

Himalayan Odyssey: Attempts for Federation of the Himalayan Kingdoms

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If Tibet is taken away from the consideration, China should have no role to play in the affairs of the Himalayan region. But China claims that Tibet has been part of its imperial domain since long and thus the region bordering on Tibet, with whom Tibet had religious and cultural contacts, belong to the Chinese family of nationalities. Chinese imagine Tibet like the palm of the hand and adjoining regions in the Himalayas such as Arunachal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Ladakh are referred to as its five fingers. The historians inform that it was the Mongol adventurer Kublai Khan (1216-1294), the grandson of the great Genghis (1162-1227), who brought Tibetan theocrat, Phag-pa, in his imperial fold as something like a dependent theocrat of Tibet, who was permitted to be autonomous in Tibet. Kublai did accept Buddhism along with Daoism and Confucian faiths as political strategy of administration. In this way, he had no hesitation in accepting the Tibetan theocrat, whose incarnations would be recognized as the Dalai Lama, the head of the Geylug-pa sect among the Tibetan Buddhists, as his preceptor. Thus, a system got evolved in which a type of Guru-shishya or teacher-disciple relation developed between the Tibetan preceptor and the Mongol Emperor, which the Chinese would term as patron-client relation between the two, in course of time. And thus they claim that Tibet had been historically part of the Chinese Empire ever since.

Genghis and his descendants did believe that the Heaven had ordained the entire world to them to rule over and thus they had every

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right to subjugate one and all. And those who opposed to the Mongol inroad, earned their wrath: they were not only defeated, but were massacred; enslaved; brutalized and annihilated. Those of them, who surrendered in time, were not only spared the torture and annihilation but they were also rewarded. Kublai's descendants lost power in China within less than hundred years of his death, but he gave birth to an illustrious dynasty of rulers: Yuan (Man, John: 2014: xiii). After them, it were the Ming and Manchus prior to coming of Comingtang (KMT) nationalist Sunyat Sen in 1911; succeeded by Chiang Kai Shek, and then by the Communist Party of China in 1949. The new regime was a totalitarian one with imperialist agenda in the name of the proletariat. It is claimed that Chairman Mao believed that the thickly populated coastal Hans must be shifted in thinly settled frontier regions of Manchuria, Mongolia, Turkistan, and Tibet for their prosperity and creation of national wealth. Thus, People's Republic of China (PRC) pursued a vigorous and active frontier policy of extending its rule to un-administered regions. Moreover, the claimed revolutionary regime had no pretention in happily implementing old imperial agenda with reference to the neighbouring countries. It were they, who talked about a strategy to involve small, weak and vulnerable Himalayan little States into a loose federation, which could be easily hoodwinked by them and work as a shield for their clandestine design of territorial extension on thinly veiled ideological and historical grounds. In course of time, about half a dozen such proposals for formation of Federation of the Himalayan Kingdoms was floated and by mid-1970's they died their natural death for a variety of reasons. An analysis of those wild ideas underscore the nature of complexity of the ambitions, policies, alignments, and operation of the human actors and social forces of the region at large.

The Early Speculation on the Himalayan Federation in Sikkim and Bhutan

“It is not clear how much the Dalai Lama knew about the anti-Chinese resistance that was being formed – or if even Nehru was aware of what the CIA in Kolkata, and their two royal Sikkimese lady friends were up to. In September, 1952, the US Consul General in Kolkata, Gary Soulton, went on a trek in Sikkim with Princess Kukula (Tashi Namgyal's daughter) to survey the terrain. On his return to India, he contacted India's then spy master, B. N. Malik. Contacts were made with two of the Dalai Lamas's brothers then living in exile. The elder of the two, Thubten

Norbu, already had contacts and the younger, Gyalo Thondup, had settled in Darjeeling” (Lintner, Birtil: 2012: p. 18). Though, George N. Patterson takes the credit to propose a grand idea of the Himalayan Federation in typical British colonial mode as a buffer between the Indian Union and People’s Republic of China (Patterson, G N: 1963: 290-291; 1970: 21), its reverberations were already echoed and noted in the right places much earlier. J.S. Lall, the Indian Dewan of Sikkim, reported on November 21, 1953 to his superiors in Delhi that Mr. K. R. Pradhan, one of the elected Executive Councillors in Sikkim referred to the talk of an alliance between Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal from the Crown Prince.

On the other hand, the Crown Prince openly claimed that there was no distinction between the Sikkimese (Bhutias) and Tibetans in any respect and, therefore, there was every reason for the amalgamation of Sikkim with Tibet. He asserted that his own uncle, Ragashar Dzasa, was then Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan army. He also appreciated the activities of the Chinese Communists, who were taking so much interest and pain to reform a backward country like Tibet. The two rulers of the Eastern Himalayas, Tashi Namgyal of Sikkim and Jigme Wangchuk of Bhutan, were not in the picture in late 1940s and early 1950s. The Bhutan Agent, Raja Sonam Tobgyel Dorji, who was married to Sikkim Maharaja’s sister, was the public and external face of the Kingdom. He, one of the most experienced operators on the scene, who was in favour of Sikkim and Bhutan joining hands with Tibet against others. The Crown Prince administered Sikkim on behalf of His Highness. In early 1950’s the old Bhutan ruler and his external public face, Raja S. T. Dorji, the Bhutan Agent in India, expired, leaving the scene open to three relatively young men in their 20’s i.e. new Bhutan Ruler, Jigmi Wangchuk (married to Raja Dorji’s Daughter and Sikkim ruler’s niece), Jigmie Palden Dorji, Raja Dorji’s son and successor to the office of the Bhutan Agent and Palden Thondup, the Crown Prince of Sikkim, to handle the destiny of the two kingdoms.

Left to themselves, the cousins, Namgyals and Dorjis, desired to get out of ‘so-called Indian clutches’, but their biggest bugbear was the presence of Nepalese immigrants in the two Buddhist kingdoms in an appreciable number. Any democratic pretension in two kingdoms starts with the Nepalese and, as the only democratic polity around; it was India, which would naturally champion the cause of democracy through the immigrant Nepalese and would get benefit out of it. On the other hand, Nepal, especially King Mahendra and his henchmen such

as Tanka Prasad Acharya, Rishikesh Shah, Tulsi Giri and the like were enthusiastically canvassing for 'Federation of Himalayan Kingdoms' consisting of Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. Apparently this political contraption would have been led by the big brother of among them, King Mahendra of Nepal, and as he had allegedly strong support among the immigrant Nepalese in two other Kingdoms. It was an idea, which the other two Kingdoms would not dream of. So, the Nepalese proposal was doomed to its failure even before it was canvassed seriously. When the issue was posed by missionary turned journalist, George Patterson to Jigmie Dorji, the Prime Minister of Bhutan in 1964, he reacted: "I told you before that I would not touch it (the proposal for the federation) because we would be overrun by these Nepali bastards. India would not look at it, anyway, and we are doing too well with India to consider it... If you can get the Tibetan leaders to agree and accept this (proposal), he said slowly, then I am with you. With Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet, Nepal could not dominate such a group. But it has not got a chance. India and China will never touch it." (Patterson, G N: 1970: 30).

Normally, the common Bhutanese did not make much distinction between the Bhutanese royal family (Wangchuks) and their kinsfolk and close associates, Dorjis in 1950s. So much so that the third Wangchuk ruler, Jigme, got married to Raja S. T. Dorji's second daughter, Kesang, and Raja Dorji's second son, Ugyen Rimpoche (Rim), was subsequently married to King's step sister, Princess Choki. Jigmie Dorji, queen's elder brother, apart from being the Bhutan Agent in India and Administrator of Ha and southern Bhutan, was the Prime Minister. His youngest brother, flamboyant Lhendup Dorji, was soon appointed as the Secretary General, in newly created Planning Department and their elder sister, Tashi, was the Bhutanese representative in Colombo Plan and was to take over as the Commissioner of Tashigong, the most populous district in Eastern Bhutan. Apparently, as the Dorjis were western educated, they were the first choice for such postings, when Bhutan decided to do away with traditional structure of administration, but elements closer to the Wangchuks did not appreciate such developments and saw in them dilution of the traditional royal authority. At the top of it, the King was not keeping a sound health. The queen used to travel often to her ancestral estates at Kalimpong, Ha, Namseyling near Thimphu and elsewhere. In such a situation, it was not unnatural for the King to liaison with a Tibetan lady, Yangki, who taking advantage of her royal proximity, began making undue interference in the administrative matters, which accentuated the

factional rifts among the State functionaries. Nari Rustomji, an astute observer of the Bhutanese scene, termed it mildly as the conflict between the traditionalist and modernist factions among the royal functionaries (Rustomji, N K: 1987: 12-13).

The wheel of the events moved fast; while the King was away for treatment in Switzerland, his Prime Minister and brother-in-law, Jigmie Palden Dorji, was shot dead on April 5, 1964 in the State Guest House at Phuntshiling, the Bhutanese border town in the south Bhutan. Jigmie's youngest brother, Lhendup Dorji immediately took over his office of Prime Minister automatically and made his presence felt in a big way. The inquiry in the murder led to uncovering of a conspiracy in which some top army officers and King's Tibetan concubine's names figured prominently. The Dorjis began to apprehend that there were plots to eliminate them from the Bhutanese scene and in the panic, a number of arrests were made. And the new Prime Minister's inexperience in handling the sensitive affairs of the State at this critical hour were glaring. The King was fed with the details of all these developments. He was not only unhappy, but was also angry over the shoddy events in his Kingdom. The King decided to return and take over the administration in his hands. His flamboyant new Prime Minister tried to reach him without success and then he and his associates ran away from the country; first they took shelter in East Pakistan and then in Nepal, where their request for asylum was granted and the coterie got busy in issuing anti-Indian and anti-King Press Statements. They termed the Bhutan King as mentally unsound under heavy dose of medication and puppet in the hands of the Indian advisors. Soon, more resourceful and imaginative, Tashi Dorji, Lhendup's sister, joined the fugitives in Kathmandu and a series of damning statements were given to the Press (for illustration, Indian Express, New Delhi, December 11, 1964).

A. Patterson's Grand imperial Design of Himalayan Buffer Zone: A Confederation of the Himalayan States:

According to Journalist Sunanda Datta Ray, Political Officer Basil Gould had advised in 1942 to Palden Thondup Namgyal the Crown Prince of Sikkim, to think of a possible federation of the Buddhist Kingdoms in the Himalayas consisting of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet as a buffer between India and China. And Namgyal immediately got busy with the idea by inviting his two uncles, Raja S. T. Dorji, the Bhutan Agent, and Dzasa Rongsar, the Foreign Minister of Tibet. George Patterson, the former missionary turned journalist, wrote in 1963: "There seems to be little

doubt that following their 'magnanimous' withdrawal from India's NEFA after inflicting a humiliating defeat on the Indian Army, China is now preparing to deliver a coup de grace. This would be accompanied by moving into and occupying Bhutan. Not only her historical claim to this territory much more firmly based than NEFA, but occupation of Bhutan would isolate Assam from the rest of India. Bhutan, at its western extremity, even without its formerly annexed territories, now part of India, forms part of a narrow neck of territory, some thirty miles wide, with East Pakistan, through which runs the only rail and road link between oil rich and tea growing areas of Assam and India. Further, it would give China control over NEFA, access to all the rebellious tribes in the north-east and, without occupying any 'Indian' territory, bring her influence right down to East Pakistan. It would also bring her into direct touch with the militant state parties of the Communist Party of India, also in a position to create 'Yenan-type', revolutionary Communist Party able to take over control of India.

This is the vision which the Chinese leaders in Peking have held out to the people of the Himalayas and Asia. It is far more than a policy, but the implicit benefits of the policy seem imminently satisfactory to the individual nations. A Confederation of Himalayan States to include Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, NEFA, and Nagaland. A major road aid to Nepal; diplomatic recognition, sovereignty and aid for Bhutan, arms and independence for the Nagas; border agreements for Pakistan and Burma, military aid for Indonesia, Laos, and North Vietnam. And, more ambitious still, the greater vision lying tantalizingly just beyond, world recognition and power. For Peking is now putting forward its grand plan, a three-Continent Conference, to include Asia, Africa and Latin America, but to exclude the West and Russia (Patterson, G N: 1963: 290-291).

Soon, Patterson got involved with a Non-Governmental Organization as its Director, International Committee for the Study of Group Rights (ICSGR), or a Commission for Minorities, taking up the grievances of small nations oppressed by others and who had no representation at the United Nations. He found, in his own logic, that the Indian policy makers, British traditional bureaucrats on Tibet and American refugee organizations representatives were all too happy to support a brother of the Dalai Lama in Gyalu Thondup and a former Tibetan delegate, Shakapba, without looking too closely at their antecedents. He believed that the above powers followed a suicidal policy of accepting the two as representatives of the Tibetans' interests, who were intensely disliked by a majority of the Tibetans. He also presumed that India would require

Tibet as a friendly buffer State and the fighting Khampas as allies in their conflict against Chinese. Thus, he volunteered to take it on himself to attempt to save India and, by extension, the West from the consequences of their own peculiar folly (Patterson, N George: 1070). Incidentally, his book was banned in India, though its text contains a long and positive interview with the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He decided in his old missionary spirit to take up the Tibetan cause once again. And for that, he adopted a new cloak, with three objectives: (1) to make a film about Tibetan refugees in action ideally in Tibet, if not, in Nepal, (2) to explore the possibility of a feature film on Tibet with a possible appearance of the Dalai Lama in it and (3) to examine the possibility of a 'Confederation of Himalayan States' by discussing with leading officials in India, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. And for that, he chose Nepal to begin with and on way to it, he decided to begin his campaign in Delhi by meeting to plead with three leading anti-Nehru parliamentarians in opposition: M. R. Masani, J. B. Kripalani and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia sometimes in 1963.

And as he put it, accidentally, he came across Jigmie Dorji, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, in Delhi. Apparently, Dorji was a known character to him to the extent that he immediately broached the subject of a Confederation of Himalayan States. Jigmie Dorji threw his hands in protest: "I told you before that I wouldn't touch it because we'd be overrun by these Nepalese bastards. India would not look at it, anyway, and we're doing too well from India to consider it". Continues Patterson in a conversational style and he went on to outline his grand scheme of Himalayan Federation consisting of Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, NEFA and Nagaland, as a grand buffer zone between India and China. Jigmie Dorji reacted: "If you can get the Tibetan leaders to agree and accept this", he said slowly, "then I'm with you. Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet with Nepal couldn't dominate such a group. But it has no chance. India and China will never touch it. You're mad, Patterson, I always said it, now I know it for sure" (Patterson, G N, 1970). But Patterson continued on and spread out his detailed plan for the federation. The first step was that the Dalai Lama decides to return to Tibet on the condition that the Chinese withdraw their armed forces from Tibet; then India too decides to remove her forces from Sikkim and Bhutan; the Dalai Lama does not return a reactionary old feudal monastic set-up; rather to a new set-up and then the federation takes the shape under international guarantee. He did not disclose why Kashmir, Ladakh, Arunachal and Nagaland should be included within

the Federation and how will the grand scheme would operate? Was it just his wishful thinking or had he got some understanding with the Chinese and/or the Indian policy makers?

B1.Federation of Himalayan Kingdoms:

A Potential Anti-Communist American Mechanization:

From mid-1950s to 1969, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States of America financially supported and trained Tibetan resistance fighters, especially the Khampas, along the porous southern borders of Tibet. It was the period of the cold war in the world politics in which the Western World saw rising of the Communist China as an evil and worldwide expansion of communist movement, which was to be stopped at all cost. And for that, apart from the strategic involvement of the western agencies, they used academic surveillance against their targets under their elaborate area study programme, in which even the visiting scholars to USA were drafted. P. P. Karan, an India born American domiciled geographer, wrote in 1963: "Along the slopes of the Himalayas, between Communist-occupied Tibet and democratic India, lie the three little-known Kingdoms of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal. Completely land-locked and cut-off from the rest of the world by mighty mountains and malarial forests, these small Kingdoms remained a sealed book for a long time, territories whose rulers actively discouraged foreign visitors and alien ways...A major transformation is stirring in the remote highlands of these three Kingdoms as their rulers attempt to challenge the middle-age feudalism of the Himalayan lands into the world of the twentieth century. The challenge of Communist aggression in the Himalaya has caused deep concern to the United States of America as well as India and brought these small countries into ideologically induced tension between freedom and Communism.

He goes further and suggests that the region had become an arena between the two competing political systems: Communist totalitarian and democratic free market driven Democracy: The Himalayan kingdoms constitute a critical sector of the Free World's ceaseless struggle against Communist challenge. To Communist China, the high plateau of Tibet is like the palm of the hand with Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and North East Frontier Agency as five fingers. China has the palm under its control; now it wants the strategic five fingers without which the palm is not very useful.

Apart from the above, there had been a strong concern for the 'Strategic Area Study' of the Himalayan region in the University of

California, Berkeley, under the rubric of 'Himalayan Border Countries Project' with special reference to 'Area research project' on India and China. Among others, Prof. Leo E. Rose, one of the editors of the Journal, *Asian Survey*, was one of the key operatives, who undertook numerous visits to region, conducted field and archival researches and published a series of titles ranging from Ladakh, to Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh (Rose, Leo E: 1956; 1971 ; Rose, L E: 1977: Rose, L E & M W Fisher: 1970 ; Rose, L E & M. W. Fisher: Undated). Leo Rose was the Director of the ambitious Himalayan Border Countries Project and with his half Chinese and half American Jew background; he was in and out of various Himalayan States and certainly in contact with power elite of these countries. The Director of the Project was charged with hiring many anthropologists to gather strategic information on life and practices of the communities in the region. However, there was a controversy on the alleged defence funding of the study in 1960s and the activities on the area research was forced to adopt a low profile.

B. II. Socialist Party of India and the Himalayan Federation :

The State of Nepal is so much exercised with its insularity that, whether it is the King or the commoners, they have developed a curious complex with reference to India. It was the father and son team of kings, Mahendra and Birendra, who set the tone for their national past-time of anti-democratic tirade. Suave diplomat and, at one time, foreign minister of his country, who successfully played Panchayati game against his former Nepali Congress colleagues, Rishikesh Shah, confessed the national guilt: "The dominant cultural ethos in Nepal, however, derives its origin and influence from India. Nepal has been subject to the major tradition of Hinduism as well as its subsidiary traditions with their emphasis on the mother godlings and clan deities. India's influence has been so dominant in all spheres of Nepali life that Nepali people, by way of reaction, feel impelled to appear different from Indians at every possible opportunity. This is seen almost as essential for the purpose of national identity in the context of the present day political reality in the world. Nepal's fear of absorption into the Indian mother culture has been heightened by the tendency of some of the Indian leaders to over-emphasize their concept of 'greater India' in politico-cultural terms. In their zeal to counterbalance the tendency, Nepal's intellectuals are inclined to misrepresent the impact and nature of Nepal's relationship

with China, which has been intermittent and never as close, as its relationship with India” (Shah, R: 1990: 2). One of the worst examples of such a so-called intellectual exercise is provided by Kaisher Bahadur KC, a former Rana functionary and a son-in-law of the then royal family, notorious for organizing Gorkha Dal attack on the first home minister of Nepal, B. P. Koirala in his official residence. The gentleman was subsequently drafted possibly at the instance of His Majesty, by the next Prime Minister to accompany him on his State visit to India. Kaisher Bahadur takes pain to parade his knowledge to canvass superiority of the Nepalese cultural heritage in his book, *Nepal After The Revolution, 1950*. Another courtier, Daman B. Tuladhar, son of the royal purse keeper, similarly brags inanity and exposes his boorishness through pages of his book (Tuladhar, D R : 1980)

Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, a leader of the Indian Congress Socialist Party (CSP), to which Bisheshwar Prasad Koirala belonged in 1930s and '40s, chided his former socialist colleague, and then the Prime Minister of Nepal on his statement suggesting Nepalese efforts to maintain equidistance between India and China: “Politicians of Nepal should not try to be clever...Prime Minister Koirala and other Nepalese leaders say that Nepal has been under the influence of China and India equally. It is not true. Many Nepalese went to jail in India’s struggle for freedom and many Indians suffered for Nepal in the same manner (in the armed insurrection against the Ranas in 1950, launched by the Nepali Congress). Why it did not happen in regard to China? It is obvious that in the matters of language, script, culture, religion, physical features, etc. Nepal is akin to India. Such statements will not deter the Chinese from their plans and whenever there is a chance, they will certainly try to thrust a Communist Government over Nepal...I appeal to the opposition leaders (of Nepal), Sri (S. P.) Upadhyaya and Dr. K. I. Singh not to use the Indo-China border question to gain some political advantage over Koirala Government. They must remember...the fact that under the Chinese they will have to go the way of Sri Koirala”(Lohia, R, 2002, 109).

The problem was that with a view to finding fault with Nehru’s stand on Tibet in their anti-communist ideology, the Indian socialists desired a move to save Tibet from China. It was a stand, to which there were no takers. In spite of all press reports in support of the cause of Tibetans, neither the Western countries took stand in favour of Tibet against China, nor did the Tibetans openly oppose the Chinese take over. They had no armed forces worth the name to oppose the People’s Liberation Army. Even the Regent of the Dalai Lama did not publicly

oppose the march of the People's army to Tibet. They had no wherewithal of the modern state, nor did they have an economy to stand against the Chinese even for a few days. Though it is a fact that the Tibetan regime of The Dalai Lama did expect Britain, U S A and India to take the Tibetan cause with the Chinese, but in the aftermath of the Second World War, the West decided not to take an unenviable side, i.e., Tibet against the Chinese. So Indian Socialists' noise to 'save the Himalayas move' was more of an anti-communist posturing.

C. Nepalese Design of the Federation of the Himalayan Kingdoms:

When India became independent, the British Residency in Kathmandu was transferred to her in December, 1947. The Prime Minister, Padma Shamsher, anticipated that their ties with India would be patterned on model of Nepal's ties with that of the British authorities in India. "But most of the Ranas considered (Jawaharlal) Nehru's India as an ally of dispossessed masses of Nepal and to safeguard their own personal interests, they considered themselves in the camp opposed to Independent India...(Very soon the Maharajadhiraj Tribhuwan would seek political asylum in India against the Rana autocrats, and with her assistance, would get back his ancestral prerogatives to rule over Nepal in the teeth of the Ranas' opposition. Moreover, there were many Ranas of various classes with considerable wealth and resources, who were rehabilitated in India by the British and they did not hesitate to play all types of sectional politics in 1950s). Three of the Ranas, who had been the Maharaja's Prime Ministers of Nepal, were in India. Yuddha (was) in Dehra Dun, Padma in Ranchi and Mohan in Bangalore. The Ranas were still very powerful in Nepal but their absolute control of all important offices of the State had gone. The change, however, had been generally peaceful and came from the King himself. The King Tribhuwan's eldest son, Mahendra was married to Marharaja Yuddha's grand-daughter and a second son, Prince Himalaya was married to a great-grand-daughter of Yuddha. The sisters of King Tribhuwan were married to (former Prime Minister) Chandra Shamsher's sons" (Sanwal, B D: 1993: 130-131). So one may imagine how difficult it was to separate interests of the Ranas from that the Maharajadhirajs of Nepal in mid-20th century. Some of the Class C Ranas such as Shubarna Shamsher and Mahabir Shamsher with their considerable investments in India and elsewhere played populist politics to settle their score with the A Class Ranas. But bulk of them held important appointments in army and

the civil service in the new order in 1950s; they sympathised and supported All India Gorkha League in India and had their own outfit, Gorkha Parishad, to settle scores with the Nepali Congress, considered to be an agent of Indian National Congress by the Nepalese establishment.

Successive Kings (of Nepal) had surrounded themselves with advisors, who were inspired intriguers, dedicated sycophants and conscientious frauds. They ill-served their unsuspecting masters, who, alas, always missed the pulse of the time. In view of a journalist with long years of reporting on the Himalayan kingdoms: "Internally, corruption and nepotism had grown to a magnitude never known before in the history of Nepal, even under the worst of the Ranas. Corruption was open and everyone in the government was believed to be involved in some or other or another scandal, so that the reputation of every government servant, including the prime minister was nil. The people lost faith in the administration, for officials preferred staying in the comfort of Kathmandu to travelling with discomfort and difficulty in the interior, and nothing was done about conditions outside the (Kathmandu) Valley, and little enough inside it" (Patterson, G N: 1970; *ibid*, 45). Patterson noted that since King Mahendra (b. 1920; r. 1955-1972) had taken over direct rule in 1960, he had only superficially reorganized the government administration and put in his own supporters in key positions. But at the same time, he had established elite of "Palace appointees", who had direct access to him, and through whom, he was able to keep an eye on the sprawling, disorganized formal machinery of government, still largely manned by corrupt, sycophantic and time-wasting officials of Rana regime.

King Mahendra was ambitious and was also keen to rule Nepal as an absolute sovereign Hindu King. He knew that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian people were backing parliamentary democracy in Nepal, which came in the way of his ambitious plan of absolute rule. And thus, he decided to court for an alternative support from countries hostile to India such as China and Pakistan. He openly canvassed his idea of the hereditary ruler's right in a Hindu Kingdom. He emphasised that the Hindu ruler's duties to the country were: 'to maintain sovereignty of the country; to maintain national integrity; to improve relations with the other countries; and to initiate action oriented to public good' (Sanwal, B D: 1993: 175). He also expressed determination not to allow any real hindrance in his sway. Unlike his late father, he was an absolute monarch in law and in fact. "King Tribhuvan had

preferred to keep crown as free as possible from day-to-day political and administrative duties. Although forced to take up these functions by the series of crises which plagued his reign, his primary objective always appeared to create conditions which would enable him to retire once again to his role of constitutional monarch. King Mahendra, it would appear, view(ed) a passive role as akin to dereliction of duty, and consider(ed) the crown to be the one institution capable of providing dynamic leadership required, if Nepal was to maintain its national integrity and rapid economic and political progress” (Rose, Leo E and M R Fisher: 1970: 41).

It will be instructive to understand psyche of King Mahendra with a view to appreciating his pivotal role in canvassing for Federation of Himalayan Kingdoms in 1960s. He did not have formal education. However, he had a strong will, abundant self-confidence and mind of a great capacity. In the opinion of his only elected Prime Minister, Koirala, “he was anti-India, and also by conviction...he was very much repelled by his father and whatever the latter did was anathema to him. It was a ‘father-hate’ reaction. Since his father was instrumental in tripartite agreement, Delhi agreement (between the King, Rana Prime Minister and the Nepali Congress) that is, he hated it like anything. Since his father was friendly to India, he hated India.” Moreover, he believed, “if I have to reign and not to rule (Nepal) directly, why should I stick like a leech to the throne. (In that eventuality), I will give up the throne” (Chatterji, B: 1980: 103). In fact, he appeared to be so desperate that at one stage, he organized a conspiracy against the King, his own father in connivance with his Rana father-in-law. Thus, his main concern was to forge a political structure that would guarantee his remaining the absolute source of power in the land. The very idea of a democratic polity with constitutional monarchy espoused by the most popular political party of Nepal, Nepali Congress, was something like anathema to him.

Like his Rana kinsmen, King Mahendra was pathologically hostile to democracy and its supporters and he did not hide his antipathy to them. Forced by the circumstances, he did order the first general election in May, 1959 in which Nepali Congress led by B. P. Koirala came to power and B. P. was appointed as the Prime Minister. It is a fact that the roots of democracy were still weak in Nepal, and without keeping that in mind, the newly elected Prime Minister began his ambitious programmes perhaps prematurely, which went much beyond the priorities of his sovereign. Furthermore, King Mahendra was yet to get used to

functioning as the Head of the State in a democratic system surrendering part of the lime light to his Prime Minister. He had lived in glare of national importance as the Head of the State and as the virtual administrative Head of Nepal; thus, he was uncomfortable with Koirala's stealing the limelight, as if the Prime Minister was cutting him to size politically. This imagined stipulation was totally unacceptable to King Mahendra and he decided to act fast without giving even a hint to his cabinet of ministers. Thus, he not only dismissed his duly elected Prime Minister without assigning any reason, but also imprisoned most of the ministers and members of the parliament; banned the political parties and took over the administration in his own hands. King's act was denounced far and wide, but the strongest opposition and denouncement came from Nepal's southern neighbour, India. King Mahendra took the Indian opposition to his action very seriously and with a view to counter balancing it, he mounted an alternative strategy to win over support for himself from any corner at any cost.

In their zeal to express their loyalty to the King and express their solidarity with his actions, the immature Nepalese press, especially four leading newspapers, unleashed puerile propaganda against India. They advanced even unsolicited advice to Sikkim and Bhutan to take note of Indian sinister designs on them and asked them to free themselves from Indian interference. They proposed "a federation of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, with Nepal taking the lead, a suggestion which, if it had not emanated from the King controlled press, would have been stigmatized as a blatant Chinese take-over plan for the whole Himalayan area since this has been a communist suggestion for some time. They also published serialized anti-Indian articles, a campaign was started against the Indian newspaper reporters in Kathmandu, and even against an official of the Indian Embassy who was alleged to have paid a visit to a political worker's house" (Patterson, G N: 1963: 152).

The first thing he did was to carve out a distinctly loyal band of functionaries by inviting/enticing unscrupulous, ambitious, and resourceful elements from the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) from India, once their demand for a separate State of Gorkhas in Darjeeling was rejected in 1956. For example, one Prakash Thakur, a former AIGL delegate to Pandit Nehru in 1948, was appointed as the Chief of the Protocol, the Royal Government of Nepal in 1964; a brother of the former AIGL Member to West Bengal Legislative Assembly, known as Jesse was the Chief of the Nepal Chamber of Commerce, a privy councillor and a Director of the Royal Nepal Airways Corporation. One Chahvan "organized Gurkha League activities in Assam and Darjeeling".

Amir Lama, son of Santabir Lama of Sukhiapokri, Darjeeling, another activist of AIGL, who had supported King Mahendra's action in dismissing the democratic government in 1960, and for which he was 'expelled from India', was His Majesty's nominee in the National Panchayat and the President of the Buddhist Society of Nepal. And this was the worthy gentleman, who was sent to People's Republic of China as the Leader of the Nepalese Buddhist Society (Patterson, George N: 1970).

Another move King Mahendra undertook was to canvass not so tacit support for a Federation of the Himalayan Kingdoms, consisting of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, in which, he was alleged to have full support from China. It was apparently an old Chinese game, which Nepal felt happy to play, as it suited its distant dream of Greater Nepal across the Himalayan ranges in its own image. The only thing, he forgot in his antipathy to Indian interests, was to take it for granted that the other two Kings would be equally adventurous to toy with the idea of the Federation, forgetting their internal support-base and historical experiences of dealing with Nepal and the Nepalese. And he did not stop at that; he sent his factotum, Dr Tulsi Giri, one of the arc turncoats of Nepalese politics, to gauge the political waters in other two Kingdoms in the east. It is not clear whether he tried to reach the Maharaja and the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim, but Dr Giri did visit Gangtok and Rangpo in Sikkim and tried his best to meet the sundry Nepalese politicians, who felt demoralized because of the policy of ethnic parity system in Sikkim. And naturally, he failed to enter Bhutan and had to satisfy himself and his mentor by running into some former members of Bhutan State Congress living in exile in and around Siliguri.

End of the Himalayan Dream: The Federation Flounders

Two developments, which occurred almost simultaneously in the region, had a strong bearing on the clandestine moves and counter-moves for the Federation of the Himalayan Kingdoms. Firstly, People's Republic of China and United States of America decided to bury their bitter animosity and the latter decided to support the former as a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations Organization (UNO) in place of Taiwan in 1971. And in this development, Pakistan played the role of an interested match-maker. This facilitated a thaw in American support to the cause of the Tibetan dissenters operating in the Himalayan region. And secondly, the Indian Union intervened decisively in the ongoing civil war in East Pakistan leading to the creation of Bangladesh in

December 1972, which again demonstrated a resolve on the part of Indian Union to stand by its national priorities and its perceived interests.

The idea of Himalayan Federation remained largely in the print media and in fact, it was never taken seriously by anybody diplomatically. Firstly, the Chinese formulation of Tibetan palm with five fingers representing various and varying Himalayan States was never taken seriously and formally. At the most, it was considered to be the Chinese arrogance to claim a series of nations as its own on flimsy historical claims of doubtful credibility. It appears that neither did the Chinese themselves take their alleged claims seriously. Moreover, gone were the days of national claims on some or other historical invasion/incursion/expedition on neighbouring countries based on the discredited principle of conquest. Secondly, George Patterson's wild and vague ideas of linking Nagaland, Assam Hills, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet and Ladakh with that of the Federation of the Himalayan Kingdoms was seen as unworkable substitute of old British Imperial fad of buffer States to keep their Indian empire in secure hands and some extra-territorial rights in Tibet. Neither did he ever try to spell out similarity among the diverse political and religious elements. Thirdly, there is no known evidence to suggest that either of the two Kings of Sikkim and Bhutan, Tashi Namgyal and Jigme Wangchuk, did take any interest in the idea of the Himalayan federation, as they had been more concerned with the ever increasing demographic size of the Nepalese in their Kingdoms. Fourthly, the first ominous nail in the coffin of the federation idea was that of the murder of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji, in 1964 at Phuntshiling, which led to the Druk-Gyalpo (King of Bhutan) asserting his authority and consequent eclipse of the Dorjis in the power structure of Bhutan, and the residual group's subsequent exile to Nepal. In the process, Nepal got exposed to as the epicentre of activities associated with the scheme potentially under the aegis of the ambitious Hindu King in the world, i.e. Mahendra. As a rebound, Bhutan and its ruler went whole hog in the Indian company and concentrated on getting the Kingdom recognized as a member of the United Nations Organization (UNO), which it did in 1971 with Indian sponsorship. Fifthly, the strongest pillar of the idea of Himalayan Federation, King Mahendra and his Bhutanese counterpart, Jigme Wangchuk, expired in 1972 leaving the two Kingdoms in the hands of two untested Crown Prince: Birendra and Jigme Singhe. Lastly, Palden Thondup Namgyal, the Chogyal of Sikkim and the last stake holder in the game of the Himalayan Federation, ran in rough weather with his subjects in 1973 (Sinha, A C: 1975; 2008). Incidentally, though the anti-feudal agitation was led by a Lepcha

aristocrat, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, it were the Sikkimese Nepalis, who overwhelmed the Namgyal ruler leading to eclipse of 333 years old Kingdom with its merger with the Indian Union in 1975. Thus, about two decades old Himalayan Odyssey of a Federation of the Himalayan Kingdoms effectively came to an end in a way in 1975, but its aftermath persisted in a different form and scale. And that may be identified with that of the policy of Nepal as a Zone of Peace, pursued vigorously by its sovereign.

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