

B S Das

*The
Sikkim
Saga*

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Preface

It is relevant to quote the Governor of Sikkim, Mr. B. B. Lal, from a speech he made on January 26, 1979.

“I am sure we all realise fully by now, that time and history only know how to move forward and that it is not possible for the clock of history to move backwards. Anyone who thinks in terms of history going backwards, obviously suffers from defective vision and has not taken any lesson from the past history of the world stretching over thousands of years.”

Obviously the reference was to the Chogyal and some other elements in Sikkim who still believed that status quo ante was a distinct possibility under certain circumstances. Sikkim's merger with India is a historical fact and India's disintegration alone can restore the pre-1973 status. The issue is secondary to the text of this book and if at all history is reversed, someone else will give the facts then.

Having been one of the prime actors in the merger drama, I owe it to the students of history to leave behind a record of events for reference as a primary source of information. I am not a historian but all those who attempt to reconstruct the history of Sikkim will not be in a position to isolate themselves from the subjective interpretation of facts and events contained in this book.

In 1971, when I was India's Ambassador to Bhutan, Shenkar Bajpai, the Political Officer of Sikkim, had come to stay with us. Like all his predecessors after mid-fifties, he felt concerned at the erosion of India's responsibilities in Sikkim under the Treaty of 1950. There was a lack of clear vision in our approach over the years which would one day affect India's vital security interests in the Himalayan region. The Chogyal's rule had a feudalistic approach, leaving the vast majority of his people dissatisfied. These people were reaching a stage of revolt against the prevailing corruption and economic disparities. It was time that Delhi realised the gravity of the situation and took decisive action to ensure stability

in such a sensitive region. I could not agree more seeing how the Chinese were reacting on the Bhutanese borders. The Himalayan kingdoms were too sensitively placed to be ignored to the detriment of India's security. I mention this incident in the context of the 1973 uprising when I was asked by the Prime Minister to take over the charge of the administration of Sikkim. Delhi's decisive action then prevented a dangerous situation developing in this region.

During my tenure in Sikkim and subsequently, I was exposed to the critical analysis of the events both by the press, Indian and international, and many an institutional platform. I was never shy of defending the ultimate goal though I was hesitant on the methods used. As the subsequent pages of this book will show, merger became inevitable and it was in India's interests to take the steps which she did. It could have been avoided if the Chogyal had played his cards well. But, he was too clever with himself and played into the hands of the elements who had been waiting for years for such mistakes to be committed.

It is said that the Sikkim Saga is the story of three women—dominant, proud and unbending. Undoubtedly, Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India; Hope Cooke, the American wife of the Chogyal; and Elisa Maria, the Belgian wife of the Kazi were all alike and played a key role in the drama. But for the influence of Hope and Elisa on their husbands, which partly moulded their thinking, things may have been different. Had the Chogyal not taken the goodwill of Mrs. Gandhi for granted and had seen through her snubs which she administered as warnings from 1970, Bajpai's leverages would have been difficult to use. Had both Hope Cooke and Elisa Maria not aspired to be the first ladies of the realm and had confined themselves to their lure of the Mongoloid husbands and their wealth, the direction to the movement of 1973 by Elisa as Kazi's wife would not have been there. If Hope Cooke had not deserted her husband during the agitation, the Chogyal could probably have mellowed down and adjusted to the new situation. Or, if her dreams of being the American Queen of this Shangrila had been confined only to the royal court, not extending outside the Palace, many a misunderstanding with Delhi could have been avoided.

The victor was ultimately Mrs. Gandhi who, with her determined mind, outclassed everyone else. She had waited too long to close

the chapter and struck at the first opportunity when it came and decisively too. No history of Sikkim of recent times can ignore the role of the "three ladies". That itself could form the subject of a most interesting book if we also included the roles of other ladies at the court who played a substantive role behind the scenes in various ways.

My only regret is that Sikkim's beauty and culture are being eroded with the implementation of the so-called development schemes and ideas applicable to other states of India. The changes would have come about in any case but should have been gradual enabling the Sikkimese to settle down to a new system of governance and culture. In one of my addresses to the young probationers, of National Academy of Administration in 1975, I had cautioned against too rapid a process of Indianisation. My apprehensions proved correct when soon after the merger, large inputs of aid and implementation of new schemes within a short period created many ethnic, political and economic problems which the new Government under Kazi Lhendup Dorji was incapable of facing. Nor was the local bureaucracy adequate to handle the situation. Kazi's total defeat in the 1979 assembly elections was a sequel to this. Kazi had fought against feudalism and corruption for over two decades. When he finally succeeded and came into power, he failed to satisfy the aspirations of his people. Though personally honest, neither his policies nor the people around him inspired a clean image. The electorate threw his party out as they did to the Chogyal. He will have to start afresh.

I owe an apology to the late Chogyal, Palden Thondup Namgyal, for some of my criticism of his personality and reactions. In fairness to each other, both made the point that we served our political interests. This prevented a lasting ill-will. We were good friends and had mutual regard for each other. Perhaps this was my most spectacular achievement.

B.S. DAS

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As Delhi Saw It

“Mr. Das, Sikkim is not Goa that the Government of India has sent you to take over as the Chief Administrator. We have our separate identity and Indo-Sikkimese relations are governed by a Treaty. The so-called ‘popular leaders’ are nothing but a bunch of scoundrels propped up by outside forces. If my Police had not been disarmed and dishonoured by the Indian Army, I would have exposed each and every one of them. I shall never forgive the Indian Army for this.”

And the Chogyal was an honorary Major General of the Indian Army!

This was my first meeting with the Chogyal on April 11, 1973, after taking over Sikkim’s administration a day earlier. His oracles had considered it inauspicious to receive me on the day of my arrival. It was understandable.

The previous day when I landed at Gangtok, it was a different scene. Kazi, the leader of the agitation, and all his colleagues had lined up at the helipad to receive me besides all the senior officials of the Government of Sikkim and the Political Officers’ representative, Sudhir Devere. Much against my wishes, I was conducted in a procession through the town with cheering crowds shouting anti-Chogyal slogans. Without meaning it to be so, I had thus come to be associated with the anti-Chogyal forces except that the welcome was arranged to greet India’s representative who had come to resolve all the problems.

Events had moved fast. On Chogyal’s birthday, April 4, 1973, agitated mobs had surrounded his Palace under Kazi’s leadership demanding political reforms. The Police panicked and fired. The news spread rapidly to the outlying areas and mobs had taken to the streets led mostly by the students. Administration in three of

the four districts collapsed with the Chogyal's writ confined to the Palace. It was under these circumstances that the Chogyal had requested the Government of India, through the Political Officer, to post a senior officer from India to head Sikkim's administration.

The Foreign Secretary rang me up on April 8 to convey the Government's decision to post me as the Chief Administrator. I was to take over my assignment on April 10. The two days that I had were spent in the Foreign Office for a briefing. Never had I seen the Foreign Secretary's office converted into an operations room. Long messages on situation reports were pouring in every half an hour with the Foreign Secretary, Kewal Singh, dictating replies after replies to a team of stenographers. The desk officers dealing with Sikkim were walking in and out, seeking and taking instructions every hour. Kewal Singh looked as cool and composed as ever in his immaculate dress.

The basic issues were only two: to what extent Delhi's support was to be given to the democratic forces and what were its ultimate objectives in Sikkim. I found the Foreign Secretary's mind clear on both. All support was to be given to the anti-Chogyal movement. The political leaders were to be assured of Delhi's determination to set up a popular elected government. If the Chogyal did not concede their demands, Delhi was prepared for a show-down. Even Sikkim's take-over as a centrally administered territory of India with a Lieutenant Governor ultimately heading it was not precluded. The Chogyal was to be reduced to a constitutional head during the intervening period. My immediate task was to obtain a political settlement, restore law and order quickly, hold the general elections at the earliest and set up an elected government. Indian interests were to be fully protected with Delhi having an overriding say in Sikkim's administration. My role in this would be critical. The time had come for a show-down with the Chogyal.

In between the briefings, Avtar Singh,¹ a Senior Secretary in the Foreign Office, returned from Gangtok after a spot study of the situation. His assessment was that the agitation could not be sustained at that pace unless Delhi increased its support. The Chogyal, though demoralised, was still adamant against making major concessions. The time was ripe to teach him a lesson for his anti-people

¹Avtar Singh, a career diplomat, had held charge of the Political Officer's post in the early sixties.

postures. His advice to me was "Do not allow the Chogyal to get on top again. We will never get a second opportunity like this. 1949 should not be repeated."

When I asked the Foreign Secretary about the possible international reaction and particularly the Chinese response, he said the Foreign Office would take care of this aspect. I was, however, to ensure that all my actions had the support of the political leaders; thus giving a legitimacy to all our moves. The feudal character of the existing system and the people's revolt against it, were to be highlighted constantly. Since the Government of India had special responsibility under the Treaty of 1950 towards Sikkim's good administration and which involved India's own security, its intervention was obligatory in circumstances where law and order had broken down and a vacuum had been created by the collapse of the Chogyal's authority. India, wedded to democratic ideals and consequent obligation devolving on her to lend support to forces fighting against tyranny in spheres of her responsibility, had a moral obligation towards the people of Sikkim. These were incontrovertible arguments. The Foreign Secretary stated: "If I and Bajpai² enunciated these principles effectively, there would be no problems."

When I narrated my brief to Shenkar Bajpai, within minutes of my landing in Gangtok on April 10, he literally pulled his hair of which none too many were left in any case. Being the man on the spot, why had he not been told of this in such clear and concise terms, he asked. If he had known this earlier, the matter would have been resolved to Delhi's satisfaction on the fourth itself. All these days he was only told to go on building support for the agitation and maintain its tempo. One could sustain an agitation of this nature only if the political parties were closely knit and well organised. As it was, the people who had joined the agitation from the villages, were tired and wanted to go back to their farms. How was he to maintain the tempo to the level Delhi wanted, he bemoaned. He made me repeat my instructions from Delhi several times. Only then could I tear the small page of my diary which carried my brief. Bajpai did not appreciate then Delhi's strategy to stretch the tempo of the anti-Chogyal agitation over a longer period to justify her intervention and partly meet the international criticism of Sikkim's take over.

We settled down to discuss the prevailing situation. The morale

²K. S. Bajpai was the Political Officer in Sikkim.

of the agitators was at a low ebb. Decades of suppression by the Sikkimese rulers had made the people docile and subservient. People joined the movement in the hope of a quick response to their demands. Aware of Delhi's support, they expected the Chogyal to give in easily. But, all these days they were just demonstrating without any tangible results. Something had to be done quickly to raise their spirits. The political leaders were aware of the 1949 happenings when Delhi rescued the Chogyal under somewhat similar circumstances. But Delhi had a different approach then.

My arrival had boosted the morale of the leaders. Bajpai and I chalked out our plan of action on the lines indicated by the Foreign Secretary. Before any of these plans could be implemented, a message came that the Foreign Secretary was arriving at Gangtok. And, this happened only within four days of my arrival. It surprised us but we sensed that something had happened in Delhi to necessitate Kewal Singh's visit. Our suspicions were confirmed when he briefed us soon after his arrival.

My appointment had hit the headlines in the press. Many described it as a "take over". Even the foreign press had flashed the news as one of significance. It was a stick to beat India with as was in the case of Goa when Indian troops marched in there. The Chogyal had used the same argument. I may have become a celebrity overnight but all this caused serious embarrassment to Delhi. Perhaps, this accounted for Kewal Singh's hurried visit and subsequent low key posture in handling the situation without giving up the ultimate objectives. Delhi also did not anticipate that the agitation would peter out so soon despite her massive support. Aggressiveness, therefore, changed to conciliation which immediately put the critics of India and the Chogyal on the defensive.

A Historical Perspective

The history of Sikkim dates back to 1641 when a horde of Tibetans overran this area inhabited then by a small tribe of Lepchas. The latter are reported to have migrated to this area from one of the tribal regions of northeast India. Beyond being animists, indolent and fun loving, the British records do not reveal very much about their origin and culture. Nor has any serious study been done on them, having been integrated politically and culturally with the invading Bhutia tribe of the Tibetans.

The first phase of Sikkim's history is linked to the "blood treaty"¹ signed between the Bhutias and Lepchas which promoted the growth of a multiple ethnic society with the invaders providing the ruling dynasty. The Lepchas were converted to the Lamaist Buddhism of the Tibetans. The new religion and ruler made a deep impression on the social and economic life of the community. The dominance of the Bhutias was so overwhelming that the Lepchas remained the poorest and the most neglected of the people, barring a few who intermarried with the Bhutia elite to reach the level of equality. Mostly confined to the northern belt of Sikkim in an area called Dzongu, they lived their life of indolence and negligence contributing little against the aggressive exploitation by the Bhutias of the riches in land and forest. When the British came to Sikkim, in the late eighteenth century, their missionaries converted a few of them to Christianity.

The advent of the eighteenth century saw an aggressive Nepal encroaching on the Sikkimese territory. This was the beginning of the second phase in Sikkim's history. While a small trickle of Nepalese into Sikkim had started at the beginning of the eighteenth century,

¹A treaty was signed in 1641 between the two tribes recognising the leader of the invaders as the spiritual and secular head. A monument commemorating it is located at the place of signing the treaty.

Nepal's invasion in 1774-75 and subsequent occupation of Sikkim's western region, led to a substantial settlement of the Nepalese on her territory. By 1790, Nepal extended its hold over the entire lower Teesta basin in the East. Helpless against the powerful invaders, the Sikkim ruler sought the assistance of the British East India Company who had by then established their stronghold in eastern India with the weakening of the Mughal rule. Nepal's occupation of Sikkim came to an end in 1812, when the British troops of the East India Company intervened and defeated the Nepalese forces. But, the Nepalese settlers stayed back.

The British interests in Sikkim were linked to their trade and political interests in Tibet. Both Bhutan and Sikkim were the possible gateways to Tibet. Sikkim, besides being weaker of the two, had an easy access. On February 10, 1817, Sikkim signed a treaty with the East India Company surrendering all her rights to deal with any foreign power and conceded unhindered right of free access to the British to Tibet border. Sikkim became a de facto protectorate in 1861 when this treaty was further revised. The Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 put a seal on this status.

The ethnic scene of Sikkim began to undergo a rapid change with the advent of the British. Not only had the early Nepalese settlers multiplied in numbers, the British needed more Nepalese labour to develop Sikkim's communication network for access to Tibet. By 1891, the Nepalese constituted fifty-one per cent of Sikkim's population, reducing the Lepchas to nineteen per cent and Bhutias to sixteen per cent. This excluded Darjeeling which had been ceded by the Sikkim ruler to the British as a health and recreation resort forming part of the state of Bengal under British occupation. The rapid development of the tea estates on the periphery of Bhutan and Sikkim and large deployment of Nepalese labour there, further added to their migration both into Bhutan and Sikkim.

The entire ethnic scene had changed in Sikkim by 1947 when the British left India and India became independent. The Nepalese constituted seventy-five per cent of Sikkim's population reducing the Bhutia community to eleven per cent and the Lepchas to fourteen per cent. In terms of inter-ethnic group interaction, it acquired the attributes of a plural society with the focal point of its management being the ruler whose shrewd manipulations succeeded in co-opting at the top, the ethnic notables in the economic,

administrative and political fields.

The Bhutia rule had seen the emergence of a new social class called the Kazis who constituted the top echelon of the bureaucracy for the Bhutia rulers. They became the power behind the throne acquiring a social and economic dominance. It threw up its own problems in later years creating a new class conflict overriding ethnic considerations. The "haves" and "have nots" got clearly demarcated and became the nucleus of the political and economic alignments crossing the ethnic barriers. So long as the British ruled directly through their Political Officer, the ethnic imbalance and interaction of this had no major impact on Sikkim's governance. The Bhutias retained their dominant position supported by the elite from the various ethnic groups. The Lepchas remained as an appendage of the Bhutias with hardly any political or economic leverage. Barring a few elite amongst the Nepalese, the vast majority were sharecroppers or confined to petty trade or employed as labourers or workers. Their political status was second class and their power and numbers stood curbed by the enforced and manipulated parity with the minorities.

The political environment in India in the last few years of the British rule had affected the subdued anti-establishment forces in Sikkim. Exposed to the Indian political scene, the democratic aspirations of the Sikkimese political groups saw the stepping up of their activities. This was evident by the coming together of a segment of the patrician Kazi aristocracy and neo-rich plebians in the shape of the Sikkim State Congress. Inspired by the movement launched by Gandhi and Nehru in India, this party came up with a definite programme of abolition of landlordism, formation of an interim government, paving the way for a democratically elected ministry and finally accession to India like any other princely states. The newly formed government of free India in 1947 was already engaged in the process of integrating the Indian States. The Maharaja² of Sikkim, visualising such a possibility, formed a counter political group, the National Party, demanding status quo and separate and distinct political personality for Sikkim linked to India only as a protectorate under a Treaty.

²Sikkim's ruler was conferred with the title of Maharaja by the British like the rulers of other princely states.

While the Sikkim State Congress represented all the three ethnic groups with its programme and ideology of struggle against the exploitation by the rich landlords under a feudalistic system and setting up a democratic government, the National Party constituted mainly the loyalist Bhutias whose own interests demanded supporting the theocratic feudalism of Sikkim's ruling pattern of the Tibetan Lamaism. The ruler was not only the secular but also the religious head and their incarnate guardian of Buddhism which could not be separated. Interestingly, both the parties were led by Bhutias. A third political group, the Rajya Praja Sammelan, mainly consisting of Nepalese, emerged which wanted complete union with India with a closer association with the Nepalese of Darjeeling. It goes to the credit of the people of Sikkim then and subsequently that they lent support to the non-communal forces led by the Sikkim State Congress.

The change in the pattern of Indo-Sikkimese relationship after 1947 and the emergence of the Maharaja's new personality on the scene, led to several developments in later years affecting the ethnic and political issues. The ethnic scene became the scenario of not only bitter conflicts but rapid political changes. To maintain the supremacy of the Bhutia-Lepcha community, who were more loyal to the ruler, an intricate system of parity between them and the majority was evolved. It was extended even to the appointments in the Government and award of scholarships to students. Elections to the Sikkim Council, the legislative wing, were conducted on a parity formula which required a certain percentage of votes from the minority communities as obligatory. Thus there were cases of the Nepalese candidates who obtained the majority of votes but would be denied the seat having failed to get the required number of the minority votes. This way the Maharaja could play about with the loyalties of the candidates. It led to considerable disaffection amongst the Nepalese majority. Those of the Bhutia or Lepcha community who joined hands with the majority were penalised in several ways.

The economic imbalances amongst the three communities were also marked. The Bhutias owned the best of lands, and controlled business and urban property. The Lepchas, mostly confined to Dzongu area in the north in their "ancestral home", lived in utter poverty despite their rich cardamom growing lands. The Nepalese were agriculturists with limited land rights and were mostly sharecroppers.

The biggest imbalance however was almost half the land of Sikkim being vested with the Maharaja and his family as private estates. Most of it consisted of cardamom growing areas and rich forests which gave a substantial income. He also had a fairly large share in urban property besides his other business interests within and outside Sikkim. This did not end there. Out of a revenue budget of forty million rupees for Sikkim in 1973, one-tenth of it was spent on the Privy Purse and the palace bodyguards, an elite military police guarding the Palace. Use of public funds for giving indirect benefits to the ruler and his family was evident. The handful of Palace coteries made full use of the Maharaja's patronage at the cost of others. A further complicating factor in these vested interests was that of the Kazis who dominated the economic scene; a handful of them controlled the business besides the most productive land. They were the Maharaja's men who enjoyed all the favours and neglected the interests of the poor agricultural workers who were mostly sharecroppers. All communities were affected by the role of the Kazis and consequently aroused their hostility towards these people who controlled the economy of Sikkim. Kazi Lhendup Dorji was one of the exceptions who joined hands with the suppressed people and raised the banner of revolt against the ruler.

All these factors contributed towards general dissatisfaction amongst the people. With Buddhism as the state religion, the vast majority of Nepalese, who were Hindus, resented its dominance. Language was yet another issue. Sikkimese was the official language without any roots. It meant a Tibetan script with a local dialect spoken by less than ten per cent of the population. The Lepchas who had their own dialect were forced to learn Tibetan in schools. Yet, the commonly spoken language, even amongst the Bhutias and Lepchas, was Nepalese.

Even prior to 1947, the political leaders of Sikkim had come in close touch with the Indian National Congress leaders. Gandhi and Nehru were their political "Gurus" and the idea of democracy fired their imagination. The disintegration of the princely states in India gave these leaders a hope of similar possibilities in Sikkim. Since the Sikkimese were ruled by the British directly, with the Maharaja as the nominal head, these leaders hoped that the new Indian pattern would be applied to Sikkim also. They, therefore, demanded Sikkim's merger with India on the same basis as other princely states. In 1946, when the Interim Government was formed

in Delhi in preparation for the British to leave India, the leading political party of Sikkim then, the Sikkim State Congress led by Tashi Tsering, a Bhutia, made three demands—bringing about a democratic set up in Sikkim, abolition of landlordism and merger with India. This party launched a formal agitation in 1949 which led to the formation of an elected government which unfortunately lasted just over a month. The Maharaja, who was then the Maharaj-kumar,³ played his cards shrewdly. He highlighted the distinct culture and separate identity of Sikkim. If Sikkim, which had been treated by the British differently than the other princely states of India under a special treaty, were to accede to India, it would be the end of the indigenous people who represented the real personality of the State. The National Party, representing the Bhutia-Lepchas, also argued its case effectively for protecting the culture and identity of the original settlers since the 17th century. Sikkim posed no strategic threat at that time. Perhaps, Bhutan's example came in handy. In spite of Bhutan's legal status as a semi-independent country, unlike Sikkim, both kingdoms had come to be associated as similar in their origin and culture. India had already signed a treaty in 1949 with Bhutan almost similar to the one British had with her. Sikkim could continue as a protectorate of India as was the case under the British. These arguments prevailed on Delhi and governed the new arrangements despite Sardar Patel's⁴ views to the contrary. Patel visualised a threat developing from the Chinese and consequent strategic importance of Bhutan and Sikkim to India. Nehru's idealism decided the issue finally, maintaining the status quo vis-a-vis these two kingdoms. Although the 1949 agitation by the Sikkim State Congress against the ruler exemplified the new trends in Sikkimese politics, Delhi took a stand that the posting of an Indian Dewan as head of the administration would adequately meet the crisis and went ahead with the signing of a treaty in 1950 retaining Sikkim's status as a protectorate. It was a wrong decision. The posting of a Dewan was also a wrong step as it undermined the Political Officers' responsibility to administer the State of Sikkim.

³The eldest son of the Maharaja and consequently his successor, Palden Thondup, was in fact not the eldest. His elder brother, the rightful heir, having died while serving as a Royal Air Force Officer, Palden was recalled from his monastic life and made the Maharajkumar.

⁴Sardar Patel was then India's Home Minister and consequently in charge of the states.

While it is true that the role of the Political Officer from an administrator of Sikkim had undergone a change, even during the later part of the British rule, he continued to act as a Resident as was the practice in other Indian States. Sikkim being a bordering state of Tibet, the concept of a Resident with more executive powers and a direct say in the administration was rigidly followed and the Maharaja was a nominal head for all practical purposes. The induction of Dewan changed this concept.

The new arrangements enabled the Maharaja to emerge as the dominant personality on the Sikkimese scene. The role of the Political Officer underwent a significant change when the Indian Dewan became instrumental in exercising the power on behalf of the Maharaja. Besides the conflict which began to surface between the Political Officer and the Dewan, who were of matching experience and seniority, the Maharaja began to treat the Political Officer more as India's diplomatic representative than Delhi's agent to supervise and control the affairs of Sikkim. The Political Officers themselves became the victims of such an illusion when the style of functioning of India's Foreign Office changed from that of the Political Department⁵ under the British.

The Maharaja, who later came to be addressed as "Chogyal,"⁶ began to exercise executive power through the Dewan. Soon, the discriminatory practices against his Nepalese subjects came into full play leading to their complete economic and political domination. Barring the first Dewan, the others who followed lost their status and power by becoming the Chogyal's senior most civil servant under his direct command. This was contrary to the spirit of the understanding arrived at with the Foreign Office in 1949 under which the Dewan was an instrument of check on the Chogyal's abuse of his administrative powers. For the people of Sikkim, the Dewan stood devalued and with the erosion of the power of the Political Officer, the Chogyal became the centre of power for them. Delhi thus lost its leverage to check the growing independence of the Chogyal.

⁵The Political Department handled India's foreign relations and the princely states till 1947. When the British left in 1947, India's new Foreign Office took over the affairs of the Himalayan kingdoms and the affairs of the princely states passed on to the States Department of the Home Ministry.

⁶Chogyal is a Tibetan title indicating the ruler's supremacy over secular and religious matters, a system which prevailed in Tibet.

Soon, the Chogyal's ambitions got the better of him. His manipulations of the elections to install his chosen men in power on one hand and moves to obtain a status for Sikkim similar to Bhutan, brought him into conflict with the majority of his people and Delhi over the years. Playing one politician against the other and depriving the vast majority of his Nepalese subjects of equal rights and opportunities: economic or political, he eroded his base as a ruler. When he started asserting his personality beyond internal issues and came into conflict with Delhi, the anti-Chogyal political parties began to look forward for India's support which Delhi gave in full measure from 1972 onwards. The Chogyal having lost his credibility with the Indian Government and committing one mistake after another, Delhi took full advantage. The agitation of April 1973 was a sequel to these developments.