions of wealth and splendour in the Imperial court, Nepal was attracted by distant China and sent presents and messengers there. As we have seen, an army of Nepali soldiers together with the Tibetans even descended to the plains of India to avenge an insult suffered by the Chinese ambassador. There followed a thriving period of commercial and cultural intercourse between the two countries. Nepal's sculpture, painting and architecture delighted the refined Chinese.

A-NI-KO

THE famous thirteenth-century emperor of China, Kublai Khan, wanted to build a golden stupa in Lhasa for his teacher, Pagt-pa, the abbot of the Sakya Monastery. In A.D. 1260, he decided to ask Nepal to send skilled architects to supervise the work.

At that time the king of Nepal was Jayabhimadeva Malla. When he called for architects to go to Lhasa, the king found that eighty were available, but he had great difficulty in selecting the most skilled amongst them to head the mission. Finally, a man named A-ni-ko

came forward and said, 'I shall lead the mission of the architects.'

A-ni-ko, also known as Araniko in Nepal, was very young at that time, but in spite of his youth he was an accomplished bronze-caster. There was some hesitation about choosing such a young man as the leader of a delegation of highly skilled men. But A-ni-ko was elected leader when he declared, 'I may be young in years, but that does not mean that my intellect is immature.'

From his early childhood A-ni-ko had shown remarkable talents. At a very early age, he knew the formulæ of the Buddhist religion by heart and fully understood them. He had a classmate who was a good painter. He became interested in painting by listening to his friends reading his books on the subject. A-ni-ko himself started practising sculpture. It was because of his skill in this art that he could boast that his intellect was not immature and so be elected leader of the delegation.

A-ni-ko went to Lhasa and began building a pagoda-style monastery. He carried out his task with such success that Kublai Khan's teacher, Pags-pa, requested him to go to China with him so that he might be presented to the emperor. When A-ni-ko stood in the presence of Kublai Khan, the emperor said to him, 'Are you not afraid to be in the Celestial Empire?' A-ni-ko replied, 'Our national art is the product or child of ten thousand centuries. The son has no reason to be afraid of being face to face with the father.'

Impressed with A-ni-ko's reply, the emperor put another question to him, 'What is your purpose in travelling this far?'

A-ni-ko said in answer, 'My motherland is very far away from here. I completed in two years the construction of the monastery which was erected in Tibet by your

command. I found internal conditions there torn with conflict. I was told that the emperor is trying to maintain peace and order in the interest of all mankind, no matter whether they are far or near. On hearing this, I came here.'

When the emperor asked in what fields he was skilled, A-ni-ko replied that he could cast statues in metal. So Kublai Khan asked him to repair a copper statue of a Sung emperor which was in bad condition. When A-ni-ko had finished, the statue looked so perfect that the sculptors and those who worked in metals in China were put to shame.

After that, A-ni-ko made all kinds of works of art. The portraits of Chinese emperors which he painted on silk were second to none. By A.D. 1274, he was in charge of all the workers in bronze and was given a silver plate with a tiger embossed on it as a token of this high office. The emperor grew very fond of him and appointed him controller of imperial studies. He was honoured after his death with the order of *Minghoi* which means *Pratyutpannamati* or genius. Among his titles when he died was that of Duke of Liang.

Marco Polo was a world famous Venetian traveller. He was A-ni-ko's contemporary. He also won the favour of Kublai Khan and returned to his homeland laden with gold and all kinds of riches. A-ni-ko could have done the same thing. Instead he chose to make China his home and to enrich her with his works of art.

The White Pagoda or the Pai Ta Sze in Peking stands to this day as a monument to the art of A-ni-ko and as a reminder of cultural exchanges between Nepal and China over many centuries. The Archway of Yung-Tai, which lies on the way from the Pataling Hill to the Ming Tombs, is in a style which is rare in Chinese architecture and is

very much like *torana* (the semi-circular arch) over important gateways to Nepali temples. In the archway dome there are extracts in Nepali script of the Khasa kingdom of western Nepal, apparently from the famous *Vajrayanic Sutras* of the *Hevajra Tantra*, with translations into the Tibetan, Mongolian and Han languages. According to Kaiser Bahadur, 'This confirms the so far unpublished story that a Nepali teacher known by the name of Matidhwaja had prescribed the esoteric cult of *Hevajra Tantra* to the court of Emperor Kublai Khan and that A-ni-ko and his disciples had found these artistic media to explain the intricate, esoteric idea of the *Hevajra Tantra*.'

A recent discovery of four monuments called Black Dragon Spring in Yanchow near Nanking in the Kingshu province of China reveals to us that a Buddhist teacher from Nepal visited China in the fourth century A.D., and translated into Chinese the Buddhist religious book called *Mahavaipulya-Sutra*. His name was Buddhabhadrā (Buddhavatam Saka). From this it is clear that Nepali religious teachers had been to China even before Matidhwaja and A-ni-ko.

Although A-ni-ko married in China and died there in 1306, he was a Nepali. The story of the life and achievements of this man, who is held in such high esteem in China even today, gives the Nepalese a sense of pride. A-ni-ko had married first a Nepali lady called Tsai-yehta-la-chi-mei (Jaydalaksmi), but then keeping with the tradition of the court at which he lived, he took a Mongol lady as another chief wife, and seven secondary wives. A-ni-ko had eight daughters, six sons and more than two hundred apprentices and pupils.

Two of his sons followed in his footsteps and became artists, but neither of them achieved fame. They made

metal images of the gods of their religion, which was Taoism, along with those of Buddhism. A-ni-ko's chief pupil was a Chinese, Lin Yuan. The tradition of work in metal, clay and in lacquer which A-ni-ko had created in Tibet and China lasted for a long time. A-ni-ko's art and fame spread far and wide. His disciples have influenced the art and architecture of Japan, Mongolia and Indonesia where A-ni-ko is still regarded as the embodiment and inspiration of art.

Sylvain Levi, the great French scholar of oriental culture, has paid glowing tributes to the contribution and skill of the Nepali architects: 'They have changed the arts of India, built temples and palaces which have served as models to Tibetans, and the Chinese classical pagoda hails from Nepal. The reputation of the Nepali craftsman consecrated by the centuries is established in the whole of Central Asia.'

The Rise of the Gorkhalis as a Nation

DRAVYA SHAH

THE Gorkhas are famed for their bravery all over the world, and the khukri, their national weapon, is equally well-known. The land of the Gorkhas has the reputation of having been for a long time the only independent Hindu kingdom in the world, but the Gorkhali nation was born only four hundred years ago. The credit for founding the nation belongs to Dravya Shah.

Nepali chronicles trace Dravya Shah's ancestry to an Indian Rajput clan which claimed its descent from the moon. But the links they seek to establish between the two are highly tenuous. Jain Khan is the first known ancestor of the Shah kings of Gorkha. He lived about A.D. 1501 in the village of Lasargha situated on the Baigha ridge on the left bank of the River Kali Gandaki. After spending a number of years there, Surya Khan, Jain Khan's son, proceeded to Bhirkot and settled down in a village called Khilung on the bank of the River Andi Khola. Of the two sons of Surya Khan, Karhancha and Mirhancha (which mean the first and the second sons in the Magar dialect, but are wrongly interpreted and recorded by the writers of Sanskrit chronicles as Khancha and Mincha), the elder son conquered Dhor, Satahun, Garahun, and Bhirkot and became the king of that area. The children of the second son seized control of Kaski in due course and began to rule there. When they were ruling in Kaski, the people of Lamjung adopted as their

king, a prince of the family named Yashobrahma. Dravya Shah, the conqueror of Gorkha, was Yashobrahma's second son.

In those days aboriginal tribes were powerful in Gorkha. These people did not like the Brahmins and the Kshatris with their strange social customs and traditions and the numerically superior tribesmen attempted to force them to adopt the tribes' customs. Smarting under this oppression, the Brahmins and Kshatris engaged in conspiracy against the tribal chiefs.

Their leader, Ganesh Pande, was uncertain as to what should be done under the pressing circumstances. He turned for assistance to Narayan Arjel of Khilung. Narayan Arjel advised him to put Yashobrahma's son, Dravya Shah, on the throne of Gorkha. This advice sparked off a revolution.

Ganesh Pande secretly began to unite his people, preparing them for rebellion. Chhoprak, on the border of Gorkha, became the rebel headquarters. From there Narayan Arjel organized the plot while Ganesh Pandey travelled back and forth between it and Gorkha.

There was a Gurung village called Liglig to the north of the township of Gorkha. Liglig enjoyed democratic rule of a kind, for its ruler was elected each year after a race to select the most athletic of its citizens. The conspirators' plan was to seize Liglig first, for Gorkha could easily be tackled once Liglig was under their control.

On the day of Vijayadashami or Dasai in A.D. 1557, the Gurungs of Liglig were assembled to watch the race for the election of their leader. The plotters struck suddenly, defeated the Gurungs without difficulty and acquired control of Liglig. They immediately made Dravya Shah king of Liglig.

Now it was easy to attack Gorkha. The Brahmins,

Kshatris and Magars were now completely united. One night Dravya Shah and his soldiers left Liglig and captured Tallakôt in Gorkha. Soon after this victory, they attacked the main palace of Gorkha, again at night. After a fierce battle outside the palace, the chief of Gorkha was slain by Dravya Shah and the rebels were victorious. At midnight, on the 26th of July, 1558, Dravya Shah was crowned king and his dynasty established in Gorkha. The Gorkhali nation had been born.

To the south, Akbar's rule had dawned in India. In his time the whole of northern India was brought under the Mughal empire. Hindu refugees from Mughal tyranny sought shelter in the Himalayas and received hospitality from the Gorkhali nation. Today the Mughal empire no longer exists, and many changes have since occurred in the history of India. But the Gorkhali nation, having been transformed into the Nepali nation has to this very day maintained its independence.

From the very moment of its birth, the Gorkhali nation contained the potentialities for developing into the Nepali nation. The movement for Gorkhali nationhood was broadly based; it had not only the support of the Kshatris and the Brahmins, but also the support of the Magars. Gangaram Rana, the leader of the Magars, had foreseen a great future for a united Nepal and played a leading role in placing Dravya Shah on the throne of Gorkha. Gorkhali nationalism had a liberal tradition from the very beginning. In due course it was able to weave the diverse tribes of the hilly regions into a single nation.

The birth of the Gorkhali nation ushers in a new era in the history of Nepal. The Nepali historian Gewali describes it: 'That was the day when the sun for fortune and security rose on the Nepali horizon. That was the

day when the seed of Nepal's prosperity was planted. We must also never forget those who had planted this seed—men like Ganesh Pande, Narayan Arjel and Gangaram Rana, because the birth of the Nepali nation was made possible by them. Blessed is Dravya Shah whose bravery and industry were responsible for the fair renown of the Gorkhalis or the Nepalese in the world.'

The Most Famous King of the Nepal Valley

PRATAP MALLA

WHOEVER goes to Kathmandu should visit Ranipokhari, a beautiful tank which adds to the charm and beauty of the Tundikhel, the historic parade ground in the heart of the city. Ranipokhari was built by King Pratap Malla towards the end of his rule in the seventeenth century A.D. as a tribute to the memory of his son Chakravartindra Malla. Water from holy places was poured into it so that the people might bathe there and offer oblations to their gods and ancestors.

Pratap Malla was a learned and religious king. He was a benefactor of scholars and men of religion who came in great numbers from distant places in India and taught in Nepal under his patronage. In addition, he himself studied many subjects and was especially fond of logic, rhetoric and prosody. He knew many languages and the scripts in which they were written. He was a poet and composed fine verse in Sanskrit in praise of the gods and goddesses. Inscriptions of his hymns are found today in the precincts of the temples of Pashupatinath, Guheshwari, Swayambhunath, and others. He accepted the title of *Kavindra*, chief among poets, because of his success as a poet, and this title was embossed on his coins and inscriptions.

All visitors to Swayambhunath are familiar with the copper thunderbolt placed beside a pavement leading up to the temple. It was King Pratap Malla who placed

the thunderbolt there. By erecting several temples and images of gods and goddesses he made sure that his name would be remembered. He added the Hanuman gates to the ancient palace and set up an image of Hanuman, the monkey-god, in front of it.

In the temple of Pashupatinath he gave away in charity one hundred horses and his own weight in gold, silver, pearls and coral in a religious ceremony called *tuladana*. (The practice of giving away one's own weight in valuables as an act of charity was also prevalent in those days among the Mughal rulers of India.)

A drama called *Gita-digambar*, (Song of those clothed in saffron), specially written for the purpose was performed for the entertainment of those assembled to watch Pratap Malla make his religious donations. The chronicles of the Malla kings show that all of them had one virtue in common: they sponsored religious activities for the recreation and entertainment of their subjects. New religious processions, dances and plays provided healthy amusements which also served as vehicles of popular education. The chronicles say that Pratap Malla started the tradition of the small Machchhendranath procession, and thereafter all the Malla kings maintained this traditional form of popular education. He had as much respect for Hinduism as for Buddhism, for he shared with other kings of Nepal devotion to both these religions.

Pratap Malla was as valorous as he was learned. He defeated the kings of Bhadgaon and Patan in battle and did not allow them to disturb the peace of the Nepal Valley. He also defeated Dumber Shah, the son of Ram Shah, and brought under his control the northern passes of Kuti and Kerung, the gateways to Tibet.

In the first half of the seventeenth century the struggle for power among the various Tibetan Buddhist sects

approached a climax. It was not until 1645 that the fifth Dalai Lama, head of the Gelukpa (yellow hat) sect had been able to bring under his sway the powerful Sakya dynasty of Tsang, adherents of the Nying-ma-pa (red hat) sect. During the crucial years of the seventeenth century when Tibet was virtually in a state of anarchy, Nepal had two strong and ambitious kings—Ram Shah of Gorkha (c. 1606–1633) and Pratap Malla of Kathmandu (c. 1624–1674). It is only natural that they should have turned their attention to developments north of the Himalayas. They were motivated by the desire to control the main trade routes between Nepal and Tibet for strategic as well as economic reasons.

Though Ram Shah's and Pratap Malla's incursions into Tibet cannot be precisely dated, they probably took place around 1630 and 1649. It may be that the Gorkha conquest in Tibet made by Ram Shah threatened one of the important trade routes to Tibet—the one through Kerung—and this necessitated immediate and bold action on the part of the Kathmandu Valley to preserve their near monopoly on Nepal-Tibet trade. Hence Pratap Malla's successful military campaign against Dumber Shah.

Pratap Malla also sent an expedition to Tibet under Kazi Bhim Malla who overran Kuti and advanced some distance towards Shigatse. At that point, the representatives of the Lamas met him and negotiated a peace-settlement. As a result of this treaty, Kathmandu was given joint authority with Tibet in the border towns of Kuti and Kerung. Newar merchants of the Kathmandu valley were permitted to establish thirty-two trading houses. They sent back to Nepal vast quantities of silver and gold. Bhim Malla arranged with the Tibetan authorities that the assets of Nepali traders in Lhasa who died without

any successors should automatically become the property of the Nepali government. When Pratap Malla acquired control of the Kuti and Kerung passes, Tibetan trade progressed all the more.

Nepal under Pratap Malla had a thriving trade with Tibet. His trade policy was liberal. Under his guidance, commerce with India also prospered as he gave shelter and patronage to a number of Kashmiri traders.

Pratap Malla also took his wives from India. One of them was the daughter of Naranarayana, the king of Cooch Behar. Her name was Rupamati. His other wife Lalmati, came of Karnat stock and was probably a princess from Mithila.

Pratap Malla died in 1674 after ruling for fifty years. Two score kings ruled in the Nepal Valley following its division into three kingdoms by Jayaksha Malla in 1480. Pratap Malla was the most outstanding. His reign gives us a glimpse of the Malla glory at its height.

PART II
BUILDERS OF MODERN NEPAL

The Rise and Growth of the Nepali Nation

PRITHVINARAYAN SHAH

THE Shah kings of Nepal, originally from the Ruling House of Gorkha, played a very significant role in bringing about the unification of Nepal. Just as Italy was united by the untiring efforts of the Ruling House of Savoy, so also was Nepal united by the Shah rulers from Gorkha, the small hilly state sixty-five miles west of Kathmandu.

We have seen that the credit for founding the Ruling House of Gorkha belongs to Dravya Shah. His successor Ram Shah established a reputation for himself as a just ruler not only among the people of Gorkha but also in the whole of the mountain region. Ram Shah's name became well-known among the people because he introduced a legal and social code that proved acceptable almost everywhere in the neighbouring principalities. Ram Shah's arbitration in disputes between the kingdoms in the hills was always sought for and accepted. The adage 'If you do not receive justice, you have to go to Gorkha' came into vogue about this time.

Prithvinarayan was a ninth-generation descendant of Dravya Shah and a seventh-generation descendant of Ram Shah. Prithvinarayan Shah stands as a powerful force in the emergence of Nepali nationalism, because in his day, when the tribal system was disintegrating he brought unity out of the prevailing chaos. It was the Gorkhali conquest that gave this country a strong central

government. The present Kingdom of Nepal stands as a lasting tribute to the foresight of the Gorkhali rulers and, in a way, represents a full measure of their magnanimity.

The military conquests and annexations of Prithvinarayan and his immediate successors are not so much remarkable in themselves as for the manner in which they led to a feeling of unity and patriotism among the people as a whole. Various peoples of Nepal joined the Gorkhali Army that was ever triumphantly on the march and thus became partners in the great task of building modern Nepal. This enabled men of diverse races with different dialects and customs, to share an equal sense of pride in the name and tradition of Gorkha. It is noteworthy that even to this day people coming from all parts of Nepal, irrespective of caste or religion, pass for Gorkhas outside Nepal. So great is the sense of pride felt by all the Nepalese for the tradition of Gorkha that even social and political organizations of the Nepalese domiciled in India and elsewhere are often called Gorkha.

Prithvinarayan Shah is the hero to whose prowess the Nepali nation owes its existence. By his valiant deeds, he transformed Gorkhali nationalism into Nepali nationalism and made it an immensely potent force.

Ram Shah had extended the kingdom of Gorkha to Rasuwa on the north and to the Trisuli River on the east. Prithvinarayan in the late eighteenth century had very little hope of being able to extend his kingdom farther west because there it was bounded by big and powerful principalities like Lamjung, Parvat and Palpa. Nothing was to be gained by proceeding towards the barren, bleak region of Tibet on the north. He had no means of expanding towards the south. Only one direction remained open to him, eastwards, towards the Nepal Valley. As soon as

he became king in 1743, Prithvinarayan began to prepare for the conquest of Nuwakot towards the east.

Prithvinarayan learnt useful lessons from his father's unsuccessful attempt to conquer Nuwakot. He became aware of Gorkha's limitations and immediately made ambitious plans for enhancing its military strength. He made a pilgrimage to Varanasi and brought back with him a number of matchlock rifles and a few experts skilled in forging weapons of war. He increased the number of troops by giving military training to all male citizens and distributed to them weapons made in the workshops he had established. Having made these sound preparations, Prithvinarayan attacked Nuwakot. Thanks to his well-organized army and effective weapons, he conquered Nuwakot fort and valley in 1744 and annexed them to his kingdom. The valley of Nuwakot, irrigated by the Trisuli and the Tadi rivers, is very fertile, and its annexation increased Prithvinarayan's revenue considerably.

As Prithvinarayan Shah expanded his kingdom to the east, the kings of the principalities to the west grew jealous of him. The Chaubisyas, or Twenty-four Principalities, launched attacks on Gorkha while Prithvinarayan was away fighting in the east, thus forcing him to fight on two fronts. But by prowess and military skill he prevented his enemies in the west from advancing, and eventually defeated and subjugated his adversaries to the east by mounting repeated offensives.

In the east the Malla kings of the Nepal Valley were not inferior to him in strength and resources. Their geographical position was a great asset to them, for their valley, surrounded by tall mountains on all sides, was like a natural fortress. If the passes between the mountains were carefully guarded, no enemies could make their way into it. Thus, it was by no means an easy task to

conquer the Valley; only a great warrior like Prithvinarayan Shah could have been capable of such an accomplishment. And even he took twenty-five years to achieve it. In fact, it is doubtful whether he could have conquered the Valley at all if there had been co-operation among the three kingdoms. Prithvinarayan spared no efforts to capitalize on the situation created by internal dissension among the Malla kings of the Nepal Valley.

After his conquest of Nuwakot Prithvinarayan had the mountains scaled and explored, and set up outposts on the highest points. In due course he worked his way round to the east of the Nepal Valley and acquired control of Kavrepalanchok and Sindhupalchok that lie on the main trade route to Lhasa through Kuti. On the west, he seized control of places like Dahachowk and Dhunibesi. He attacked Makwanpur and conquered it, thereby blocking the southern entrance to the Valley from India. Thus the Nepal Valley was shut in from all sides.

Prithvinarayan's main objective was to force the valley into economic isolation. He successfully accomplished this, but while fulfilling his design, he clashed with two external forces. The price for the Nepal Valley was high.

First, in 1763, Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal, was instigated by the displaced ruler of Makwanpur to attack Nepal. Prithvinarayan checked the advance of troops led by Mir Kasim's general, Gurgin Khan, at Makwanpur, destroyed his army and forced him to retreat.

After Prithvinarayan had consolidated his blockade of the Nepal Valley, the East India Company government in India, in response to a request for help from Jayaprakash Malla, the king of Kathmandu, attacked Prithvinarayan. He defeated the East India Company soldiers sent under the command of Captain Kinloch at Sindhuli in 1767. Kinloch, forced to retreat from Sindhuli, remained

in control of Bara-Parsa and Rauthat in the Tarai for two years, but Prithvinarayan did not mind that because he was not in immediate need of those lands. His aim at that time was to conquer the Valley and not the Tarai.

Having defeated his external enemies, Prithvinarayan entered the Nepal Valley. His economic blockade had weakened the kings and the people of the Valley, and they could now put up very little resistance against him. Jayaprakash Malla, the king of Kathmandu, had already fled from his palace when Prithvinarayan marched into Kathmandu on the day of Indrajatra (26th September) in 1768, and took his throne. Once Kathmandu fell into his hands, it did not take him long to take possession of Patan and Bhadgaon.

Thus the Nepal Valley came under the control of Prithvinarayan. A great nation was born. The Gorkhali nation transformed itself into the Nepali nation. The Newars of the Valley, who had looked upon the Gorkhalis as their enemies, became a part of the same greater Nepali nation. The brave Gorkhalis and the artistic Newars became compatriots. In endorsement of this Prithvinarayan made Kathmandu his capital. Kathmandu now became the centre of the loyalty of the Magars, Gurungs, Newars—all of whom now composed the new nation of Nepal.

The Kirats to the east of Nepal were still separate, but it was a historical necessity that having once been politically dominant in the Nepal Valley, they should also form part of the Nepali nation. As soon as Prithvinarayan was in firm control of the Nepal Valley, he set himself to the task of incorporating the Kirat land into his kingdom. Both sections of the ancient race of the Kirats—the Rais and the Limbus—accepted his dominance. In this way the ancient heritage of the Kirats also became a part

of the new Nepali nation. Thus did the new nation acquire its cohesion, tradition and skills, its courage and vision.

The history and geography of Nepal also seem to ordain that the various physical divisions of Nepal should be one nation under one government. If the Kosi basin and Gandaki basin were not linked with the region watered by the Bagmati, the country would have lacked in integral unity. Unless these three regions stood together, they would not be self-supporting. The ancient kings of the Nepal Valley sought to extend their kingdoms both to the east and the west and achieved a measure of success. Unity was finally achieved through Prithvinarayan Shah's prowess and foresight.

If we take a broad view, all of us living in the shade of the Himalayas are one. There is not much difference in our outlook and tradition, no matter whether we speak Mongoloid languages or Indo-Aryan languages, whether we are Hindus or Buddhists, whether we carry arms or study the ancient books. The Himalayas have given us a deep sense of unity and equality: Newari traders, Gorkha warriors, Brahmins and Kshatris have for long ages been trickling into this mountainous region and settling here. Did the Brahmins and the Kshatris look down upon the natives and consider their own culture superior? If they had done so, the native tribes would not have accepted them. At first the Kshatris and Brahmins were not in a position to impose their culture on the native tribes by force. If the native tribes gradually came to share the social and religious tradition brought by the immigrant Brahmins and Kshatris, it was because of the merits of the latter's tradition. The orthodox Hindu tradition of the immigrants was also gradually transformed in the process of adaptation to local conditions.

When Prithvinarayan Shah was on his way to Varanasi,

Sirdar Balibhanjan was reported to have said to him, 'In the hills, we hill people are in the habit of referring to ourselves as coming from Gorkha, Piuthan or Parvat. But once we are in the plains we are all hillmen.' Prithvinarayan Shah eliminated all the differences between the small kingdoms in the hills, and made us all into Nepalese. The hill people, who once owed their loyalty to small mountain kingdoms and kings, became under Prithvinarayan Shah the subjects of one king and one country. The sphere of their patriotism was extended. No longer would they be called upon to fight against their own kinsmen in local wars started by one petty king against another.

Prithvinarayan was a great administrator as well as a warrior. Towards the close of his rule, he worked hard at organizing the administration of his country. The prolonged period of war had adversely affected trade with Tibet; he started correspondence with the Tashi Lama and the Dalai Lama for restoring trade to its former prosperous condition. The Nepali people were granted a complete and full measure of religious freedom: the Buddhist Newars were permitted to follow their traditional religious and social practices in peace.

Foreigners, who had trade and other vested interests in the Nepal Valley, were very much perturbed by the Gorkha conquest. The Capuchin missionaries, who had been active during the Malla rule, took Prithvinarayan's leave and withdrew from Nepal on 4th February, 1769. The missionaries apprehended that Prithvinarayan's zeal for protection of the Hindu religion might restrict the scope for their activities in the Valley. Like the missionaries, the Muslim owners of the Kashmiri trading houses in the Valley also feared persecution by Prithvinarayan on religious grounds, and on suspicion of their past

connexion and dealings with the Malla rulers. The Kashmiri Muslims had an important role to play in conducting trade between India and Tibet through Nepal. Prithvinarayan persuaded them to carry on their trade as before. Despite this, most of the Kashmiri Muslim trading houses closed down their business and their owners returned to India.

No doubt Nepal's trade with Tibet suffered a temporary decline after Prithvinarayan came to power. But, nobody was more fully aware of the value of this trade to Nepal than Prithvinarayan himself. His most cherished objective was to re-establish Kathmandu as the principal trade centre in the Himalayan region, but on conditions different from those that existed under the Malla rulers. The Gorkha King hoped to acquire in due course a monopoly on the trade between Tibet and India, channelling it entirely through Kathmandu. In his 'Divine Counsel', he stated that by 'closing the roads through the East and West I shall open the road through Nepal (Kathmandu).' Prithvinarayan did everything in his power to maintain intact the trade routes and relations with Tibet. His only consideration was to exclude the British from trade with Tibet. Prithvinarayan hastily completed conquest of the Kirat lands and Morang with a view to closing the trade route for the British through that area.

One of the allegations brought against the Gorkhali conqueror by foreign writers is that Gorkhali conquest caused a serious decline in the trades and crafts of the Valley. There may have been a decline in the time immediately following the conquest, but the lasting and more serious decline in the trades and crafts of the Valley had quite different causes. It was caused by the growing competition from cheap machine-made goods flowing in

from outside with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and as such had nothing to do with Gorkhali supremacy.

In 1775, shortly after he had set himself to the task of organizing a new administration and improving Nepal's trade, Prithvinarayan Shah died at the early age of fifty-five. His task was left unfinished. His successors had by 1809 extended the kingdom from the Teesta in the east to the Sutlej in the west, and a portion of the Tarai was also incorporated in it. But they did not possess Prithvinarayan's foresight. Prithvinarayan believed in making the people of the conquered areas share a sense of common stake in the future of the kingdom by treating them alike with the same kind of justice and benevolence. The maxim he laid down for himself and his successors was: 'It is with much travail that I have acquired this kingdom. It is a common garden for all castes (of people). Let everyone realize this.' His successors were unable to consolidate their rule in their newly acquired territories because they failed to win the heart and confidence of the people there. Again, the inability of his successors to retain all of the additional territories they had acquired resulted from their neglect of a valuable piece of advice left to them by Prithvinarayan Shah in his 'Divine Counsel':

'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 clever. He has kept India suppressed, and is entrenching himself on the plains. One day the army will come. Do not engage in offensive act. Fighting should be conducted on defensive basis.'

The failure of Prithvinarayan's successors to heed this advice and warning involved them in a war with China in 1792 and with the British in 1814-1816. Though

Nepal's war with China did not result in any adverse effect of a lasting nature, yet its war with the British in India meant loss of considerable territory to Nepal.

Prithvinarayan Shah's valour and statesmanship fill Nepalese with a sense of pride. As a result of his foresight and wisdom, a synthesis of Hinduism and Buddhism exists in Nepal to this day. The strong nation he created was to be for a long time the only independent Hindu nation in the world.

JAYAPRAKASH MALLA

JAYAPRAKASH Malla was called upon to meet not only the challenge of Prithvinarayan but also that of adverse circumstances. His long rule in Kathmandu was a constant struggle with internal as well as external enemies. But even the prospect of a fight on a double front, rendered all the more grim by internecine dispute, did not daunt him. To his last hour, he faced the situation with fortitude and equanimity, and did his best to meet it with all his intelligence and strength. Though his patriotism may appear parochial from the modern point of view, it was none the less real. He gladly laid down his life for his country. We can learn from him valuable lessons in patriotism, and thus his life has a high place of honour in our national history.

Even before he became king the hill people who served in his army did not like Jayaprakash. When his father, Jagatjaya Malla, proposed that Jayaprakash should succeed him on the throne, the soldiers from the hills resented the suggestion and expressed their preference for Jagat-

jaya's third son, Rajyaprakash. Nevertheless, after his father's death, in 1736, Jayaprakash became king.

It was only natural for Jayaprakash to look upon his officers from the hills with suspicion and soon these officers hatched a plot to dethrone him. They induced his fourth brother to declare himself an independent king of the area consisting of Sankhu and Changu. It took Jayaprakash four months to put down this rebellion.

If we consider Jayaprakash's personality against the background of the treachery of his officers, the active assistance they received from the neighbouring rajas and the armed attack of Prithvinarayan, he appears a great man. We find him undaunted by failure, ever ready to meet a challenge without fear or consideration of difficulties, resolute in his purpose amidst the most trying circumstances, intelligent and sober. It was by virtue of these qualities that he was able to put down the periodic revolts against him. Jayaprakash freed Kathmandu from the conspiracy of treacherous officers by having such officers as Kasiram Thapa put to death.

This quarrel might appear at first to have involved domestic issues only, but in order to realize its gravity, we have to look at it in relation to two other matters. Every plot against Jayaprakash received assistance from the kings of Bhadgaon and Patan. Rajyaprakash, whom Jayaprakash had exiled only a few days after succeeding to the throne of Kathmandu, received asylum in the court of the king of Patan. In 1745 Rajyaprakash was crowned King of Patan. Bhadgaon also openly opposed Jayaprakash and helped his enemies. Prithvinarayan himself missed no opportunity to keep this strife alive. Several of Jayaprakash's officers from the hills were secretly in league with Prithvinarayan. It was on the invitation of some of these officers and with the backing of Bhadgaon

that Prithvinarayan took Sankhu, Changu and other places from Jayaprakash.

Jayaprakash Malla suffered a tremendous loss of face as a result of Gorkha's capture of these villages in the neighbourhood of Kathmandu. It provided a golden opportunity for his old enemies who were just biding their time. Taudik, one of the leading members of the Kathmandu court, had sought refuge in Patan following the execution of his brother Dati Pradhan by Jayaprakash. He seized this opportunity to spread rumours among the young men and women of Kathmandu that if Jayaprakash continued to remain on the throne, the Gorkhas might capture Gokarna and thereby endanger the security of both Kathmandu and Patan.

At midnight on 23rd September, 1746, Jayaprakash's palace was surrounded by a hostile crowd. Jayaprakash himself was taken into custody and sent to Patan on his own request that he be allowed to stay with his mother there. Jayaprakash's wife Jayalaxmi Devi was also involved in the plot. The conspiracy was successful. The conspirators put his eight-year-old boy Jyoti Malla on the throne with his mother Jayalaxmi Devi as Regent. Taudik was appointed Minister of the court. But, after four and a half years Jayaprakash came out of hiding and, with the help of loyal troops, regained the throne. He acted as regent for his son for two years. Thereafter he declared himself King and made his son his heir-apparent. After Jayaprakash returned to power, he temporarily regained Naldum and Mahadev Pokhari. He also fortified the defence outposts to the west and the north of Kathmandu from Simbhu.

Jayaprakash did his best to counter Prithvinarayan by every possible means. He sometimes fought against Prithvinarayan in open battle and at other times con-

spired against him. But his efforts were of no avail. Prithvinarayan Shah blocked all entrances to the Valley of Nepal, maintaining so tight a siege that its surrender was only a matter of time, and then launched his armed attack. The outposts on the surrounding hills had already fallen into Prithvinarayan's hands; the company of British Indian soldiers, the last hope of Jayaprakash, had been defeated.

Prithvinarayan Shah demanded surrender from Jayaprakash in this hour of despair and hopelessness. Had the latter not been a man of strong will, he would have readily given up the struggle. But Jayaprakash Malla was made of different mettle. He rejected the demand for surrender in a manner befitting a hero.

At the end he did his best to prevent the entry of Prithvinarayan into Kathmandu. He failed to do so and fled seeking shelter with Ranjit Malla, the king of Bhadgaon. Ranjit Malla did not readily offer shelter, because he knew it meant inviting armed assault by the Gorkhalis. Therefore he first sought the opinion of the important people of his kingdom. They were, no doubt, very much impressed by the patriotism of Jayaprakash and decided in favour of granting him asylum.

Prithvinarayan next conquered Patan, and Tej Narsing, the king of Patan also fled to Bhadgaon. Finally, Prithvinarayan attacked Bhadgaon, where the last battle was fought in 1769. Following their defeat, all three Malla kings gathered in the palace of Bhadgaon, where Prithvinarayan Shah arrived smiling with a few of his followers. Jayaprakash had been mortally wounded. 'How could the wounded tiger stand this?' asks the historian Gewali. Jayaprakash said as if in reply, 'You Gorkhalis have no occasion for rejoicing; it was all due to the treachery of our officers.' Prithvinarayan at once realized the im-

portance of the moment and sought to undo the effect of his untimely laughter by paying a tribute to the bravery of the dying Jayaprakash, thus taking the sting out of his mockery.

There is no doubt that Jayaprakash fully deserved the praise given him by Prithvinarayan. Jayaprakash was indeed a hero. Unlike the kings of Bhadgaon and Patan, he never bowed down to Prithvinarayan and had no secret dealings with him. For twenty-five years he faced unflinchingly the grim realities of a massive attack by an outsider as well as the treachery of his own officers and the hostility of the two neighbouring kingdoms within the valley itself. In the end, he bravely met his death from the wound he received in his last great battle.

AMARSINGH THAPA

THE hopes and aspirations of the new nation that had thus been forged by the force of Prithvinarayan's personality increased continually for some forty years after his death. The stream of spiritual vitality he had poured into the nation continued to find new springs of energy and strength until 1814. At the start of the nineteenth century, Nepal was aspiring to fly its flag, with its emblem of the moon and the sun over the entire region of the Himalayas extending from Sikkim on the east to Kashmir on the west. Amarsingh Thapa spent all his life making great efforts and sacrifices for the realization of this goal.

It must be noted at the very beginning, however, that Amarsingh's ambition was inspired not by national vanity or self-aggrandizement but by the urgent necessity for

survival in the face of the growing strength of the British in India. All the soldier-statesmen of the day who mattered—Bhimsen Thapa of Nepal, Ranjit Singh of the Punjab and Dowlat Rao Scindia of Maharashtra—feared the designs of the British, but not one of them shared Amarsingh's foresight in realizing that only unity of purpose and action among them would be effective protection against British imperialism. Nepal sincerely endeavoured to unite the Gorkhalis, the Sikhs and the Marathas in a common cause against the British. It was only after the failure of diplomatic efforts that Amarsingh started his armed push towards the west along the Himalayas. His aim in doing this was to consolidate the strength of the feuding hill principalities into one strong kingdom as a bulwark against the advance of the East India Company. He further believed that such a move on the part of Nepal would provide an incentive to the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh to join hands with Nepal against the British in India.

At the outset nothing was further removed from Amarsingh's thoughts than an open clash with the Sikhs and the British. But palace circles in Kathmandu had an exaggerated estimate of their own military strength. There was much mutual suspicion among the soldier-statesmen of the day. Further, British diplomacy had succeeded in keeping them divided till the end. For these reasons Amarsingh came into conflict with Ranjit Singh's forces and eventually with the British before he was able to consolidate his position in the newly acquired far-western territories. In the end the superiority of the British in arms and organization decided the issue in their favour.

Amarsingh's father had won renown as a commander in Prithvinarayan's army and died a hero's death in the battle for the Nepal Valley. Amarsingh Thapa received

care and guidance from Prithvinarayan. Out of a sense of duty and as a matter of policy, Prithvinarayan had undertaken to provide for the upbringing and training of the sons of his men and officers who died in battle.

Amarsingh Thapa took a leading part in all the battles fought west of Gorkha during the regency of Bahadur Shah. As a result of these battles, Nepal's boundary on the west was pushed as far as the Alakananda River in Garhwal. Then, in 1792, Nepal became involved in a war with China and its expansion westwards had to be suspended.

Military activity in the west was stopped for about twelve years. This period was marked, instead, by intense domestic strife. But just before Rana Bahadur Shah returned from self-imposed exile in Varanasi and took over the reins of government for the second time, Amarsingh was sent on an expedition to complete the conquest of Garhwal.

In the course of his onward march, Amarsingh conquered Garhwal along with Dehra Dun by defeating the king of Garhwal. Like Caesar who said, 'I came, I saw, I conquered,' Amarsingh conquered one territory after another until Nepal's boundary on the west reached as far as the banks of the Sutlej. At the same time, while the flag of Nepal was flying on the banks of the Sutlej, Ranjit Singh was consolidating his position in the plains of the Punjab by merging the different Sikh sects into one. The British were strengthening the foundations of their own administration in India.

Amarsingh assumed the leadership of several independent kingdoms on both sides of the Sutlej that were dissatisfied with Samsar Chandra of Kangra. Amarsingh then turned his attention towards the Quilla-Kangra fort of ancient fame, which commanded the entire hill region

as far as Kashmir. Because of the small number of men with him, and also because the local rajas were not dependable, he could not actually attack the fort itself. Instead, he began energetically to tighten a blockade around it by conquering most of the surrounding kingdoms. Just when Kangra's resistance was almost broken, Sikh troops under Ranjit Singh came to Samsar Chandra's rescue. A fierce battle was fought between the Sikhs and the Nepalese in front of Kangra fort during which the soldiers inside the fort came out to join the Sikhs. At last Amarsingh retreated across the Sutlej.

After his retreat from Kangra, Amarsingh was busy consolidating his position in the newly acquired territories when war suddenly broke out between Nepal and the East India Company. He had not been in favour of this war and had done his best to bring about a peaceful settlement of differences. But when he failed in his attempt he was forced to confront the Company soldiers when they attacked his positions in the Simla hills.

The Company troops launched a four-pronged attack on Nepal through the Simla hill states, Dehra Dun, Butwal and Bara-Parsa. The military operations were reinforced by political and psychological warfare. The rulers of principalities which had been recently conquered by the Gorkhas had good reason to oppose the latter. The Company gave them false hopes that they would be reinstated as rulers once the Gorkhas were defeated. It also took precautions to neutralise China and the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh, both of which were powerful sovereign states with interests in the Central Himalayas.

The Company had made careful and elaborate preparations for war. Despite this, during the first phase of the war of 1814-16, for a period of about six months, the British met with reverses on almost every front along a

700-mile frontier. Not only the courage and valour of the Nepalese, but also the incompetence of the British generals was responsible for this. The reverses suffered by the Company's forces near Gorakhpur and Saran and the failure of their initial operations in Kumaon temporarily relieved the Gorkhas of the threat of an attack on their capital and left them in a better position to send reinforcements to their forces stationed in the western area. But the Company's forces mounted their efforts to prevent reinforcements from reaching Amarsingh Thapa in the extreme west. Its forces captured Almora and forced the Gorkhas to withdraw to the east of the Mahakali River.

Major-General David Ochterlony, who proved to be the most capable of the British generals, was pitted against the ablest Gorkha general Amarsingh Thapa, in the westernmost area of Nepal. Unlike other British generals, Ochterlony never underestimated the strength of his opponents, and nowhere did he launch a frontal attack on any Gorkha stronghold. He was the only general who took maximum advantage of his superior artillery. Wherever artillery could be used, he never resorted to a bayonet charge or rifle fire. Furthermore, he employed the same tactics against the Gorkhas which the latter had used successfully against the British in other sectors.

Ochterlony had about seven thousand men under him at the commencement of hostilities, whereas Amarsingh Thapa had hardly three thousand soldiers. Despite his numerical superiority, Ochterlony did not initiate any major action against the Gorkhas until April 15, 1815, though he had actually entered the Himalayan foothills as early as November 5, 1814. For about five months, Ochterlony was merely content with manoeuvring his soldiers either in the rear or the flank of the enemy, thereby merely forcing the small advance posts of the Gorkhas to abandon

their stockades. He found an equal match in General Amarsingh who, though ill-equipped in arms and men, gave proof of his skill in warfare by outmanoeuvring the enemy on several occasions. As a large army was required to offer open battle on a wide field, Amarsingh resorted to defensive tactics and strategic retreats after inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

At one stage, Ochterlony had thought Amarsingh Thapa would not be interested in defending the area and would withdraw towards the Mahakali or the Sharada River on the east because the areas on the far west were not easily defensible against the long-range guns the British were in a position to employ against the Gorkha fortifications there. But Amarsingh Thapa was resolved to make a stand. He moved his forces from his headquarters at Irkee and took up a defensive position on a high and difficult ridge of mountains with the fort of Ramgarh on his right and a high and fortified range of hills on his left. In the back of this ridge, and running almost parallel to it, was another high range of mountains on which the forts of Malaun, Ratangarh and Surajgarh were situated.

It took Ochterlony all his military skill to outwit Amarsingh and force the Gorkhas back to their second line of defence on the Malaun ridge. The Gorkhas had most of the hilltops in the neighbourhood garrisoned and fortified by fences and stockades. Only Raila and Deothal remained unprotected. The Gorkhas had left them unprotected thinking that the British would not bother to capture them because of the difficulty of transporting guns there. On 15th April 1815—the very first day of attack—Raila fell without much opposition to a grenadier battalion. Ochterlony was aware of the fact that the control of Deothal by his forces would endanger the entire Gorkha line of defence. He took Deothal by a

surprise action. This put the British astride the Gorkha defence line.

Although the recapture of Deothal would reverse the advantage held by Ochterlony, the odds were heavy against the Gorkhas. They had no chance of recapturing it, and Amarsingh knew this better than anybody else. But Sardar Bhakti Thapa, a seasoned veteran of many battles, insisted on being allowed an opportunity to make an attempt to regain Deothal. Amarsingh tried to dissuade him, but he told Amarsingh that he could not choose a better way to die in his old age than by attempting to capture this vital link in the Gorkha line of defence. Bhakti probably knew he was going to die on the day of the attack because he had asked his two wives to be prepared to burn themselves with his dead body on the following day.

Bhakti Thapa launched his attack with two thousand troops. The British forces were already on the height of Deothal and they had fortified it with heavy guns and mortars. The Gorkhas' uphill attack had no artillery for support. Despite these handicaps, they began their first attack with such vigour that it proved difficult for the British forces to stop them. A number of Gorkhas, who had got as far as the British line on top of the hill, were killed by a bayonet charge. They made several attempts to break through the fence protecting the hill-top, but all their efforts proved of no avail.

Time and again Bhakti led his men up the steep hillside in desperate attempts to capture the peak. All through the attacks, Amarsingh and his son, stood in the open near his colours and within musket range, inspiring their men to greater efforts. Fighting continued throughout the day. Towards evening, Bhakti Thapa died a hero's death on the battlefield. Later, when the Gorkhas asked for his dead body, Ochterlony had the corpse covered with

a white sheet of linen and returned it with military rites and honours. The British were deeply moved by the sacrifice and courage of this man.

Even after the battle of Deothal, Amarsingh hesitated to surrender despite the fact that his force was reduced to less than five hundred men. At last he gave in, but it was only after he received news of the fall of Kumaon. The Gorkhas had thrown all their available forces into their counterattack on Deothal and were not in a position to reinforce them. Ochterlony, in recognition of their valour, permitted Amarsingh and his son Ranjore Singh, to return to Kathmandu with all the honours of war.

The defeat of the Gorkhas in Malaun sealed their fate in the war and broke the power of their resistance against the British. Negotiations for peace were started by Nepal at different places after May 1815. Shortly after Amarsingh returned to Kathmandu, a treaty was drafted at Sugali and sent to the King for his final approval. Amarsingh Thapa immediately expressed his strong disapproval, arguing that it would not be consistent with Nepal's dignity to conclude this treaty. By this treaty vast territory was surrendered on the excuse that further continuation of war would endanger Nepal's freedom. The treaty also stipulated that the Nepali officers and men would be paid in future out of the funds to be made available by the British to the King of Nepal for the purpose.

The presence of a man like Amarsingh, who was the embodiment of the spirit of freedom, put new courage into the hearts of the Nepalese. They once again gathered their strength to renew the fight. The warriors again unsheathed their swords, inspired by the words of Amarsingh, 'If we win the war we can easily settle the differences on our terms. If we suffer defeat, it is better to die than to accept dishonourable terms.'

Upon Nepal's refusal to accept the draft of the treaty proposed at Sugauli on 2nd December 1815, Ochterlony was entrusted to launch a new military campaign against the Gorkhas and compel the Nepal Government to accept the proposed treaty. In February 1816, Ochterlony advanced on Makwanpur with a force of about twenty thousand men. He stationed a section of his forces at Bhullooee (near Amlekhgunj) in the Tarai and set out to gather information about the hills and routes leading to them. On the morning of 4th February 1816, Ochterlony had a strange piece of good luck. An informer conveyed to him that there was a pass on the Churiya Range which was not garrisoned and was difficult but accessible.

The same evening, Ochterlony ordered a brigade under Col. Miller to parade before the camp after dark in order to deceive the prying Gorkhas into thinking that the brigade would be in camp that night. This brigade had orders to leave Bhullooee the same night, but to leave all tents standing. Col. Burnet, who was to remain in the camp that night, was asked to have his men occupy these tents as far as their number would permit. This was done to conceal from the Gorkhas any change or movement in the camp. The brigade under Col. Miller marched all night and reached its destination at the base of the hill at 8 a.m. on 15th February, 1816. The same day Col. Burnet advanced with his brigade towards the main Churiya Pass which was deserted by the Gorkhas after being outflanked by the forces under Col. Miller.

With his men in control of the pass, Ochterlony marched towards the township and the fortified heights of Makwanpur. There he found that the Gorkhas were entrenched in their positions on a steep hill opposite his left flank

and in another position to the right on the same ridge. Early on the morning of 28th February; the first of these positions—called Sikharkoti—was abandoned by the Gorkhas and occupied by the British; when the Gorkhas realised their mistake and attempted to recover it, it was already too late. At noon, the Gorkhas launched a vigorous attack on this post and renewed their assaults on it several times in the course of the day. However, the charge by a British infantry battalion finally compelled them to disperse in confusion.

On 29th February, 1816, a fierce battle raged all day between the British troops, advancing from the Bagmati side towards Bhagwanpur, and the Nepali contingents placed in charge of the fort of Hariharpur and the adjoining outposts. But as the British forces received reinforcements, the Nepali contingents first retired into their fortification at Hariharpur and then withdrew from there the next day. Thus the fort of Hariharpur also fell into the British hands. Only after Ochterlony's successes posed a direct threat to the capital, was the draft finally accepted by Nepal as a treaty on March 4, 1816.

During the second phase of fighting, Amarsingh had been put in command of troops in the Sindhuli Gadi. Ochterlony's troops did not approach Makwanpur and Hariharpur by the Sindhuli Gadi route. They bypassed Amarsingh and mounted direct attacks on these forts. Amarsingh was dismayed to hear the news of the treaty surrendering in a few minutes the territory conquered by his arms, comprising modern Kumaon, Garhwal and Simla. The sudden collapse of the glory he had created hurt him terribly. He decided to spend his last days in solitude and retired to the Himalayas in quest of solace. He did not long survive the treaty of Sugauli. Early in

1816, he breathed his last at Gosainkunda in the very heart of the Himalayas.

Thus did the great hero depart, leaving the indelible stamp of his valour and heroism on the history of Nepal. By enkindling the fire of Nepali heroism, this great man dazzled the eyes of the people beyond the Sutlej. The same blood flows in our veins as flowed in his. We are raised in the same climate and surroundings as he was.

We are as devoted as he was to the same nation. We should remember the deeds of this great hero with admiration.

Amarsingh Thapa spent all his life fighting for his country. He had neither time nor desire for material gains; his only interest in life was to extend Nepal's territory. The fort was his home and the battle field his courtyard. Military uniform was his normal dress and his adornments were the khukri and the sword. The battle sounds of bugle and drum were his favourite music.

His ambition to establish Nepali rule in the whole of the Himalayan region would have done credit to any brave son of the Himalayas. True, he was unable to fulfil his ambition, but his efforts to this end are unforgettable. Some pseudo-realists and narrowly practical-minded people might find his ideal unrealistic. But the aim of extending the boundary as far as Sikkim on the east was already achieved, and the advance of the Nepali army as far as Kangra on the west brought the goal almost within his grasp. The swimmer had sighted the shore to which a few strong strokes would have brought him, but he was caught in a whirlpool that finally engulfed him. His endeavours were devoted to one sole end, and the memory of his sacrifices in the cause he championed is his legacy to the Nepali nation.

No more fitting conclusion can be found to Amarsingh's

story than his own words at the time of the truce negotiations with Ochterlony: 'The Gorkhas will fight for every inch of ground from the Sutlej to the Teesta. If they are turned out of there, they will go to China. This country is not rich in men and wealth like Bengal and Hindusthan, but here lives a nation every member of which will fight till the end rather than live in subjugation like the rich and prosperous in the plains.'

BALABHADRA

'It is not our practice to read a letter or reply to it at midnight' was the scornful answer of Balabhadra, the Nepali commander of a fort called Nalapani near Dehra Dun, to a messenger sent by British General Rollo Gillespie with a letter demanding his surrender without battle. Like Amarsingh Thapa, fighting on another front in the same war, Balabhadra did not know how to surrender.

All preparations had been made by the British for an attack on Nalapani the following morning, 30th October, 1814. The British forces of three thousand men were divided into five detachments: four were to attack the fort from different directions, while the fifth was to be kept in reserve.

... On the Nepali side, things were very different. Balabhadra was still raising the height of the walls surrounding his fort. In fact, although Nalapani Gadi is described as a fort, it was merely a knoll surrounded by walls. There were six hundred people inside the enclosure, but not more than three hundred were able to fire weapons, for

the rest were women and children. They had just one cannon and were desperately short of arms and ammunition, but they had one thing in abundance: patriotism. They were even ready to sacrifice their lives for their country. It was with this knowledge that Balabhadra had torn to shreds the letter demanding his surrender.

The Kalunga hill, atop which stood the Gorkha fortification, was about half a mile long. Gillespie had a cannon mounted on the hill at a distance of hardly six hundred yards from the wall of the fort. It was planned that an attack was to be mounted on the fort in four columns as soon as the bugle sounded the signal for it. The following day artillery fire commenced at dawn, and a portion of the walls surrounding the fort immediately gave way. The General was so encouraged by the sight of the falling ramparts that he ordered a full-scale attack an hour earlier than scheduled. As a result only two of the detachments heard the signal and launched their attack on the fort. The other two detachments were still waiting to hear the signal as originally planned.

Balabhadra had purposely left the door in the main entrance open by placing two beams across it from inside, and had placed a small cannon in such a way that it actually projected out through the opening. The Gorkha soldiers sat quietly under cover with their rifles laid across the wall, and let the British soldiers come right up to the wall. But as they started scaling the walls, the Gorkha cannon opened fire. Constant firing from the gun threw the British ranks into confusion. On finding that small door open, the British soldiers tried to force their way into the fort through it. But as two heavy beams of teakwood had been laid across it from inside, they could not easily enter.

Under constant fire from inside the fort, the attacking

British soldiers lost courage and turned back. They were discouraged and reluctant to move forward again. At this point, General Gillespie, sword in hand, rushed towards the fort to inspire his men when a bullet fired from inside struck him in the chest and he dropped to the ground, dead. The General showed a greater share of courage than discretion. Fifty-four soldiers had been killed along with the General. On that day alone, the total list of British casualties comprised one general, four officers and eighteen soldiers dead, and fifteen officers and two hundred and thirteen men wounded. It reflects credit on the Gorkhas that these heavy casualties were brought about by such a small group pitted against a well-equipped section of the British Indian army. It appears that Balabhadra had accurately anticipated the manner in which he would be attacked by the British, and had planned his defence strategy skilfully.

The British army did not have the courage to launch another assault on the fort for a full month. Only after reinforcements of men and weapons had arrived did they move. This time they slightly changed their strategy and had their guns placed at a distance of three hundred yards from the fort. From this short distance, the walls of the fort were subjected to incessant pounding. By 27th November, 1814, a considerable portion of the walls surrounding the fort had been brought down and a breach opened. British troops managed to get as far as the wall, but suffered heavy casualties in the process. A gun was dragged with great difficulty to the opening in the wall. The object was to enable the British soldiers to march into the fort under cover of the shells and smoke afforded by the firing of the gun.

It was expected that the Gorkhas would naturally surrender under the pressure of artillery fire, but

they stood firm. Many were killed but others continued to fight. In the end, the British officer gave way, and this was enough to frighten the native Indian soldiers on the British side to abandon the attack. Some of the British soldiers who had actually proceeded as far as the breach returned with the report that it was impossible to enter the fort that way, as one had to jump to the ground from a high wall, and sharp bamboo stakes had been planted upright in the ground. As a result of the valour of the Nepalese the British forces, having been frustrated in their attempt to take the fort, once again retreated.

The Gorkhas would give a respite to the British soldiers every day so that the latter might remove their dead and wounded from the neighbourhood of the fort. They did not even take away the arms of the enemy's dead and wounded, and never allowed anyone to touch their bodies. Captain Eden Vansittart reflects: 'The determined resolution of the little party must surely claim universal admiration. . . the men of Nalapani will forever be marked by their unsubdued courage and the generous spirit of courtesy with which they treated their enemy.'

One day, at the height of the bombardment, a Gorkha soldier made his way to the British lines through shell and smoke. As a bullet had shattered his lower jaw, he had come to the British surgeon for treatment. When he was discharged after treatment, he asked for permission to return to his own army in order to fight the British. This is what he is reported to have said to the men and officers on the British side when he first met them: 'Your method of medical treatment is good, so put me under treatment. We would have done the same for you if we had as good a system of medicine and surgery, but I have been fighting for the sake of my country; that I will do always. You

will also fight for your own. This is just what is proper and right and nobody should object to that.'

The British did not give up. Instead, they laid siege to the fort, they blocked the flow of the river supplying the warriors inside with drinking water, and the brave Nepalese began to die of thirst. The defenders had stood gallantly against their human foes, but they were helpless against Nature.

The staunch soldiers struggled even against Nature for three days. Then they finally decided to move out of the fortress. They thought it better to die fighting their enemies in the open than to perish of thirst inside the fort. As a result of the enemy's offensives, sheer physical exhaustion and thirst, only seventy warriors were left alive. These survivors with their brave commander Balabhadra at their head charged from the fort. They were greeted by a shower of British bullets, but with only Khukris in their hands, they escaped and disappeared into the neighbouring hills. The British forces pursued but failed to capture them.

After the Nepali warriors' departure, British soldiers at last entered the fort they had struggled so hard to capture. What did they find? Some of the wounded were still alive, and they cried out for water to quench their frightful thirst. But most of those left behind were dead. Bodies of women and children torn asunder by shells were scattered about amongst the dead soldiers and the smell of rotting bodies was almost unbearable.

Why did the Nepalese go through such terrible suffering? Everyone will agree that it was for the protection of their country. Genuine patriots can stand all kinds of ordeals. The brave Balabhadra and his comrades-in-arms were dedicated to the service of their country and were prepared to face any odds on its account.

An official English historian, R. C. Williams, records his admiration of the heroic defence of the Nalapani Kalunga by the Gorkhalis under the command of Balabhadra: 'Such was the conclusion of the defence of Kalunga, a feat of arms worthy of the best of chivalry, conducted with a heroism almost sufficient to palliate the disgrace of our own reverses.'

Balabhadra made history by his gallantry. As long as gallantry is regarded as a virtue in this world, Balabhadra's name will not be forgotten. Indeed his bravery was equally praised by friend and foe. The stone monument erected by the British in his memory on the battlefield of Nalapani stands as testimony to his heroism. Its inscription reads as follows: 'This is inscribed as a tribute of respect for our adversary, Bulbudder, Commander of the Fort, and his brave Gurkhas.'

After this battle Balabhadra left Nepal and joined the Nepali regiment raised by the Punjabi maharaja, Ranjit Singh, as its commanding officer. In 1823, there was a war between Ranjit Singh and the Muslim Afghans. The Khattak and the Yusufzai tribesmen had taken shelter in Pir Sabak hill and, on 13th March, they defeated the Sikhs by repulsing their attacks all day long. In the late afternoon it was the turn of the Nepali regiment to lead the attack.

The Nepalese charged the Afghans twice. Then the Afghans counter-attacked. The Nepalese stood firm at their posts and fell one by one before the onslaught of the Afghan artillery. Balabhadra died gallantly on the field of battle. Ranjit Singh wrote of the bravery shown by the Nepali troops in the battle: 'Among all my trained soldiers, only the Gorkhas stood their own against the Muslim attack.'

Balabhadra has now been dead for over one hundred

and fifty years. But in a sense he is still alive. He still lives in the heart and memory of every patriotic Nepali. He is a source of inspiration to those who in moments of weakness feel tempted to deviate from the path of duty. His life serves as a beacon to those who are groping in the dark. It acts as a pillar of strength to us in the face of distress and calamity. His life is a lesson in patriotism to all Nepalese, and will always remain so.

The Rise of Nepali Literature

BHANUBHAKTA

WE have seen how heroic warriors forged a single country out of the hills and valleys of Nepal. But the force of conquest alone is not strong enough to create an enduring nation. The peoples of Nepal—the Newars, Kirats, Magars, Gurungs, Kshatris and Brahmins—spoke different dialects. Their customs and traditions were not the same. All these diverse elements remained to be combined into a cohesive whole.

Less than two decades after the war with the British, a Brahmin of Tanahu named Bhanubhakta chanced one day to meet an old, landless grass-cutter by the name of Sete. In the course of their conversation, Sete told Bhanubhakta that he had spent all his meagre savings digging wells in the neighbouring villages in the hope that his name might be remembered by future generations.

The words of the grass-cutter opened the eyes of the Brahmin poet. Bhanubhakta thought to himself, 'If this poor, uneducated grass-cutter thinks of posterity, why

should not I? I resolve to translate the *Ramayana* into our own language so that everyone, in my own lifetime and after I pass away, may read it and understand it.'

When his *Ramayana* was published, it was not only the Brahmins and Kshatris who read it. It was also the Magars, Gurungs, Newars, Kirats and Tamangs, peoples previously unfamiliar with the great Hindu epics. Now all could know these sacred Hindu writings, and all could feel within themselves the glory of Nepali nationhood and become conscious of their great legacy. Bhanubhakta's poetry cemented the bricks placed by successive generations on the edifice of Nepali nationhood. Everyone began to look upon Rama with respect and admiration. Seta became a model of womanhood for all. Laxman became an ideal brother, and everybody began to dream of the blessings of Rama Rajya.

Apart from the edifying influence of the *Ramayana* on the people in general, the fact that Bhanubhakta chose to popularize the story of Rama among his countrymen has had a deep significance in the context of contemporary Nepali history. Bhanubhakta was born in A.D. 1814 and died in 1868. All his important works like the *Ramayana*, *Rama-Geeta*, *Badhu Siksha*, and *Prasnottari*, along with a number of short poems, were written between 1834 and 1868. Bhanubhakta himself had grown up in the dark shadow cast on the new nation by the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Sugauli of 1816. No wonder, then, that his poetry breathed patriotism and sought to revive the drooping spirits of the nation. The entire nation had been seized with a deep sense of frustration because its movement for territorial expansion had received a serious setback, the first defeat it had suffered since the time of Prithvinarayan. The people's pride had been humbled, and it appeared as though they had lost all sense of national

purpose. In this context Bhanubhakta rendered the story of the *Ramayana* in popular verse with the object of conveying the message of Rama to the people in every hamlet so that all of them might be roused by the story of Rama's success. He sought to restore their confidence in the future of their country by impressing upon them how Rama, after a long spell of fighting against heavy odds and frustration, won Seeta back from Ravana.

Bhanubhakta's contribution was to popularize and standardize the Nepali language and therefore it will not be out of place here to go briefly into the origin and growth of the Nepali language.

Nepali is derived from the same Indo-European family of languages as many of the major tongues of India. The Vedic language is a common ancestor of a major group of Indian languages, and many forms of Prakrit stem from it. Nepali is derived from one of the various forms of Prakrit.

Even today Nepali is not used in the same form in all the districts. One expert, Balakrishna Pokharel, classifies the Nepali language from the geographical point of view into three distinct branches: eastern Nepali or Gorkhali or Parvati, which includes minor variations current in Sikkim, Bhutan and Assam; central Nepali or Jumli (Khasani), which includes dialects of Nepali prevalent in the areas of western Nepal from Jumla to Pokhara; and lastly, western Nepali or Dotyali, which includes the dialect forms of Nepali used in Doti and Baitadi. All these main forms of Nepali are derived from Sinjali. The name Sinjali is derived from Sinja, the capital of the powerful and prosperous kingdom of the Mallas in the Jumla area from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. And thus Sinjali is the name for old Nepali, the most ancient form of which is yet to be discovered.

The oldest specimens of Nepali in the written form are found in Punya Malla's copper plate of 1337, and in the Kanak-patra (the gold leaf) of Jumla written by Shiva-deva Pandit in 1356. The experts think that these specimens represent the end of the period of old Nepali and the beginning of medieval Nepali. The language itself must be much older than the earliest surviving inscriptions. The Nepali forms found in *A Nepali Grammar* by J. A. Ayton, published in 1820, are the first Nepali lines ever printed. The Nepali language used in the translation of the Bible, published at Serampore (Bengal) in 1821, is often amusing and irritating because of Father Carey's attempts to force the syntax and sentence structure of English and Indian dialects like Braja Bhasa into Nepali.

If we have not wholly succeeded to this day in evolving a standard form of Nepali grammar and spelling, we can very well imagine the state of affairs in Bhanubhakta's time. There were a few vernacular writers in the four hundred years before Bhanubhakta, but the appeal and circulation of their works were extremely limited with the result that even their names are not known except to a few specialists in the Nepali language. It is also true that in Bhanubhakta's time Nepali scholars did not regard Nepali as a suitable medium for serious thought and writing. They preferred Sanskrit to Nepali for their purposes. Even after Bhanubhakta the so-called learned among us showed preference at first briefly for Persian and then for English rather than for Nepali. These people did not realize that a classical or foreign tongue could never take the place of the living language of the country as a medium of mass education and mass information.

It was to the credit of Bhanubhakta that he realized this simple fact early enough and succeeded in making

Nepali an effective medium of mass education. To this day, his works are better known to the Nepalese than those of any other author, and hundreds of thousands of copies of his works have been sold. There is hardly a Nepali who is not familiar with the first line of Bhanubhakta's *Ramayana*: 'एक् दिन् नारद सत्यलोक् पुगिगया लोक्को गरौं हित् भनी.' His works have been so popular that it is not unusual to hear an illiterate Nepali recite Bhanubhakta's stanzas in an intricate metrical pattern of classical Sanskrit, and so great has been the popular appeal of his style that even the uneducated folk of the countryside often use these verse patterns for their own oral compositions. Bhanubhakta no doubt used a large number of Sanskrit words, but these words have become a part of the standard Nepali vocabulary.

Today Nepali is the language of the Nepalese both within and outside Nepal. The Constitution calls it the national language of Nepal. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the poet Shaktiballabh Arjel called it the *Lok Bhasa* (popular language). In the Bible published in 1821, it was called the 'Nepal language'. In 1831, the poet Vidyapati called it *Raj Bhasa* (the king's language). In 1844, Kavi Pandit called it the 'Gorkhali language', while in 1934, the *Sharada* magazine called Nepali *Nepal-Bhasa*. Thus it has been called by various names in the past, but today it is Nepali.

It must be noted that Nepali had already been a means of communication between various regions of Nepal even before modern Nepal came into being. The stone inscriptions of Laxmi Narsingh Malla, King of Kathmandu, in A.D. 1641, Jagatprakash Malla, King of Bhadgaon, in 1663, Pratap Malla, King of Kathmandu, in 1670, and Raghav Jaisi, a subject of Bhadgaon, in 1712, the copper plate of Bhupatindra Malla, King of Bhadgaon, dated

1714, and the will of Jayaprakash Malla of 1757, all bear testimony to this fact.

The Nepali nation at last had one language. It was in a position to carry its message to every one of its members. After Bhanubhakta, Shambhuprasad Dhungel, Homnath and Motiram used this medium to reach the heart of every Nepali. Now contemporary poets like Lekhnath, Balakrishna Sama, Laxmiprasad Devkota, Siddhicharan and Bhawani Bhikshu have composed their immortal works in this language. The people are increasingly using it. The sorrows and sufferings, the hopes and joys of the nation have become the common heritage of all. When a Sherpa climbed Mount Everest, or a Magar or a Gurung or a Kirati won the Victoria Cross in the last World War, or a Newar stood first in Patna University, all Nepalese equally shared the pride of their achievement. This sense of unity, fraternity and equality is fast growing among us, and the foundations of Nepali nationalism are being strengthened with the passing of every day.

The historian Gewali pays an eloquent tribute to the role and impact of Bhanubhakta as a nation-builder in the following paragraphs:

‘Now we think that Nepal is the garden of all of us, and all of us are its gardeners. We no longer remember today which tribe or principality lost to whom and when. We have forgotten our differences of the past and now think only of how to make the garden of Nepal more beautiful, what new flowers to plant, how to foster their growth and, to this end, how to remove the weeds and other obstacles obstructing growth. We are all engaged in the task of making Nepal a heaven on earth. We are all giving the best of ourselves. We all are of the same stock and speak Nepali. All of us are devoted to Pashupatinath and Swayambhunath. We all derive

our life and sustenance from the snow-clad Himalayas. We all bathe in the river of love, Bagmati. We regard the seven Kosis and the seven Gandakis as our sisters. The mention of Nepal strikes a sympathetic chord in every heart.

This is just the dawn of our nationhood. Its objectives are yet to be achieved. Our journey is long but we have set out on it. Who was the first to take spade in hand to make the way to the achievement of our national purpose? Who did the pioneer work in this respect? Who was it that came forward to weave the different threads representing our diverse tribes and traditions into a well-knit pattern of devotion to Rama? Who set before the Nepalese the ideal of womanhood represented by Seeta? Who sought to tie the Nepalese into a fraternal bond like the one that existed amongst Rama, Laxman and Satrughna? Who gave a tongue to the Nepali nation when it had no medium for expression? Who was it that enhanced the glory of our language? Who was it that created the medium in which Nepali authors are still working to this day? That was the great Bhanubhakta, an ordinary Brahmin of Tanahu.'

The Dawn of Democracy in Nepal

KING TRIBHUVAN AND KING MAHENDRA

FOR more than a century royal power in Nepal was eclipsed by the Rana family whose autocracy was bolstered by British imperialism in India. During this period the country suffered the worst period of stagnation and exploitation in its history.

The system of hereditary prime ministers was dealt a death blow by the Revolution of 1951. Before the Revolution, the Ranas had held the same position in the political and social structure of Nepal as the Shoguns in Japan before the Revolution ended the Shogunate in 1867. The Revolution of 1951 restored the King to power and brought the beginnings of democracy to the Nepali people.

King Tribhuvan, who was born within the memory of many men alive today, proved to be a most unusual king. History records many an instance of brave, generous and talented rulers, but never before had there been a king who staked his life and throne to secure the liberty of his subjects. King Tribhuvan's efforts to introduce democracy were greatly helped by the impact of events outside Nepal. The dawn of democracy in Nepal is related to the general awakening in Asia and Africa and particularly to the attainment of independence by India during the post-war period. Just as Prithvinarayan Shah will always be remembered for the part he played in bringing about the unification of Nepal, King Tribhuvan will forever be

cherished by his people for his efforts to introduce democracy.

By the Interim Government Act of Nepal, 1951, he granted democratic rights to the people and provided for the external safeguards of democracy: an independent commission, independent audits and accounts and public service for the impartial recruitment of government officials. King Tribhuvan's firm commitment to constitutional and democratic rule has brought him acclaim as 'the father of the nation' and 'the chief architect of Nepali democracy'. By its solid contributions to the lasting good of the country, the Ruling House of Nepal has won an enduring place in the affection of the people.

Nepal stands on the threshold of a new era, conscious of its remarkable efforts in the past towards national unity, and rejuvenated by the recent process of political transformation. If Nepal succeeds in applying the lessons of its history to its present-day problems both in the national and international spheres, it will certainly be able to hold its own against the forces that attempt to undermine its national progress.

King Mahendra inherited from his revered father the responsibility for furthering the cause of nationalism and democracy in the context of mid-twentieth-century realities. These realities are the amazing power of modern science and technology to improve the condition of human life, and the growing desire in the world to share this improvement amongst all people in every country. But it will not be enough for Nepal merely to recognize these realities. It must be able to telescope centuries of progress elsewhere into a mere decade or two. The world is moving fast. Nepal must move even faster.

King Mahendra's only fear is that the events of this

world may completely overtake his country before the democracy that he is constructing has attained full growth. He has come to the conclusion that in the backward conditions of his country, democracy will naturally have to be built slowly, by creating first the more rudimentary organs and, thereafter, building up the upper structures. With this end in view, he has devised an elaboration on the Panchayat System which was already deeply rooted in the tradition of the people of Nepal.

King Mahendra fully realizes that the success or failure of democracy in Nepal will largely depend on whether democracy can become an instrument for removing social and economic inequality and for promoting the development of the country. His social and legal reforms are of far-reaching consequences and will lead to the emancipation of the common man. Since the traditional system of land tenure and ownership has been the main cause of social and economic inequality, he has enacted basic land reform legislation. His economic planning for the development of the country is based on his realization that Nepal has to catch up with other developing countries if it is to maintain effectively its position as a sovereign nation.

Situated as it is between the two powerful nations of Asia, India and China, Nepal's own security depends on cordial relations between these two great neighbours. One can very well imagine how expertly Nepal must walk the diplomatic tightrope when relations between India and China show signs of strain. King Mahendra knows that the theory of the buffer state has become completely outmoded in modern times, and that such a role in any case is not suited to the best interests of his country. 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. Nepal has

never sought to profit by playing off one neighbour against the other. It has been content with contributing whatever it can to the growth of co-operation and understanding between them. The great question before King Mahendra is whether a small country situated between two giants can, in the realities of mid-twentieth-century international affairs, evolve a relationship with its neighbours that is basically different from the outmoded one of the buffer state. Can a relationship be established that conforms to the standards of equality and freedom as envisaged in the United Nations Charter for every sovereign nation?

Never before in its history has Nepal won such international recognition as it has under King Mahendra's rule. Never before has it been able to assert its independence and sovereignty *vis-à-vis* its colossal neighbours as at this time. Was it the time factor alone that helped King Mahendra to secure a place of pride and respect for Nepal among the nations of the world, or was it the determined efforts of the youthful monarch? The changes in time and in the international situation might certainly have helped him but the real answer lies in the King's firm policy, based on foresight and courage, and in his capacity to rally his people behind him. King Mahendra has never succumbed to the temptation of playing a grandiose role in world affairs—a temptation which many rulers of Afro-Asian countries have fallen victim to in recent times. There is no doubt that Nepal's strategic position in the world is such that it can always offer it this temptation, but under King Mahendra, Nepal has conscientiously refrained from aspiring to a major role in world affairs, a role which is not warranted by its size and power.

Before King Mahendra's time, Nepal had diplomatic

relations only with Britain, India, the United States, and France. It was not until after his accession to the throne in 1955 that Nepal gradually extended its relations to other countries including the Soviet Union and its closer neighbours, China and Pakistan. In addition, it became a member of the United Nations in December 1955. Today it may appear normal for a sovereign country like Nepal to achieve these ends. 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 it new obligations which it has successfully fulfilled. Nepal's capacity for discharging these new commitments was fully tested at the time of the Kora Pass (Mustang) border incident in the north in the year 1960 and during the crisis created by the border raids in the south in the year 1961-62. The successful conclusion of the boundary treaty with People's Republic of China and the conclusion and subsequent revision of the agreement on trade and transit with India are the positive gains of King Mahendra's successful foreign policy of non-alignment, peace and friendship with all countries.

King Mahendra's state visits to important countries of the world and the visits to Nepal of other heads of state in return have won increased recognition and publicity for Nepal. The substantial expansion of foreign aid and the number of resident foreign missions in Kathmandu are proofs of the growing interest of the world in Nepal. King Mahendra's firmness of purpose, based on sound considerations of justice has brought him success in his foreign policy.

But foreign policy, however successful, cannot itself 'deliver the goods' to the people, nor can it alone achieve

the positive ends of dynamic and constructive nationalism. Nobody realizes this more than King Mahendra. Hence his insistence on mobilizing popular energy and putting it to work for national construction. Experience has taught him that political parties in the Nepali context cannot serve as effective instruments of achieving national goals. Political parties by their very nature are faction-oriented and disruptive to national unity. Yet the fact remains that some kind of organization is needed for generating popular energy on a nation-wide scale and utilizing it for the realization of national objectives.

It will not be possible to achieve the above ends merely through the mechanism of the various tiers of Panchayat, as provided for in the law and constitution. Efforts must be made to create popular enthusiasm which alone can sustain the Panchayat system. Hence the need for class organizations like the Peasants' Organization, the Women's Organization and the Labourers' Organization to channelize new enthusiasms for new goals.

King Mahendra has formulated national goals which have been widely accepted. His leadership has aroused a deep awareness of national purpose. The constitutional framework of Panchayat exists, but a constant search for ways to strengthen it must continue. New sources of confidence must always be sought, and new springs of popular energy must continuously be discovered to revitalize the Panchayat system.

Let there be no mistake that the problems and prospects, the perils and the opportunities which confront us today will tax our resources to the utmost and will demand the best of each of us. The journey to more benign pastures is going to be long and arduous, but we are a people used to these journeyings and can meet whatever challenge the future has to offer. We can always turn to the stories of

our great heroes for inspiration. In our heroes can be found all the qualities that we shall need. If a little of Gautama Buddha's noble spirituality, A-ni-ko's artistic inspiration, Prithvinarayan's political foresight and Amarsingh's patriotism and stubborn courage can be found in each of us, then Nepal may look forward to a proud and prosperous future.

GLOSSARY

OF BUDDHIST AND HINDU GODS AND WRITINGS AND OF
ANCIENT CLANS AND TERRITORIES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

Adi-buddha, the primordial Buddha, Buddhahood in itself.

Avalokiteshwara, 'The Lord who directs his gaze downward', is the spiritual son of Buddha Amitabha. He has one hundred and eight forms.

Bodhisattva, literally 'the Buddha to be' or 'the potential Buddha'; Gautam in previous incarnations, who renounces Nirvana and lives a life of action in order to save mankind and, according to the Mahayenists, leads them all to the blissful state of Nirvana.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the oldest of the Upanishads, the general body of early Hindu philosophical treatises. It goes back to a period anterior to 600 B.C. and contains bold speculations about the eternal problems of human thought, concerning God, man and the universe. The Upanishads are written in Sanskrit and mark a change from ritualism to abstract thought in Hindu writings or an intellectual revolt against Brahmanic formalism.

Buddha, the 'Enlightened', a sage of the royal Sakya clan (Sakyamuni). For the current aeon he is the Lord Buddha. He embodies Buddhahood. In former aeons other perfect and enlightened sages had taught the doctrine and in a future aeon Maitreya will be the Buddha. This 'historical' sequence of the appearance of a Buddha rests in the idea of Buddhahood which is timeless. The principle of Buddhahood is the *Adi-buddha*. This principle, when viewed as

active throughout the cosmos, is represented as fivefold to the central realization which is resplendent (*vairochana*) and is represented by Buddha *Vairochana*. Buddha *Vairochana* is placed at the centre with reference to the other four exponents of Buddhahood. The Buddha nature permeating the entire cosmos is similarly realized in the four directions of space in four further forms, as Buddha *Akshobhya* in the east, Buddha *Amitabha* in the west, Buddha *Ratnasambhava* in the south, and Buddha *Amoghasiddhi* in the north. Each of these five Buddhas or fivefold exponents of Buddhahood is associated with an Orient, a cognizance, a colour, a consort (*prajna*), a *Bodhisattva* or spiritual son, and even further members of his 'family'. With each of the Five Buddhas is also associated a particular human failing: wrath, malignity, desire, envy and stupidity.

Durga (Kali), an epithet of *Parvati*, wife of *Shiva*. Tantrik religious lore credits her in her manifestation as *Durga* or *Kali* with the slaying of powerful demons and regards her as an embodiment of power.

Hevajra, Heruka, typical of the fierce aspect of Buddha in union with his female partner (*prajna*)—the twelve-armed, four-headed deity. The *Yidam Samavara* or *Hevajra* also belongs to the family of Buddha *Akshobhya*. His *prajna* is *Vajrabarahi*, the adamantine she-boar with an excrescence on the left side of her head which resembles the head of a wild boar. She is the embodiment of beauty, intuition and wisdom.

Kali, (see *Durga*).

Kalinga, comprised modern Orissa about as far north as the town of *Bhadrak* in the *Balasore* district and the sea-coast southward as far as *Vizagapatam*.

Kosala, an ancient Aryan kingdom which roughly corresponded to modern Oudh. Its earlier capital Ayodhya was about one mile from modern Fyzabad in Uttar Pradesh (India). Shravasti, the later capital, has been identified with Sahetmahet in the Banke-Bardia District of Western Nepal Terai bordering on the Baharaich and Gonda districts of Uttar Pradesh in India.

Krishna, Hindu god. Krishna is an avatar (earthly manifestation or 'descent') of Vishnu. Among his many deeds of valour as a young boy was his defeat of the great serpent Kaliya who lived in the River Yamuna.

Kushinagara, the place where Buddha died. It has been identified with Kasia, 35 miles to the east of Gorakhpur.

Lichchhavis, originally a republican clan with their capital at Vaishali, modern Basarh in the district of Muzaffarpur. The Lichchhavis and the Videhas were conjointly called Vrijjis or Vajjis. They were a well-known clan living in Videha at the time of Gautam Buddha and were conquered by Ajatasatru at the beginning of the fifth century B.C. We do not hear of them again till they reappear under a monarchical constitution in Nepal in the second or third century A.D.

Lokeshwara, the 'Lord of the World', Lokeshwara is Shiva identified with Avalokiteshwara.

Magadha, kingdom which comprised the modern districts of Patna, Gaya and Shahabad in Bihar (India).

Mahasattva, name of Sakyamuni in a previous incarnation.

Maitreya, the Future Buddha. In the present dispensation of time he is a Bodhisattva.

Mallapuri, the area of the Mallas who covered a large area to the

south of the Sakyas and east of the Vrijjis, from the district of Gorakhpur to that of Champaran, divided into two units, with their capitals at Kushinagara and at Pava.

Manjushri, the 'Glorious Gentle One' is a Bodhisattva who belongs to the family of Buddha Vairochana; he is also attached to the family of Buddha Akshobhya or of Buddha Amitabha. He is the Creator of Nepal. In his fiercest manifestation he is Vajra-bhairava 'the Adamantine Fearful' called Yamantaka, the Ender of Death.

Pashupati, one of the many names of Shiva. The temple of Pashupati in Kathmandu is the most noteworthy of the sacred shrines of Nepal. Pashupata is one of the Shaiva sects named after their God or historical founder. This sect developed very rapidly as a form of neo-Brahminical religion and had spread to the extreme south of India by the sixth century A.D. It had also become the predominant religion in Annam and Cambodia. The cult of Pashupata was the most ancient form of religious practice in the Nepal Valley. It suffered some decline as a result of competition with the growth of Buddhism, but it was later revived in a rather aggressive and puritanical form by Shankaracharya and his disciples from South India as a part of their general movement for the revival of Brahminical influence. To this day, only South Indian Brahmins are allowed in the *sanctum sanctorum* of Pashupatinath as professional worshippers or votaries.

Sakyas, a republican tribe with their capital at Kapilavastu. A few years after the passing away of Buddha, they were destroyed by Vidudabha, son of Prasenjit and Amrapali, the famous *Sakya* courtesan whom Buddha had also honoured with a visit.

Shiva, name of the third God of the Hindu Trinity, who is

entrusted with the work of destruction as Brahma and Vishnu are with the creation and preservation of the world. Shaivism and Vaishnavism are two sects of Hinduism like Protestantism and Catholicism in Christianity, the Hinayana and the Mahayana of Buddhism or the Shvetambaras and the Digambaras of Jainism. Shaivism centres around the cult of Shiva and appears to be pre-Aryan.

Tantrism, a body of Revelation in which are laid down the rites by which Buddhahood or the realization of the Ultimate can be attained in this life.

Videha, to the north of the Ganges, east of Sadanira (Ghagra), stretching northward to the Nepal Terai, one of the most important Aryan Kingdoms in the later Vedic period. It roughly covered the areas of the district of Mahottari in Eastern Nepal Terai and those of the district of Darbhanga in Bihar (India). It had its capital at Mithila. Later on, around 700 B.C., it became a republic under the control of the Lichchhavis, and was famous as the Videhas. It was a member of the Vajjian Confederacy which frustrated the ambition of Ajatasatru but was finally annexed to the growing Magadhan empire along with other confederates.

Vishnu, the 'Pervader', one of the three Hindu Demiurges (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva). He preserves and looks after the universe. He descends (avatarati) from his transcendental state in order to restore the world when, because of all the evil in it, it is threatened with destruction. It is around him and his ten avatars that Vaishnavism centres. Buddha was declared one of the ten avatars around 400 A.D. because of the threat Buddhism had posed to Hinduism.

Yidam, chosen divinities who are said to guarantee the Tantrik worshipper his union in Buddhahood with one of the five Buddhas with whom his human failing is associated. His

failing may be wrath, malignity, desire, envy or stupidity. Through the Tantrik mechanism of the Heruka-yidams, the failing is transformed into the special kind of wisdom represented by the particular kind of Buddha.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE TEXT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES

THIS book should be very useful supplementary material for developing reading skills. The great advantages of this book for instructional purposes are its familiar subject matter, its undoubted interest for the students, and its clear, up-to-date expository style.

Chapter questions designed to develop reading skills should stress vocabulary study and comprehension of ideas and relationships rather than mere recollection of facts. I have attempted to illustrate some of the kinds of exercise which may prove helpful.

VOCABULARY

Students can attach meanings to words with the aid of contextual and structural clues. They should also learn to make use of an English dictionary.

Getting Meaning from Context:

1. *Devout* (p. 21, l. 3). A pilgrimage is a trip taken to a holy place like Janakpur. A devout person goes on such a trip. How would you describe a devout person? Can you think of any synonyms for 'devout'?
- Notorious* (p. 23, l. 22) means well known, but it is not synonymous with famous. What other word in the sentence tells us how a person can become notorious? How is notoriety different from fame? What prefix can be added to famous to make a synonym for notorious? Can you think of some notorious Nepalese? Some justly famous ones? What other adjectives can be used to describe a man's deeds or misdeeds?
2. For each chapter select a list of words for study. In one type

of exercise, definitions are provided and the student is asked to use the word, as defined, in phrases or sentences. Or sentences (phrases) are excerpted from the text containing the words to be studied. The student chooses one of several synonyms or expressions whose meaning is closest to the word as it is used in the context. These drills may be varied with matching and completion exercises.

When using the dictionary as an aid in finding meanings, students need to develop an awareness that a word changes its meaning in every context and that he must look for the dictionary definition which comes closest to the meaning in the context. Words should not be studied in isolation from their context.

Word Structure:

The analysis of roots, prefixes, suffixes, and inflexional forms is another major aid in vocabulary development. The text may be used to supplement and reinforce the intensive study of English word formation (morphology). A useful review of the important roots and affixes of English can be found in E. A. Betts, *Foundations of Reading Instruction* (American Book Company, 1954), pp. 655-67.

Review vocabulary in previewing a chapter. Words which have clearly identifiable roots and affixes may be analysed structurally: proceeded (p. 48), conspiracy (p. 49), conspirator (p. 49), transformed (p. 50), benefactor (p. 52), inscription (p. 52), recreation (p. 53).

The exercises should include identification of the parts of a word; recognition of how affixes change the meaning of specific words (conspiracy, conspirator); recognition of common roots of different words (local, location); listing derivatives of base words (scribe: inscribe, describe, prescription, etc.); and similar exercises which lead to the discovery as well as the recognition of meanings.

COMPREHENSION

Comprehension exercises are designed to develop the skills of recognizing main ideas and supporting details and of following patterns of organization. Précis writing calls for all of these skills. As preparation for writing précis, students should practise outlining, identifying key generalizations in paragraphs, and relating significant details to these generalizations.

Getting the Main Idea:

1. Identify the topic sentences of important paragraphs in the text, or supply them if they are not clearly identifiable.
2. Summarize a series of events by writing newspaper headlines for each major event. Chapter Five, Part III, 'Amarsingh Thapa' lends itself well to this sort of practice in following a time sequence.
3. Choose the statement which comes closest to expressing the central idea of the paragraph. (Example: p. 83, para 1)
 - (a) Balabhadra refused to negotiate through letters.
 - (b) The letter incident illustrates Balabhadra's feeling about surrender.
 - (c) General Gillespie thought he could win without fighting.
 - (d) Balabhadra was confident he could defeat the British.

Reading for Details:

Don't ask students to remember insignificant, unrelated details, but rather those which provide important support for a generalization or conclusion.

1. 'Bhanubhakta' (Chapter Five, Part V). Make a chart of the development of the Nepali language, tracing it from its Indo-European origins to its present geographic variations.

2. In what ways did Bhanubhakta 'give a tongue to the Nepali nation'?
3. 'King Tribhuvan and King Mahendra' (Chapter Six). What efforts did King Tribhuvan make to establish democracy in Nepal?
 - (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)

Comprehension of the Chapter :

The kinds of questions asked should be related to the purpose and organisation of the chapter.

1. 'Prithvinarayan Shah' (Chapter Five, Part I). What conditions in Nepal led to the Gorkha conquest? (Cause and effect).
2. In what ways did Prithvinarayan Shah contribute to the unity and development of Nepal?
3. 'Jayaprakash Malla' (Chapter Five, Part II). List the qualities which lead the author to the conclusion that Jayaprakash was a great hero. Support your statements with specific examples of the exercise of these qualities. Why was he defeated in spite of his greatness?

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