

# **Democratic Movement in NEPAL And the INDIAN left**

**STOP Democracy  
BEFORE IT STOPS YOU**

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**antwana Tewari Chaube**

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# **Democratic Movement in Nepal and The Indian Left**

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**Santwana Tewari (Chaubey)**



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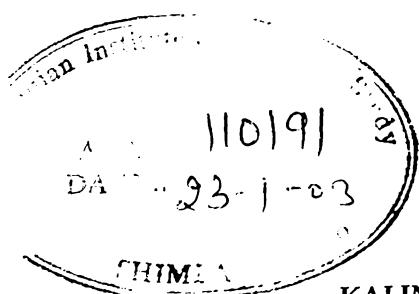
Democratic Movement in Nepal and The Indian Left

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*Dedicated  
To  
The Memory of My Parents  
Birendranath and Sovona Tewari*

## Preface

The saga of Nepal's struggle for freedom from one of the most reactionary and autocratic regimes of the world has been well documented by a number of Nepali, Indian and Western scholars. The overall impact of the freedom movement in India on the political development of Nepal has been more or less universally acknowledged. Particular references have been made to the indirect role of the Government of India under Jawaharlal Nehru and a more direct role of the Congress Socialist Party led by Jaya Prakash Narayan, Narendra Deva and Ram Manohar Lohia.

The present study is the product of a search for the extent of the support that the Indian Left extended to the democratic movement in Nepal and the way such support was extended. Our hypothesis is that, Nepal being technically a vassal state outside British India, neither the Indian National Congress nor the States Peoples' Movement could have a role in Nepal. Yet Nepal could hardly remain untouched by the events in India and Indians, particularly, the radical Indians, could be hardly expected to remain passive about Nepal.

We have generally described such radical political elements, advocating democracy and fighting inequality and oppression, as the Left. We have traced the first appearance of such political actors to the extremist movement in India that began in the wake of the partition of Bengal in 1905. After World War I this Left took somewhat concrete, though fragmented, shape within the broad spectrum of the nationalist movement.

The physical proximity of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh of today was largely responsible for the substantial role of the (Congress) Socialist Party — which operated mainly in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh — in Nepal. But the present study has indicated considerable role of the other left parties and groups of India in the struggle. It has also noted certain limitations of the Indian Left's approach to Nepal's democratic movement, one such weakness being the thin line of demarcation between the desire for democracy in Nepal and the desire for its integration with India which, probably, may explain the apprehensions about big

power aspirations of India occasionally expressed in Nepalese political circles. Yet it strikes every observer of Nepalese politics that the only parties which came to power in Nepal through democratic process — the Nepali Congress and the United Communist Party of Nepal — have had past association with the two major Left Parties of India — the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India.

## Acknowledgement

This volume is based on my research work in the North Bengal University. I express my gratitude to Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Reader, Department of History, North Bengal University, under whose supervision this study was undertaken. I have benefited a great deal from his guidance.

I do acknowledge my debt to Dr. Hari Deo Sharma, Assistant Director of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, who permitted me to consult J.P. File in the Private Section which were still closed for general scholars. I have immensely benefited from successive discussions with him because of his encyclopaedic knowledge of the socialist movement in India.

I am also indebted to the late Mr. M. Farouqi, National Executive member of the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.), Mr. Indradeep Sinha, Ex-Revenue Minister of Bihar, Mr. Bhogendra ex-Jha, M.P., Mr. Chaturanan Mishra, ex-M.P. all veteran communists of Bihar, Mr Prem Bhasin, veteran socialist leader, Mr. Abani Lahiri, veteran communist leader, Mr. Atul Kumar Anjan of the CPI Central Office and Mrs. Kiran Mishra of the library of the Institute of Economic Growth. All of them had spared their valuable time for me and also enlightened me about the political life of the Indian as well as Nepalese left leaders.

My thanks are due to all those academic personalities whose books have given me a lot of information about the subject of the study.

I have received advice and help from several scholars like Prof. Anirudha Gupta and Prof. Aswini Ray of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Dr. Parmanand of Delhi University and Dr. Dharmdasani of the Centre for Nepal Studies, Banaras Hindu University, Prof. N.C. Chaudhury, Prof. Tapas Ray Chaudhury. Dr. Namita Chaudhury, Dr Ranju Rani Dhamala, Dr Ratna Roy, Prof. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharjee and Dr. Gautam Biswas of North Bengal University.

I had the privilege of consulting the library of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, which I had occasion to visit

in the summer of 1993. The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, National Archives of India, the library of the National Archives, the Library of the Indian Council of World Affairs, the P.C. Joshi Archives of Jawaharlal Nehru University, the library of Narendra Niketan, the library of Ajoy Bhawan, the Delhi University Central Library (Arts), the Ratan Tata Library, (Delhi School of Economics), the Library of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Delhi, the National Library, Calcutta, and the North Bengal University Library.

I also express my thanks to Mr. Attar Chand, Department of Chinese and Japanese Studies, Delhi University. The members of the academic and administrative staff of the Centre for the Himalayan Studies, North-Bengal University, gave me warm reception and several kinds of help.

Thanks are due to my husband, Dr. S.K. Chaube, retired Professor, Delhi University, Department of Political Science, who not only encouraged me but helped me in my work in different ways. He made notes of 'Nepal Annual Reports 1937-1946' from India Office Records Library, London, for me.

I express my love to my children Amrito, Anjana and Ranjana from whom I have received great co-operation and help while doing this research.

24 July 2000  
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**Santwana Tewari (Chaube)**

# Introduction

## Background of Nepalese Politics

During the 18th Century, as the Mughal empire in India collapsed, a mighty Hindu Kingdom emerged to its north, the kingdom of Nepal. At the peak of its power Nepal spread from almost the border of the present-day Himachal Pradesh in the west to the Tista river in the east.

## The country and its people

Nepal today extends 885 km east-west between  $80^{\circ}$ E and  $88^{\circ}$ longitude. North to south; however its spread is from 145 km to 241 km between  $26^{\circ}$  N and  $30^{\circ}$  N latitude.<sup>1</sup> The total area of Nepal is 147,181 km<sup>2</sup>. The nearest sea port from Nepal is Calcutta, 960 Km away.<sup>2</sup> Nepal is mostly mountainous. More than 25 percent of the land surface is about 3000m and 20 percent is lower than 300m high.<sup>3</sup>

South to North Nepal is divided into three physical divisions:

- 1) Lowland including the Terai, Bhabhar, Churia and Mahabharat upto 915m.
- 2) Midland including the Mahabharat range between 916m and 2745m.
- 3) The highland region above that.

Traditionally, 'Nepal' refers to the middle range which includes the Kathmandu valley.<sup>4</sup>

The Terai is 25 to 32 km wide and it covers about 17 per cent of the total land area. It forms the northern part of the Indo-Gangetic basin and is fertile with alluvial soil. The Terai produces 60 per cent of the total grain output of Nepal and it is also rich in evergreen forests.<sup>5</sup> The Terai is the home of major industries of Nepal.<sup>6</sup>

From east to west the territory of Nepal is divided into three major river basins, all formed by three trans-Himalayan rivers—the Kosi, the Kali and the Karnali. The Kosi drainage basin in the

eastern Nepal is made up of narrow bridges and deep valleys. It receives heavy rainfall and is the home of large Mongoloid groups of tribal people.

The Karnali basin of western Nepal is a dry tract of extensive high lands. Majority of the population of this tract is caucasoid, the only tribal group being the Tharus of the plains.

The central basin is formed by the Kali or the Gandaki rivers. It forms the transitional zone both in physical and in cultural terms. This zone is most developed and urbanised. The major urban centres in this zone are Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon. The high intermontane vallies found in the north of central and western Nepal are inhabited by the Bhot people.<sup>7</sup>

One major consequence of the lay-out of the Himalayan ranges is that roads, like rivers, can go only north-south. There is no east-west lateral road on the Himalayas. This generates certain peculiar results. In the first place, no direct physical communication between the east and west is possible. In order to move east or west one has to come down to the plains and travel through foreign territories.

The topography of Nepal has divided the Nepalese population into different islands, Economically, the Terai is most prosperous as it grows and exports rice, maize, jute, sugarcane, oilseeds and various other tropical crops. The mid-range of Nepal grows paddy, maize, millet and barley at a subsistence level. The Bhot region, which is snow-clad during the major part of the year, has short seasons to grow barley, buckwheat and potato. It is a food-deficit area and the people depend on trade and trans-humance as well as on agriculture.

### **Population**

The total population of Nepal in 1980 was over 15 million with an annual growth rate of 2.6%. However, the Terai has been generally less populated than the hills. It was only in 1960, that a governmental drive was made for human settlement in the Terai region. In 1980, the mountains and the hills contained 83% of Nepal's population while Terai contained only 17%.<sup>8</sup> The proportion of land and population of the Terai (17:83) hides the

fact that the several parts of the hills and the mountains do not have any human settlement at all. About 52% of the total population of Nepal live in the midland which is quite densely populated.<sup>9</sup> Further, the eastern half of the country supports three quarters of the population.<sup>10</sup> The 218 sq km Kathmandu valley, which occupies a mere 0.4% of the total area, accounts for 5% of the total population. The Kathmandu valley, in 1960, had a density of 2,000 persons per square mile with Kathmandu city having 50,000 persons per square mile.<sup>11</sup>

Nepal's rugged geography has given her considerable ethno-cultural diversity. While the Terai and the middle range show predominantly Indian features, in the northern hills there is a distinct presence of Tibeto-Mongoloid population. In the eastern part the Kiratis have affiliations with the Indo-Tibetan population of the eastern Himalayas.<sup>12</sup> There are about 36 dialects in the country. Though 24 such dialects belong to the Tibeto-Burman group, the 12 Indo-Aryan dialect speakers far outnumber the Tibeto-Burman speakers. The Nepali language today is essentially a standardised form of the Indo-Aryan dialects.<sup>13</sup>

The religious distribution of the population of Nepal shows the predominance of Hinduism and, in 1962, the King of Nepal declared Nepal as a Hindu state. Buddhism came to Nepal probably during Ashoka's time (Though Gotama, the Buddha, was born at Kapilavastu, in the Terai, he preached in northern India, not in the Nepal hills<sup>14</sup>). Among the Newars of the Western mid-range there is a division between Hindu and Buddhist<sup>15</sup>. In the northern hills the Tibetan mixture of Bon and Buddhism exists. There is also a small Muslim population in Nepal, mostly concentrated in Terai.<sup>16</sup> There is no communal conflict in Nepal.

### **The Traditional Political Economy of Nepal**

An economically diverse country like Nepal must necessarily be dependent on trade of which there is a long tradition. In fact Nepal's economic importance clearly depends upon roads and Indo-Tibetan trade. This trade is facilitated by the existence of two factors: (i) Convenient mountain passes between Nepal and Tibet, and (ii) the practice of transhumance and periodic migration of Nepalese population.

The trade, traditionally, took the following forms. In winter the Bhotias would come down with their herds of animals and merchandise to the mid-range and the mid-range Nepalese would move down to the Terai markets to extend the same trade and vice-versa during summer.

Yet, much of this trade was carried out through barter and gold, though there are archaeological evidences to suggest that Nepal minted coins for Tibet. There was no monetisation of the Nepalese economy as there was very little surplus production in it.

Ninety per cent of the Nepalese population live on agriculture which contributes about 62% of the gross domestic product. According to an official estimate of 1973 the share of agriculture to the national occupation structure was 93%, of business 2.5%, of industrial labour 1%, of cottage industry 1% and of services 2%. 95% of the population lived in 28,446 rural villages.<sup>17</sup>

Until 1951, the annual revenue of the Nepal Government was to the tune of Rs. 1,500,000. Of this 90% was kept by the Rana rulers themselves and the other 10% was spent for the army and Governmental information agents.<sup>18</sup> As agriculture was severely under-taxed,<sup>19</sup> the importance of 'services' in the revenue rose. Such 'services' of course mainly meant the soldiers allowed to be hired by the British and the Indian Governments.

According to Mahesh Regmi, the tax-base of the Government of Nepal was narrowed by the prevalence of tax-free grants of land to the aristocracy and the bureaucracy under the Birta and the Jagir system. There were basically two aspects of the traditional land tenure system of the hill region of Nepal. The first aspect was the dominance of the aristocracy and the bureaucracy over land and peasants. Before 1951, the bulk of the cultivated area in the hill region had been granted under the Birta and Jagirdar tenure. The peasants were compelled to pay to the Birta owner or Jagirdar in money and commodities at a level which took away at least half of their produces. Such payments were in addition to personal servitude of different categories.<sup>20</sup>

Such a condition would be described as semi-serfdom. But there was a second kind of exploitation in the traditional agrarian

system in the hill region. Below the superior rights of the Birta owners or Jagirdars or of the state, there were landlords who had achieved their position through the interplay of economic forces within the statutory tenure structure. Particularly important was the role of the money lenders.<sup>21</sup>

The Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh *Manifesto* of 1950 highlights this social oppression of the bulk of the Nepalese:-

In our country the peasants are in majority but they have not their own land to till. Almost all land is in the hands of big Ranas, big Birtawals, Zamindars, Jimmiwals and other big feudal lords who do not work in a land even for a day. The real peasants, the tillers of the land, are forced to work as the slave ploughmen or crop-sharers and to hand over major portions of the products of their labour to the owners of the land.... At last... they are forced to go to their own plunderers and borrow money at interest of 50-100%. This debt like the web entangles them from all sides, and from generation to generation they are not able to free themselves from this. This is the condition of landless peasants.

The small and middle peasants have certainly some land but it is not enough for maintenance of their family. They also, in order to save their children from starvation, are forced to go to money lenders. The burden of debt has broken their backbone and they, too, are over head and ears in debt. Land is passing out of their hand; they, too, are becoming landless peasant.....

In brief, historical economic conditions have divided the rural population of Nepal into two mutually opposing camps. On one side, there is 5% of population. This includes big Ranas, big Birtawals, big feudal lords, Zamindars, Jimmiwals and moneylenders—enemies of the country and the people. On the other hand is 95% of the population. This includes landless peasants, poor peasants, middle peasants and rich peasants.<sup>22</sup>

It is in this context of a fragmented society and depressed political economy that the story of democratic movement in Nepal unfolds itself.

## References

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 9 and Gurung, Dr. Harka, "Geographic Setting" in *Nepal, A Profile*, p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Majupurias, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Nepal, A Profile*, p. 10.
8. Majupurias, *op. cit.*, pp.29-30, and Gurung, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
9. Gurung, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Majupurias, *op. cit.*, p.9-10. Gurrung, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
12. Majupurias, *op. cit.*, p.7., Sharan, Dr. P., *Government and Politics in Nepal*, p. 3.
13. Gurung, *op. cit.*, p.8. 'The Nepali language as it stands today has assimilated the distorted forms of Sanskrit and Prakrit as well as (is) a product of the Aryan-Mongolian culture. Not only the words of these languages are found in Nepali but also their verbs. Words derived from these languages have been remoulded into Nepali forms and are used in accordance with the rules of the grammar . A Brief Introduction to Nepalese Literature', in *Nepal: A Profile*, p. 91.
14. Sharan, *op. cit.*, pp.3-4. There are, however, legends of the visit of either Gotama or Ananda, his disciple, to the valley, See Sanwal, *Social and Political History of Nepal*, p. 108.
15. Sharan, *op. cit.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. Rishikesh Shaha, *An Introduction to Nepal*. Mishra, D.K. and Mahesh Acharya, 'Resource Mobilization in Nepal' in S.K. Srivastava (ed.), *Modernization in Nepal*, Centre for the Study of Nepal, Banaras Hindu University, 1985, p. 153, and Majupurias, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
18. *A Dictionary of Politics*, Penguin, 1957 p. 242.
19. Misra and Acharya, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
20. Regmi, Mahesh C., "Modernizing Peasant Society: Recent Trends in the Hill Region in Nepal", in Chaube, S.K. (edited), *The Himalayas*, p.130. Birta=Bharta=Maintenance; Jagir=Fief.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Manifesto of All-Nepal Kisan Sangh*, 1950, C.P.1, Archives, Calcutta.

## Birth of Nepal As a Modern State

### Unification

Historically, Nepal is an ancient country. Several dynasties, namely, the Licchavis, the Kiratas, the Somavansis, the Suryavansis, the Mallas and the Shaha dynasty ruled different parts of the country at different times. Presently the Shaha dynasty is at the head of the state of Nepal. It's founder, Prithvi Narayan Shaha, of the Gurkha, united Nepal by A.D. 1770.

The story of the unification of Nepal begins with the induction of modernity in Nepal. Prithvi Narayan's forefather, Dravya Shaha, is said to have migrated from Chittor<sup>1</sup> after the sacking of that kingdom by Alauddin Khilzi.<sup>2</sup> However, Dravya Shaha was the younger son of the Raja of Lamjung. The elder branch of the family ruled in Lamjung and tried to absorb Gorkha. Dravya Shaha fought it out by means of his alliances with the Magar and Gurung localities to the north and the east of Gorkha under his control.<sup>3</sup> Dravya Shaha's grandson, Ram Shaha, became the Raja of Gorkha in 1605 A.D. He was a good administrator and able military commander.<sup>4</sup> He appointed a Chautaria or a Principal Minister from among the close kin to assist the administration and Kazis to work under him.<sup>5</sup> He introduced a kind of district administration. He introduced the collection of rents from the tenures and octroi or trade dues from merchants and craftsmen. He also set up a small army.

Prithvi Narayan Shaha was born in 1723 A.D. He ascended the throne in 1742 A.D. He set his view on a conquest of the Kathmandu valley which was ruled by the Malla Kings.<sup>6</sup> The Gorkha attempt to approach Kathmandu by capturing Nayakot was foiled in 1737 A.D. On ascending the throne Prithvi Narayan made another unsuccessful attempt to take Nayakot. After the

defeat by the forces of Jayaprakash Malla, Prithvi Narayan retired to Banaras and came in contact with the British army. He returned to Gorkha with a few Hindustani soldiers of the East India Company. These soldiers trained the Gorkhas in the use of guns.<sup>7</sup>

Prithvi Narayan not only introduced modern weaponry into his army but thoroughly secularised it.<sup>8</sup> Prithvi Narayan recruited his soldiers not only from the Thakurs but also from the Magars, Gurungs and even the Bhotias.<sup>9</sup>

Prithvi Narayan had the goodwill of several local castes and he was able to neutralise the Chaubisi Rajas and the Raja of Lamjung through diplomacy. From 1745 A.D. till his death, Prithvi Narayan went on his spree of conquest.<sup>10</sup>

The appeal of the Malla King brought the East India Company's army into Nepal in 1767. But the Company's forces were defeated by the Gorkhas.<sup>11</sup> From then on the company maintained a neutralist policy until the second decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Gorkha army under Bahadur Shah tried to expand their kingdom towards Tibet in the north. The Gorkha army conquered Dailukh, Dullu, Bajhand and Dati in 1789. They captured Kirung, Kuti and Tungri in 1788. In the second war with Tibet in 1791, when the Nepali army was defeated and lost their territories in the north, they moved towards the south to fulfil their aspiration of expanding their territories. Between 1808 and 1814 Nepal had several clashes with the British authority in India.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of Nepal had all the appearances of the emergence of a strong regional power in the Himalayan belt like the Sikhs in the northwest and Marathas in the south-west of India threatening the British aspiration for hegemony over India where the Mughal power was crumbling. So the Anglo-Gorkha War broke out in 1814. This was continued till 1816 when Nepal lost the war and had to cede territories between the Mechi river and the Tista river in the east and the region of Kumaon, Garhwal and Shimla in the west. The present shape of Nepal was determined by the Treaty of Segauli in 1816.<sup>14</sup>

After the Treaty of Segauli, a British resident was posted in the court of Nepal. During the next century, that became the crucial external factor in the political scene of Nepal.

### **Nepal Under British Hegemony: Intrigues around the throne**

Prithvi Narayan Shaha had united Nepal in one empire but he maintained, and in some cases strengthened, the feudal privileges of the noble families and his military chiefs through grants of 'Jagirs' and 'Birtas'.<sup>15</sup> He also granted 'Guthi' lands to the Brahmins.<sup>16</sup> Thus the feudal and upper caste elite in society remained quite powerful. They got their inspiration and encouragement from the district officers and the central government.<sup>17</sup> Their influences grew further after the death of Prithvi Narayan Shaha<sup>18</sup>. Such a closed society suffering from economic stagnation and insulation naturally promoted court intrigues around the throne over succession, regency and Prime Ministership.<sup>19</sup> Children of a dead king would fight for the throne, the queen mother would take side and aim at becoming regent when a king would be a minor. The important families would take part in their intrigues with their eyes on the Prime Ministership frequently leading to murders. Tripura Sundari Devi acted as a regent queen, during the minority of Rajendra Bikram Shaha from 1806-1816, when Bhimsen Thapa as the Prime Minister wielded almost absolute power in the kingdom.<sup>20</sup> In 1816 the Anglo-Gorkha War ended with Nepal's defeat and a British resident was installed at Kathmandu. From now on the British resident was also taking active interest in the Nepalese court intrigues which led to the downfall of Bhimsen Thapa in 1837 and, finally, to the "Kot Massacre" in 1846.<sup>21</sup>

During this period Jung Bahadur Rana emerged as the most powerful Prime Minister in Nepal's history like the Peshwas of Maharashtra. He obtained from the king the title of Maharaja and established matrimonial relation with the royal family. Prime ministerial position in Nepal became hereditary. The king became a puppet and the Ranas became the ruling heads in Nepal. The British supported the Ranas and their friendship was cemented by the visit of Jung Bahadur to England in 1850 and Nepal's military assistance to the suppression of 1857 revolt against the British in India. Gradually Nepal became the market for Gorkha

soldiers. For the nine decades after that the position remained the same.

On the other hand, the Ranas divested the king of all power. They consolidated their feudal grip over the Nepalese peasantry. Extortion of agricultural surplus led to quick pauperisation of the bulk of the people resulting in massive migration towards British India.<sup>22</sup> Recruitment to the British army as well as in the tea gardens of British India and the various services absorbed a part of their emigrant population. But the distress of the masses of the common people went on increasing opening up the objective possibilities of an alliance between the monarchy and the populace against the Ranarchy and hence against the British Raj.<sup>23</sup>

### Socio-Cultural Awakening In Nepal

It is a common experience of several traditional countries that the protest against the oppressive rule of a King, or an elite, or a foreign power, first gets expression in religious and socio-cultural movements. The Anglo-Gorkha War not only brought the British into Nepal, it was also a great humiliation for the patriotic section of the Nepalese. Their pain and agony were succinctly expressed in the writings of Acharyya Bhanu Bhakta (1814-1864) who wrote a Nepalese version of *Ramayana* based on the original Sanskrit classic *Adliyatma Ramayana*.<sup>24</sup> His references to Ram Rajya was a reminder of an ideal monarchy to the Nepalese people. It was an indirect critique of the state of affairs in the Nepalese polity. Bhanu Bhakta's other writings more sharply pointed out the malaise of the regime. His stress on *Swadeshi* (own country), *Swabhasha* (own language) and *Swasanskriti* (own culture) was offensive enough for the regime to put him in jail where he completed his main literary work in 1853.<sup>25</sup>

It should be noted here that Nepal's cultural contact with India is hundreds of years old. Many Hindu deities have found their homes in Nepal. A number of Hindu pilgrimage centres are located in Nepal. Gautam Buddha was born in Nepal. The Nepal king claims to be an *Avatar* (incarnation) of Vishnu. The Nepalese caste structure is a reproduction of the Indian caste

structure. Till today Nepal claims to be the only Hindu state in the world. Migration from different parts of India is still continuing. Students from Nepal have come to India for education for several centuries. During the British period Nepalese soldiers and workers worked in India and settled in different parts of this country. Children of the Nepalese elite came to Banaras, Calcutta, Patna and Dehradun for modern education.

Acharyya Bhanu Bhakta initiated a “renaissance” in Nepali language and culture.<sup>26</sup> Specially, his use of the sacred text of *Ramayana* opened up a new phase of socio-cultural mobilization. Several religious associations were formed inside the country to discuss the *shastras*. One of these groups embraced the teachings of Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Madhav Raj Joshi returned to Nepal from India and started religious discourses. In 1896 he founded a branch of Arya Samaj at Kathmandu.<sup>27</sup> The Samaj threatened the hegemony of the upper castes in the Nepalese society as it was anti-caste. Their pressure forced Madhav Raj Joshi to leave the country in 1905 and settle permanently at Darjeeling in Bengal.<sup>28</sup> But the Arya Samajist movement continued in Nepal under the leadership of a younger generation of Nepalese.

### **Beginning of Political Movement**

Nepal's proximity to India was largely responsible not only for her socio-cultural awakening but also for political consciousness. This phase of modern politics in Nepal can directly be traced to the political ferment in Bengal since 1905. The agitation against Bengal partition surcharged the political atmosphere not only in Bengal but also in the rest of India. Darjeeling, the favourite middle class tourist resort and centre of tea industry in Bengal, had already attracted Bengalis among whom nationalist militancy was growing. The most important consequence of the anti-partition agitation for the nationalist movement in India was its division between the 'moderates' and the 'extremists'<sup>29</sup> with Bengal largely subscribing to the extremist position and giving birth to revolutionary nationalism which the British called "terrorism".<sup>30</sup> The disgruntled Nepalese youth could not keep away from this revolutionary ardour emanating from Darjeeling, Calcutta, Patna, Banaras and Dehradun. It is also

important to know that the Bengal revolutionaries in the second decade of the century were trying to cross the Himalayan border in search of arms and ammunition.<sup>31</sup> At the same time they were trying to propagate the revolutionary spirit among the Indian and the Gorkha soldiers in Dehradun and Lahore.<sup>32</sup> In 1907 the first Gorkha activities were reported from Calcutta. One Prithviman Thapa,<sup>33</sup> a dismissed Gorkha soldier, addressed a meeting at Calcutta College Square on 27th July 1907 where about two hundred persons were present.<sup>34</sup> He raised subscription for the purpose of a newspaper which would promote among the Gorkhas in India love for their motherland. The paper would also enlighten the Gorkhas about the economic condition of India and promote understanding between the Bengalis and the Gorkhas. Thapa sought the assistance of Colonel Bahadur Jung, Nepal's political representative in Calcutta, to get the Nepalese Government support for the *swadeshi* movement. He also unsuccessfully wrote to Chandra Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana for financial assistance to his paper, the *Gorkha Sathi*.<sup>35</sup> Prithviman Thapa's dream of the Nepali Rana regime supporting the *swadeshi* movement in India, which was out and out anti-British, was naturally shattered. Very soon Thapa's disillusionment with the Rana rule was reflected in his paper which became increasingly critical of the regime. Naturally, again, the British Government in India banned the paper's circulation among the Gorkha soldiers in India.<sup>36</sup>

The Nepal Prime Minister asked for Prithviman's extradition to Nepal. But the request was not entertained as the British Government policy did not favour extradition of political offenders in Nepal.<sup>37</sup> This may or may not indicate a mass resentment against British power in Nepal. It surely indicates the Rana Prime Minister's loyalty to the British Raj. It is necessary to know that Prithviman Thapa's appeal for support to the *swadeshi* movement had been made to the Maharajdhiraj and not the Maharaja.

Prithviman Thapa's episode is a study in contrast of the more vocal loyalty to the British Raj among the retired Gorkha soldiers settled in British India. For example, in the same year, 1907, the retired Gorka settlers of Darjeeling joined hands with the Bhutia and Lepcha landlords to demand the exclusion of the Darjeeling hill from the scope of the Morley-Minto Reforms.<sup>38</sup>

In 1907 Rana Chandra Shumsher moved to ban or restrict the Indian nationalist newspapers. He issued a warning against reading four Indian newspapers which were considered to be writing seditious articles. They were *Bande Mataram*, *Jugantar*, *Sandhya* from Calcutta, and *New India* from Lahore.<sup>39</sup>

Chandra Shumsher also wanted a full list of other papers considered seditious by the British. The list of newspapers supplied by the British was made up of the following names, the *Punjabi*, *New India*, *United Burma*, *Sultan*, *Navashakti*, *Milir-O-Sudhakar*, *Charu Milir* and *Howrah Hitaishi*. The list of papers did not include papers in other Indian languages as "such papers are probably not received in Nepal."<sup>40</sup>

Nepalese political linkage with Bengal can easily be understood in terms of the importance of that province as the seat of British India's capital, as the foremost educated province and as the most volatile region of India. The presence of a large number of educated Bengalis as government servants, businessmen and professionals in Nepal helped the carrying on of the revolutionary spirit of Bengal. Most importantly, the largest Nepalese settlement, outside Nepal, was in the district of Darjeeling in Bengal.

In 1908 the extremist nationalist newspaper from Bengal, the *Bande Mataram*, launched a strong attack on Rana Chandra Shumsher. Rana Chandra Shumsher reacted by issuing a proclamation warning the people in general and the Bengali employees of the Nepalese Government in particular.<sup>41</sup> He is also reported to have appointed four British Indian detectives<sup>42</sup> to trace the Bengal revolutionaries who were allegedly manufacturing bombs in Nepal.

### Nepal and the First World War

The First World War started in 1914 when the extremist movement in India was taking a revolutionary terrorist turn and the seeds of Khilafat agitation had already been sown. The British came down heavily upon several Indian newspapers including the *Amrito Bazar Patrika*, the *Bengali*, both from Calcutta, the *Leader* from Allahabad, the *Hamard* from Delhi and the *Zamindar* from Lahore. The Prime Minister of Nepal was informed of the seditious character of these papers.<sup>43</sup> While

Nepal was put under heavy censor of posts and papers from India, the government soon realised the undesirable consequences of vigorous censor as wild rumours were spreading in Kathmandu about the war in the absence of authentic news. It was, therefore, decided to relax the censor and hand over all posts from British India to the Nepalese subjects, in Nepal to a nominee of the Maharaja.

But the new wave of consciousness could not be kept out of Nepal. The First World War brought about worldwide revolutionary changes. Thousands of Nepalese soldiers went out of the country to serve the British army. They brought a new awareness of the world situation and democratic aspiration to the country.

Meanwhile, in 1912, the seat of highest British power in India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. Educational centres started growing in northern India. Nepalese students found it more convenient to study at Banaras and an increasing number of modern educated youth assembled in Banaras. They were joined by a disgruntled group of dismissed civil and military employees of the Nepal Government who settled down in northern India. For the next few decades Banaras became the focal point of middle class intellectual activities of Nepal.

The First World War changed the scenario of British India. It placed the Indian national movement on a new footing. On the one hand the Indian revolutionaries and the Khilafatists were moving out of India in search of arms and external support. On the other hand, in 1915, Gandhi returned to India and gradually took command of the nationalist movement. It should not be forgotten that the first political struggle of Gandhi in India was on the border of Nepal—at Champaran (in 1917).

Gandhi's attitude to the First World War changed over time. At the beginning he was co-operative with the British. After the passing of the Rawlatt Act Gandhi increasingly opposed the British Raj until the non-cooperation movement which brought about a confrontation between the British Raj and the Indian National Congress. The non-cooperation movement, however, was withdrawn in 1922, creating a strong resentment against Gandhi

among a section of Congressmen like Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Subhas Chandra Bose.<sup>44</sup> Even Jawahar Lal Nehru was sceptical of the decision to withdraw the movement but thought that Gandhi knew the public mood best.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Indian Left**

The Indian Left emerged in this context of division over the strategy of non-cooperation movement and was born about the time of the Gaya Congress of 1922<sup>46</sup> presided over by Chittaranjan Das. This group counterpoised itself against Gandhi and formed the Swarajist group within the Congress Party with a view to council entry in 1923 while Gandhi engaged himself in constructive work. This group also claimed its lineage from the extremists of the earlier period. C.R. Das had close personal contacts with the extremists like Aurobindo Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal.<sup>47</sup> He retained his contacts with the national revolutionaries of Bengal till his death in 1925.

The informal left in India, therefore, can be traced from the extremists of 1906 through Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru. The formal "left" emerged, after Das's death, at Kanpur in 1925 with the first meeting of the Indian Communists.<sup>48</sup>

The early communists worked in the trade union movement and maintained links with young Congress leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>49</sup>

Subhas Chandra Bose's link with the left can be traced to 1931 when the All-India Trade Union Congress elected Bose as President. Jawaharlal Nehru's link with the left can be traced to his membership of the executive committee of the League against Imperialism and for National Independence in 1927. In 1929, when the famous Meerut conspiracy case against the Indian Communists was started by the British Government, Jawaharlal Nehru was the President of All-India Congress Committee. The Congress party set up a Meerut Defence Committee with Motilal as the President and Jawaharlal as the Secretary.<sup>50</sup> Dr. Muttar Ahmed Ansari and Babu Giridhari Lal acted as its working president and working Secretary respectively. Although many Congress leaders promised funds for the defence, only Motilal and Dr. Ansari made contribution. However, in the early 1930s

the Congress party lost interest in this case. Before launching the Civil Disobedience Movement Jawaharlal informed the communists that Congress could no longer defend their case. Jawaharlal's commitment to anti-imperialism, however, was never in doubt.

The Communist Party of India was formally established in 1935 and was immediately banned. Its workers operated from within the Congress Socialist Party<sup>51</sup> and other small groups.

Muzaffar Ahmed seems to insinuate that the Nehrus showed interest in the Meerut Conspiracy case when, in view of Jawaharlal's known socialist leaning, they apprehended his arrest along with the leftists. When the fear disappeared they withdrew from the case. Jawaharlal Nehru, however, writes that "there were different kinds of people among these, with different types of defences and often there was an utter absence of harmony among them. After some months we wound up the formal committee but we continued to help in our individual capacities."<sup>52</sup>

The Congress Socialist Party was established in 1934 in a direct revolt against the Gandhian leadership which, according to the rebels, was soft towards the empire.<sup>53</sup> In particular, the socialist revolt was a response to the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934. The Congress Socialist Party remained within the Congress. Gandhi left the Congress for good but retained his massive influence on the Congress leadership. In 1939 the Congress left took on the Gandhian leadership to defeat Gandhi's personal nominee to the Congress presidency at Tripuri, Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

In this confrontation with Gandhi the Congress Socialist Party missed Jawaharlal Nehru who chose Gandhi for the sake of broad national unity.<sup>54</sup> In 1940 when Subhas Chandra Bose formed his 'All-India Forward Block' neither the Congress Socialists nor the Communists joined him. The C.S.P. leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, was convinced of the necessity of Gandhi's continued leadership.<sup>55</sup> The communists suspected Bose of pro-fascist sympathy. They, later, denounced Bose's Azad Hind Fauj as well as Gandhi's Quit India Movement because both these movements facilitated the growth of fascism and weakening of the defence of 'the

socialist fatherland'—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The split of the communists with the socialists was complete during the Quit India Movement.<sup>56</sup> Its split with the Congress took place in 1945 when the communist members of the All India Congress Committee were expelled from the Congress.

The Congress Socialist Party rose to the peak of its glory during the Quit India Movement. At the instance of Gandhi the A.I.C.C. adopted this resolution on August 8, 1942. All the Working Committee members as well as Gandhi were arrested the same night. The young leaders of the C.S.P. took the leadership of the movement when Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the national flag, at the venue of A.I.C.C. meeting at Bombay, in the morning of August 9.

The C.S.P., however, lacked ideological cohesion. The difference within the group as well as with the Congress leaders grew after World War II and, finally, the C.S.P. split from Congress in March 1948.<sup>57</sup> By that time the C.S.P. had considerably moved away from Marxism towards Gandhism, so much so that its leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, accused Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel of neglecting Gandhi's security on the eve of his assassination.<sup>58</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru offered Jayaprakash Narayan a seat in the cabinet. Jayaprakash did not respond to it. On the other hand, in early 1953, the Socialist Party joined the Krishak Mazdur Praja Party, a break-away group of Congress led by Acharya J.B. Kripalani, to form the Praja Socialist Party. The ambivalent attitude of Nehru and Jayaprakash towards each other created suspicion within the Praja Socialist Party about Jayaprakash's attitude towards Congress and Jayaprakash became disgruntled enough to partly withdraw from the P.S.P.'s work and devote himself to Bhoodan. After the election of 1957 he retired from active politics. Meanwhile, in 1955, Rammanohar Lohia walked out of the P.S.P. to form the Socialist Party and, after the death of Acharya Narendra Deva, the socialist movement in India became rudderless. In 1977, after the death of Dr. Lohia, the Socialist Party merged with the Janata Party.

The Communist Party of India had a chequered career since World War II when it extended its co-operation to the British war effort and got freedom to operate openly. In 1948-49, it launched a lot of adventurist programmes and was severely punished by the independent state. During this period, the

Communist Party of India came into contact with some Nepali leaders in India.

Thus, the Indian left is also not a cohesive group. Its ideological spectrum ranged from militant nationalism to revolutionary Marxism. The intermingling of these trends had produced several ideological strands followed by different political groups. All these parties were essentially concerned with India. Yet, the proximity of Nepal to this country and interaction between the two peoples have forced them to take cognizance of the developments in Nepal and adopt different kinds of strategies towards that country.

### **Overall NATIONALIST POLICY towards Nepal**

The Congress, as a nationalist movement, suffered from some inherent defects. Gandhi's stress on multiclass unity stopped it from adopting radical positions on socio-political issues. The need to draft the support of the princes, who had been early patrons of the Congress, discouraged major reformist programmes in states. The All-Parties Conference Report envisaged modification, in varying degrees, of the system of government and administration among them. In 1929 the Congress demanded that states be brought into line with the rest of India through introduction of responsible government and social reforms. The states people's movement was born.

Nepal was a British protectorate. The Congress, therefore, could not officially show interest in her internal affairs. It, however, would favour democratization of Nepal. A large number of Nepalese settlers in India, particularly those serving the British armed forces, were the special foci of interest. But the Indian left was more outspoken in opposition to the princely order. As Jayaprakash Narayan wrote "The princes, relics of feudal India, are an anachronism in the modern world".<sup>54</sup>

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# 2

## Cultural Awakening

### Religious and Literary Movements

Prithvinarayan Shah gave Nepal a political identity. He lifted the Khaskura dialect to the status of the official language of Nepal. But the Nepalese language took about a century to grow. The man most responsible for giving shape to the modern Nepalese language was Acharya Bhanubhakta.

The identity of a nation is born in the sphere of culture and is expressed most powerfully in its language. Bhanubhakta not only gave the Nepalese language an identity by using simple forms and avoiding the use of Sanskrit to a large extent.<sup>1</sup> He gave the Nepalese people a sense of nationhood.<sup>2</sup> That sense was born out of pain. A country, that seemed to be emerging as the mightiest Himalayan power spreading from modern Himachal in the west to Sikkim in the east and stretching its wings into Tibet on the north and the Indian plains in the south, got a rude shock at the Anglo-Gorkha War.

The defeat demoralised the Nepalese people as a whole. The Nepalese elite slid into fractional conflicts, palace conspiracy and personal degeneration. Bhimsen Thapa's suicide was representative of the elite crisis. While the common people, smarting under a national humiliation, looked at the intrigues helplessly, Bhanubhakta brought to them a new sense of self-respect and reminded the oligarchy of its responsibility.<sup>3</sup> Bhanubhakta's work was a critique of the Nepalese power structure. At the same time Bhanubhakta's works like *Badhu Shiksha* and *Prasnottri* contributed to the spread of knowledge among the common people of the country.<sup>4</sup>

Bhanubhakta's works were a blend of religion, literature and politics. They led to an interesting phase of intellectual history in which political grievances were often expressed in the garb of religion. Madhav Raj Joshi's Arya Samaj movement was a

benchmark of the intellectual tradition. Like Bhanubhakta, Madhav Raj Joshi was also persecuted by the state.<sup>5</sup> Madhav Raj used religious discourses for the spread of his egalitarian ideas using *shastras*. He was beaten up by the agents of the Ranas and awarded imprisonment for two years.

If Bhanubhakta formed the classical background of Nepalese literature, the sixty years between 1880 and 1940 constituted a period in which, according to Kumar Pradhan, "Nepali language and literature forged ahead in many new directions".<sup>6</sup> This period is marked by the beginning of the publication of journals in Nepali. Pradhan notes the publication of two journals about which, however, no detailed information is available. They were (i) *Gorkha Bharat Jeewan* and (ii) *Sudhasagar*. *Gorkha Bharat Jeewan* was published by Motiram Bhatta and his compatriots from Banaras in 1886 and *Sudhasagar* published at Kathmandu in 1898.<sup>7</sup> It is possible, however, that the first was the subsidiary of the Hindi journal, *Bharat Jeewan*, which carried the notice of *Gorkha Bharat Jeewan*.

*Gorkha Khabar Kagat*<sup>8</sup> published from Darjeeling, from 1901 to 1932 by Reverend Ganga Prasad Pradhan, was a mouthpiece of the Scottish Baptist Mission at Darjeeling. Yet, according to Kumar Pradhan, the *Gorkha Khabar Kagat* published some literary pieces also.

After a few weeks of the publication of *Gorkha Khabar Kagat*, the *Gorkha Patra*<sup>9</sup> was published from Nepal as a kind of gazette. It carried not only news and notices but also novels, stories, both original and translated, and other prose pieces including essays and criticism.<sup>10</sup>

The first non-official paper was *Sundari*<sup>11</sup>, published from Banaras since 1906, giving prominence to poetry. *Madhavi*, published from Banaras, under the editorship of Rammani Acharyya under the pseudonym of Matri Prasad Adhikari, since 1908, promoted both prose and poetry. By 1907, however, an entirely new vision opened up before Nepalese literary efforts with the publication of *Gorkha Sathi*<sup>12</sup> from Calcutta. In 1914, *Chandra*<sup>13</sup>, a monthly from Banaras, declared that the "the reason behind the progress of the English, French and German people lay in the development of their respective language". It devoted

its attention to the promotion of Nepali language. But Kumar Pradhan considers as "more significant" the publication of *Gorkhali*<sup>14</sup>, a weekly, from Banaras in 1915. It was edited by Subba Devi Prasad Sapkota, a former officer of the foreign department of the Rana Government.

It gathered around itself important literary and cultural figures like Surya Bikram Jnnavali, Mansingh Gurung, Laxmi Prasad Sapkota, Dharanidhar Koirala, Dinanath Sharma and Krishna Prasad.<sup>15</sup> *Gorkhali* was not only a literary journal, it also contained standardisation of the Nepali language, as well as critiques of Nepal's society and economy. It was closed down in 1922, under the pressure of British Raj, at the peak of the non-cooperation movement. Kumar Pradhan quotes the British envoy to Nepal on *Gorkhali*:- "It seems certain that artificially introduced dissatisfaction with their condition, such as the *Gorkhali* sets itself to bring about, can neither lead to any beneficial change in the form of Government nor to improvement in material prosperity"<sup>15</sup>.

In 1918, *Chandrika*<sup>16</sup> was published by Parashmani Pradhan, from Kurseong in Darjeeling district. *Chandrika* praised *Gorkhali*, for its boldness but itself went on boldly and published Dharanidhar Koirala's *Udbodhan*, a poem that gave a clarion call for Nepalese awakening.<sup>17</sup>

It is significant to note that, while the literary endeavours of the Nepalese in Darjeeling and Calcutta were through secular journals, the literary activities in Nepal had been through books. At first, these endeavours were mixed up with religion. This indicates the control of the Rana regime on the intellectual world of the Nepalese. Publishing a book is a one-time affair but publishing a journal is a recurrent phenomenon and easily attracts law. Publication of a journal also requires a constant readership.

Secular literature in the form of books appear in Nepal after World War I. In 1919 was published *Siksha Darpan* written by Baburam Achariya. In this book Ranashahi was compared with the 'Shogunate'<sup>18</sup> in Japan. The significance of this comparison was almost revolutionary. 'Shogunate' in Japan was a feudal clique that had petrified the monarch into a divinity and confined him to the palace while the Shogun appropriated his power. The Shogunate in Japan ended in 1866-67 with the Meiji Restoration

that brought the monarchy out from oblivion and anointed it with unlimited authority. The actual authority, however, passed down to the Japanese bourgeoisie. There was no bourgeoisie in Nepal in 1918, but the counter-poser between the Maharajadhiraj (King) and the Maharaja (Prime Minister) could never be missed. It was a definite suggestion of actual or latent conflict between the King and the Rana Prime Minister.

In the 1920s Pandit Dharanidhar Koirala's collection of poems '*Naivedya*'<sup>19</sup> was published from Banaras; it was refused entry into Nepal. In the same year another educational book on agriculture was published by Krishnalal Adhikari. The name of the book is *Krishi Shikshavali, Prathambhiag, Makai Ko Kheti*.<sup>20</sup> In the Preface of the book he wrote "we care more for the foreign dog, than for the native one, but when it comes to guard ourselves against thieves and robbers, it is the native dog and not the foreign one, sleeping in the sofa, that proves more useful".<sup>21</sup> This book led to the imprisonment of the author till his death.

Sambhu Prasad Dhungel (the *Asiakavi*)<sup>22</sup> (1899-1928) contributed a few verses to *Makai ko Kheti*, lost his job, tried to pacify the Rana (Chandra Shumsher) by singing his praise in a few compositions, earned his ire again by contributing poems to *Gorkhali*<sup>23</sup> (Published from Banaras by Sapkota) and had finally to die at Banaras in penury.

Another rebel literary figure was Bala Krishna Shumsher who left Nepal for Calcutta to learn about Indian politics and was known as Bala Krishna Soma.<sup>24</sup> He wrote "Oh, my country, if it happened in Calcutta, my child would surely have been saved. The appalling condition of my motherland, in this very century, had murdered my son...but this event had brought change in my life. Revolution began to smoulder deep within my heart".

Meanwhile in Darjeeling socio-political activities had started. In 1907 a group of rich Nepalese and Bhutia landlords made a representation to the British Government demanding a separate administrative set-up for Darjeeling district, outside the scope of the Morley-Minto Reforms. In 1917 the demand was reiterated.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the Gorkha Association, formed in 1918 in Darjeeling, seemed to be approaching the Indian nationalist movement. During the non-cooperation movement, Dal Bahadur

Giri, earlier associated with the Gorkha Association, opened a branch of the Indian National Congress at Darjeeling. The non-cooperation movement spread to the tea plantation in the hills under the leadership of Dal Bahadur Giri and Bhakta Bir Lama (popularly known as *Asahajogi Lama*).<sup>26</sup> In 1926 a Gorkha Association was formed in Calcutta to work for the social, economic and religious uplift of Nepal. Its President, Agan Singh, had been implicated in the non-cooperation movement. It raised a volunteer corps to prevent the abduction of Nepalese women to India. An expatriate C-class Rana, Thir Shamsher, became its President in 1928. The Association was, however, short-lived.<sup>27</sup>

### **Beginning of the Political Movement in Nepal**

The First World War agitated South Asia more than ever before. Nepal could not keep away from this tumult. Thousands of Gorkha soldiers were deployed all over the world by the British Government. After the war they came back and settled mostly in the Indian districts on the neighbourhood of Nepal like Darjeeling, Banaras and Dehradun. The First World War was a war against authoritarianism and medieval imperialism. The campaign was surcharged by liberal ideologies. Many Nepali soldiers were affected by the spirit of enlightenment and democracy. For obvious reasons, however, such spirit had no place in Nepal. They were spread among the Nepalese settlers in India who established social and cultural organisations. In 1918, a Gorkha Library was established at Kurseong in Darjeeling, and, in 1924, the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan was founded in the Darjeeling district.

### **All India Gorkha League**

The All India Gorkha League was the first political organisation of the Nepalese settlers in India.<sup>28</sup> It was founded by educated Nepalese, mostly ex-armymen, some of whom had participated in the non-cooperation movement at Dehradun in 1921. In the first six years, however, it avoided taking part in politics. But in 1926, the League adopted a strong anti-British and anti-Muslim tone.<sup>29</sup> The second session of the League at Dehradun elected Thakur Chandan Singh as its President and asked for

modernisation of Nepal by extensive reforms of the kind undertaken by Amir Amanullah Khan in Afghanistan and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in Tibet.<sup>30</sup> Resolutions were passed urging the Rana Government to lift the ban on foreign tour by the Nepalese. In 1927, a branch of the League was opened at Dibrugarh in Assam where a large Gorkha population had settled down.<sup>31</sup>

The most illustrious name associated with the foundation of the Gorkha League was that of Thakur Chandan Singh, a member of the Nepalese nobility and a soldier of distinction. Thakur Chandan Singh attended the 1921 Delhi Session of All-India Hindu Mahasabha and renounced his war decorations and medals. Before that he had been in the Indian National Congress for a short period and took part in non-cooperation movement. He had also served the Maharaja of Bikaner as his Assistant Secretary. In 1922 he left Congress and, in 1926, edited a paper called *Himalayan Times*. Later he edited another paper, *Tarun Gorkha*, which was renamed as *Gorkha Samsar* and became the organ of the Gorkha League. Through its column Thakur Chandan Singh urged the Nepalese to take education, particularly technical and scientific knowledge. It had a moderately satisfactory circulation in 1927. But later it was banned in the Gorkha cantonments.<sup>32</sup>

Another important name connected with the League was Bahadur Shumsher,<sup>33</sup> the son of Dev Shumsher who had been ousted from power as the Prime Minister by Chandra Shumsher in 1901.

The involvement of a section of Ranas with various protest movements from time to time suggests that factional conflicts within the Nepalese political elite was in part responsible for the growth of political movements in Nepal. More important, however, was the role of the educated and intellectual Nepalese who were, on the one hand, suffering from economic insecurity and, on the other, sharing a vision of development of Nepal, side by side with India, with the Indian nationalist leadership.

Given the demography and the culture of Nepal, such political consciousness at the earlier stage partly tended to associate itself with Hindu Mahasabha and even oppose the Muslim<sup>34</sup> and

Christian interests. The Hindu Mahasabha also extended its patronage to the League and covered its activities in the papers like *Sraddhanand* in Bombay, *Keshri* in Poone, *Arjun* in Delhi and *Shrikrishna* in Calcutta.<sup>35</sup>

### The Overzealous Indian Patriotism

The Indian nationalist interest in Nepal suffered from one drawback—lack of knowledge. In 1917, during World War I, Raja Mahendra Pratap, an Indian revolutionary living in exile at Kabul and calling himself "The head of the provisional Government of India", sent an emissary, named Kala Singh, a member of the Ghadar Party, to Kathmandu.<sup>36</sup> He carried a letter from Bethman Hollwegg, the Chancellor of Germany, exhorting the King of Nepal to rise against the British. Mahendra Pratap, in his own letter to Chandra Shumsher, the Prime Minister, urged him to exploit the British difficulties during the war, political unrest in India, unrest among the frontier tribes and the Khilafat controversy. He warned Chandra Shumsher that the British would some day usurp Nepalese sovereignty as in the princely states of India, Egypt and Persia. He wanted Chandra Shumsher to support the Indian nationalist movement and promised him the premiership of an Independent Indian Republic of the future, besides territorial concession to Nepal. During his return from the unsuccessful mission in the guise of a cloth merchant, Kala Singh was caught by the British and later was hanged. Chandra Shumsher remained convinced of the necessity of British rule in India and offered the British Indian Government assistance to restore law and order in Afghanistan. Strict censorship on mails from India and Nepal was imposed. The critical difference between the King and Rana Prime Minister was not noticed by Indians until quite late. The Rana Government nevertheless made use of the British difficulties.

The Agreement of 1923 between the British Government of India and the Government of Nepal, reasserting the Treaty of Segauli and acknowledging the sovereignty of Nepal opened up a new phase of politics in Nepal. One of the consequences was the growth of a certain kind of communal pride in British India. Shortly after this treaty the Hindu Mahasabha was organised as a political party by V.D. Savarkar.<sup>37</sup> Savarkar advocated the

election of either the Maharaja or the Prime Minister of Nepal to the presidentship of the All-India Hindu Sabha to be held at Calcutta in 1924.<sup>38</sup> Obviously, Savarkar was less familiar than enthusiastic about Nepal's politics for he did not know that the title of Maharaja belonged to the Prime Minister, while the Nepal king was known was Maharajadhiraj.

Savarkar probably meant the king or the Prime Minister. His brother Ganesh Savarkar wrote in 1925 that the idea was to invite either the King or the Prime Minister.<sup>39</sup> The idea did not materialise because of several factors. But one D.A. Dharmachariya came out with a letter stressing the point that the Maharaja was the Prime Minister's title given by the virtue of his position, while the prime ministership was a qualification of an official post.<sup>40</sup>

Dharmachariya also objected to the address used by the Hindu Sabha Convention of Bombay for the letter written to Maharaja Sir Chandra Shumsher Rana as "Ex-Prime Minister". Thus the writer went on stressing that Sir Chandra Shumsher was still in office and had done splendid work as Prime Minister.<sup>41</sup> The role of religious activists of India in Nepal's social and political movements had already been noticed in the Arya Samaj's mission. The religious zealots could never identify the contradiction between the Maharajadhiraj and the Maharaja of Nepal. The name of Dharmachariya is also mentioned as the leader of the All-India Buddhist Movement, a socio-religious reform movement of India.<sup>42</sup>

Another name that occurs in the British records of this period was that of Swami Vishuddhananda<sup>43</sup>. He is described in the Indian police report as a disciple of Gandhi. He had close connection with the Hillmen's Association of Darjeeling. He visited Nepal, but was prevented from visiting Tibet.

The Hindu Mahasabha's persisting interest in Nepal (particularly, the Rana Prime Minister) is reflected in an important delegation sent by it to the visiting Nepalese Prime Minister, Juddha Shumsher, in January 1935 at Hyderabad House, Delhi. The delegation was headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and included Hindu Mahasabha stalwarts like Pandit Din Dayal Upadhyaya and Bhai Parmanand, besides some Hindu Mahasabha members of the Central Assembly.<sup>44</sup>

In Calcutta among the prominent non-official Indians to receive the Maharaja was Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee. But the most important point about the Hindu Mahasabha's reception to the Maharaja was the address:

"While strictly adhering to the highest ideas of Pan-Indian Nationalism this Mahasabha is seeking to bring about Hindu solidarity and Hindu well-being. In our endeavours to preserve Hindu Culture, we hope to receive Your Highness' approbation and sympathy."<sup>45</sup>

## References

1. Quoted in Mrs. V. Sharma, 'Role of Nepali Language and Literature in the Integration and Modernisation of Nepal', in *Modernisation in Nepal*, pp. 230-31.
2. See Pradhan, Kumar, *History of Nepali Literature*, p. 36.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Bhanubhakta's *Ramayana* was translated from *Adhyatma Ramayana*, a relatively unknown text varying from Valmiki's *Ramayana*, reflecting the Bhakti philosophy. See also Shah, Rishikesh, *Heroes and Builders of Nepal*, pp. 76-78.
5. V. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
6. Pradhan, Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
7. Hutt, Michael James, *Nepali, A National Language and Its Literature*, pp. 138-42.
8. Pradhan, Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
9. Pradhan, Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 36. See also Hutt, M. James, *Nepali*, pp. 138-39.
10. After forty five years of publication of *Gorkha Patra*, this monthly became a bi-weekly and, from the 59th year, a daily.
11. Hutt, M. James, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-40.
12. Chap 1, *Supra*.
13. Pradhan, Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
14. Gupta Anirudha, *Politics in Nepal*, p. 23 and Pradhan, *op. cit.* p. 76. See also Majumdar, Kanchanmoy, *Nepal and The Indian Nationalist Movement*, pp. 25-26.
15. Pradhan, Kumar, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
16. Hutt, Michael James, *Nepali*, *op. cit.* p. 139.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
18. Shogunate was a hereditary military dictatorship whereby the greatest feudal family exercised political power relegating the King to venerable obscurity. See E. Herbert Norman, *Japan's Emergence As a Modern State*, p. 11.
19. Gupta, Anirudha, *Politics in Nepal*, p. 24.
20. "Jaga Jaga Aba Jagajana Jaga,  
Jaga Anati-Vishwa Aba Jaga,  
Ghoro Nida Abato Parityaga,  
Bhorbhaya Atisuta Jana Aba Jaga".

(quoted by Kumar Pradhan *op. cit.*, p. 77)  
 Awake Awake, Now Awake People of the World  
 Awake the Whole World,  
 Leave Your Deep Slumber,  
 It is Dawn, Awake All Sleeping People Now"  
 (Translated by me)

21. *Ibid.*
22. Quoted in Mrs. V. Sharma, 'Role of Nepali language and literature in the integration and modernisation of Nepal.' (*Modernisation of Nepal*), pp. 227-34.
23. Hutt, Michael James, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-40.
24. *Ibid.*, p.171 and also Pradhan, Parashmani, *Bal Krishna Soma*, p. 1.
25. D.B. Gurung, 'Political Socialisation of the Indian Nepalese in the Early twenteeith century', *North Bengal University Review*, vol. 2, No. 1, and 2, Special Issue on the Himalaya, Dec. 1981.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Mojumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.* It appears that, in 1926, a branch of the Gorkha Association was formed in Calcutta too. The Association organised a volunteer corps to combat abduction of Nepalese women to India. ('Nepal' in Haruhiro, Fukui, ed., *Political Parties of Asia and The Pacific*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1985) vol.II, p. 802.
32. Mojumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. Mojumdar, Kanchanmoy, *op. cit.*, p. 6. and Sinha, L.P., *Left Wing in India*, p. 68.
37. Anderson and Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron*. p. 40.
38. See Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, "Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha Sanghach Tritiya Adhiveshan Ani Nepalachha Maharajanche Prastutanche Kartyaav" in *Hindu Sangathanatmak Nepali Andoloncha Upakram*.
39. See G.D. Savarkar, "The Nepal Movement" in *Hindu Sangathanatmak Nepali Andoloncha Upakram..*
40. See D.A. Dharmachariya, "Appeal to the Hindu Sabha and the Nepal Maharaja" in G.D. Savarkar, *op. cit.*

41. *Ibid.*
42. Mojumdar, Kanchannmoy, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Shaha, Rishikesh, *Modern Nepal*, vol. II, 118, and Prasad, Iswari, *The Life of Maharaja Juddha Shumsher*, p. 136.
45. Shaha, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-26.

# 3

## Background of Political Extremism in Nepal

### Imperialism and Nepal

The rise of political extremism within Nepal had two main sources : (1) internal and (2) external.

Internally, Nepal was a feudal state with an extremely backward economy and a fragmented society, Prithvinarayan Shaha and Bahadur Shaha territorially united a land mass under Gorkha military power, which was mutilated by the Anglo-Gorkha War, and gave shape to modern Nepal. No communication system could develop among the regions, no civil society could grow. The royal family was plagued by factionalism and intrigues were very often erupting into murder. Such intrigues virtually transferred power even in the nineteenth century from the monarch to the Prime Minister, Bhimsen Thapa.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1833, Brian Hodgson reported that,

The Minister had grown so great by virtue of two minorities (with but a short interval between them) and 30 years of almost uninterrupted sovereign sway that he can not now subside into subject and is determined to keep the Raja cypher, as his nonage, both with respect to power and to observance as far as possible.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Kot massacre' of 1846 merely confirmed this transfer of power from King to Prime Minister who happened to be a Rana. The earlier Prime Ministers were Pandes. This situation created an intra-caste rivalry, within the Nepalese Chhatri elite, between the Ranas, the Pandes and the Shahas.<sup>3</sup>

The second impact of this transfer of power was the growth of factionalism and intrigues within the Rana dynasty. The licentiousness of the privileged Rana dynasty often broke the caste barriers and gave birth to different grades of social status to their

offsprings. They went on advancing conflicting claims to the Rana Gaddi. Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana (1932-45) made use of the misery and confusion of the great earthquake that shook Nepal, on January 15, 1934, to revise the roll of succession and remove the 'C' class Ranas from it on March 18, 1934. They were reduced to the entitlement to only district-level offices.<sup>4</sup> Many of the 'C'-class Ranas, as a result, became disgruntled with the seat of power. *The Nepal Annual Report* indicates conflicts between Sir Bahadur Shumsher and Mohan Shumsher, head of the family of Chandra Shumsher, Juddha's elder brother and Prime Minister before 1932.<sup>5</sup> In 1937, Sir Bahadur Shumsher suggested that illness could force Juddha Shumsher to abdicate. Juddha Shumsher did abdicate in 1945, in favour of his nephew, Padma Shumsher (son of Bhim Shumsher, Juddha's predecessor).<sup>6</sup>

Externally, the British Government appears to have maintained a general interest in Nepalese political affairs during 1817 to 1842.<sup>7</sup> Its policy, towards Nepal, was initially not distinguishable from its policies with regard to other major princely states. The British Government in India was represented in Nepal by a Resident. In 1920, the British Residency was called "Legation" and the Resident was called "Minister". In 1923, a fresh treaty was concluded between Britain and Nepal confirming all treaties since 1815 and recognising Nepal as a "buffer state" different from the princely states of India.<sup>8</sup>

The Nepalese sentiments remained anti-British and there were occasional skirmishes between the Nepalese Government and the British authorities. The British became somewhat passive about the Nepalese affairs in 1842. It extended qualified support to the Prime Minister after 1846. But a firm friendship between the British and the Ranas grew only after the Maharaja sent thousands of Gorkha soldiers to quell the Indian rebellion of 1857.

But the internal contradiction of colonialism is such that, whereas its official policy supports the traditional vested interests, its nemesis springs from the wave of modernisation that it generates. The modernization came from the impact of :

- (1) The modern administration
- (2) The recruitment of thousands of Gorkha soldiers into the British army, many of whom returned to Nepal after seeing quite a bit of the modern world.

- (3) Spread of modern education and
- (4) Nepal's proximity to India which herself was in the process of modernization and, from the beginning of the twentieth century, burning with nationalist fire.

While many a Nepalese settled in India became an active participant in the Indian national movement, the dream of a democratic modern Nepal, free from British colonial dominance, was inspiring a section of the Nepalese youth, particularly the disgruntled section of the Nepalese elite.

### **The Indian National Movement and Gandhi**

Until the First World War no political activity in Nepal could be conceived of. In 1920 the Government of Nepal, however, came down heavily on the Arya Samajists led by Tulshi Meher, Chakra Bahadur and Amar Raj Joshi.<sup>9</sup> The movement suffered a temporary eclipse but the Samajists carried on their work under different guises. Krishna Prasad Koirala, father of Bisheshwar Prasad Koirala, of Biratnagar, started spreading ideas of Gandhi in his poems. Known as "Nepal's Gandhi," he was banished from Nepal. Tulsi Meher was released from prison in 1926 and started to propagate the importance of Charkha.<sup>10</sup> He was sent back to prison. Later, another group of young Nepalese was campaigning against untouchability and cruelty to animals. Their inspiration was Gandhi's idea of *ahimsa* and social equality.

But the direct impact of Gandhiji on Nepal was felt only with the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement in India in 1930. The Civil Disobedience Movement was the second all-India political agitation sponsored by the Indian National Congress against the British Raj. It came at the peak of Indian frustration with the Simon Commission Report which failed to promise India a dominion status. In 1930 Congress demanded complete independence and launched Civil Disobedience Movement. It should be noted that the young Congress leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru had been impatiently urging the Congress leadership to launch such a movement since 1929. Gandhiji had resisted their pressure in 1929 but endorsed them in 1930. It may also be noted that, in 1929, a circular was issued by the British Government warning the Provincial administrations

against "the Bolshevik menace".<sup>11</sup> In 1930, further, the Meerut Conspiracy Case was launched against the communists in India. The association of Jawaharlal Nehru with the communist movement since 1928 is a well-known phenomenon. The setting up of the 'Meerut Defence Committee' under Motilal's chairmanship is a further proof of the surcharged atmosphere in India.<sup>12</sup>

### The Kharag Bahadur Episode

On November 14, 1930, the police arrested one Kharag Bahadur Singh, a graduate, son of one Rup Singh, at Delhi Main Railway Station in connection with the murder of a Calcutta trader, Hiralal Aggarwal, who had been involved in the illicit trade in Nepalese women. On search of his luggage, however, the Criminal Investigation Department of the British Indian Government stumbled upon alarming political information. Kharag Bahadur had earlier been arrested and convicted, in June 1930, along with thirteen other Gorkhas, while proceeding by train to Dehradun for manufacturing 'contraband salt'.<sup>13</sup> They had in fact been awarded 30 months' rigorous imprisonment.

Obviously, Kharag Bahadur was an activist. His involvement with Gandhiji's salt agitation of 1930 was established. But the materials recovered from him had several implications. At the time of his arrest he was proceeding to Allahabad to take part in the programme of 'Jawahar Day' on November 16, 1930. He was carrying three trunk loads of pamphlets entitled '*The Eight Days' Interlude*' containing the speeches and statements of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru during the week he had been out of jail. These pamphlets had been printed at 'Jawahar' Press, Delhi, on behalf of the All-India Congress Committee, Allahabad, for distribution on the Jawahar Day. (Possibly he was acting as a courier of AICC).<sup>14</sup>

The other belongings of Kharag Bahadur included the following:

- (a) A cyclostyled leaflet in Gorkha language urging the Gorkhas to join the National Congress.
- (b) 4 copies of printed circular orders from the Brigadier, Dehradun, prohibiting the Gorkha sepoys and officers to

join the Congress. Kharag Bahadur also had in his possession the draft of a handbill written in his own handwriting rebutting the circular.

- (c) A list of names of 22 officers serving the 1/9 Gorkha Rifles and 5 officers serving in the depot fo 2/9 Gorkha Rifles.
- (d) A notebook and loose papers showing details of expenditure in connection with enlistment of Gorkha Volunteers for the Dehradun, Delhi and Rohtak Congress Committees.
- (e) An English draft of a scheme prepared by Kharag Bahadur about publicity, propaganda and recruitment of Gorkha Volunteers involving an expenditure of Rs. 820/- for two months.<sup>15</sup>
- (f) Some songs exciting nationalism among the Gorkha volunteers.

The correspondences obtained from Kharag Bahadur's papers revealed interesting details of the Congress contacts with the Gorkhas in India. Kharag Bahadur, assisted by Dhruva Singh and Dhanpati Singh, had been active in enlisting Gorkha volunteers for the Civil Disobedience Movement of the Congress since May 1930. The first batch of Gorkha volunteers arrived in Delhi in June, 1930.<sup>16</sup>

A letter was discovered from Kharag Bahadur's luggage that had been written by a Gorkha soldier to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stressing that the fate of different classes of Gorkhas and the domiciled Gorkhas was indissolubly bound up with the fortune of India and the Gorkhas had in their hearts a warm and sympathetic corner for the Satyagraha movement. Another letter was written from the All-India Congress Committee, Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad, dated November 2, 1930. It stated that Motilal Nehru acknowledged the receipt of Kharag Bahadur's letter to Jawaharlal Nehru,<sup>17</sup> a day after Jawaharlal was arrested. The letter was, however, read by Jawaharlal and the proposal was made to issue an authoritative statement assuring the Gorkha brethren, on behalf of the Indian National Congress, that they were an integral part of the Indian community.

However, one swallow does not make a summer. There were not many Kharag Bahadurs around. Dhana Pati Singh had infact turned an approver. His statement confirms the view that many

a Gorkha were induced by a monthly stipend of Rs.10/- to join the Civil Disobedience Movement. But undoubtedly, among the educated Nepalese settlers in India, political awareness was spreading fast.

### Tradition Versus Modernity

The Rana regime's attitude to social transformation in Nepal was split between the need for progress in keeping with British India and preservation of the traditional order. The progress in education in Nepal was inhibited by tradition, the opposition of the vested interests and religious orthodoxy, writes Prof. Majumdar.<sup>18</sup> Dev Shumsher set up a number of modern schools in the nineteenth century. They had to be closed down due to the opposition of the *Bharadars*. Chandra Shumsher pursued a moderate policy of enlightenment, but his moves were largely thwarted by the privileged Bharadars. Prof. Gupta writes that during the later phase of the Rana rule it became an article of faith with the rulers to suppress the growth of an educated intelligentsia.<sup>19</sup> Distrubed by the radicalism Chandra's successor, Juddha Shumsher, tried to use religion to bring the errant Gorkhas back to their right conduct.

In 1930 the Maharaja sent a request to the British Indian Government for posting religious representatives along with Government officers in the plains where the Gorkhas lived to fight disloyalty to British Indian and Nepal Governments and to rigorously apply caste rules that were being undermined by Gandhiji's movements.<sup>20</sup> While the Government of India officers were sympathetic, the Bengal officers did not give much credence to the letter and documents, forwarded by the Maharaja of Nepal, and thought that the information was either fictitious or motivated by consideration of local politics, particularly, the Hindus' association at Darjeeling.<sup>21</sup>

### Rise of Political Extremism

While India was churning under the Civil Disobedience Movement led by the Indian National Congress and Mahatma Gandhi, the British Legation claimed to have discovered a major conspiracy against the Maharaja. A Nepalese officer reported to C. Dances that some six men "under the influence of revolutionary

ideas prevalent in India had formed a sort of 'Congress' party with disloyal intentions."<sup>22</sup> The Legation gathered that fourteen or fifteen individuals conspired together and succeeded in securing the co-operation of one or two officers who were in a position to obtain possession of a number of revolvers and bombs from the Nepal arsenal.<sup>23</sup>

The leader of this party was "said to be a relative of the Maharajadhiraj" and there was a rumour that a plot was hatched to restore him to power. But the Maharaja obtained information and got them arrested unexpectedly at a ceremony of officers.<sup>24</sup>

Dankes was however not clear about these moves and promised to report further. The archival sources are not equipped with the subsequent report. But it appears that the reference was to the setting up of a secret society called "Prachanda Gorkha".

### **Prachanda Gorkha (1931)**

The Prachanda Gorkha was established by a group of young men like Umesh Bikram Shah, Khadga Man Singh, Maina Bahadur and Ranga Nath Sharma.<sup>25</sup>

The formation of Prachanda Gorkha in 1931 as a secret society is ascribed by the historians of modern Nepal to the impact of the revolutionary movement in India in general and Bengal in particular. According to G.P. Bhattacharjee the founders of the society formed the organisation with a view to ending the Rana rule and establishing a democracy under the King.<sup>26</sup> But the dimension of the family feud is expressed by the fact that Khadga Man Singh<sup>27</sup> belonged to a powerful minister's family and Umesh Bikram Shah was a royal collateral. The other members of the society like Maina Bahadur and Ranga Nath Sharma were said to have links with the Indian revolutionaries. They obtained bomb and revolvers from India.<sup>28</sup> It also appears that most members of this group of revolutionaries were deported.<sup>29</sup>

### **Educational Movement (1935-36)**

In 1935-36, a batch of Nepalese youth like Fatte Bahadur, Chiniyaman Lal, Rameshwar and Anandaman decided to set up a school on the model of Gandhi's Rashtriya Vidya Pith (National School) in Kathmandu.<sup>30</sup> The Mahavir School, as it was called, was established at Khimla Tole. By May-June, 1937, they had

drawn up syllabus of studies. Purna Bahadur, Tanka Vilas, Bakpati Raj Joshi, Indra Prasad Pradhan, Siddhi Charan, Suryya Bahadur Bharadwaj and others started teaching in the school. Naturally the school attracted the Maharaja's attention. The teachers of the school were arrested and some of them got life imprisonment.<sup>31</sup>

### Praja Parishad (1935)

In 1935, the Praja Parishad was established by Tanka Prasad Acharyya. Dasharath Chandra, Ramhari Sharma, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Puskar Nath Upaty, Balchandra Sharma and Chandra Mani Dongol were the other influential members of the Parishad. Dharma Bhakta Mathema was the physical instructor of the King. He also had good relations with the Ranas. His association with the founding of the Parishad and the observance of the silver jubilee of King Tribhuvan's accession to the throne (in 1911 at the age of five) by the Parishad gave rise to the suspicion that the Parishad had the blessings of the Maharaja.

The aspiration of the Parishad, however, reached wider horizons. Some of its members received support from the Nepali Sangh, an association of Nepalese students studying in Banaras.<sup>32</sup> The Parishad grew in its membership fast. It's secret organisation and outstretching influence produced a serious dilemma for it and exposed its leaders to arrest. The publicity of the Parishad followed two lines:

- (1) Starting a pamphlet war within the country for which they procured a printing press from Banaras and placed it at Kathmandu.
- (2) Publishing articles and reports in the Indian media. It appears that they were able to obtain a column in the *Janata*,<sup>33</sup> published from Patna by Ram Briksha Benipuri, a Congress Socialist.

*Janata* was of course a paper of the Congress Socialists, but Rishikesh Shaha mentions two other Hindi periodicals in India as publishing attack on the Rana regime in Nepal (1) *Naya Hindustan* and (2) *Aragamii*.<sup>34</sup>

*Nepal Annual Report 1939* (for 1938) says “ one vernacular Indian paper was writing against Maharaja for isolating the King and his sons”.<sup>35</sup> According to the Annual reports the King was taking personal interest in the abdication of Sir Juddha Shumsher and family and disliked the form of Government. The King had no power to change the formal Government.<sup>36</sup>

In the trial that followed four persons, Sukraraj, Ganga Lal, Dharma Bhakta Mathema and Dasharath Chand, were executed and a number of other activists were awarded long-term imprisonment. The Parishad’s president, Tanka Prasad Acharya, and secretary, Ramhari Sharma, could not be executed according to Nepali law as they were Brahmins.<sup>37</sup>

### Civil Rights Movement

Side by side with the Praja Parishad, in 1937, a reformist movement, under the name of Nagarik Adhikar Samiti, was launched by Pandit Sukraraj Shastri (son of Madhav Rai Joshi of Arya Samaj fame), Raja Lal, Ganga Lal, Kedar Man Singh (Byathith).<sup>38</sup>

The main personality in this movement was Pandit Sukraraj Shastri, a teacher of the state-run Trichanda College of Kathmandu. Shastri had met Mahatma Gandhi in Calcutta and had been influenced by his ideas<sup>39</sup>. When his meeting with Gandhiji was known in Nepal, he was immediately dismissed from service. But it did not stop him from propagating his message. The important point about it was that Shastri fell back to the tradition of religious discourse and *kirtan*.<sup>40</sup> His moderate tone in criticising the power elite, however, made some of his young followers impatient and exposed the move to the Ranas’ assault.

### The First Climax in Nepal

From 1938, as the *Annual Report on Nepal*, 1940 notes, “an increasing number of educated people were beginning to question the authority of the Rana family.” The criticism “started with the morals of Juddha Shumsher, extended to the Rana family and to the whole system.” Disaffection was spreading in the army, in 1940, according to the British report. The Gorkha battalion

stationed at Kohat (Baluchistan, in British India) had to be disarmed.<sup>41</sup>

A contemporary British record admits that "Sir Juddha Shumsher is a naughty old man and his way of life has left much to be desired". The same report mentions that the excessive number of legitimate and illegitimate children notwithstanding, he was an extremely wealthy man. It further observes that "although Sir Juddha is not peculiar in this respect, times had changed". He had antagonized the priesthood, the people and even the royalty.<sup>42</sup>

Three streams of movement headed together from 1935 and came to a climax in 1940: (1) The Praja Parishad, (2) The Mahavir School, (3) The Nagarik Adhikar Samiti. Then the Rana Government came down heavily on the critics.

Sukraraj Shastri met Gandhi at Calcutta and came back to Nepal only to lose his job in the Government College. Being a son of Madhav Raj Joshi, an Arya Samajist, and a Sanskrit scholar himself, persecuted by the Rana regime earlier, Sukraraj started lecturing on the 'Geeta' and other scriptures in public places. The Government suspected him to be indirectly criticizing the regime and arrested him on 26th November, 1938 for voicing demands for civil rights and social reforms.<sup>43</sup> In fact he is reported to have convened a public meeting at Kathmandu chowk in which "half" a congratulation was sent to the Prime Minister for fixing the minimum age of girls for marriage at 16 and passing no such law for men.<sup>44</sup> However, Shastri's associates like Pandit Muralidhar Bhattarai went on spreading his message in Shastri's way.

Shastri belonged to the Nagarik Adhikar Samiti, not the Praja Parishad, which was politically outspoken. The Praja Parishad formally elected Tanka Prasad Acharya as its President. In May-June 1940 leaflets condemning the Rana rule were circulated in Kathmandu by the Praja Parishad.<sup>45</sup>

In August 1940 the Praja Parishad was banned. By October 1940, about 500 persons belonging to the Praja Parishad, the Nagarik Samiti and even the Mahavir School were arrested.<sup>46</sup> Dharma Bhakta, Dasarath Chand, Ganga Lal and Sukraraj Shastri were executed. Subba Purna Narayan Pradhan, sentenced to

death, was, however, spared capital punishment. 20 imprisonments from three to eight years and four banishments from the empire were awarded. 28 teachers of Mahavir School were arrested too. Two of them, Fatte Bahadur and Chiniyaman (two brothers), were sentenced for life, two were awarded 18 years' prison sentence and one 12 years'. The rest were fined.<sup>47</sup>

It will, therefore, be wrong to claim that the 1940 upsurge was a Praja Parishad movement only. On a comparative scale, perhaps, the attack on the Nagarik Adhikar Samiti will appear more severe. Two interesting things, however, stand out. One, the turning of Bakpati Joshi into an informer, particularly in the context of the implication of the already imprisoned Sukraraj Shastri, his brother, in the case.<sup>48</sup>

Two, the effort to depict the whole episode into an anti-Rana conspiracy involving the name of the King too. In the first place, there is a mention of a "Raktapat Mandal"<sup>49</sup> (Bloodshed group), allegedly 'under the direct control and guidance of the king himself' entrusted with the task of blowing up the kings' private cinema hall where the Ranas would be invited on the Dewali night according to established practice. One Ramdas Khawas, a confidant of the king, was in charge of the operation. The others belonging to the group are said to have been Ganesh Raj Gorkhali, one Sharma and the driver and mechanic of the royal palace who was also a member of the Praja Parishad. There were attempts to personally implicate the king and he was actually interrogated.

Finally the King was exonerated, as the British officers advised the Maharaja against convicting the King at the time when the World War II was at its peak.

The *Annual Report of Nepal*, 1941, stated two probable reasons of the King being exonerated: (1) the crown prince declined the throne in the event of the King abdicating and (ii) the Ranas did not know what to do with the king if he was found to be guilty.<sup>50</sup> According to the same report the Nepal Government also suspected Major-General Mahabir Shumsher, grand son of Maharaja Bhim Shumsher, who had been exiled from the capital (Kathmandu) in the *coup d'etat* of 1934 to be the chief instigator.<sup>51</sup>

The anti-Rana agitation went under a lull for several years after 1940 as far as the internal situation of Nepal was concerned. The *Nepal Annual Report*, 1942, records the absence of anti-Rana agitation during the year 1941.<sup>52</sup> Violence in India did not affect Nepal, though some Congress activists in Bihar started escaping to Nepal.

### The Indian dimension of the Anti-Rana Conspiracy Case

The Maharaja sent to the British Indian Government a messenger to the effect that he had discovered a plot to overthrow the Rana family and set up the king of Nepal as the actual and not only the nominal ruler. He sought British assistance in tracing the Indian connection of the plot. He sent in the name of a Bombay firm (The Excelsior Finishing Products Company) to be searched in connection with the manufacture of explosives in Nepal. Subsequently he requested a close watch on some Indians as well as Nepalese settlers in British India in connection with the movement.<sup>53</sup>

Sir Olaf Caroe, Secretary, External Affairs Department, advised D.I.B. to keep a watch on the premises and individuals.<sup>54</sup> He also advised that any act prejudicial to the interest of a friendly country was actionable under the Defence of India Act.

A series of searches was conducted by the British Government in Bengal, United Provinces and Bihar in connection with the alleged plot against the Rana family in Nepal in 1940. Ten Indian socialists having connection with the *Janata* and the Nepal Praja Parishad were in the list of suspects, though none of them could be positively implicated. Of the ten three, (Suraj Narayan Singh, Mahabir Prasad Singh and Oudhesh Prasad Singh) could be traced and four were already under detention under the Defence of India Rule 26 (1).<sup>55</sup> An enquiry was made in Bombay regarding a letter from "a firm" found in the possession of one of the Nepalese arrested in Nepal, Dharam Singh.

Of the ten Indians subjected to search four persons were reported to be 'communist', two of them (Anil Mitra and Yogendra Sukul) being already in prison. It was reported by Frampton that, in 1938, Devendra Prasad Singh was in touch with B.P. Koirala, Maniram Verma was likely to be concerned in

the agitation against the Nepal Ranas. Anil Mitra was desirous of meeting a friend who was taking a leading part in the agitation against the Ranas.<sup>50</sup> Yogendra Sukul was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (H.S.R.A.). 23 names of Nepalese subjects living in India were also sent by the Maharaja. They were:

1.	Raja Lal Kanwar	Raxaul
2.	Shib Shankar Das	Mathura or Dehradun
3.	Anu Rudra ( <i>Blicue</i> )	Burma
4.	Dr. Mani Ram	Panch Ganga (U.P.)
5.	Baglunga Shwamee	Lalit Ghat, Banaras
6.	Nani Babu Jyotish alias Haim Nath	Panch Ganga, Benaras (U.P.)
7.	Udai Raj Shastri	Panch Ganga, Benaras
8.	Gopal Singh Byathith	Champaran, Bihar
9.	Seva Singh Salamee (Narapati Pal Singh)	?
10.	N. Prakash	Harrison Road, Calcutta
11.	Sahuman Kazi	Bowbazar Street, Calcutta
12.	Paga Ghose	Hazra Road, Calcutta
13.	D.P. Pradhan	103/1, Upper Chitpur Road, Calcutta
14.	Beer Bahadur Singh	Vill. Rampat, Dist. Bhagalpur
15.	B.P. Koirala	Banaras
16.	Lakshmi Bilas Upadhyaya	Student of B.H.U.
17.	Subba Adi Bhagta	Lansdowne Road, Calcutta
18.	Basuvdev Upadhyaya	(Student) Calcutta.
19.	Jagadish Chandra Ghosh	Kalimpong
20.	Batuk Raj	Meheralli (Maulali) Street, Calcutta.
21.	Bhet Narayan	Elgin Road, Calcutta.
22.	Shankar Prasad	Allahabad, U.P.
23.	Mukendra Nath	Lucknow.

The Government of India reported back that eleven of these people, that is numbers 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, and 23, were untraced. Nothing incriminating was found in the case of eight, that is, numbers 1, 4, 7, 8, 13, 15, 16 and 19 (of whom 1, 7, 8 and 16 were British subjects). No. 6 had gone to his native place and a search of his premises had produced one Khukri. Action was being taken by the Provincial Government under the Arms Act. No. 3 belonged to Burma and did not concern the Bengal Government.<sup>57</sup>

The search of the premises of No. 20 had led to the arrest of one Thakur Nath Raimal as he had in his possession a letter from the Commander-in-charge of the Southern Command, Nepal directing him to return to Nepal at once. The Bengal police thought that he might be wanted by the Nepal Raj.<sup>58</sup>

Three arrested persons evoke interest in this connection. Subba Adi Bhakta happened to be the father of Dharma Bhakta Mathema,<sup>59</sup> the Praja Parishad leader who had been executed by the Ranas. Bhet Narayan Singh was a T.B. patient and was transferred from Alipur Jail to Jabbalpur T.B. hospital. But one Santbir Lama was also arrested in Bengal in connection with this plot. He was described as a dangerous person. His name, however, had not appeared in the Maharaja's list.<sup>60</sup>

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3. Shaha, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-58.
4. Ibid pp. 158-159, Anirudha Gupta, *Politics in Nepal*, p.16. Also see Shaha, *Modern Nepal*, Vol II, p. 335.
5. *Nepal Annual Report, January 1938*, India Office Records, N.E.G. 9436.
6. Nepal Annual Report, *op. cit.* (1938).
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8. Shaha, *Modern Nepal*, Vol. II, pp. 334-35.
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10. *Ibid.*
11. Sinha, L.P. *Left Wing in India*, p.23. Sumit Sarkar has noted the unusual British panic about the 'Bolshevik menace' since November 1917. On May 5, 1918, the Bombay Governor, Willingdon described Gandhi as a 'Bolshevik', *Modern India*, pp. 177 & 249.
12. Sinha, L.P. *op. cit.* pp.234 and 239.
13. Home Political Department, File No.14/9, 1931, N.A.I.
14. Home Political Department, File No. 14/9, 1931.
15. File No. 14/9, 1931, *op. cit.*
16. File No. 14/9, 1931 *op. cit.*
17. File No. 14/9, 1931 *op. cit.*
18. Mojumdar, Kanchanmoy, *Political Relation between India and Nepal*, pp.257.
19. Gupta, Anirudha, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
20. See copy of letter no. 2 (88) C dt. 23rd July '30 from the British Envoy at the Court of Nepal to Foreign Secy, Govt. of India (Simla). Nepal Residency papers.
21. File No. 14/9, 1931 *op. cit.*
22. Home Political Department, Govt. of India, File No. 232/3/31, N.A.I.
23. File No. 232/31 *op. cit.*
24. File No. 232/31 /, *op. cit.*
25. Shaha, Rishikesh, *An Introduction to Nepal*, p.158.
26. Bhattacharjee, G.P., *India and Politics in Modern Nepal*, p. 22.

27. Khadga Man Singh was a descendant of Abhiman Singh Basnyat, who had lost his life during the 'Kot Massacre' of 1846. Khadga Man's father was a civil servant in the Rana regime and was sent to prison for 11 years on charge of misappropriation of state fund. (See Uprety, *op. cit.*, pp.59-60).
28. Home Political, File No. 232/3/1.
29. Confidential letter from British Envoy, No. F 257-X/31.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Shaha, Rishikesh, *Modern Nepal*, vol.II, p. 126.
32. Bhattacharjee, G.P. *India and Politics in Modern Nepal*, p. 24.
33. The first article appeared in June, 1938 in *Janata* and the last article appeared in 1940 revealing the plan of the Parishad to launch a Satyagraha. The Nepal Government banned the *Janata* in Nepal. The British Indian Government raided the office of *Janata* thrice at Patna before the Journal was closed down in 1940. However, a number of *Janata* copies were smuggled into Nepal. (For details see D.R. Regmi, *A Century of Family Autocracy*, pp. 173-76).
34. Shaha, Rishikesh, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
35. India Office Records, London, N.E.G. 9436.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Bhattacharjee, G.P., *India and Politics of Modern Nepal*, p. 24.
38. Sharma, Balchandra, *Nepal Ki Aitihasik Ruprekha*, p. 391.
39. File No.33/66/42, Home Deptt., Government of India, N.A.I.
40. Chauhan, R.S., *Political Development in Nepal*, pp. 19-20.
41. *Nepal Annual Report, 1940*, dated 26.4.41, I.O.R. (India Office Record) NEG 9436.
42. Sir Geoffrey Betham's letter to Sir Olaf Caroe, dated 17, August, 1939, quoted in Shaha, vol -II pp. 127-28.
43. Shaha, vol. II, p. 127-31.
44. Extract from E.A. Deptt. File No. 61 (2)-X/42 Secret: Publication in the *Durbar*, a Hindi Weekly, Delhi, Article by Pandit Nara Dev Shastri, regarding a conspiracy against the P.M. of Nepal etc. File No.33/66/42 H/Dept. N.A.I. Anirudha Gupta (*op.cit.* p. 26) reproduces a narrative of Ganeshman Singh which reveals that, while Shastri's lecture was within the limits of Gitapravachan, the younger followers like Ganga Lal, spoke in the meeting forcefully against the Ranas turning that meeting into the first political meeting in Kathmandu.
45. Shaha, *An Introduction to Nepal*, p. 161.

46. Gupta, Anirudha, *op. cit.* p. 27.
47. Shaha, *Modern Nepal*, vol. II, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-37.
48. Shaha, *op. cit.* pp. 128-29.
49. The letter of Colonel Betham, His Britannic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the court of Nepal, reported the name of one "Rajat-pat Parishad" which, along with the Praja Parishad, "put in papers various kinds of news indiscriminately." It's members had been arrested and were tried. It is not possible to connect Rajat-Pat Parishad and the Raktapat Mandal though the similarity of the names is striking.
50. *Nepal Annual Report, 1941*, India Office Library Records, London, N.E.G. 9436.
51. *Nepal Anual Report, 1941*, *op.cit.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. O.K. Caroe's note dated 20.11.40, File No. 791-X/40 (Sec.) External Affairs Department, 1940, N.A.I.
54. O.K. Caroe's note dated 26.10.40, External Affairs Department, 1940, N.A.I.
55. File No.. 791-X/40, Diary No. 212-X/41.
56. File No. 791/40, *op. cit.*
57. File No. 791-X/41, External Affairs Department, 1940, N.A.I.
58. File No. 791-X/41 *op. cit.*
59. Upreti, *op.cit.*, p-117, F.N.32.
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# 4

## The Indian Left and Nepal (Early Contacts)

### Revolutionary Terrorism

The Leftist activity in Nepal was on the whole an offshoot of the Indian nationalist movement. It derived its ideological inspiration from the Bolshevik revolution but had organisational linkage with the revolutionary movement in India. After the Kanpur Conspiracy Case and the Kakori Conspiracy Case the linkages were well established.

Financing the defence of Bhagat Singh required money that the revolutionaries decided to gather through dacoities. On the night of 7/8 June, 1929, was committed a dacoity at the house of one Banka Mahato of Maulania in Bettiah district of Bihar. The participants in the dacoity case were Jogendra Sukul, Kedarmani Sukul, Nanku Singh, Gulali Sunar, Kapil Deo Rai, Kamal Nath Tewari, Swami Parmanand and Raghunath Chamar.<sup>1</sup>

Gulali Sunar, Nanku Singh, Kapil Deo Rai and Kedarmani Sukul were arrested on the basis of confession of Monohar Banerjee, a revolutionary who had earlier been arrested. Pushpath Singh of Munger and Ramchandra Verma of Darbhanga were arrested on suspicion but could not be prosecuted. Jogendra Sukul and Swami Parmanand absconded. It was suspected that Jogendra Sukul fled to Nepal and enquiries were made by the British resident in Nepal.<sup>2</sup> Jogendra Sukul, however, was not found in Nepal.<sup>3</sup> He was later arrested in Gandhi Kutir in Malka Chowk of Saran district in Bihar. Kiran Misra writes that the involvement of B.P. Koirala, then a student of Class IX, in a Banaras school, with a terrorist group landed him and his elder brother Matrika Prasad Koirala in jail as suspects in the Maulania case.<sup>4</sup>

The Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-32 drafted a section of revolutionaries who had given up arms at the persuasion of

Gandhi. During the movement, B.P. Koirala is said to have been arrested, for the second time, in connection with the Darbhanga jute mill strike.<sup>5</sup>

In 1933, the Civil Disobedience Movement was over and the Congress Socialist Party was born within the fold of the Indian National Congress. Its main operation centre was Bihar and U.P. on the southern border of Nepal. As a result, the Congress Socialist Party became interested in Nepali politics also.

Another dimension of the Congress Socialist Party was its connection with the Communist Party of India. The Communist Party (C.P.I.) was banned immediately after its formation. Therefore, its members decided to operate within the Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.). The C.S.P. and the C.P.I.'s collaboration continued till 1940. In 1942, their relationship became extremely bitter as the C.S.P. was in the vanguard of the Quit India Movement while the C.P.I. extended its support to the British War and opposed the Quit India Movement.

The C.S.P. and the C.P.I.'s criticism of the Rana regime in Nepal was outspoken. Sajjad Zaheer, a leading communist, wrote in *Janata* of 6 July, 1939, severely criticising the Rana regime<sup>6</sup>. According to Sajjad Zaheer, it was the greatest ally of the British in Nepal, as the regime helped the British to exploit Nepali economy as well as to recruit the most loyal soldiers while the country remained in extreme poverty.<sup>6</sup> The Indians were not welcomed in Kathmandu and they were called 'Mughlianian'.<sup>7</sup> The Ranas had virtually imprisoned the king, Tribhuvan. They freely indulged in gambling, wining, promiscuity and concubinage. They got the title of 'General' and 'Colonel' even in the mother's womb.

### C.P.I. in Anti-Rana Movement

The exact relation between the C.P.I. and the anti-Rana movement can not be clearly established except through circumstantial evidences. In the first place, the C.P.I. was, informally, established after the Kanpur Conspiracy Case in 1925. It was formally established only in 1935 and it was banned after its birth and remained an illegal organisation till 1941. It could hold its first conference only in 1943. Immediately after its second congress in early February, 1948 it was again banned in West Bengal.

The first connection of the Indian Communists with Nepalese politics emerges with the Maulania dacoity case against the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (H.S.R.A.) in 1929. Two important personalities in the episode were Jogendra Sukul and Kedarmani Sukul. Jogendra Sukul evaded arrest for some time until he was arrested at Gandhi Kutir at Malka Chowk in Bihar. Interestingly, his name appears in the D.I.B.<sup>8</sup> report on the anti-Rana movement's connection in India where he was described as a communist. The fact of his arrest from Gandhi Ashram may partly explain the reason why he finally joined the Socialist Party and became a close associate of Jayaprakash Narayan.

His brother, Kedarmani Sukul, moved directly from the H.S.R.A. to the Communist Party of India. He was immediately arrested after the Maulania case and embraced communism in jail.<sup>9</sup> He fought Assembly elections in Bihar, after Independence, unsuccessfully. The third Sukul brother, Baikuntha, had been hanged for murdering a C.I.D. officer.<sup>10</sup>

The third name that emerges out of the D.I.B. report is of Anil Mitra. Anil Mitra was a communist<sup>11</sup> in the District of Monghyr in Bihar who worked in the trade union of tobacco workers. His brother, Jnan Bikas Mitra, was also a communist worker.<sup>12</sup> But his name was not mentioned in the D.I.B. report of 1940. The fourth name occurring in the 1940 file is that of Binod Bihari Mukherjee (C.P.I.). His father was an influential Congress Leader of Bihar and a minister of Srikrishna Sinha's cabinet.

The veteran Communist leader of Bihar, Indradeep Sinha, told this author that many young Nepalese, studying in Banaras, Patna and Calcutta in the thirties, embraced communism. The Communist Party of India helped the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal through advice and financial support. Sajjad Zahir, a communist leader and writer of Lucknow, possibly visited Nepal on the instruction of the Communist Party of India in the late thirties. There were several occasions when the Communists of India and Nepal in the bordering districts took shelter from each other's country. On several occasions the Nepalese communist leaders have campaigned in the election of the border district of Nepal. In the Biratnagar jute mill strike of 1947, for instance, Rajkishore Singh, a C.P.I. trade union leader of Bihar, and Manmohan Adhikari, a Nepali member of the CPI, worked hand in hand.<sup>13</sup>

### **C.S.P. as the Bridge Between Revolutionary Terrorism and the Anti-Rana Movement**

A few other names emerging out of the Maulania Dacoity Case of 1929 persist in the subsequent records of the Congress Socialist Party apart from the fold of the Communist Party of India. They are the following:

**Gulali Sunar:** The name of Gulali Sunar appears in connection with the Maulania Dacoity Case in 1929 and he was arrested in that connection. His name again appears in connection with Jayaprakash Narayan. When Jayaprakash went to Nepal from Hazaribagh jail, a meeting of the socialist leaders was held in Nepal under the leadership of Gulali Sunar.<sup>14</sup>

**Jogendra Sukul:** The name of Jogendra Sukul, as already noted, appears in 1929, 1940 and 1942. Lodged in Hazaribagh along with Jayaprakash Narayan, he escaped from jail along with J.P. and accompanied him to Nepal.

**Kamal Nath Tewari:** The third name is Kamal Nath Tewari. Tewari is said to have been in touch with some members of Nepal Praja Parishad in 1935.<sup>15</sup> Kamal Nath Tewari also was an active member of H.S.R.A.<sup>16</sup> His name appeared in the Maulania Dacoity Case. He was arrested with Gulali Sunar, Kedarmani Sukul and others.

The Indian names which appear in the 1940s' D.I.B. files on anti-Rana conspiracy case and persist through the records of the Quit India Movement are the following:

The first name is that of Suraj Narayan from U.P. His name first appeared in 1935 when an explosion took place in a village, Gandhwari, of Tirhut, on 1st July. One Asharfi Thakur died and five others were injured. All of them were arrested. One Kameshwar Jha confessed and stated that Suraj Narayan Singh,<sup>17</sup> who was a known socialist in India, had taught them to make bomb.

Suraj Narayan first went to Nepal, to arrange Jayaprakash's shelter after his escape from Hazaribagh Jail.<sup>18</sup>

Another name which appears in that file (1940) is Mahavir Prasad Singh who was a close associate of Jayaprakash and involved in the 1943 Nepal episode. He sent, through Anand

Prasad Singh, a letter to Rameshwar Prasad Singh of village Barsain. His uncle Kartik Prasad Singh and a few other socialists reached Rameshwar's house where they got food and shelter.<sup>19</sup>

Devendra Prasad Singh's name also appeared in that (1940) file as a communist. Singh was a close friend of B.P. Koirala and educated at Banaras Hindu University along with B.P. Koirala.<sup>20</sup> Devendra Prasad Singh was a founder member of the Congress Socialist Party in India, member of the Executive Committee, Bihar P.S.P., in 1957 and 1958 and elected to the Rajya Sabha in April, 1958.<sup>21</sup>

There appears to be some confusion about the political affiliation of Binod Bihari Mukherjee and Devendra Prasad Singh. The 1940 file called Singh a communist and Mukherjee a socialist. According to Indradeep Sinha the affiliations were the opposite. Mukherjee, the son of a Congress Minister of Bihar, was a communist while Singh was a socialist.

### Political Background of B.P. Koirala

The early political activities of B.P. Koirala are somewhat misty and, in the absence of corroborative evidences, one can only rely on BP's autobiography. BP's autobiography, *Apno Katha*, was published in 1953 and is totally silent on his early political life.

BP's father, Krishna Prasad Koirala, an educated Brahmin, had a successful business at Biratnagar, a foot hill town of Nepal. He could not keep himself away from politics and fell from the grace of the Ranas. His social service, including the promotion of Charkha, gave him the nickname of Nepal's Gandhi. Finally he had to flee to Banaras.<sup>22</sup>

As a school boy B.P. seems to have been involved with some radical groups of India and arrested once or twice for brief spells. He is said to have met S.A. Dange by chance during a train journey and started taking interest in Marxism. *Who is Who—Nepal* also says that he was a Communist Party member in 1931-32. Though the Communist Party of India, officially, was not formed by that time but unofficially it was formed in 1925. B.P. Koirala came in contact with the Congress Socialist Party, in Banaras, when he was a student

of B.H.U.<sup>23</sup> He became the assistant secretary of the Congress Socialist Party of Bihar during 1939-41.<sup>24</sup>

The Congress Socialist Party's connection with the Nepalese leaders like B.P. Koirala can be traced through the D.I.B. report to the External Affairs Department in 1940.<sup>25</sup> A report of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of British India, also mentioned the fact of the possession of the *Janata* by some of the Nepalese accused in the anti-Rana Conspiracy Case.<sup>26</sup>

B.P. Koirala went to Lahore to meet Prem Bhasin with a forwarding letter of Jayaprakash Narayan in 1946. Prem Bhasin, at that time, was the secretary of the C.S.P., Punjab Province, while B.P. was the student secretary of C.S.P. B.P. went to organise the students at Lahore.<sup>27</sup>

### **Impact of the Quit India Movement in Nepal**

The Quit India Movement of 1942 was not only a major step towards realization of Indian Independence but also the initiator of a new wave in Nepal politics. The movement started in August 1942. All the important Indian leaders of the Congress were arrested and the leadership was taken over by the younger elements, particularly of the Congress Socialist Party.

In North India Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia took the lead. In U.P. Acharyya Narendra Deva activated the organisation. Banaras, Patna and Calcutta emerged as the major centres of such revolutionary activities. A number of Nepalese students took part in the movement and were arrested. The reasons of their participation seem mainly to be two: (1) The closeness of Nepal to India and (2) The general sentiments against the British Raj which was responsible not only for the political oppression of India but also the Ranarchy of Nepal.

The Governments of U.P. and Bihar detained some of them in an "Anti-Rana Conspiracy" case. The Central Government took over the investigation against such persons and issued fresh detention orders. The arrested persons from Banaras were:

1. Agni Prasad Sharma alias Joshi alias Kharail, son of Brahma Lal Sharma.
2. Dilli Raman Regmi, son of Rohini Raman Regmi.

3. Shri Prasad Sharma, son of Brahma Lal Sharma
4. Bishnoo Prasad Sharma, son of Brahma Lal Sharma.

From Patna the arrested person was Bishweshar Prasad Koirala, son of Krishna Prasad Koirala of Biratnagar (Morang/Terai), whereas the four persons from Banaras belonged to the hill areas of Nepal. The purpose of their detention was preventing them from acting in a manner prejudicial to His Majesty's relations with a foreign power.<sup>28</sup>

In February, 1943, however, the Intelligence Bureau informed the Home Department of the Government of India that the four persons arrested from Banaras were not connected with the Indian National Congress.<sup>29</sup> But B.P. Koirala had been a secretary of the Congress Socialist party, Darbhanga, Bihar. He was also reported to have been acquainted with Jogendra Sukul, the Bihar H.S.R.A. leader. In a letter written by him in October 1942, to a student friend studying in Banaras, Koirala expressed the opinion that the Nepalese should "associate" themselves with the movement initiated by the Congress although he was not clear about the manner of the association. It was not, however, established that B.P. Koirala was actually involved in the conspiracy. The person may be one of his brothers, the report said. This point was under enquiry.<sup>30</sup>

The Intelligence Bureau, further reported that Agni Prasad Sharma had probably met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Purushottam Das Tandon at Allahabad, where he showed them a copy of his unpublished book 'Jagriti' which was believed to contain an attack on the Rana administration.<sup>31</sup> Dilli Raman Regmi was alleged to have been associated with unspecified Congress workers in Hardwar in June, 1942.<sup>32</sup>

It appears that the anti-Rana Conspiracy Case against B.P. Koirala was diluted, if not dropped, for, some time after the detention, the order was replaced by a fresh order of restriction on B.P. Koirala. In July 1945, the restriction was also removed with the concurrence of D.I.B.<sup>33</sup>

However, the British Indian Government extradited Agni Prasad Sharma and his two brothers, Shri Prasad and Bishnu Prasad, in reciprocation of the extradition of the Congress fugitives by Nepal.<sup>34</sup>

D.R. Regmi writes that he and his associates were released after the surrender; that is, in late August or still later.<sup>35</sup>

It is also possible to conclude that B.P. Koirala and D.R. Regmi's groups were arrested from Bihar and U.P. and were initially implicated in the anti-Rana conspiracy case. The Intelligence Department in Bihar Government convinced the Government of India that B.P. Koirala's case was different from that of D.R. Regmi and his associates. Though there are reports of some of the members of the Regmi group having contacted Congressmen, there is little evidence to suggest that Congress backed them in the anti-Rana conspiracy. The British Government acknowledged that Congress as a party did not involve itself in the Nepal agitation.<sup>36</sup>

There are two significant pieces of information emerging out of this file:

- (1) Sankar Prasad Sharma, an absconder, was reported to have contacted J.B. Kripalani, General Secretary of All-India Congress Committee, in August 1940, to publish an anti-Rana book but Kripalani refused to do so.
- (2) B.P. Koirala was acquainted with Jogendra Sukul, the Bihar H.S.R.A. leader. Jogendra Sukul was an important member of H.S.R.A. which had been formed in 1929. Sukul was a strong activist and was arrested many times for his involvement with Phanidra Nath Ghose, Chandrashekhar Azad and Manmohan Banerjee.<sup>37</sup> Later he became an associate of Jayaprakash Narayan.<sup>38</sup>

### **Revival of Nationalist Militancy in India**

Almost at the time Nepal was going through the anti-Rana Conspiracy Case, Indian politics was sensitized by a revival of militant nationalism which saw in the Second World War an opportunity to wrest Indian Independence from the troubled British Empire. Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia went out advocating this new line. Two weeks before the Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress, on March 7, 1940, Jayaprakash was arrested at Jamshedpur for an objectionable speech.<sup>39</sup> In July, the same year, Rammanohar Lohia was arrested on the same ground at Allahabad.<sup>40</sup> Although Gandhi and Nehru did not approve of J.P.'s militancy, they issued a strong statement praising his spirit.<sup>41</sup>

J.P. Narayan was in jail for nine months. After his release he was immediately arrested and detained without trial in the special camp jail at Deoli.<sup>42</sup> He carried on the fight from detention and advised his followers to build an underground organisation. When the Deoli detention camp was disbanded largely due to J.P.'s struggle, he was shifted to Hazaribagh jail from where he escaped along with five of his colleagues. He founded a guerilla camp in the Terai region of Nepal close to the border of North Bihar.

K.K. Dutta notes that Suraj Narayan Singh and Vijaya (younger sister of Achyut Patwardhan) accompanied J.P. when he was proceeding to Nepal. The site of *Azad Dasta*'s head quarters was chosen in Nepal as it was outside direct British authority. Several other Bihar revolutionaries proceeded to Nepal. One of them was Kartik Prasad Singh, a formidable revolutionary of North Bhagalpur.<sup>43</sup> He took J.P. to his relation, Rameshwar Singh, in Barsain, Nepal. His food and shelter was arranged by Rameshwar. J.P. then took his party to Bakro-ki-Tapu where Rameshwar Singh had some land and arranged their food and residence.

The first military camp was set up with 35 men and Sardar Nityanand Singh was their chief instructor.<sup>44</sup> But in the month of May, 1943, J.P. was arrested and lodged in the Hanuman Nagar Bada Hakim's jail.<sup>45</sup> He was rescued by a band of trainees under the headship of Suraj Narayan Singh and Sardar Nityanand Singh. On his way to the Northern Frontier, J.P. was again arrested on 18th September, 1943. Further repression led to the collapse of *Azad Dasta*.

Kashi Prasad Srivastava, a Nepalese historian who had himself taken part in the August Movement and was arrested by the British Indian authority, writes that in the western Terai of Nepal Shibbanlal Saksena, Bishwanath Dubey, Comrade Jamir Ali and other Indian revolutionaries set up their camp.<sup>46</sup> Though the details of the camp are not yet available it will be wrong to assume the J.P. episode in Nepal as an isolated incident involving the Indian revolutionaries in 1942. On the other hand, all these three names are associated with Indian left movement. Shibbanlal Saksena was a radical member of the Congress Party. He joined the left consolidation group<sup>47</sup> that had grown around Subhas Chandra Bose during his confrontation with Gandhi. He attended

the Ramgarh Session of the Congress Party where the Forward Bloc broke away. He remained in the Congress and was nominated by the Congress Party to the Constituent Assembly of India in 1946.<sup>48</sup> He was connected with Rafi Ahmed Kidwai's<sup>49</sup> group in 1946. In 1951 Saksena joined the Krishak Majdoor Praja Party that later joined the Praja Socialist Party.

Bishwanath Dubey was a member of the Labour Party that had been formed in 1932. The Labour Party joined the Forward Bloc and later turned into the Bolshevik Party of India. Dubey was connected with labour movement in India.<sup>50</sup>

Comrade Jamir Ali, as the title "comrade" indicates, probably belonged to the Labour Party or the Communist Party. However, no detailed information about him could be gathered. No senior socialist or communist interviewed by this author could remember him.

### **Nepalese Involvement in The Quit India Movement**

The first Nepalese connection with the Congress Socialist Movement outside the group of Nepalese students in India appears to be that of Rameshwar Singh of the village Barsain in the Terai region of Nepal. In 1940, he came in contact with Suraj Narayan Singh, the revolutionary Congress Socialist.<sup>51</sup> His cousin, Anandi Prasad Singh (Lal Babu), was also connected with Suraj Narayan by marriage.

In August, 1942, Anandi Prasad Singh, who was a resident of the Purnia district of Bihar, and his associates captured the Rupauli police station. As the police repression on the Indian revolutionaries increased, they started crossing over to Nepal from August 21/22. In November, 1942, Jayaprakash, along with Suraj Narayan Singh, Rammanohar Lohia, Jogendra Sukul and others escaped from the Hazaribagh jail and took shelter at the house of Anandi Prasad Singh, from where they moved on to the house of Rameshwar Prasad Singh. Rameshwar Singh had already given shelter to many other expatriate Congress Socialists.<sup>52</sup>

According to the reminiscences of Rameshwar Singh and his associate, Avadh Singh, Suraj Narayan first suggested to Rameshwar that Jayaprakash was finding it impossible to hide

in Bihar. He urged Rameshwar to arrange shelter for J.P. and his party.<sup>53</sup> Subsequently, J.P. and his party arrived at the house of Anandi Prasad on 3rd April 1943. A Conference of revolutionaries was organised at Banarjhola on April 11, 1943, and it was decided there that a training camp was to be set up in Nepal.

Dalbahadur Prajapati, a substantial land holder of Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, had 40 Bighas of land at 'Sakra' where Suraj Narayan had already set up a group. On the advice of Dalbahadur Prajapati a training camp was set up at Suranga hills. 18 men were chosen for the training.

For J.P., a separate place for hiding was arranged in a jungle across the Kosi river where a bamboo hut was constructed for them. Kartik Prasad Singh had already reached there. J.P., in the company of his friend, Baidynath Jha, an M.B.B.S. student of Mudhubani, reached there. On 21st May, Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Rammanohar Lohia and Baidyanath Jha were arrested by the Rana Government.<sup>54</sup>

The 1943 *Annual Report on Nepal* observes the cooperation of the Nepal Government in apprehending Congress offenders after the 1942 outrage as "sadly lacking". Only nine out of 487 Congress fugitives were arrested in Nepal.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, Rishikesh Shaha notes that only one of the 7 rescued persons was immediately arrested in India, although Nepal Government had given the Indian authorities the name of all of them.<sup>56</sup>

A peculiar information comes from the reminiscences of Rameshwar Singh that the Nepal Government had instructed the border officials not to charge custom duties on the Indian fugitives.<sup>57</sup> There can be two interpretations of this phenomenon:

- (1) That the Nepal Government was moved by humanist consideration towards the political victims,
- (2) That the Nepal Government officials were apprehensive of a transfer of power from the British to the Indians in the near future and were unwilling to face reprisals from a future Government in India. The second view was floated by the *Annual Report* itself.

However, the Government of Nepal planned to hand over the prisoners of Hanuman Nagar Jail to the British Government of India. The Hanuman Nagar Jail raid was intended to preempt that transfer. According to K.P. Srivastava, hundreds of Nepalese youth, including Sardar Nityanand Singh, Gulali Sunar, Bandhu Tharu, Vishnu Bhakta Shrestha, Rahut Marwari, Basant Lal, Krishna Dusadh, Gopi Majhi, Jaimangal Singh, Ram Dutt Koirala and Jaistha Malla Kanwara were involved in the raid.<sup>58</sup>

In British India, on the other hand, the following Nepalese were arrested in connection with the Quit India Movement: B.P. Koirala, Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, Dilli Raman Regmi, Hari Prasad Pradhan, Gopal Prasad Bhattarai. Several Nepalese students in the Indian cities like Calcutta, Patna, Lucknow and Darjeeling were also arrested. The Rana Government was only pleased<sup>59</sup> with these arrests. It requested the British Indian Government to hand over those political prisoners. But the Indian judiciary declared such transfer illegal and the Nepalese prisoners were kept in Indian jails.<sup>60</sup> In 1943 British India did not have a formal extradition treaty with Nepal. But the exchange of prisoners took place under Article 3 of 1923 Treaty between Nepal and Great Britain which provided for "close consultation and co-operation between Nepal and Great Britain through exchange of information should any serious friction and misunderstanding arise" between them and Article 4 which obliged each of the parties to "use all such measures as it may deem practicable to prevent its territories from being used for purposes inimical to the security of the other."<sup>61</sup>

The Hunuman Nagar incident embarrassed the Nepal Government. By the middle of September, 25 Nepalese were arrested by the Nepal Government for harbouring Jayaprakash Narayan and his party.

The Maharaja was reported to have personally questioned the prisoners. Two of them died in prison (Krishnabir Kamai and Abdul Mia). Rameshwar Singh, Chaturanan Singh, Jamuna Prasad Singh, Jaimangal Singh, Min Bahadur, Tarini Prasad Singh, Ramji Singh, Bishnu Bhakta, Kisan (Krishna) Dusadh and Nebu Mandal were released after about two and half years' imprisonment.<sup>62</sup> By the end of 1943, 450 Indian fugitives were expelled from Nepal.<sup>63</sup>

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## Prelude to The Nepalese Revolution

### Approaching the Cross Roads

The 1944 *Annual Report on Nepal* takes satisfaction from the fact that there was no sign of an anti-Rana movement by the end of 1944.<sup>1</sup> In 1944 the Government of Nepal celebrated, in Kathmandu, "with illumination of public building and holidays for licensed gambling as a gesture of popular rejoicing" the allied success in Africa and the defeat of Italians.<sup>2</sup>

The atmosphere was so relaxed that the *Nepal Annual Report of 1944* also reported "the sensational breach of precedent in the incognito visit of the King of Nepal to India". For the first time since 1846, on November 20, 1944, the King crossed the frontier of his country. The King visited Puri, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi and Calcutta by arrangement between the British Government of India and the Maharaja of Nepal.

In 1945 the *Nepal Annual Report* said that nothing was heard of the anti-Rana movement. When World War II was over. On July 31 and on August 20, 1945, Maharaja Juddha Shumsher wrote two letters to Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, congratulating him on the allied victory. Churchill, apparently, received the letters after losing office through the general election of 1945. But he wrote back to the Maharaja on October 13, 1945 conveying warm appreciation of the services of the Maharaja and the heroic Gorkhas in defeating the German and Japanese tyrants and aggressors.<sup>3</sup> The Gorkha contingents returned by October 1945 along with modern standard equipment.<sup>4</sup>

On November, 29, 1945, ended the benevolent despotism of Maharaja Juddha Shumsher when he abdicated, voluntarily, in favour of his nephew. Padma Shumsher was found by his critics as "the weeping Maharaja" as he had wept publicly during the handover ceremony of November 29.

He had reasons to weep besides the emotion. His treasury was exhausted.<sup>5</sup> Thousands of demobilized Gorkha soldiers had returned to Nepal having seen the world. Their expectations from a tottering *ancien régime* would normally make it's rulers nervous. The Nepalese youth was in ferment and the British Empire was cracking. The winds of change had started blowing in British India where negotiations for transfer of power had started immediately after the war and had been accentuated since the victory of the Labour Party in British elections.

In March 1946, the Cabinet Mission arrived in India and gave it's plan for a Constituent Assembly, comprising representatives from British India and the princely states for framing a constitution for a free India. Of course, the Cabinet Mission did not directly concern Nepal as Nepal was neither a princely state nor a part of British India. But everybody could see that the transfer of power in India would remove the protective shield of British power from the Rana regime. Everybody did also expect that the democratic forces that had thrived with direct and indirect assistance from Indian nationalist and radical movements would get a shot in the arms. The 1946 *Annual Report on Nepal* from G.N. Falconer, the British Ambassador in Nepal, dated 29th January 1947, noted under the heading 'Anti-Rana Movement' that there were faint rumblings, towards the end of the year, mainly from the disgruntled Nepalese living outside Nepal.

On June 9, 1946, Rana Padma Shumsher's simple coronation ceremony was held. In that ceremony Padma Shumsher announced a few gifts to the Nepalese people. In the month of September, the same year, Dr. B.S. Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha visited Nepal along with his son and his personal secretary. He had several meetings with the Maharaja. He strongly denounced the Indian National Congress programme and supported the Rana regime as the guardian of the only Hindu state of the world in a public meeting at Trichandra College in Kathmandu. On the other hand, a delegation of the All-India Gorkha League, led by it's President, Dambar Singh Gurung, reached Kathmandu on November 26, 1946. It paid a courtesy call to the Maharaja but, subsequently, in public utterances, strongly criticised the Rana regime for neglecting the Nepalese in India."

### Formation of the Nepali National Congress

The first move towards the formation of a broad-based political organisation of the Nepalese to fight the Ranashahi, after World War II, was taken by B.P. Koirala. In a statement issued, in October 1946, from Patna, B.P. Koirala called upon the Nepalese youth to form a strong organisation in India for the same purpose. Following this the Nepalese youth in Banaras, mostly students, held a small meeting and formed a new party. Thus, on October, 31, 1946, the Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Congress<sup>7</sup> was formed. The office holders of the ad-hoc Committee of this organisation were the following:

President	Devi Prasad Sapkota
Vice-President	Bal Chandra Sharma
General Secretary	K.P. Upadhyaya
Publicity Secretary :	G.P. Upadhyaya

Subsequently, on January 25-26, 1947, a larger conference of the party was held at Calcutta to formulate the aims, objectives and programme of the party. Two other organizations—the Nepali Sangh of Banaras and the Gorkha Congress of Calcutta<sup>8</sup>—joined this conference. Ganeshman Singh, the Praja Parishad leader who had escaped from Kathmandu prison on June 20, 1944, arrived at the conference.<sup>9</sup> The conference received letters of good wishes from the Congress leaders, Acharya J.B. Kripalani and Mrs. Vijay Laxmi Pandit, and the Congress Socialist leaders, Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia. Dr. Lohia is said to have personally contributed to the success of the Conference.<sup>10</sup>

The conference renamed the organisation as Nepali Rashtriya (National) Congress after the style of the Indian National Congress. The Nepali Rashtriya Congress adopted two broad objectives:

- 1) to help the people of India to achieve complete national independence without which no democratic government could be established in Nepal<sup>11</sup> and
- 2) to launch a non-violent movement in Nepal for ending the Rana rule and establishing a constitutional monarchy there.<sup>12</sup>

Two other resolutions (1) supported the cause of the Vietnamese people in their struggle against French colonialism and (2) demanded the release of the Praja Parishad leaders rotting in the Nepalese jails since 1940.<sup>13</sup>

The four resolutions underline the democratic, anti-colonial and internationalist spirits of the Nepalese revolution, which was but natural for a Third World country in the middle of the twentieth century. Because of her peculiar geography and history Nepal could not dream of democracy under the shadow of a British empire in India. The resolution on Vietnam, however, not only speaks of anti-colonialism but also bears the imprint of a left ideology. Organizationally, the conference elected an executive committee with the following office-bearers:<sup>14</sup>

1. Tanka Prasad Acharya	-	President
2. B.P. Koirala	-	Acting President
3. Bal Chandra Sharma	-	General Secretary
4. D.R. Regmi	-	Publicity Secretary
5. Gopal Prasad Upadhyaya	-	Member
6. Krishna Prasad Upadhyaya	-	Member
7. Rudra Prasad Giri	-	Member

The central office of the party was set up at Banaras.

### **The Biratnagar Jute Mill Strike**

Although the Nepali Rashtriya Congress adopted a resolution planning to undertake the Satyagraha on civil rights movement, the Biratnagar jute mill strike intervened between the resolution and its implementation. All available evidences suggest that the strike was not on the agenda of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress. Rishikesh Shaha suggests that "it was more than just a coincidence that labour strikes and political demonstration inside Nepal occurred about the same time as the Nepali delegation was taking part in the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi. The newly formed Nepali Rashtriya (National) Congress which was agitating for democratic rights in Nepal from its base in India, took advantage of the situation of unrest in the Biratnagar jute mill in the spring of 1947. The Nepali (Rana) Government was

no longer in a position to send troops quickly to the disturbed area by the Indian railways and it took a long time for the troops to be sent to Biratnagar by the long and circuitous hill route.”<sup>15</sup>

According to D.R. Regmi, the strike was launched by Manmohan Adhikari, who was a member of the Communist Party of India. The Purnea Unit of the Congress Socialist Party “also intervened on behalf of the labourers in the dispute between the Marwari management and the labour hands on the questions of wage increment”.<sup>16</sup>

It should be noted that Nepal was a very unlikely place for an organised labour movement in 1947. Virtually there was little industry in Nepal. Electricity was introduced in Kathmandu only in 1912. It was extended in 1933. In 1936 an Industrial Board was set up for Nepal. A new Nepal Company Act was passed encouraging private management and investment in industry in 1934 a Bombay-based National Mining Syndicate and Trading Company was given licence to work cobalt mines east of the Kathmandu valley. The first bank in Nepal was established in 1937. In 1947, Nepal boasted a jute mill in Biratnagar, a cotton mill at Birganj and two match factories in the two towns.<sup>17</sup> In 1947, Biratnagar had its postal links with the Indian town of Jogbani<sup>18</sup> which had another jute mill.

In fact, the Biratnagar jute mill appears to have been a subsidiary of the Jogbani jute mill, which, according to Regmi, had 50% Indian capital and wholly Indian labour population.<sup>19</sup> According to Jayaprakash Narayan, however, 80% of the jute mill workers were Indian.<sup>20</sup> This sounds more probable as, according to Shaha, Tarini Prasad Koirala, Girija Prasad Koirala, Manmohan Adhikari, Gehendra Hari Sharma and Yuvaraj Adhikari, all Nepalese leaders of the mill workers, were employees of the mill.<sup>21</sup> The strike started on March 4, 1947, on economic demands of the workers and ended on March 27, 1947, after 250 troops, sent from Kathmandu, reached Biratnagar on March 23 and unleashed brutal repression.<sup>22</sup> On March 9, B.P. Koirala, Acting President of Nepal Rashtriya Congress, and his colleagues reached Biratnagar and got involved in the strike on invitation of the said strike leaders. On March 25, B.P. Koirala, Balchandra Sharma, Gopal Prasad Bhattarai, Girija Prasad

Koirala, Manmohan Adhikari, Gehendra Hari Sharma, Tarini Prasad Koirala, Yuvaraj Adhikari<sup>23</sup> and a member of the Congress Socialist Party of India (from Purnea, Bihar) Kapil Dev Singh<sup>24</sup> were arrested. The Indians were released, after due admonition, a few days later. Manmohan Adhikari, Yuvaraj Adhikari, Girija Prasad Koirala and Tarini Prasad Koirala were detained for two and a half years as they were Nepalese subjects along with Narasingha Narayan Singh, Secretary of the Purnea District Committee of the CSP, and Vidyadhar Tripathi, another socialist from Purnea (J.P.'s file).

Immediately after these arrests the mill owners accepted most of the demands of the workers. But the strike went on for two more days under the leadership of Matrika Prasad Koirala in protest against the arrests. On March 27 B.P. Koirala's mother, two sisters and cousin's widow were arrested.<sup>25</sup> A meeting of the Working Committee, held at Calcutta, called upon the Rana Government to release the arrested persons and stop repression by April 13, 1947.<sup>26</sup> On April 9-10 a delegates' conference at Joggan endorsed the decision.

### **The Analytical Questions on the Strike**

The facts of the Jute mill strike underline the complex relationship between the Nepali National Congress and the Indian Left.

In the first place, it has to be noted that the strike was not on the N.N.C's agenda as laid down in January 1947 at Calcutta. On the face of it, it was a labour agitation on purely economic ground. Jayaprakash Narayan refers to the strike in the "two mills of Joggan".<sup>27</sup> It is possible that the labour movement was entirely conceived in India as a part of the Indian Left's strategy. It is known that, in the late forties, some of the Nepalese young men based in Calcutta were in touch with the Communist Party of India. In 1947 they were active in certain parts of Terai in organising peasants and workers' movements.<sup>28</sup>

In the second place, the question of initiatives arises. Regmi writes that the Biratnagar strike had been launched by Manmohan Adhikari, a Communist Party of India hand.<sup>29</sup> Balchandra Sharma agrees with this view. He points out that labour laws prevailing

in India did not operate in Nepal. The Nepalese mill workers were encouraged by the foundation of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress.<sup>30</sup>

In the third place, there is a question of timing of the strike. 'It was more than just a co-incidence" writes Rishikesh Shah, that "labour strike and political demonstration inside Nepal occurred about the same time as the Nepali delegation was taking part in the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi. The newly formed Nepali National Congress which was agitating for democratic rights in Nepal from its base in India took advantage of the situation of the unrest in the Biratnagar Jute Mill in the spring of 1947"<sup>31</sup>

This gives an impression of a 'conspiracy' of the N.N.C. to embarrass the Rana Government. On the other hand, if, according to our first contention, the strike is viewed as originating from the Indian labour movement, a different perspective opens up. The labour scene in India after World War II was quite volatile because of the depressionary pressure on the Indian economy and the rising communist activity since 1946, when the Interim Government had come into being under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. The Congress Party was trying to dissociate from itself the All-India Trade Union Congress or to capture its leadership through the Hindustan Majdoor Sevak Sangh (In fact, in May 1947, the Congress decided to have a separate labour organization).<sup>32</sup> This gave birth to a competitive radicalism in the Leftist labour movement of India. The Jogbani-Biratnagar strike can be seen as a part of this cauldron.

The fourth question is what role did the N.N.C. play in the strike. According to Balchandra Sharma, the strikers invited B.P. Koirala, the acting President of N.N.C. (who himself had some trade union background), to guide them in the movement.<sup>33</sup> The fifth question is why did the Rana Government react to violently to the strike and resort to repression. According to Shah the difficulties of the communication system led to the delay of the arrival of troops in Biratnagar.<sup>34</sup> According to Balchandra Sharma hopeful negotiations were going on during the peaceful continuation of the strike till March 24.<sup>35</sup> But the Nepal Government refused to allow the N.N.C. to entrench itself in the labour movement through a successful settlement of the strike. According to Saul Rose, "Strike action was unprecedented in

Nepal. Slavery had been abolished only some thirty years before—and the Government reacted strongly".<sup>36</sup>

According to J.P., violence was unleashed only after the labour leaders and the N.N.C. President demanded the reference of the dispute to arbitration.<sup>37</sup>

It is possible to construct a harmonious interpretation of all those views. The labour strike was unprecedented and totally alien to the "benevolent despotism" —which had so far allowed only loyal submissions from the common people and suppressed all kinds of protest. The proposal of arbitration was a direct challenge to the self-righteous autocracy. The Ranas must have decided to nip such challenges in the bud. It was, therefore, an over-reaction on the part of the Ranas. Logistic difficulties delayed the arrival of the troops. But when they arrived, the action was decisive.

To sum up, the Biratnagar strike had started as an economic struggle of the working class projected from India. The Indian Left had a very positive role in the initiation of the movement, but it remained confined to the framework of trade unionism. This self drawn limit of the Biratnagar struggle was obliterated by the arrogance and panic reaction of the Ranas and the labour movement joined the mainstream of the Nepalese democratic struggle.

### A Critical Negotiation

The Biratnagar strike was over on March 27, 1947. But neither were the issues settled, nor were the leaders of the strike released immediately. On April 13, 1947, the N.N.C. started the Satyagraha.<sup>38</sup> On April 24, B.P. Koirala was brought to Kathmandu. On April 30 the movement exploded into mass rallies and demonstrations at Kathmandu. On that day, Keshav Prasad Koirala, a brother of B.P. Koirala and a Government officer himself, reached Kathmandu at the invitation of Maharaja Padma Shumsher.<sup>39</sup>

According to a confidential memorandum of Keshav Prasad Koirala, the Maharaja had formulated certain reform plans and placed them for consideration of the 44 reactionary Ranas who, till the time of his arrival, had not given their opinion. Padma Shumsher, therefore, had called K.P. Koirala for securing through his office the opinion of B.P. Koirala on his reform plan.<sup>40</sup> The

Maharaja had already been warned by one of the powerful Ranas, Vijay Shumsher, that the NNC was out to hand Nepal over to an independent India.<sup>41</sup>

The Maharaja's plans were mainly two:

- (1) There would be a Council of 28 members, 14 of whom to be elected and 14 nominated, to advise the Maharaja on matters of administration except the army and finance.
- (2) He had requested Pandit Nehru for an adviser to suggest reforms.

According to K.P. Koirala, B.P. rejected the first plan outright. On the second plan B.P. wanted a public commitment from the Maharaja that the advice given by the Indian expert would be implemented *in toto* and without delay. The NNC would, of course, accept them.

B.P. Koirala endorsed the following suggestions of his brother on the strike.

- (1) Increase in the wages of the workers by 15%.
- (2) Union to be recognized.
- (3) Impartial enquiry to be instituted in the firing and proper compensation to be paid.
- (4) No victimization of the strikers to take place.
- (5) All persons arrested in connection with the strike to be immediately and unconditionally released.<sup>42</sup>

### **Conflicting Accounts of the Repression**

In his letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, dated 9th May, 1947, Jayaprakash reported that "a large number of arrests had been made, three women were shot dead and peaceful processions were regularly lathi charged. B.P. Koirala (a friend of mine), his mother and two sisters were among them".<sup>43</sup>

In the official accounts of the March incidents there is no mention of killing<sup>44</sup> though there is an admission of firing with a view to dispersing the workers' procession. The Nepal Government denied the allegation of killing and the torture of women. Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited the area and enquired into the matter.

According to Nehru, Rajendra Prasad "could not find any substantial proof".<sup>45</sup> In his letter, of 9th May, 1947, J.P. had called the Nepalese rulers "polished liars" and had alleged that the Nepalese authorities had removed the dead bodies to suppress evidence.

Even if one does not agree with J.P.'s description of the Nepalese authorities, one is flabbergasted by the double-talk of the men in power. When B.P. Koirala was brought to Kathmandu, the Maharaja Padma Shumsher informed him: "You have been brought here to help me as you did not come earlier listening to my messages sent through several persons". Maharaja Padma put the blame for fabricating the charge of "treachery against the King and the country" against B.P. Koirala on the reactionary Ranas, particularly the number 2 of Nepal, the Commander-in-Chief, Mohan Shumsher.<sup>46</sup>

When Suryaprasad Upadhyaya asked Maharaja Padma Shumsher under what charge B.P. was arrested and "brought to Nepal when he was pleading for Government arbitration",<sup>47</sup> the Maharaja fell silent. Then he said that his intentions were never to arrest B.P. Koirala or "anybody else". But that he was overpowered by Mohan Shumsher and Babar Shumsher (No.3 of Nepal).<sup>48</sup>

On 19th May, 1947 was made the confidential report that B.P. Koirala and his five comrades "have been treated well". They were given all kinds of personal comforts, kept unfettered and without handcuffs, in a private bungalow, given good food, books and newspapers and medical treatment and were even allowed to walk around the garden.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, even though the N.N.C called off the Satyagraha on 2nd June, 1947, B.P. Koirala and a few of his close comrades were released only in August 1947, and that too on health ground, as a result of intercession of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Satyagraha—1947**

The N.N.C. resolution on 10th April, 1947 raised the following demands:

1. grant of civil liberties

2. release of all political leaders<sup>51</sup>
3. end of Ranashahi<sup>52</sup>

The Civil Disobedience Movement started on 13th April, 1947, as individual satyagrahas. On 30th April, the agitation took the form of rallies and processions, defying prohibitory orders in Kathmandu.<sup>53</sup> On that day a big procession proceeded to Bishal Nagar, the palace of the Maharaja, raising the slogan "*Marna Mitana Tayyar Chalua*" (ready to die). Suddenly, Nara Shumsher Rana with military forces appeared before the procession like a hungry lion. Tanka Vilas, Pushpalal, Shambhu Ram, Tilak Raj Shahi were beaten with the rifles of Narabahadur Rana. One Gaja Sundar was completely ceased by one ear.<sup>54</sup> Among the Satyagrahis on that day a few were women. They were Sahana Devi (wife of Pushpalal), Snehalata Devi, Sadhana Devi etc. Altogether 27 persons were arrested. It is also a surprising fact that two of them were of Rana status.

On 3rd May, 1947, Satyagraha was launched by a sixteen year old girl, Priyadarshan.<sup>55</sup> She had just been awarded her Matriculation degree from the Darbar High School. When Priyadarshan, with other participants, proceeded to Bishalnagar, she with four others were arrested.<sup>56</sup>

On 6th May 1947, a big procession (in which thousands of people participated) proceeded to Bishalnagar. They were with lathis and spears. However, 25 were arrested and taken to the commander-in-chief's palace where they were asked to stop the Satyagraha on the basis of the fulfilment of their demands by the Maharaja.<sup>57</sup>

When the Satyagrahis were returning from the Commander-in-Chief's palace, they met B.P. Koirala along with his five comrades waiting outside the palace of the Maharaja. Tanka Vilas and Tilak Raj Shahi informed Koirala that Maharaja had promised them civil liberties within a few days and asked them to withdraw the Satyagraha. Suddenly they were arrested and put into prison with nail and fetters under the false charge of attempting to rescue B.P. Koirala.<sup>58</sup> The Maharaja was probably kept in the dark.<sup>59</sup> However, the Maharaja finally proclaimed the grant of civil rights on Friday 16th May 1947. The Satyagraha was withdrawn on June 2, 1947.

### **An Analysis of the Satyagraha**

A number of features are revealed by the Satyagraha. First, as D.R. Regmi notes, several Praja Parishad members had been active underground since 1941. Four of them, Tanka Vilas, Amir Bahadur, Tilak Raj Shahi and Pushpalal organised the procession of 30th April and were arrested.<sup>60</sup> Pushpalal also happened to be the brother of Ganga Lal, a martyr of 1940.<sup>61</sup>

Secondly, there was participation of at least five women in the agitation. For the first time in Nepal's history<sup>62</sup> the middle class women came out on the street in protest against the regime. The procession of 3rd May was, in fact, led by a sixteen-year old girl.<sup>63</sup>

Thirdly, three interesting names appear in the reports of the agitation (1) Prem Bahadur Kansakar who had first returned to Kathmandu after completing his study at Patna, as the "main person behind the political activities in Kathmandu valey".<sup>64</sup> (2) Tilak Raj Shahi (C-Class Rana), nephew of General Duman Shamsher and grandson of Sher Shumsher.<sup>65</sup> (3) Nara Bikram, Rana, son of Colonel Dambar Bikram Rana (A-Class Rana).<sup>66</sup>

The Satyagraha, therefore, shows a distinct widening of the base of democratic movement in Nepal. Three different streams appear to have merged into the Satyagraha. One was the indigenous Praja Parishad with ever widening participation. The second was the India-affiliated leftist and democratic Nepalese like B.P. Koirala and Manmohan Adhikari who had increased the speed of the movement by their participation in the Biratnagar strike. The third group was made up of India-based Nepalese students, spread from Banaras to Patna, who had, in fact, begun laying the organisational foundation of the movement in October 1946 (Devi Prasad Sapkota to Prem Bahadur Kansakar).

### **Sir Padma Shumsher's Dilemma**

The Rana Government of Nepal had its own dilemma. Eyebrows were raised, as early as February 1, 1935, when Maharaja Juddha Shumsher attended an unofficial function organised by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, at Talkatora Garden, New Delhi, in his honour.<sup>67</sup> Malviya's personal interest in the

Nepal Maharaja could perhaps be explained partly by his religious interest and the Maharaja's patronage to Banaras Hindu University. But there were other personalities such as Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Ansari and Bhulabhai Desai. This reception was, of course, held long before the Praja Parishad agitation in Nepal. Yet it shows a desire on the part of Maharaja to make a distinction between the Congress movement in India and the democratic movement in Nepal. In other words, whereas an authoritarian Prime Minister like Juddha Shumsher could not tolerate any challenge within Nepal, he would not mind exchanging pleasantries with enemies of the British empire outside Nepal.<sup>68</sup> Rishikesh Shaha has the following explanation:- "In attending this function Maharaja Juddha made a departure from the traditional policy of the Maharaja Prime Ministers of Nepal of having nothing to do with Indian politicians in opposition to the British Government. Juddha's attitude towards the Congress leaders might also have slightly changed in view of the fact that they were likely to come into power in most of the provinces after the constitutional reforms envisaged by the Government of India Act 1935 were implemented."<sup>69</sup>

Maharaja Padma, therefore, was not the first Prime Minister of Nepal who gave the impression of riding two horses at a time. Padma Shumsher, in 1946, sent Surya Prasad Upadhyaya to Mahatama Gandhi. Upadhyaya, on behalf of Padma Shumsher, presented Gandhi with a Kashmiri shawl.<sup>70</sup> In 1947, Padma Shumsher helped Haraprasad Joshi and Kedarman Byathit escape to India and join the N.C. as his cousins were pressing him for their arrest.<sup>71</sup>

Padma Shumsher even gives the impression of not knowing his mind while dealing with B.P. Koirala during the Satyagraha. As Upadhyaya notes, on May 19, 1947 "no charge has been framed against B.P. Koirala. The camp of the Ranas is divided as to the nature of the charge to be framed against him". When B.P. Koirala was brought to Kathmandu the Maharaja's "first word" to him, through Captain Maskay, was, "you have been brought here to help me as you did not come earlier listening to my messages sent through several persons".<sup>72</sup> This appears plausible for B.P. could have been picked up at Biratnagar if the intention was only to remove B.P. and his family from the volatile situation in Biratnagar. B.P. seems to have appreciated Padma's dilemma too.

In any case, Padma communicated to B.P., through his brother Keshav Prasad, the following proposals on reform:<sup>73</sup>

1. Budget to be declared
2. A council of 28 members to be appointed, 14 of whom would be nominated by him from among the people of Kathmandu—all officials—14 others from hillside and Terai—all zamindars. The council to advise him in the nation-building activities, administration of the country and drafting of laws. Its powers would be advisory.
3. The P.M. to have veto power.
4. The administrative system to remain unchanged.
5. A personal nominee of Jawaharlal Nehru—a constitutional expert whose service had been requested by the P.M. through the Indian civilian, G.S. Bajpaei—to advise on reforms.

B.P. Koirala turned down all the proposals but insisted on the grant of elementary civil rights for the present.

### **Jawaharlal Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan's interaction**

The Satyagraha movement led by the N.N.C. on the whole got a positive response in Nepal. The direct involvement of B.P. Koirala (who was a friend of J.P.) made the movement active. The support of the socialist leaders made the movement partially successful.

The Government of India's passivity regarding the jute mill strike and Satyagrahis' arrest made J.P. unhappy and, when J.P., Dr. Lohia and Devendra Prasad Singh expected the Indian Government's support, Jawaharlal Nehru did not respond. When J.P. wrote a letter to Jawaharlal regarding the strikers' arrest, Jawaharlal did not reply to J.P.'s letter. But Jawaharlal intervened in Nepal politics on what J.P. considered to be the wrong side.

On 5th May, 1947, Nehru wrote two letters regarding the Satyagraha, one for J.P. Narayan and the other for Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. He wrote to J.P.: "The other day in the course of our talk, I mentioned Nepal. I felt then that this was not the right time for any kind of Satyagraha to be offered there". In the last

part of his letter Nehru wrote "I suggest Satyagraha should be withdrawn; otherwise it will come in conflict with some of our activities in regard to Nepal".<sup>74</sup>

In reply to Nehru's letter J.P. angrily wrote "when I sent a messenger to New Delhi to meet you and the Nepalese Consul General, neither you nor the Nepalese Government could do anything. You were not even able to reply to my letter".<sup>75</sup> J.P. demanded the unconditional release of the workers who were arrested in connection with the strike.

In the letter of May 9, J.P. alleged that women protesters had been arrested by the Rana Government and three had been killed. J.P. further alleged that these dead bodies had been removed by the Rana authorities to falsify the case.

The letter from Jawaharlal Nehru, dated 13th May, 1947, stated that he had sent Rajendra Babu to enquire about the killing and torture of the arrested persons but the latter did not get any particular evidence.<sup>76</sup>

The next point that was mentioned in that letter was that, as a foreign country, India could not interfere in Nepal's politics. For, then, it would be an international problem. Nehru requested J.P. not to interfere in Nepal's politics.

J.P.'s letter dated 17th May 1947 to Nehru made an important point. J.P. stressed that the Indian Government's help was necessary for the Nepalese movement. Nehru was reminded by J.P. how the establishment of the revolutionary government in Russia, without the help of Switzerland and other progressive countries, could never have been successful. Lenin had prepared the base of his party in a foreign country. J.P. Narayan hoped that India should help the N.N.C. leaders and maintain the liberal tradition of her own freedom movement.<sup>77</sup>

### **Nehru, J.P. and Lohia**

Jawaharlal Nehru's correspondence with J.P. reveals a dilemma of a freedom fighter turned into a ruler. Whereas his heart would have sympathised with the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, as the head of the Interim Government of British India, he could not but feel uncomfortable at the thought that the Indian soil be used as the base of operation of a revolutionary movement in its

neighbourhood and Indian leaders, supposed to be enjoying his affection, being incitors of the movement. It is also not clear as to what impression Dr. Rajendra Prasad had brought back from Biratnagar. Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Jayaprakash Narayan represented two poles of the Congress movement in Bihar. A note on "Essential points for the present" prepared by Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, a trusted aide of Maharaja Padma Shumsher, dated May 17, 1947, points out that in Kathmandu "everyone was given to understand that Dr. Lohia and Dr. R. Prasad had accepted contentions of the Nepal Government that the mill workers resorted to violence first and that they apologised for misunderstanding." Surya Prasad Upadhyaya hoped "that the contrary fact must have gone to the head of the people of Nepal after forceful statement by Dr. Lohia". There is, however, no statement available from Rajendra Prasad on this episode.

The entry of the Congress Socialist Party in Nepal was caused by the push-factor rather than the pull-factor. Until 1943 there is no evidence of the C.S.P.'s direct interest in Nepal's politics although it is possible to argue that the C.S.P. had anticipated a role for its Nepalese recruits in the future democratic movement in Nepal. The entire correspondence of Jayaprakash Narayan with Jawaharlal Nehru presents him as the spokesman of militant Indian nationalism. He acknowledges his debt to the Nepalese activists for support to the Indian national movement. He argues with Jawaharlal Nehru on the question of the Biratnagar jute mill strike on the ground that the jute mill had Indians constituting 80% of its workers. (In fact, the jute mill was owned by Indians). He denies any role in the decision of the N.N.C. on the Satyagraha and cites the fact that all the persons arrested in connection of the Satyagraha were Nepalese.<sup>76</sup> Though he eminently justifies the Satyagraha movement, he sees it as an extension of the jute mill strike. The two conditions he set for his intervention in the Satyagraha are: (1) Release of all arrested persons and (2) reference of the labour dispute to impartial arbitration according to standard practices of labour relation. Thus Jayaprakash takes a "politically correct" position. At the same time he argues with Nehru on the point of the Nepalese agitators' right to shelter in India. For, Nehru, inspite of his revolutionary past, was heading a Government in 1947, he could afford to extend his sympathy for the democratic movement in Nepal but could not be actively in it.

That active involvement is perceived in Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. It may be noted that Lohia was a degree more revolutionary than Jayaprakash. A Marwari from Rajasthan, Lohia operated in Bihar and U.P. His interest in Nepal was more than that of a sympathetic observer. Lohia entered Nepal in 1942 close on the heels of Jayaprakash. According to Rameshwar Singh, on May 15, 1942 Lohia had a briefing from Rameshwar on the history and politics of Nepal. And then he formulated his line on Nepalese revolution. Lohia told Rameshwar that the 'Praja Parishad' did not represent the strength of the people. It had been born out of the conflict between the King and the Prime Minister. Even if the Rana lost the fight, the Nepalese people would not get democracy. Only the Rana's authority would pass to the king. Therefore, the Praja Parishad should be regarded as a palace coup. Rana Jung Bahadur Shumsher had captured power by killing 70 of his relatives. Before that Pandey had removed Bahadur Shah and the Thapa's had replaced the Pandey's clan. Such intrigues had taken place since the Hindu period in India. Lohia saw history in terms of the people and not the royal dynasty.<sup>79</sup>

In the subsequent period, while J.P. retained his general interest about democracy in Nepal, Lohia showed more active interest in Nepal politics. In 1947 he took active interest in the formation of the Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Congress in Calcutta. There is, however, a confusion about the presence of Dr. Lohia at the Calcutta conference. Lohia's own notes on Nepal claim that the Nepal National Congress was "inaugurated" by Dr. Lohia himself.<sup>80</sup> Other accounts of the Conference show Lohia as absent because of his preoccupation with the Goa problem.<sup>81</sup> There is no doubt, however, about Lohia's presence at the Jogbani Conference on April 10, 1947 where the decision to start Satyagraha with the Nepalese volunteers was taken.<sup>82</sup> It may be noted here that a copy of the Jogbani resolution was sent to J.P. Narayan by the President of N.N.C., Calcutta branch.<sup>83</sup>

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75. A letter from J.P. to Nehru, dated 9th May, 1947, J.P.'s file, p. 4.
76. A letter from Nehru to J.P. dated 13th May, 1948. J.P.'s file. It is possible that the evidences at the possession of J.P. about strike and the Satyagraha were mixed up. It is unlikely that woman workers would be killed in Biratnagar and evidences totally suppressed.
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# 6

## Padma Shumsher's Reform and Its Failure

According to the confidential report of Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, Padma Shumsher was aware of his own weakness and wanted external help. He invited Surya Prasad Upadhyaya to Nepal soon after he became the Prime Minister. But Upadhyaya refused to go to Nepal unless the Prime Minister promised that he would introduce reforms in Nepal.<sup>1</sup>

Upadhyaya went to Nepal in March 1946, after getting fourteen telegrams from the Nepal Prime Minister. He was requested by the Maharaja to meet Jawaharlal Nehru and he met Jawaharlal Nehru on 1st July 1946, at Lucknow<sup>2</sup>. Upadhyaya writes "He gave me some suggestions which I sent to P.M. So was with Dr. Rajendra Prasad".<sup>3</sup> But the P.M. did nothing.

In November, Upadhyaya again went to Nepal and found that the Ranas were divided on the question of reform.<sup>4</sup> A section of educated young Ranas took the side of Maharaja Padma Shumsher and the King also declared his support to introducing reforms. But the Prime Minister did not move.

Upadhyaya also contacted some young Ranas who "openly declared against the existing system." One of the educated young Ranas, General Brahma Shumsher, went to India to meet Jayaprakash Narayan. As J.P. was then in Bombay. General Brahma met Jawaharlal Nehru on October 2, 1946 and promised Nehru that he would work for introducing reforms in Nepal.<sup>5</sup> After his return he pressed the Prime Minister for reforms but observed that "the P.M. is too weak, that he should give up believing that he can go against reactionaries" (Rana).<sup>6</sup> According to Upadhyaya, the Prime Minister was thinking of declaring to the people that he could not introduce reforms and he was resigning because he sensed the danger of being shot or exiled by the reactionaries.<sup>7</sup>

### Nepal at the Asian Relations Conference

For the first time in Nepal's history, Nepalese delegates took part in an international conference—the Asian Relations Conference—in Delhi, March-April 1947.<sup>8</sup> The Conference was organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs and was attended by participants from 28 countries.<sup>9</sup> The Nepali delegates were Sardar Narendra Mani Dikshit, Professor Ratna Bahadur Bisht, Principal Rudraraj Pande, Surja Prasad Upadhyaya, all led by Major-General Bijoy Shumsher. There were three observers: Major General Subarna Shumsher, Lieutenant-Colonel Khadga Narasingh Rana and Sardar Gunja Man Singh.<sup>10</sup>

According to Upadhyaya's note, he was requested by the Maharaja to attend the Conference as a Nepali delegate, but, after consulting Bisweshar Prasad Koirala, he joined the Conference as a distinguished guest. But when he heard about the Biratnagar strike he thought "that the Ranas might have come with preparation and sinister motives, I wanted to watch from within".<sup>11</sup> He talked with the Maharaja and then went there as a delegate. He met Gandhiji on the Nepal PM's request.<sup>12</sup>

When the Nepali delegates were busying themselves in public relation with the Indian leaders, Upadhyaya contacted Nehru, Patel and Rajendra Prasad and requested them to support the reforms.<sup>13</sup> Upadhyaya was satisfied that the Indian leaders did it. In the pursuit of his goal he was helped by Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, Upadhyaya was very unhappy. He writes "By giving funds to the Asian Conference, to the Malviya Memorial through Jawaharlalji and personal presents from Maharaja to Panditji, Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sarojini Naidu, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mrs. Pandit and Sardar Baldev Singh and by exploiting their worries about the Gorkha troops, the Ranas wanted to secure themselves against people's movement in Nepal."<sup>15</sup> Upadhyaya reports that "Sardar Baldev Singh, Sarojini Naidu and, lately, Girija Sankar Bajpaie have been the mouthpiece of the Ranas. Sardar Baldev Singh, Defence Minister of India, had further assured the Ranas that he would keep Panditji within limit and not allow him to embarrass the Ranas siding with the people's movement in Nepal."<sup>16</sup>

Maharaja Padma Shumsher made a public statement on 16th May, 1947 which contained the decisions:<sup>17</sup>

- i) to set up a reform committee and invite an eminent constitutional lawyer to advise on constitutional reforms suitable to Nepal.
- ii) to set up elected municipalities and district boards of different towns and districts in the capital and other places.
- iii) to set up an independent judiciary outside the control of the executive.
- iv) to open seven schools in the capital. Girls schools would also be opened in the country.
- v) to publish the national budget annually.
- vi) to appoint consuls in different places like India and Burma, where necessary, to protect the Nepalese subjects.<sup>18</sup>

However, he announced that "these matters would take six months to one year to materialise."<sup>19</sup> On May 28, 1947, the Reforms Committee started functioning with General Bahadur Shumsher as its Chairman. On the 2nd of June N.N.C. withdrew its agitation and, on 11 June, 1947, election was held to the Kathmandu municipality. The franchise was restricted. There were ten nominated members in the council and there were twenty one members elected from twenty one wards and belonging to three 'functional classes':<sup>20</sup>

a.	The Business Community	7
b.	The Scholastic Professions	7
c.	Other Occupations	7

Anirudha Gupta notes that, inspite of official control, some independents and sympathisers of Nepali Rashtriya Congress were elected to the Kathmandu Municipality<sup>21</sup> and it held its first conference on May 28 at Kathmandu.<sup>22</sup>

In July 1947, the students of the Sanskrit Collegiate School started a movement called "Jayatu Sanskritam". They staged a strike demanding higher pay for their teachers, better facility for them in the hostel and the modernisation of the curriculum by including subjects like history, economy and other social sciences. The "Jayatu Sanskritam" movement was called off on Padma Shumsher's assurance that the demand would be fulfilled.<sup>23</sup> After the movement

was suspended Mohan Shumsher, Commander-in-Chief, came down heavily upon the students and some of them were forced to leave the hostel as well as Kathmandu. Some important leaders of this movement, like Rajeshwar Debkota, Shri Bhadra Khanel, Kashi Nath Gautam and Gokarna Raj Shastri had to flee to India. They also joined the Nepali Congress there.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, a team of advisors, viz, Shri Prakash, a personal friend of Jawaharlal Nehru and a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, Ram Ugra Singh, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Lucknow University, and a member of U.P. Legislative Council and Raghunath Singh, arrived at Kathmandu on 13th June, 1947. The team, with the collaboration of the Rana representatives and Maharaja Padma Shumsher, prepared a draft constitution for Nepal. They handed it over to Rana Padma Shumsher and returned to India on 26th July 1947.<sup>25</sup>

In the month of July, when Bahadur Shumsher, a Pro-Padma Rana, resigned from his post of presidentship of the Reforms Committee, the Maharaja felt very insecure. After the resignation of Bahadur Shumsher, his son, Nara Shumsher also resigned from his post of Director-General of Police.<sup>26</sup> Padma Shumsher, however, before his abdication, promulgated the Government of Nepal Act, 2004 V.S. (1948 A.D.) on January 26, 1948.<sup>27</sup> in the name of the King and himself.

It was the first written constitution in Nepal's history which assured the Nepalese people of a moderately democratic set-up through fundamental rights.

After announcing the new constitution Rana Padma Shumsher left Kathmandu on February 21, 1948 and went to Ranchi and settled there. His letter of resignation reached Kathmandu by 30th April, 1948.<sup>28</sup>

### **Split in the Nepali Rashtriya Congress**

It is possible that Rana Mohan Shumsher, who captured the Prime Minister's office, was indirectly encouraged by a split of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress shortly after the withdrawal of Satyagraha. The reason of the split was not ideological but factional.

After the arrest and during the detention of B.P. Koirala, his brother, M.P. Koirala, took up the reins of the party as its acting

President.<sup>29</sup> Ganesh Man Singh, a Praja Parishad member, opposed the elevation of a member of the Koirala family to the post once held by B.P. Koirala.<sup>30</sup> So, at the delegate's conference held at Banaras in July 1947, D.R. Regmi was elected as acting president. After his return from jail, B.P. Koirala claimed the post of acting chairman back. D.R. Regmi refused to oblige B.P. Koirala and the Party split.<sup>31</sup>

Both the factions expelled each other and the name "Nepali Congress" continued to be used by both the factions for about three years. Consequently, the financial support of Subarna Shumsher, a 'C'-class Rana, based in Calcutta, was withdrawn. B.P. Koirala was accused of being agent of the Congress Socialist Party of India and not of Nepalese nationalism.<sup>32</sup>

### The Turning of the Tide in Nepal

Shortly after Padma Shumsher left Kathmandu for Ranchi on February 21, 1948,<sup>33</sup> Mohan Shumsher, the No.2 and the leader of the reactionary Ranas, moved into the official residence of the Prime Minister. He sent some senior officers to Ranchi to bring the resignation letter of Rana Padma Shumsher.<sup>34</sup> The resignation reached Kathmandu by 30th April, 1948.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Mohan Shumsher took over formally and banned the Nepali Rashtriya Congress in the same month.<sup>36</sup> A few days earlier the N.N.C. had offered co-operation on the reforms on two conditions:<sup>37</sup>

- i) immediate release of all political prisoners, and
- ii) unequivocal declaration of full civil freedom.

Actually the reform was promulgated on January 26, 1948, as the Government of Nepal Act 2004, V.S. (A.D. 1948). It came into force on 14th April, 1948 (the new year's day of 2005 V.S.). Mohan Shumsher proclaimed the ban a day earlier.<sup>38</sup>

Mohan Shumsher's government came down heavily on the Nepali National Congress. Many important political leaders were exiled and their property attached. Many other were detained without trial while fresh arrests were made. *Aj* (a periodical from Banaras) *Sansar* (Banaras), *National Herald* (Lucknow) and *Yugabani* (a Nepali weekly of NNC) were banned inside Nepal.<sup>39</sup>

However, according to Shaha, in his speech as the Maharaja Prime Minister on 13th April 1948, Mohan Shumsher did not completely back out from his predecessor's commitment to the people. While addressing a gathering in the grounds of his official residence he made a reference to the recently promulgated constitutional reforms and expressed his Government's intention to implement them smoothly with the goodwill of the people.<sup>40</sup>

A "smooth" constitutional reform, to the exclusion of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, can be viewed as nothing but a cruel joke. Balchandra Sharma, the NNC Secretary, described the new scheme of reforms as a big fraud. The PM's authority remained intact. Elections were reduced to a farce. Under the new scheme official candidates would be set up on whom general opinion would be taken.

Rishikesh Shaha writes:- "Both Mohan Shumsher who became Prime Minister at the age of 63, and his younger brother Bahadur Shumsher, 61, whom he promoted to the rank of Minister and Commander-in-Chief on 3 July 1948,<sup>41</sup> were completely lacking in the political vision needed to cope with the challenges of the time. They were unable to realise the significance of the new forces of nationalism, anti-imperialism and communism that were already at war in the post-war period."<sup>42</sup>

### **Regrouping of the Democratic Forces**

When, on April 2-4, 1948, the Nepali National Congress working committee gave a conditional support to Padma Shumsher's reform plan, it probably had an apprehension about the immediate political future of Nepal as Mohan Shumsher's reactionary character was well known. The working committee, therefore, decided to seek to fulfil their aspirations through non-violent mass politics in the event of the reforms being not implemented.<sup>43</sup> After 14th April most of the NNC leaders were exiled. They started regrouping their forces in India.

Subarna Shumsher and Mahabir Shumsher, two rich 'C'-class Ranas living in Calcutta, blessed the formation of another organisation in Calcutta in August 1948, Nepal Prajatantrik (Democratic) Congress.<sup>44</sup> Its composition appears to be a little

aristocratic. Mahendra Bikram Shaha, son of Colonel Raja Birendra Bahadur Shaha, of Jumla, became its Secretary-General. Rishikeh Shaha, also a member of the Nepal aristocracy, teaching in Trichandra College, Kathmandu, was a founder member. Surya Prasad Upadhyaya who had acted as a via media between Padma Shumsher and B.P. Koirala joined them. The party "looked to Soumendra Nath Tagore, the leader of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India, for inspiration and guidance."<sup>45</sup>

Though the Nepal Democratic Congress accused B.P. Koirala and his party, as well as the Socialist Party of India, of splitting the Nepalese democratic movement, it shared with the NNC the goal of establishment of a responsible government in Nepal under a constitutional monarchy.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, the Nepal Democratic Congress advocated violence for realising its aims.

It may be noted here that there was political violence in the air in 1948. Under a programme of the Cominform, revolutionary activities in several parts of Asia, including India, were spreading. Not only did the Communist Party of India adopt this programme, several smaller parties like the R.C.P.I.<sup>47</sup> and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India followed the policy.

A third political group came into existence in Kathmandu in September 1948—Nepal Praja Panchayat.<sup>48</sup> It adopted the most moderate tone and offered full co-operation to the implementation of the 1948 Constitution. By the same token they demanded the immediate implementation of the constitution. They began open air meetings and popular demonstrations in the Kathmandu Valley towns. The names of the founders of this Party—Tripubar Singh, Gopal Prasad Raimal and Bijoy Bahadur Malla—appear for the first time in the Nepalese political history except for the fact that Gopal Prasad Raimal had been arrested in 1947 in connection with the agitation for the abolition of untouchability in Nepal.<sup>49</sup>

There could be two explanations of this third force: (i) It was an humble, grassroots movement originating out of a Gandhian tradition long in existence in the Nepalese politics, (ii) It could be an extension of Nepali Rashtriya Congress that was operating mainly from India.

Of course both these explanations simultaneously could hold good. For we find B.P. Koirala travelling incognito from India to Kathmandu in 1948 to establish contact with the party.

This brief picture of the regrouping of the political forces in the Nepalese democratic movement, thus, presents two major organisational foci: (1) The Nepali Rashtriya Congress (a divided house in itself) and (iii) Nepal Prajatantrik Congress.

There was a bit of competition between the two groups. As we have noted, Koirala was accused of being the agent of the Socialist Party of India. The Koirala group, in turn, accused the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress of being the "Generals' Party" with a "self-made central authority from which all directions for action would flow", with the common members only following instructions.<sup>50</sup> About D.R. Regmi, Koirala alleged that he had no following. But Koirala was not averse to accommodating him.<sup>51</sup>

Rishikesh Shaha claims to have persuaded Jiv Raj Sharma, one of the founder members of the Nepal Praja Parishad, to join the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress and sent him to India. Another long-time political worker, Shanker Prasad Sharma, joined him and the two started looking after the official organ of the Party, *Nepal Pukar*, which was published from Patna with Babul Muktan as its editor, before being banned by the Nepal Government.

According to Shaha, further, the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress was in touch with some of the Nepali Communists in India like Ratna Lal Bahun<sup>52</sup> (Ratan Lal Brahman), a communist leader of Darjeeling. After Surya Prasad Upadhyaya became the secretary general of the Party, it began to turn to the Indian National Congress leaders like Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Keshav Dev Malaviya for advice and guidance.<sup>53</sup>

However, there was not much success of the Democratic Congress. In April 1949 negotiations were started for uniting the two factions of NNC and N.D.C.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, Mahendra Bikram Shah was adventurous enough to set up a cell of some Nepali officers who had served the Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra Bose for organising armed revolution in Nepal.<sup>55</sup>

### Koirala's Arrest

In the middle of April, 1948 Koirala's assessment was that the Nepali National Congress was the most popular organisation in Nepal, "though inside Nepal it has not been able to do much work after the last Satyagraha movement. It has confined itself so long to propaganda work, with its base in India. It publishes pamphlets, turns out a weekly and runs an organisational chain of offices on the border and inside Nepal too. It holds public meetings on the Indian side and secret meetings of members on the Nepal side."<sup>56</sup>

According to Koirala, the N.N.C. was handicapped by the following factors:

1. Deterioration in the condition of Kashmir and Hyderabad. The Government of India felt obliged to the Rana Government of Nepal as they had lent ten battalions of Nepalese army to India.
2. Internal Dissension in the N.N.C. with D.R. Regmi trying to play honest broker between Koirala and Nepali Prajatantrik Congress.
3. Financial difficulties with the withdrawal of financial support by the generals.

Koirala's arrival in Kathmandu, one assumes, was aimed at broadening the base of the functioning of the N.N.C., for there was no situation that would favour another mass movement immediately. In a way, his arrest on December 13, 1948, along with his two associates, K.P. Bhattarai and Kedarmal Byathit, gave him the opportunity.

The news of his arrest was immediately circulated.<sup>57</sup> The inhuman treatment meted out to him and his colleagues was widely publicised. B.P. started hunger strike on 1st May (*Akshay Tritiya*)<sup>58</sup> 1949, in protest against the arrest and inhuman treatment.<sup>59</sup>

B.P.'s statement of 15th March, from the dungeon that was Nepalese prison, created a political opinion strongly favouring the unity of the different political groups engaged in the democratic movement in Nepal.<sup>60</sup>

### Aftermath of B.P.'s Arrest

B.P. Koirala was arrested at Kathmandu on two charges: (i) defiance of the order of exile, and (ii) instigation of political agitation.<sup>61</sup> On March 1-3, 1949, the Nepali National Congress held its third annual session at Darbhanga taking crucial decisions towards unity and renewal of agitation. The conference set up a 'council of action'. The council met at Raxaul, Bihar, and submitted an ultimatum to the Nepalese Prime Minister in the form of a letter, from the N.N.C. President, M.P. Koirala. The time limit was May 21, 1949, failing which the N.N.C. would organise a fresh agitation from 1st June 1949.<sup>62</sup>

As if coinciding with the N.N.C. programme, a letter from B.P. Koirala (undated) arrived at Raxaul in early March 1949. This letter did not bear any address but was intended to be handed over to Ganeshman Singh who was not at Raxaul. At the time of the arrival of the letter, a Banaras Hindu University student, Iswar Baral, who received the courier of the letter, copied it and sent it to Devendra Singh. This letter gave a frightening description of the condition of the jail in which B.P. was detained in an inhuman state.<sup>63</sup>

It is possible that the timing of the letter had a correspondence with the annual general conference of the Socialist Party at Patna on May 6-10-1949. In any case, the Socialist Party Conference passed a resolution expressing its solidarity with the people of Nepal and the N.N.C. in their struggle for representative government, civil rights and social well-being. "Not only as a part of Asia but more so as a neighbour whose history, economy, hills and river systems and traditional memories are interwoven with those of India, Nepal must necessarily rouse the deepest attention of the Indian people and that of the people of Nepal". The conference noted with indignation and sorrow the continuation of the oligarchic and hierarchical political system that did not allow the people to assemble and organise, controlled their thought, made the running of primary schools or holding of mass prayers a criminal offence, did nothing to improve their agriculture, industry, education and health or to lift the many burdens of rent and taxes and stop forcible procurement of farm produce at cheap price.<sup>64</sup>

On April 13, 1949, all over India "Nepal Day" was celebrated by the Indian socialists. In East Punjab seven socialist workers were arrested on that day while observing the "Nepal Day".<sup>65</sup> Sometime during this period, Jayaprakash Narayan sent a telephonic message<sup>66</sup> to the Nepalese Prime Minister protesting against the arrest of B.P. Koirala and his colleagues and the inhuman condition in which they were kept. J.P. stressed the fact that the charges against B.P. Koirala and his colleagues were of political nature. Therefore, they should be treated as political prisoners. J.P. asked the Maharaja to immediately accept the demand of political prisoners, "The Indian people can not brook the tyranny in Nepal or Indonesia or anywhere else.... You should take a lesson from end of British tyranny in India," said Jayaprakash.<sup>67</sup>

On May 1, 1949 started B.P. Koirala's historic fast for three weeks. The duration of the hunger strike was calculated keeping in view the date of the ultimatum of the N.N.C., that is, May 21, 1949.

In the midst of widespread anxiety over Koirala's detention and fast came the rumour of B.P.'s death as B.P. was in poor health. Jayaprakash immediately sent a telegram to Nehru asking him to enquire about the rumour.<sup>68</sup> The Patna newspaper, *Searchlight*, dated 17th May, 1949, carried an editorial expressing great concern and indignation: "Should the report prove true that Mr. B.P. Koirala has died in a Nepal jail as the result of his fast unto death, there will be no restraining the tidal wave of indignation that will sweep the country and will surely submerge the petty principality. Lovingly described as a kind of Nehru by his people who idolise him, this young leader commands the 'argest and most powerful of the political parties in the state struggling for freedom and enjoying the widest measure of support from the advanced political parties of India. In fact the Nepalese struggle for freedom is only a logical and inevitable offshoot of our own major struggle which has reached a successful conclusion. If we have succeeded, so the Nepalis must. This business we must see through even if all the wings of the Ranas are to fall on the grass."<sup>69</sup>

On May 21, the last day of the ultimatum of N.N.C. passed off. No announcement was made by the Maharaja Prime Minister.

In the last week of May 1949, the Socialist Party of India, under the leadership of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, observed 'Nepal Day' all over India. B.P. Koirala continued his hunger strike. On May 25, 1949,<sup>70</sup> Lohia organised a demonstration in front of the Nepalese Embassy, on the Barakhamba Road in New Delhi. As the procession reached the front of the Sapru House, the police stopped it and made a mild lathi charge. Lohia, along with 50 of his colleagues, were arrested, brought to the Parliament Street police station, and then shifted to the Delhi Jail. Some of the demonstrators who were arrested were Prem Bhasin, Rajendra Sachchar, Som Prakash Shaida, Onkar Sharma, Padam Singh, Chand Saksena, S.K. Saksena, and Romesh Dutt Tewari.<sup>71</sup>

The report of B.P.'s fast-failing health disturbed many Indians and Jawaharlal Nehru was persuaded to press Mohan Shamsher for the release of Koirala and concession of reforms. On May 28, 1949, B.P. was released with an assurance of reforms from Mohan Shamsher.<sup>72</sup>

There was no sign of reforms, however. On the other hand, the arrest and the hunger strike raised the status of B.P. Koirala to the level of a national hero. The Nepali Democratic Congress realised the new situation and decided to merge with the N.N.C. which now came to be completely dominated by B.P. Koirala.

The clouds that had gathered around the B.P. episode dispersed after the release. The agitation was called off. But a new alignment started in preparation of the final assault on the Rana power.

### **B.P. Koirala—A critical assessment**

A somewhat critical view of B.P. Koirala's political role, during the Satyagraha in 1949, is available from two letters written by the veteran Praja Parishad leader, Tanka Prasad Acharya, who had been in jail since 1940, one written to Jayaprakash Narayan and the other to B.P. Koirala in November 1949.<sup>73</sup> According to Acharya, B.P. had given up his fast without consulting his colleagues who had undertaken fast at the behest of B.P. Koirala. Infact, Koirala met Mohan Shumsher immediately before his release. There was a hint in the letter that Koirala had bought his freedom by sacrificing his colleagues.

There was a dark hint that Koirala had come to Kathmandu when he had heard of the forthcoming Satyagraha by the Praja Panchayat. Koirala wanted either to win the movement over to his side in his factional conflict with D.R. Regmi's group or to sabotage the movement.<sup>74</sup>

Acharya even challenged the socialist credential of B.P. Koirala who was reported to have said that socialism was not applicable to Nepal. Acharya, on the other hand, argued in the letter that, like the Central Asian Republics Nepal could also make a short-cut to socialism.

But the most important thing in Acharya's letter to J.P. was the claim that "Praja Parishad" was a socialist party. Acharya did not know J.P. or any other Indian socialist in 1936 when the Party was born. Acharya had to introduce himself to J.P. in his letter.<sup>75</sup>

### **Formation of Nepali Congress**

The move for the merger of Koirala's N.N.C. and Shumsher's Nepal Prajatantri Congress was initiated by B.P. Koirala through a statement issued in India, early in 1950. There was a meeting at Patna between the two groups.<sup>76</sup> On March 27, M.P. Koirala, President of N.N.C., and Mahendra Bikram Shah, President of Nepal Prajatantri Congress, issued a joint press statement emphasizing the need for the merger.<sup>77</sup> A joint conference of delegates of the two parties was held at the Tiger Cinema in Calcutta, on April 9, 1950, to formalise the union of the two groups into a new party—The Nepali Congress. The Nepali Congress adopted the flag and the mouthpiece, *Nepal Pukar*, of the Nepal Prajatantri Congress and elected M.P. Koirala of N.N.C. as its president.<sup>78</sup>

In September, 1950, the Nepali Congress held a conference at Bairgania, a border town of Bihar, and adopted a revolutionary programme of armed struggle against the Rana autocracy.<sup>79</sup> The programme of the new party included the demand of fundamental rights, democratic system of government, economic welfare and immediate intensification of the struggle. According to Rishikesh Shaha, the revolutionary plan of the Nepali Congress was to abduct king Tribhuvan Bikram Shaha and take him to western

Nepal, probably to Palpa, and set up a parallel Government under him. This move was to be followed by a revolt of the disaffected section of the Nepalese army against the Rana regime. It was planned to abduct the king during the weak-long 'Indra Jatra' festival in September.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Communist Party of Nepal**

It was a part of the understanding between the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India in the thirties that the Communist Party would not set up its unit in Bihar.<sup>81</sup> It was Jayaprakash Narayan's first romance with Marxism that marked the C.S.P. politics in the thirties. On the other hand, most of the communist workers were active participants in the 1942 Quit India Movement in Bihar as Congress Socialists. A few such Quit India activists who had joined the Communist Party were Bhogendra Jha, Indradeep Sinha and Manmohan Adhikari. The last mentioned activist was a Nepali who had ancestral property at Biratnagar (Jogbani) Darbhanga and was a student of Banaras Hindu University. He was not extradited to Nepal or formally implicated in the anti-Rana conspiracy case.<sup>82</sup>

Manmohan Adhikari, after two and half years of his imprisonment in the British Indian jail, became a member the Communist Party of India which had by now parted company with the C.S.P. He became the Secretary of the Town Cell Committee of Darbhanga while Bhogendra Jha was the District Secretary of Darbhanga.<sup>83</sup> In 1947, he seems to have been working in the Biratnagar Jute mill and was the main organiser of the 1947 Jute mill strike.<sup>84</sup> Of course, the leadership of the strike was later handed over to the Nepali National Congress.

Manmohan Adhikari was arrested in connection with this strike along with his comrades and jailed for two and half years. Adhikari, was, perhaps, still in jail when, on April 22, 1949, five Nepalese activists met some leaders of the Communist Party of India at a house of an Indian Communist at Shyambazar, Calcutta.<sup>85</sup>

The Communist Party of Nepal, thus, sprang from the same anti-imperialist tradition as the Nepali Congress had. In a way

Manmohan Adhikari was the counterpart of B.P. Koirala because his political initiations took place on the India side. Both of them were participants in the Quit India Movement too.<sup>86</sup>

Two other leading personalities—Pushpalal Shrestha and Tulsilal Amatya—had been involved in the democratic movement within Nepal. Pushpalal was a brother of the martyr Gangalal Shrestha and was a leading figure in the Satyagraha Movement of 1947.

Tulsilal Amatya was arrested in August 1947 at Patan while leading a procession for celebrating the Indian Independence, along with Tulsi Mehar Shrestha, the famous Gandhian who had popularised Charkha in Nepal. Amatya and Mehar were released after six months, by the order of the departing Prime Minister, Padma Shumsher.<sup>87</sup> In 1948 Amatya organised the Praja Panchyat alongwith others (some four hundred members). The Nepalese members present there were Pushpalal Shreshtha, a 1947 Satyagraha activist, Narabahadur Karmacharya, Narayan Bilas Joshi, Nirajan Govind Baidya and Durga Devi.<sup>88</sup> A central organising committee, consisting of Manmohan Adhikari, Tulsilal Amatya, D.P. Adhikari, Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya, Hikmat Singh Bhandari and a representative of the Communist Party of India, Ayodhya Singh, was set up under the leadership of Pushpalal Shreshtha, at the first conference of the Communist Party of Nepal held from September 27 to October 2, 1949. Meanwhile, on September 15, 1949, the manifesto of the Communist Party of Nepal was released. In 1951 Pushpalal Shrestha was replaced by Manmohan Adhikari as the Secretary-General of C.P.N.<sup>89</sup> Members were arrested in connection with the movement for implementation of Padma's reforms. After the movement subsided, Amatya went down to Raxaul and joined the N.N.C. He visited Gandhi Ashram at Wardha. Amatya fell out with the N.N.C. leadership when he prepared a draft programme stressing land reform and tried to organise the working class in Nepal. So he went to Calcutta and came in touch with Pushpalal who brought him into the communist movement.<sup>90</sup>

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38. For details see Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-35.
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44. Shaha, *op. cit.*, 205. The party was, subsequently, in April 1949, reorganised with Mahendra Bikram Shaha as its President and Surya Prasad Upadhyaya as Secretary-General. The office was shifted to Patna.
45. *Ibid.*
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85. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 239.
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87. Biodata of Tulsilal Amatya, personally supplied.
88. Shaha, Rishikesh, *op. cit.*, p.239. Also see Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.200. There is a slight discrepancy between the narrations of Shaha and Gupta. In Gupta's account the date of the first meeting was September 15, 1949 and the woman participant was Durga Devi instead of Moti Devi. The CPN regards September 15, 1949 as its foundation day.
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## Resort to Arms

### The International Dimensions of the Democratic Movement

There was a dilemma in the Indian Left's approach to the democratic movement in Nepal. The Communists, of course, did not recognise international boundary in their basic ideological position. On the other hand, the nationalist left, that is to say, the C.S.P. and their likes, refused to treat Nepal as a foreign country. Even in the letters of Jayaprakash the revolutionary cause gets precedence over international conventions. The editorial of the *Searchlight*, Patna, dated 17th May, 1949, reflects the dilemma clearly.

If, before the Satyagraha is launched on June 1, the people's demands are not considered, the Government of India should act energetically and take measures which will have a resounding effect on even the impenetrable recesses of the mountain kingdom. Surely, if they have time for Malaya, Indonesia and Burma, they can at least spare a thought for our helpless neighbours of Nepal....

"Cutting out all bombast and pretension, the frank fact remains that the status of Nepal should be no better and no worse than that of Hyderabad or Mysore. That is nature's decree and India's opinion. It should merge in our Union on the same terms as the states have done.... Either the Satyagraha succeeds or the Government of India will put a peaceful end to the intolerable tyranny that has lasted long enough and must no longer live.<sup>1</sup>

The *Searchlight* editorial cited, with approval, J.P. Narayan's recent statement that "If the people of Nepal are not able to establish their own democratic rule, there is even danger of other foreign powers filling the vacuum".<sup>2</sup>

The reference was, obviously, to the way some of the reluctant princely states like Hyderabad and Junagarh had been made to

join the Indian Union under the dual pressure of internal political movements and external military intervention/operation. For China was yet absent in Tibet. But Nepal was neither Hyderabad nor Mysore. The British had never exercised their *paramountcy* over Nepal in the past. The dilemma had its effect on the Government of India's policy towards Nepal. On March 17, 1950, Nehru told the Indian Parliament:

We have, accordingly, advised the Government of Nepal, in all earnestness, to bring themselves into line with democratic forces that are stirring in the world today. Not to do so is not only wrong but also unwise from the point of view of what is happening in the world today.<sup>3</sup>

Among the foreign powers, of course, the British retained their interest in Nepal's affairs through their acting Ambassador, John Falcon, and the U.S.A. was taking interest in Nepal's affairs. But something unexpected happened when, in October, 1949, China made an assault on Tibet and, subsequently, took it over.

### J.P. and the Nepalese Revolution

Shortly before Mohan Shumsher's state visit to India to offer all military help and secure corresponding advantage from Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan wrote a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, on January 31, 1950, urging Nehru to press for the release of Tanka Prasad Acharya, Kharag Prasad and 100 other political prisoners languishing in jail. The first two had, in fact, spent about ten years in jail. J.P. commended Tanka Prasad's selflessness.<sup>4</sup>

In the same letter J.P. warned Jawaharlal Nehru of the new trend of political consciousness among the people of Nepal. The Nepalese were turning to communism. They were becoming anti-Indian and their eyes were towards China and Tibet for deliverance. J.P. sarcastically commented:

The Nepalese people have lost faith upon the Indian Government, they are looking for China's help. I hope, China's communists will not move by the same scruples as your Government do and in the C.P.N. they have a

readymade fifth column, they will supply it with necessary tools.

Jayaprakash, further, advised Nehru that his Government could save the situation in two ways:-

- (1) By exerting political and economic pressure on the Rana Government and
- (2) By rendering all possible help to the Nepalese leaders who were fighting for their freedom.<sup>5</sup>

The emergence of China as a communist power on the northern border of Nepal created a third factor in the Nepalese politics. Both Jayaprakash and Mohan Shumsher played upon it.

Jayaprakash is reputed to have brought the Red Flag first to Bihar.<sup>6</sup> He was also instrumental in the forging of the alliance between the C.S.P. and the C.P.I. in the thirties. But in 1942 C.S.P.-C.P.I. relations became extremely hostile and Jayaprakash became suspicious of communist expansion.<sup>7</sup>

Mohan Shumsher promised full support to the Indian Government against China. In 1950, ironically, Nehru did not share the same hostility towards China with Mohan Shumsher and Jayaprakash Narayan. He politely advised Mohan Shumsher to democratise the country.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Mohan Shumsher's visit to Delhi led, ultimately, to the signing of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship on July 30, 1950,<sup>9</sup> assuring Nepal of freedom and sovereignty. Two letters, written by the Prime Ministers of the two countries, which remained secret for ten years, assured each other of mutual support in case of foreign invasion.<sup>10</sup>

### **Towards Revolution**

By the time the Treaty was signed, the relations of the Governments of Nepal and India had already soured. According to Girilal Jain this souring was due to the refusal of Mohan Shumsher to consider even the very moderate suggestions of the Government of India towards democratic reform of Nepal.<sup>11</sup> In July, 1950, Rammanohar Lohia, Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee of the Socialist Party of India, observed in his report to the Party's eighth National Conference at Madras:

Tyranny of a small clique in Nepal has caused a vacuum and, unless its people are actively helped to self-rule, Atlantic or Soviet powers would inevitably rush in. The Socialist Party has striven to help the people of Nepal to fill up the vacuum with their own power of a self-rule movement. The Indian Government must give up its policy of doing nothing until the milk is spilt and then of crying over it".<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, the Rana Government of Nepal introduced a set of superficial reforms within Nepal. The Rana Government claimed to have activated the Local Self-Government structure. A Parliament was convened on September 22, 1950. Mohan Shumsher also declared that he had co-opted two elected members of the Parliament to the Council of Ministers in accordance with Padma Shumsher's Constitution. (Shaha calls the Councils of Ministers 'non-existent').<sup>13</sup>

On September 26-27, 1950, the Nepali Congress at its Bairgania Conference decided to launch a liberation campaign in Nepal.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, on September 24, 1950, some persons were arrested on the allegation of bringing arms to Nepal and conspiring against the Rana Government. The arrested persons included Dilman Singh of Nepali Congress, Ganeshman Singh of Praja Parishad, Sundar Raj Chalise and his wife Sushila (not only prominent workers of Nepali Congress but also connected with the ex-Commanding General, Hiranya Shumsher), Colonel Toran Shumsher Rana, Captain Pratap Bikram Shaha and Captain Mohan Bikram Shaha, all active army officers, and some retired army officers like Colonel Mohan Bikram Shaha. Some of the arrested officers were connected with Generals Hiranya Shumsher and Subarna Shumsher.<sup>15</sup>

The arrests strongly suggested the King's connections with the latest move against the Ranas. The King's movement outside the palace was restricted by the Ranas. He is believed to have refused to sign the order of capital punishment on the detainees advised by the Ranas.<sup>16</sup> The Ranas are also believed to have been planning to despatch the King and the Crown Prince to Gorkha and put the five-year old grandson of King Tribhuvan on the royal throne. It was in this situation of high tension that the King managed, on November 6, 1950, to slip into the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu

and then to India. The country was left wide open for the final confrontation between the Ranas and the revolutionaries.<sup>17</sup>

On November 7, 1950, the Ranas put the four-year old second grandson of King Tribhuvan, Gyanendra, on the throne. Tribhuvan, naturally, refused to abdicate and the Government of India refused to recognise the new Government. On November 11, 1950, the King reached New Delhi. On November 10, 11 and 12 unauthorised private planes from India (allegedly hired by Subarna Shumsher) dropped Nepali Congress leaflets in Kathmandu valley, Birganj and several places between them.<sup>18</sup> On November 12, 1950 a revolutionary Government was formed at Birganj.<sup>19</sup> On December 6, 1950, Pandit Nehru delivered a speech in the Parliament of India:

As the House knows, the King of Nepal is, at the present moment, in Delhi along with two other members of the Nepalese Government.... Needless to say, we pointed out to the ministers who have come here that we desire, above all, a strong progressive and independent Nepal.... I should like to add that we are convinced that a return to the old order will not bring peace and stability to Nepal.

We have tried to advise Nepal to act in a manner so as to prevent any major upheaval. We have tried to find a way, a middle way if you like, which will ensure the progress of Nepal and the introduction of or some advance towards democracy in Nepal. We have searched for a way which would at the same time avoid the total uprooting of the ancient order.<sup>20</sup>

Subsequently, in a speech broadcast on January 24, 1951, Nehru further said "The settlement in Nepal is a statesman-like act on the part of all concerned. It marks the beginning of new era in the history of our sister country".<sup>21</sup>

#### **B.P. Koirala, Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan**

At the beginning of the revolution B.P. Koirala had met Jawaharlal Nehru for assistance. Nehru, apparently, behaved rudely with Koirala. Koirala reported this to Jayaprakash and Jayaprakash wrote a hard-hitting letter to Nehru:-

So this is how you wish to treat a democratic revolution in a neighbouring state: Koirala is doing for his country, as you did for yours, and you speak of putting him in bars and fetters.... One by one you are denying your noble ideas. You are compromising, you are yielding, you are estranging your friends and stepping into the parlour of your enemies.... But, for heaven's sake, do not let Nepal's freedom be assassinated by your hesitations.... You have all the trump cards—the King and the revolutionaries on your side.<sup>22</sup>

On November 20, 1950 Nehru wrote back to Jayaprakash taking offence to the tone of his letters. J.P. replied on December 8, 1950 expressing regret but defending Koirala and his colleagues. He reminded Nehru that the Nepali revolutionary leaders had been living in India for years and treated India as their home.

I do not think Bisweswar committed a crime by hoping that the Government of India would so far deviate from the path of rectitude as to render unofficially the kind of help he sought from it. I am sure, in his position, I would have not only asked the Indian Government to give me that help, but I also would have that Government responsible for upholding reaction and defeating progress if it denied me that help. You have no doubt to take into consideration world opinion and such other matters. Personally, I feel we do more harm to ourselves than otherwise by first taking tentative steps in a certain direction and then retreating in confusion by fear of world opinion,<sup>23</sup> J.P. wrote. Though the correspondence does not specify the kind of help that B.P. Koirala had asked for, it seems that Koirala was interested in getting either arms from the Government of India directly or facility for landing of arms on Indian soil after they were brought from abroad, which Nehru could not possibly give.

According to Bhola Chatterjee, an associate of Jayaprakash, Lohia and Koirala and a participant of the 1950 revolution in Nepal, Jayaprakash and Lohia were initially opposed to the use of violence. They dropped their objection "only when they were confronted with the choice between passivity and doing nothing and an armed struggle".<sup>24</sup> The Nepalese were assured of all co-operation by the socialist leaders.

### The C.S.P.'s strategy in the 1950's Revolution

The C.S.P. generally decided to activate the party units in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and instructed them to co-operate with the Nepali Congress. Lohia suggested to B.P. Koirala, the following steps:

- (1) The arms left over during World War II and the Muslim League engineered riots since 1946 and being kept secretly by people in various parts of the country should be collected.
- (2) A number of selected socialists should not only help in the collection of arms but also should be actively associated with the building of the organisation of the armed struggle. Some of the veterans of 1942 and anti-Razakar movement in Hyderabad were to be contacted.<sup>25</sup>

The Hyderabad episode has an important place in this narrative of the Nepalese revolution. Not only as a model but also as a material source of arms for the Nepalese revolution. According to Chatterjee, "in 1948 considerable quantities of arms had been supplied to the socialists in their fight against the armed mercenaries of the Nizam. I have participated in that struggle, the principal architects of which were Lohia, Jayaprakash, Mahadev Singh and Aruna Asaf Ali".<sup>26</sup>

Inspite of Jayaprakash's assistance, however, there was not much success in the collection of arms. The other channel of the planned arms collection was Subarna Shumsher who operated at Calcutta.<sup>27</sup> One suspects that Shumsher was looking for arms and ammunition left over after the communal riots in Bengal and Bihar. His success was also very limited.<sup>28</sup>

Chatterjee notes further: "The arms that had been procured (at Biratnagar) were a poor sight, a few automatic pistols, about 3 or 4 revolvers, half a dozen sten guns and Lee Enfield rifles. Although there was no lack of volunteers they had but little acquaintance with weapons. One saving grace was there, however. The Biratnagar unit of Nepali Congress had been able to recruit some of those Nepalese who had served in the police and armed forces under the British in India. No doubt, these men would be quite useful, provided they could be put through a process of political indoctrination".<sup>29</sup>

The other source of arms could be the foreign countries like Burma where there was a socialist government. But the matter was delicate and needed the consent of Subarna Shumsher who was in charge of the party's action wing. Jayaprakash wrote a letter to U. Ba Swe, Burmese socialist leader, introducing Bhola Chatterjee who went there for procuring arms.

### **Gathering Arms**

According to Bhola Chatterjee, before his journey to Burma, in a meeting between Koirala, Subarna Shumsher and him "it was decided that, in the event of the Burma Socialist Party agreeing to help us, matters concerning the mode of transport and the place of delivery of arms should be left at its discretion. The Nepalese leaders would make discreet attempt to gauge Delhi's reaction toward this, without confiding anything in particular".<sup>30</sup>

Bhola Chatterjee, along with Thirbhom Malla, a nephew of Subarna Shumsher and a successful cadet of the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, reached Rangoon on August 10, 1950.<sup>31</sup> They had to wait for some time to meet U. Ba Swe and his colleagues in the Burma Socialist Party. But the arms could be arranged after a rather long waiting. The Burmese side agreed to make a gift of the required number of Bren guns and Sten guns declining an offer of payment. But they could not bear the responsibility of transportion.

Burma, itself, was in turmoil since the murder of Aung San in July, 1947. The communists and a section of tribal population were in revolt in Burma. U. Ba Swe was leading the Burmese Socialist Party in his struggle against the imperialist forces on the one hand and communist adventurism on the other. The agreement of the Burmese Socialist Party to supply arms to the Nepali Congress in this situation spoke eloquently of its internationalist socialist zeal.

Bhola Chatterjee returned to India to report to B.P. and Shumsher and to make arrangements for the transport of arms as the struggle "could not be launched before arms were received from Burma".<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile "it was planned that sabotage attacks on unguarded or poorly guarded military targets and...attempts on the lives of the chief architects of the Rana regime should be undertaken".<sup>33</sup>

This plan of action was expected to serve two main purposes:

- (i) Each successful execution would have a demoralising effect on the Government and its supporters.
- (ii) It would destroy the myth of invincibility of the Gorkha army. Kathmandu was chosen as the field of operation.

In September, Chatterjee made an unsuccessful trip to Rangoon. A few more unsuccessful visits were made later. At the same time, the Nepali Congress sent Ganeshman Singh secretly to Kathmandu to plan and execute the liquidation of Mohan Shumsher and other senior officials. In September, 1950, also, the Nepali Congress formally declared its decision to abandon the technique of non-violent action. The Working Committee of the party was dissolved. Its president, M.P. Koirala, was given all executive powers and made a dictator of the party.<sup>34</sup>

According to Chatterjee Delhi agreed to the strategy of pressure in order to bring Mohan Shumsher to the path of sanity though not to go in for a war.<sup>35</sup> Mohan Shumsher responded by formally convening the promised Legislature on September 22, 1950. The Nepali Congress rejected the call to join it and the Government of India told the Government of Nepal that the reform measures were inadequate. On September 29, Mohan Shumsher announced that a Nepali Congress plot to kill senior officials including himself had failed.<sup>36</sup> Ganeshman was arrested by the Ranas.

The Kathmandu plot having failed the Nepali Congress became impatient. It decided to resume the effort at arms procurement from Burma as well as to talk with the Government of India. Chatterjee went again to Burma and returned without success on October 24. Meanwhile, on October 23; the Nepalese leaders met at Patna and decided that Delhi had given a restricted "go ahead" signal. "In effect this boiled down to the fact that the N.C. was permitted to conditional use of Indian territory as its base of operation", writes Chatterjee.<sup>37</sup>

In this context two significant decisions were taken:

- (i) No final date should be decided upon until arms were received from Burma; and
- (ii) The action would be connected with the moves of the King whose position was critically threatened because of his

support to the Nepali Congress.<sup>38</sup> The Nepali Congress also decided to continue with the institution of the King as he was a friend of the revolution. The Government of India was in complete agreement with the Nepali Congress's support to the King.

It was also agreed that the main bases of the Nepali Congress operation would be Biratnagar in Eastern Nepal and Birganj in Central Nepal, two towns bordering on the Indian towns of Jogbani and Raxaul respectively. There would be a number of other strategic bases between the two towns.<sup>39</sup> It was expected that once the military operation was launched, the people of Nepal would have a major upsurge and overthrow the Ranas.

The Chinese invasion of Tibet, on 23rd October, 1950, hastened the pace of events. The Indo-Nepal Peace Treaty was signed under pressure on October 30, 1950. But the things did not stop there. On October 31, Chatterjee reached Rangoon for the delivery of arms. On November 3, the aircraft chartered by the Shumsher brothers reached Rangoon and brought the arms to Patna. These were stocked at the house of Devendra Prasad Singh. A wireless transmitter installed in the house sent radio messages to the Nepali Congress leaders asking them to reach Patna. On November 6, the regional leaders of N.C. met at Patna.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, on the same day, the King of Nepal slipped into the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Bhola Chatterjee wrote:

No final day for the launching of the struggle was yet fixed, the reason for which, however, was not disclosed to the general assembly of men. The top echelon of the leadership had very pertinent reason to keep the date open, for secret messages from Kathmandu had for the last few days been giving increasing indication of an imminent confrontation between the palace and the Prime Minister.<sup>41</sup>

Though there is no record of communication from the Nepali Congress to the palace, it is possible to surmise that such communication existed either through the Nepalese subjects at Kathmandu or the Indian Mission there. Chatterjee speaks of "clandestine messages of hope and expectation" from the Nepali Congress to the King.<sup>42</sup> He also points out that the Indian Ambassador, C.P.N. Sinha, had been in communication with the palace before November 6.<sup>43</sup>

### The Military Operation

The overall command of the Biratnagar-Birganj axis was placed under Subarna Shumsher. Thirbhom Malla and Tej Bahadur were directed to lead the attack from Birganj which has the nearest border point from Kathmandu. The first move would be for the establishment of position of the Nepali Congress with a view to an assault on Kathmandu. The Biratnagar contingent would be supervised personally by B.P. Koirala.

The other points were left to the local leaders.<sup>44</sup> On November 7, 1950, in a message to the people of Nepal, B.P. Koirala proclaimed the loyalty of the revolution to the King and called the people of Nepal to revolt against the Rana usurpers.<sup>45</sup>

Even before the actual military operation of the Nepali Congress was undertaken, Nepal was in ferment. According to Shrivastava, in Western Nepal people signed a pledge of blood from their thumb not to rest before the end of the Ranashahi and to stake their lives in the struggle for freedom. In Eastern Nepal lakhs of Limbu-Kirats revolted on November 8, at Lumbini, Buddha Balli and Kapilabastu, the villages associated with the name of Gotama, the Buddha.<sup>46</sup>

### Birganj Operation

On November 10-11, the military operation began at Birganj. Between 200 and 300 men captured the town in an attack from Raxaul under the command of Thirbhom Malla and Tej Bahadur. Thirbhom was killed in the operation. Tej Bahadur was given the mandate for the emergency administration of the town. The Bara Hakim of the town, Som Shumsher Rana, and other officials with their families were arrested and taken to the Indian side of the border. On November 12, the Governor was released from captivity by the Government of India.<sup>47</sup>

### Biratnagar Operation

The Biratnagar operation on 11th November was less equipped than the Birganj operation. The forces there were divided into two columns. Girija Prasad Koirala, and Bishwabandhu Thapa were to lead the first column that would seize the armoury, the

police station and the residences of three local officials. Tarini Prasad Koirala and Bhola Chatterjee were to lead the second column that would occupy the army headquarters, the prison and the treasury. The total strength of the Biratnagar contingent was 150. They were to assemble, after their operation, around the official residence of local government. The early operation was successful but the final assault on the Governor's residence was defeated with several casualties including Kuldeep Jha, prominent socialist from Bihar.<sup>48</sup>

The smaller operation planned in other places could not materialise. But Birganj was retained by the Nepali Congress volunteers for a week.<sup>49</sup> According to Kashi Prasad Shrivastava the Birganj rebels took about Rs. 45 lakh from the local treasury and the Government of India seized Rs. 35 lakh from it at the Delhi airport.<sup>50</sup>

### **Operation in Western Terai**

According to Shrivastava the Nepali Congress could not make proper arrangement in Western Nepal. Yet, at Nautanawa, for a long time, Dr. Kunwar Indra Singh, a homeopath, and Shrivastava himself had been preparing for a rebellion. K.I. Singh had taken part in the freedom movement of India when he came in contact with the President of the Gorkhpur District Congress Committee, Professor Shibban Lal Saksena. He had been a member of the Nautanawa Congress Committee and had contested, with a Congress ticket, for Nautanawa Town Area Committee. When the revolution broke out in Nepal, Singh was an important official of the local committee of the Indian National Congress. He also set up a strong branch of Nepali Congress at Nautanawa.

Immediately after the departure of the Nepal King for India, Singh prepared for an assault on Bhairahawa, the headquarters of the Butwal district in mid-western Terai.<sup>51</sup> The Nepali Congress deputed Mahendra Bikram Shah (a former member of Nepal Democratic Congress) as the commander of the Western Front. He supported the plan for assault on Bhairahawa.

The assault on Bhairahawa was led by Dr. K.I. Singh and Colonel Kharga Bhadur Singh Gurung. The local Governor was willing to surrender but was encouraged not to do so by one Gopal Shumsher who claimed to be the commander of the

rebellion in the western sector. According to Shrivastava, Gopal Shumsher was a fraud.<sup>52</sup>

The assault on Bhairahawa took place at 5 A.M. on 15 November. The strength of the rebels was between 100 and 150 well-trained men and two hundred followers.<sup>53</sup> Shrivastava says that on the first day of battle, two Government soldiers died and three became injured. The rebels lost one soldier while many were injured.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, Shaha says that by 8 A.M. the Government side killed about 12 and wounded about the same number of rebels. An hour later the Nepali Congress volunteers mostly dispersed.

Several outbreaks occurred in different parts of Nepal and a fresh assault was made by the people's army on Bhairahawa on November 18. Several Government forces were killed and wounded. On that day, however, the Government forces recaptured Birganj.<sup>55</sup>

The focus of the rebellion now shifted to mid-western Nepal. Bhairahawa became the seat of the revolutionary leadership which called for the establishment of a revolutionary Government. On November 21, about 500 delegates assembled at Bhairahawa and elected K.I. Singh as the military Governor of Western Nepal. K.P. Shrivastava was appointed Prime Minister and Colonel Kharga Bahadur Singh Gurung the Commander-in-Chief. The election of new Government was held in the presence of Shibanlal Saksena. While returning from Bhairahawa to Nautanawa, Saksena was hit by a bullet of the Rana soldiers. Krishnadas Bhatta, one of his colleagues, became a martyr.<sup>56</sup>

On November 23, the rebels captured the Bhairahawa post and jail. The next day the Rana army attacked and injured Kharga Bahadur Singh Gurung and four of his soldiers. Dal Bahadur became a martyr. Yet the rebellion spread out all over the Western Nepal and continued till the middle of January 1951.

### **The Role of the Government of India**

The position of the Government of India was unenviable. In the first place, it carried the legacy of the British empire which made it a suspect as cherishing a design to annex Nepal. In the second

place, the nationalist and the socialist zeal about the liberation of Nepal hammered on virtually the same thing. Thirdly, the annexation of Hyderabad through police action was the immediate precedent confirming such suspicions. Fourthly, the asylum granted to the Nepal King on November 6, 1950, strengthened the suspicions about the King, the Nepali Congress, the Indian Socialist-Nationalists and the Government of India working in close liaison.<sup>57</sup> India was afraid of adverse international opinion particularly in the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference scheduled in January 1951. On November 12, the Government of India informed the British High Commissioner at Delhi that it was not aware of the pressure of rebellious activities inside India. On the other hand, it would simply be inhuman to ignore the plight of the Nepalese King. Therefore it adopted a middle path.

The Government of India's most immediate concern was to ensure the safety of the legitimate ruler of Nepal, King Tribhuvan. It was afraid of the Rana army violating the diplomatic immunity of the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu and arresting or harming the King. The Government of India decided to shift the King and his family to India. The permission to do so was obtained from the Ranas only after giving them an assurance that the King would not play politics from the Indian soil.

Secondly, while extending indirect support to the Nepali Congress on the Indian soil, the Government of India had to look after the interest of the Nepal Government. Thus, on November 12, the Government of India got Colonel Som Shumsher Rana, the Barahakim of Biratnagar, released from the captivity of the Nepali Congress. On November 13, it intercepted a plane carrying Nepalese leaders with a quantity of arms and 3.5 millions of Rupees (taken from Birganj treasury) and subsequently returned the money to the Nepalese Government. Thirdly, by November 16, the Government of India issued strict orders to the State Governments of West Bengal, Bihar and U.P. not to allow armed men going across the border.<sup>58</sup> For one month the restrictions were kept. But on December 20, they were relaxed in view of the Anglo-American reluctance to stand by Tribhuvan. An aircraft carrying rifles and ammunition supplied by Shaikh Abdullah of Kashmir, was allowed to be unloaded. (This second supply would have been impossible without the Government of India's connivance).<sup>59</sup>

The Government of India had no intention to recognize Prince Gyanendra as a King. For a long time Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was pressurised by the Nepalese Ambassador as well as the British Ambassador to avoid making an announcement of its intention of not recognizing Prince Gyanendra. It was only on November 26, that Nehru, at a meeting at Jamshedpur, publicly declined to recognise Gyanendra.<sup>60</sup> The continuous pressure on Nehru from the Government of Nepal did not produce any effect. On December 8, 1950, the Government of India handed over a set of proposals for constitutional reforms to the Rana Government.<sup>61</sup> The Government of Nepal kept this memorandum in the dark till December 19, 1950.<sup>62</sup>

The Ranas had set up Gyanendra as the prince and were planning to set up a Regency Council through the Constitution that was planned to be passed in the Parliament convened on 24 December. Under the pressure of the Government of India Mohan Shumsher dropped the idea of Regency Council from the Constitutional proposal. Negotiation with the Government of India was resumed on December 25. By January 2, 1951, the Nepalese negotiators accepted the King's return subject to approval of the Parliament (Constituent Assembly). But the approval was a foregone conclusion.<sup>63</sup> On January 8, 1951 Mohan Shumsher announced the acceptance of the Government of India's demand and the revocation of the decision of the Nepalese Parliament on November 7th, 1950 about the installation of Gyanendra. Mohan Shumsher gave two reasons for the change of stance:<sup>64</sup>

- (i) the refusal of the Government of India to recognise Gyanendra and
- (ii) increasing lawlessness within Nepal.

### **Return of the King**

Mohan Shumsher requested the King to return to Nepal and promised the following steps:

- (i) election to a Constituent Assembly to be held on the basis of universal suffrage.
- (ii) formation of an interim cabinet with equal representation of the Ranas and the common people and
- (iii) a general amnesty for political prisoners.

On January 10, 1951 the King made a public statement welcoming the Maharaja's proclamation and promising to do his part "with the full sense of duty and having the good of my people as my only concern".<sup>65</sup> These developments were probably unexpected by the Nepalese fighters. M.P. Koirala's initial reaction was one of disillusionment while D.R. Regmi, leader of the still surviving faction of Nepal Rashtriya Congress, who had given a general support to Koirala without taking active part in the fight, in a statement from Calcutta on January 9, 1951, criticised the excesses of the "freedom fighters" and welcomed Mohan Shumsher's offer to set up a Constituent Assembly. Finally, on January 16, 1951, M.P. Koirala made the following statement:

After consultation with the Government of India about the situation arising out of the declaration of the Prime Minister of Nepal and the statement thereupon by His Majesty, the King of Nepal, and in response to the appeal made by the Prime Minister of Nepal, we have decided that in order to create suitable conditions for negotiations there should be a cessation of all operations at once. We, therefore, direct all workers to stop hostilities of every kind and we appeal to every one in Nepal to assist in the restoration of peace. We are grateful to the Government of India for all that they have done in the cause of reforms and progress of Nepal. We accept the advice given by the Prime Minister of India at this juncture and we fully trust that the problem of Nepal will soon be solved satisfactorily.<sup>66</sup>

The above statement completely exposed the support of the Government of India to the Nepali Congress and yet the Government of India would not leave the field to the Nepali Congress fighters alone. It wanted the King to take command of the situation and establish a democratic set-up through the compromise between the Ranas and the Nepali Congress. Pandit Nehru appealed to the Nepali Congress fighters to lay arms and work for peace and stability in the country. As late as January 14, 1951, B.P. Koirala and Subarna Shumsher reached Delhi and unsuccessfully pleaded with the Government of India against the settlement.<sup>67</sup>

K.I. Singh went on with his armed struggle in the Western part of Nepal. This called for a joint military operation of the

Governments of India and Nepal in Western Terai even after King Tribhuvan's return to Nepal and establishment of an interim government.<sup>68</sup>

### C.P.N. and the Revolution

Another group that opposed the Delhi settlement was the Communist Party of Nepal.<sup>69</sup> This Party had been formed in 1949 through a number of organisational meetings from April to September. Its founders like Pushpalal, Manmohan Adhikari and Tulsilal Amatya had been active participants in the democratic movement in Nepal. But as the Communist Party of Nepal they could not take part in the struggle because the Party had not been formed before 1949. The Communist Party of India, on the other hand, was banned in West Bengal in 1948. As much of the communist activity in eastern India was controlled from Calcutta, many Bengal communists had to go underground after the ban. The communist activity on the Nepal border was thus scattered and lacked co-ordination.<sup>70</sup>

Yet Manmohan Adhikari went to jail for two and half years in March 1947 in connection with the Biratnagar jute mill strike. That strike showed a co-operation between the communists, the Congress Socialists and the Nepal National Congress.

Pushpalal and Tulsilal Amatya<sup>71</sup> had gone to jail because of their participation in the 1947 Satyagraha. Pushpalal was connected with the Nepali National Congress and Amatya with the Praja Panchayat Movement.

The opposition of the Communist Party of Nepal to the Delhi Settlement seemed to follow from a number of factors. Anirudha Gupta points out the impact of the adventurist policy of the Communist Party of India<sup>72</sup> which followed from the adventurism of the Cominform that saw the transfer of power in India as a deal between imperialism and the local bourgeoisie.

There was a second factor. The emergence of China as a communist country on the northern border of Nepal and India inspired a certain kind of adventurism that was furthered by the adoption of the "China line" by the Indian communist movement. This was reflected in the following draft statement of the Politbureau, Communist Party of India:

It might be possible that our comrades in Nepal, where there is only a small and young party unit, may be able to successfully utilise the present national upsurge and the struggle that is going on there, boldly advocate this form of struggle and adopt it as and when the conditions are mature. The Nepali people, militant by tradition, inspired by the victories of the liberation army of China on their border, might in a short time take to this guerilla form of struggle before some other terrorists in India, where the Party and people's movement are stronger, will be able to take up this form of struggle due to several reasons.<sup>73</sup>

### **The C.P.I. Strategy**

Before going into the assessment of the role of the Communist Party of Nepal, therefore, it would be advisable to assess the general strategy of the Communist Party of India since the departure of the British. The C.P.I. had collaborated with the C.S.P. until 1940. In fact, it led the left consolidation group that had gathered around Subhas Chandra Bose in the wake of the Bose-Sitaramayya contest over the Congress presidency. When, however, Bose decided to quit Congress at the Ramgarh conference, the CSP and the CPI refused to join a bloc that would challenge the leadership of the Congress. Having passed through the trauma of World War II the CPI was expelled from the Congress in July 1945. The differences with Congress began to grow. But, in August 1947, it welcomed Independence.

Yet in February-March 1948, at the Second Congress at Calcutta, the CPI decided that India was in fact not quite independent, that British imperialism had transferred power to the Indian bourgeoisie, its collaborator, in order to maintain its exploitative grip over the Indian economy. This led to an adventurist policy of 'strikes, agrarian struggles, general strikes, political strikes, rising to higher forms, ending in insurrection and capture of power—leading to socialism'.<sup>74</sup> When this line proved unproductive, the Central Committee of the Party elected in June 1950 adopted the Chinese path of agrarian revolution as demonstrated in Telangana".<sup>75</sup>

As far as the Nepalese democratic movement was concerned, however, full credit must be given to the Indian communists in

showing interest even before Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia stepped in. Sajjad Zaheer, a communist, working in the CSP as well as the AICC Secretariat at Allahabad, brought out the first open accusation of the Ranashahi in Nepal (in *Janata*, 1939). In 1940 four communists were detected trying to infiltrate into Nepal. During the subsequent period, inspite of the gradually growing CPI-CSP rift their support to the Nepalese democratic movement continued. The Nepalese democrats, on their part, sought and obtained support from the CPI and the CSP as well as from the Congress radicals like Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Shibanlal Saksena. The Nepalese communists were in the democratic movement too.<sup>76</sup>

The CPI helped the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal. In the early years of the CPN the CPI guided its political line as is revealed by the correspondence between the Nepalese communists and the CPI leaders. The two Indian personalities that appear in this correspondence quite frequently are Biresh Mishra, a Bengali-speaking communist of Assam and a kind of 'frontier man' in the CPI with wide experience in the north-east Indian hills, and Nikhil Chakraborty, in charge of international contacts of the underground party.<sup>77</sup>

### **The CPN Strategy**

As a newly formed party, the Communist Party of Nepal started off by publishing translations of three Marxist books in Nepali.

- (i) *The Communist Manifesto*.
- (ii) *Society and Individual in Soviet*, and
- (iii) *People's Democratic Dictatorship in China*.<sup>78</sup>

The Party also published "*Pacthic Prachar Patra*". Later the paper was renamed as *Pacthik*. It was a monthly paper.<sup>79</sup>

The Communist Party of Nepal set up different frontal organisations like Nepal Progressive Study Circle, All-Nepal Peace Committee and Nepal Kalyan Karini Samiti.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Nepal Progressive Study Circle*

The N.P.S.C. was formed in Calcutta with a few members. But gradually the membership of the circle grew faster. The circle

established its centre in different parts of Nepal. Firstly, it established one branch at Palpa, two centres at Biratnagar town and one at Biratnagar *mazdoor* area. This young party of Nepal had decided to open one centre at Darjeeling because some progressive students of Darjeeling district were interested to join and open its branch there.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Kalyan Karini Samitis*

The Darbhanga district of Bihar gave good response to the formation of the Kalyan Karini Samiti whose aim was to give relief only.<sup>82</sup>

#### *All-Nepal Peace Committee*

The A.N.P.C. was formed in Calcutta by the month of July 1950. The committee published a manifesto asking the democratic and peace-loving people of Nepal to join the committee.<sup>83</sup> About two thousand manifestos were circulated among the people. *Nepal Pukar*, the journal of Nepal Democratic Congress, also published the manifesto and it was widely appreciated and responded to by the people.

The party started slowly building its organisation within Nepal according to the manual, "Principles of Party Organisation". It chose Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Birganj, Pulpa and Nepalganj for initial work. But it would send only a few members to Kathmandu and to Biratnagar (industrial town) at first.<sup>84</sup> Subsequently, a few communists reached Pulpa and Nepalganj and Birganj as well as Kathmandu.<sup>85</sup>

According to a secret report of Pushpalal (pseudonym, Rahman) dated 29.5.50, "The joint conference of Nepali National Congress and Nepal Democrtic Congress held in Calcutta in April last, 1950, gave us a good opportunity to contact *kisans* of different parts of Nepal who had come to the conference.... Our comrades went into the delegates' camp and explained to them our aims and objectives and exposed the treachary of their leaders. There were also some honest Congress workers who had studied Marxism and read our publications. They were eager to keep contact with us". They decided to form a Mazdoor Kisan Sangh after some months."<sup>86</sup>

The dilemma of the communist movement arose here. In the words of Pushpalal "at first we adopted the policy of left sectarianism towards other organisations. Due to this policy we could not win over those honest Congress workers who were in favour of our party and Marxism."<sup>87</sup>

Bhogendra Jha denies that the Communists had no role in the 1950 Revolution. He claims that, though most of the members of the party were underground at that time, but those who were not underground, like the Bihar and U.P. communists, supported and participated in the armed struggle hand in hand with the Nepali Congress.<sup>88</sup>

It appears, however, that, even by the end of 1950, the C.P.N. was not able to overcome the left sectarianism which the Communist Party of India was still suffering from. The manifesto of the Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh (ANKS), that was drafted in October, 1950, saw Indian capital as the "junior partners" of Anglo-American capitalism.

So far their greedy eyes were fixed on the market alone of our country, now they have turned to our land too. So far by starting factories in Biratnagar etc., they took away to their country the money earned by the hard labour of our brothers, now according to recent Indo-Nepal Treaty they will be able to exploit us becoming the master of our land also.

This feudal autocracy, the Government of Nepal, are selling our country to foreign brigands and, on the other hand, increasing their fleecing of the people day by day.<sup>89</sup>

The strength and the weakness of the Communist Party of Nepal was a legacy of the communist movement in India. The early growth of communism in Nepal as well as in India, was hand in hand with the nationalist-democratic movement. After the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal the left sectarianism of the CPI rift the CPN. The party was banned in January 1952. The ban was Lifted in 1956. But unlike the C.P.I., which lost heavily due to its secterianism, the C.P.N. seems to have gained. For, the C.P.N. was successful in combining its class hatred for the Indian capitalists with the patriotism of the Nepalese people, while the C.P.I. split in 1964 essentially on the question of the

“national bourgeoisie”. Nepal did not have the “national bourgeoisie”. Her “enemies” could easily be located in a foreign capitalist class. The Nepal Communist Party, of course, suffered split due mainly to factional reasons. But in the 1990s they were able to unite and when they united, they captured power in the general election in 1994. It is not within the scope of the study to examine the zig zag development of the Nepali political parties after the 1950-1951 revolution.

## References

1. See the *Searchlight*, dated 17th May, 1949.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Nehru, Jawaharlal. *Speeches 1949-1953*. p. 146.
4. J.P.'s letter to Jawaharlal Nehru dated 31, January, 1950, forwarding a letter from Tanka Prasad Acharya to Nehru written in Kathmandu Jail. (J.P.'s file).
5. *Ibid.*
6. Personal communication from Bhogendra Jha, on 11.5.95. at his official residence, Delhi.
7. J.P. was particularly upset by the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948. See his 1948 article "Ends and Means" in Bimal Prasad (ed.) *A Revolutionary's Quest: Selected Writings of J.P. Narayan*, pp. 139-148.
8. Shaha, *Modern Nepal*, Vol. II, p. 196.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-201.
11. Jain, Girilal, *India meets China in Nepal*, pp. 17-18.
12. Chatterjee, Bhola, *Recent Nepalese Politics*, p. 55.
13. Shaha, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-201.
14. Gupta Anirudha, *Politics in Nepal*, p. 43.
15. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 207. Srivastava, *Nepal ki Kahani*, p. 148.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Shaha, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213, Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
19. Shrivastava, *op. cit.*, p.140, Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 44
20. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Speeches 1949-53*, p. 177.
21. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Selected Speeches. September 1946-April 1961*, p. 437.
22. J.P.'s letter to Nehru, dated 17.11.50 (J.P.'s file)
23. J.P.'s letter to Nehru, dated 8th December, 1950.
24. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 78.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85. According to Shaha the commercial plane that brought the first consignment of arms from Burma belonged to the Himalayan Aviation of which Mahabir Shumsher was the Managing Director. It landed in an abandoned World War II airstrip in North Bihar. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 237.
40. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
45. *The Hindustan Standard*, November 8, 1950.
46. Srivastava, *op. cit.* p. 149-150.
47. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p.103, Shaha, *op.cit.*, p. 213.
48. Chatterjee, *op. cit.* p. 105.
49. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
50. Shrivastava, p. 151.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 151-152.
53. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
54. Shrivastava, *op. cit.*, 152.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

61. Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
62. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
65. Quoted in Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
66. Quoted in Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
67. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
68. *Ibid.* Also Shrivastava, *op. cit.*, p.163. The Delhi Settlement acknowledged Tribhuvan as the King. There was a decision to have an elected Constituent Assembly for drawing up a constitution of Nepal and interim cabinet of 10 members, consisting equally of the representatives of the Ranas and the people, would function meanwhile.
69. Shaha, *op. cit.*, p. 239.
70. Personal communication from Indradeep Sinha, and Bhogendra Jha, senior communist leaders of Bihar.
71. Biodata of Tulsilal Amatya personally communicated.
72. Gupta, Anirudha, *op. cit.*, p. 200.
73. CPI Polit-Bureau Draft Policy Statement of November, 1950, in M.B. Rao (ed.), *History of the Communist Party of India*, vol. VII, 1948-1950.
74. 'Introduction' in M.B. Rao (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party*, vol. VII, 1948-1950, p. X.
75. *Ibid.*, p. XI.
76. According to Indradeep Sinha the CPI helped Nepalese democrats in holding secret meetings on the Bihar border.
77. The correspondence presents only pseudonyms which have been verified with the help fo Abani Lahiri.
78. Report dated 29.5.50 (Communist Party of Nepal's report).
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Ibid.*
84. *Ibid.*
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. *Ibid.*

88. Personal communication from Bhogendra Jha on 11.5.95.
89. Manifesto of the Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh—draft forwarded by Rahman (Pushpa Lal) to Madhavda (Biresh Misra) on 24.10.50.

## Conclusion

There are two major points about a revolution. Revolutions, as Stalin said, can not be exported in a suitcase. At the same time, no revolution can grow within a shell. There has to be external contacts while the revolution must be made by the people themselves.

For Nepal India has been the most important catalyst. Her sheer size, their mutual geographical accessibility, their cultural similarities, their long historical contacts and economic interdependence have bound the two countries together. But there was one political difference. Whereas India was colonised by the British for nearly two centuries, Nepal was not a colony as such. India, in the British days, was divided into two parts. (I) British India under the sovereign authority of the British Government and (II) Native India under the paramountcy of the British Government and consisting of 566 states of different sizes and powers. The British regarded Nepal, loosely, as a part of their "Indian Empire". But Nepal actually was more than a princely state. It was a vassal state.

Indian influence over Nepal covered a very wide area including economy, culture and politics. Nepal got one of the most reactionary feudal governments of the world under the blessings of the British empire. On the other hand, the Indian renaissance had its delayed but sure impact on the Nepalese society. The year of Anglo-Gorkha War was also the year when Raja Rammohan Roy settled in Calcutta. The Nepalese were shocked by the defeat in the war. The revival was sought not through the enlightenment of the Bengal Renaissance but through the folk tradition of the Ramayana. Indeed, modern literary movement under the Western impact did start much later in the twentieth century. By that time social protest had started gathering in Nepal. In 1896, the Arya Samaj arrived at Kathmandu and challenged the rigid caste system of the Nepalese society that had strengthened the Rana autocracy.

The political impact of the nationalist agitation in British India on Nepal is noticed since the anti-partition agitation of 1905 and the growth of extremism in Indian politics since 1906. We have defined the "Indian Left" in the broadest sense—to include the radical opposition to the empire and all programmes of radical social transformation. The justification of including radical-nationalists in the Left lies in the fact that India was a colonial country and approaches to colonial power varied among sections of the Indian populations. Secondly, there is a positive connection between the extremist politics and the radical Left of the later period through revolutionary terrorism. The organised 'Left' emerged in India in the late twenties of this century. It ran parallel to the Gandhian stream of the nationalist agitation and, in some cases, confronted each other. In Nepal both these streams arrived late, and, happily, joined hands. The Charkha, the anti-Rana conspiracy and the agitation against untouchability—all strengthened the same demand for a re-structuring of the Nepalese polity.

In India, the Left was somewhat fragmented. It grew within the Congress with different names. The Nehrus along with C.R. Das and Subhas Bose were associated with the main Left in the Congress. The Communists, the Congress Socialists and the Forward Bloc grew at the margin of the Congress. The organisational needs under governmental terror forced the C.P.I. to work within the C.S.P. from 1934 to 1939. The C.S.P. superiority in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh brought it closer to Nepali politics than the Communists. Yet the C.S.P.'s influence was essentially concentrated in Bihar between Biratnagar/Jogbani and Raxual. U.P. remained largely under an even control of the Congress Left led by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and the Congress Socialists led by Acharya Narendra Dev. In Calcutta the Communists had a greater presence. These three influences criss-crossed each other and, happily, again, did not clash in Nepal. Even in Bihar and U.P., inspite of the People's War line of the C.P.I., communists and socialists both went to jail during the Quit India Movement. But the Indian Left did not directly bring Nepal on its agenda until the end of World War II. In 1942 Jayaprakash and his colleagues escaped to Nepal for shelter. But that was nothing new. People had crossed the India-Nepal border for atleast a century to escape state repression. It was during the short stay of J.P. and his

colleagues in Nepal that we find Rammanohar Lohia developing a political line about Nepal. This line, subsequently, developed into Lohia's Himalayan Policy.

Democratic movement in Nepal, as elsewhere, was a middle class phenomenon. In Nepal this middle class was immature and very small in size. Essentially, it was the product of minor feudal benefits like *birta*, transborder trade and services in the Government and the army, both native and British. Modern English education came almost at the end of the day, and, that too, to a handful of persons beyond the aristocracy. The border towns of India provided this middle class with a few elements of modernity as well as shelter from the wrath of the rulers. The border towns of India, thus, became major nodes of Nepalese modernisation.

Within Nepal, there were two major segments of the Nepalese middle class that became disgruntled with the Nepalese political system. One grew out of the tradition of social reform generated by the Arya Samaj and Gandhi. The other grew out of dissent within the feudal elite and enjoying the indirect help of the King. To the first group belonged the activities of prayer meetings (*Kirtan*), propagation of charkha and removal of untouchability. To the second group belonged the organisations, Prachanda Gorkha, Praja Parishad and Nagarik Adhikar Samiti.

The British Government in India consistently supported the Rana regime. The most active anti-Rana elements, therefore, sought their moral and material support from the critics of the British empire in India. They developed different channels of communication with the Indian political groups or parties. Officially, the Indian National Congress could not take side in the struggle for democracy in Nepal. Individuals and groups in the Indian National Congress, however, bore sympathy for the struggle. The only Indian political group which extended moral support to the Rana regime was the Hindu Mahasabha.

It is not that the Rana regime was totally insensitive to the changes taking place around them. They tried to send priests to British India to teach the Nepalese there the virtues of caste and loyalty. They made liberal grants to certain institutions like Banaras Hindu University and were successful in winning the

admiration of certain Indian leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya. Padma Shumsher bore considerable sympathy for popular Nepalese political aspirations and tried reforms. His successor, Mohan Shamsher, made a mess of everything through sheer arrogance.

The Nepalese revolution was actually a product of different forces, both internal and external. Certain individuals played critical roles in mobilising these forces. Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ganeshman Singh and the Koirala brothers gave the weight of their names to the organisation of the movement. Bishweswar Prasad Koirala was the most crucial link in developing the co-ordination between the Nepalese democratic movement and the left wing of the Indian nationalist movement. His roots in the Nepalese democratic movements appear to be less firm than his brother, M.P. Koirala's. He also does not seem to have as much rapport with the communists as with the socialists in India.

Tanka Prasad Acharya's long imprisonment made him a legend in his life time in Nepal. Ganeshman Singh added a bit of high drama to his sufferings by effecting escape from the Rana prison. Matrika Prasad Koirala maintained a low profile but carried conviction with his people as well as the King, so much so that, when the Nepali Congress formed its first cabinet after the revolution, M.P. Koirala was called upon to head it.

It will be an exaggeration to give credit to Nepali Congress alone for the democratic revolution. Inspite of pockets of rebellion, near the Indian border, being set up for short durations, the Government would not have bowed down had the King not deserted it. And there international politics played a crucial role. It is true that Jayaprakash Narayan continuously goaded Jawaharlal Nehru to come out in open support to the Nepalese democrats. It is also true that in the first Nehru cabinet there were members opposed to the Government of India's support to the democratic movement in Nepal. It is reasonable to guess that the Chinese takeover of Tibet hastened the process. But it will certainly be wrong to assume Jawaharlal Nehru to be unsympathetic to the democratic movement in Nepal.

It will also be wrong to give the entire credit of the Nepali revolution, on the Indian side, to the (Congress) Socialist Party.

Of course, it maintained the major public relation function of the Nepali Congress in India. Jayaprakash Narayan's connections with the Second (Socialist) International brought some weapons from Burma. In the subsequent years this connection brought B.P. Koirala himself into the fold of the Socialist International.

On the other hand, the arms supply by Sheikh Abdullah from Kashmir could not be connected with the socialists. If at all, it suggests a linkage between the Sheikh and the Nepalese fighters through Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a left-wing Congressman of Uttar Pradesh, and minister in the Nehru cabinet at that time, and probably the indirect role of the Government of India. But the connection of Kidwai is strongly suspected, because of Sibbanlal Saksena organising revolt in Western Terai. Saksena was a known supporter of Kidwai and belonged to the Congress 'Left'.

Last, but not the least, there were the communists. Communist interest in Nepal started at least in 1939 with the publication of Sajjad Zahir's article in *Janata* strongly criticising the Rana regime and arrest of a batch of suspect communists trying to cross the Nepal border about the same time.

Communists of Nepal and India fought in 1947. In 1949, with the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal, appears a distortion in their movement. The communists participated in 1950's struggle but seemed to be more eager to 'expose' the leadership of the Nepali Congress as agents of Indian capitalism.

### Prospects for the Nepalese Left: An Assessment

While the democratic movement in Nepal was catalysed by the Indian Left, its basic forces were native. The Nepali Congress grew in association with the Socialist Party of India, but it remained a centrist party. Like the Socialist Party of India the Nepali Congress had a middle class leadership, a following of mixed character and an ideology kin to that of the Second International but a strategy akin to that of the Gandhian Congress. After the success of the democratic revolution and the entry of the party into government the internationalism somewhat faded though B.P. Koirala retained his personal contact with the Second International and some socialist leaders in India. Jayaprakash Narayan's shift from socialism to what he regarded as the

Gandhian non-party politics ('partyless democracy') and indirect support to 'panchayati' government in Nepal, not only bode a crisis for the socialist movement in India, but also cooled the Nepali Congress' warmth about the socialist movement in India.

The Indian Left had split in 1942 as a result of the divergent stands of the socialists and the communists on the Quit India Movement though, as earlier noted, several communists did take part in the movement. The Indian communists have not yet been able to completely wipe out this spot on their history. The Communist Party of Nepal was indeed formed with the encouragement of the Communist Party of India, but it did not have the stigma of the latter. Indeed the Nepalese communists always enjoyed the credit of being both democratic and nationalistic. Their stand on Indo-Nepalese relations has only enhanced this 'independent' image and enabled them to be in the mainstream of Nepal politics. The splits in the Communist movement in Nepal have more to do with the ideological difference between China and the former Soviet Union than with the predicaments of the Indian communists. Nepal did not have a capitalist class, Nepal's agriculture remained feudal and the Nepalese literati declassed. In short, Nepal's political economy is much simpler than that of India enabling the Nepalese communists to take more ideologically cohesive positions than those of the Indian communists. Hence the greater success of the Nepalese communists, on their national plane, than of the Indian communists.





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