



**Political History**  
**OF**  
**Himalayan States—**

Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim  
& Nagaland Since 1947

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## CHAPTER ONE

# *Prelude to India*

THE CORNER-STONE OF BRITISH POLICY WAS TO SAFEGUARD India, "the noblest trophy of the British genius and most splendid appanage of the Imperial crown"<sup>1</sup> so that no one can understand the foreign policy of Great Britain during that period without keeping India constantly in view. In 1893, Durand line demarcated the Indo-Afghan border from Chitral to Baluchistan and, two years later, the Pamir boundary commission between Britain and Russia ceded a narrow strip of mountainous land, 15 to 30 kilometres wide, to Afghanistan to prevent the British and Czarist empires from touching each other. Britain also developed a kind of monroe doctrine to maintain her *predominant influence in countries adjacent to India*<sup>2</sup> and though trade with Tibet did not promise to be lucrative, it helped them establish their firm political influence on Lhasa.

When India became independent in 1947, she assumed the existing treaty rights of the former British government including its special privileges in Tibet. The British mission in Lhasa became an Indian mission and British trade marts and lines of communication became Indian lines of communication. British representative in Lhasa, Mr. Hugh Richardson, was allowed to continue at his post until 1950 when the Indian government found a suitable incumbent for it. Indian posts in Tibet appeared to be of no great value to the Government of India then because, while Kuomintang China engaged in a fatal civil war was hardly a power to challenge India, the USSR had ceased to be a military threat that Czarist Russia once had been. It was duly noted by British diplomats in 1920, that the Bolsheviks were more an ideological threat, inasmuch as they issued flaming appeals and prophecies<sup>3</sup> from time to time and smuggled some help to native revolutionary movements, but thirty years of Soviet power had demonstrated convincingly that it had no intention to intervene openly in any of the colonies. Interna-

1. Lord Curzon.

2. Sir Alfred Lyall.

3. Such as, "the rule of the plunderers is tottering"—appeal by the *Council of Peoples Commissars* on 7 Dec 1917.

tional communist policy initially was not favourable to the 'bourgeois' regimes emerging in Asia after the second world war but the British and Indian leaders and ensured, by a peaceful transfer, that there would be no power vacuum in India to permit the chances of red sailing.<sup>1</sup>

## INITIAL DIFFICULTIES

THE EMERGENCE OF COMMUNIST CHINA IN 1949-50 ABRUPTLY changed this picture and made the Tibet region once more important for the Indian government. Prime Minister Nehru was realistic enough to see that communist China was an accomplished fact and that capitalist India would have to come to terms with it<sup>2</sup> rather than take a negativist attitude which a far-off and powerful country like the USA could afford. So the Indian government was one of the first to accord a *de jure* recognition to the People's Government of China on 30 December 1949, soon after the KMT was driven off the Chinese mainland early that month. It sent an ambassador to Peking in May 1950.

To begin with, the Government of India was not even clear regarding the validity and strength of its special rights in Tibet,<sup>3</sup> or of the possibility of asserting them. Possibly, it could not refute Chinese suzerainty, nor accept or interpret it, without reference to British imperial inheritance which it should have been loath to assert in view of its recent anti-British past. In addition, it might have seemed futile to assess the juridico-legal value of Tibet-British conventions when a triumphant Red revolution was sweeping away all unequal treaties as the Soviets had done in 1917. K. M. Pannikar tells us that when he went to

1. Where this did not happen, for example, in Malaya or the French colonies, communism raised its head.
2. Mr. Nehru told Parliament on 17 Mar 50, "Very great revolutionary changes have taken place in that country (China). Some people may approve of them, others may not. It is not a question of approving or disapproving; it is a question of recognising a major event in history, of appreciating it and dealing with it. When it was quite clear, about three months ago, that the new Chinese government, now in possession of practically the entire mainland of China, was a stable government and there was no force which was likely to supplant it, we offered recognition to this new government and suggested that we might exchange diplomatic missions". *Speeches*, II, pp. 147-8.
3. We do not know whether the Government of India consulted the British government on that occasion, and if not, why. Mr. Nehru denied having consulted them when questioned about it in 1959, but he said that they had accepted "the position as it was in British days, both the advantage and disadvantages of it" and therefore "constitutionally speaking we could not say anything because of the position we had accepted and the world had accepted". (*LS*, 4 Sep 59).

Peking in 1950, before he left, the Indian Prime Minister agreed with him that the British policy of claiming special interests in Tibet could not be maintained by India.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, while India could not but long for the continuation of this Himalayan buffer, Government knew that the preservation of old extra-territorial rights was no longer possible. Nehru was undoubtedly convinced of it at that time, for both ideological and practical reasons, as was evident from his numerous speeches.

The years between 1947 and 1950 had been extremely difficult ones for India. The new Indian government, since its birth, was faced with at least three internal problems which absorbed its entire attention and must be noted before we proceed with Indian reaction to Tibetan events. They were: the riots and refugees, integration of the Indian states, and the framing and application of a new constitution for the country.

The riots were suppressed during the first year of its existence but the rehabilitation of refugees remained a priority job in the main till July 1952. The refugees were not only an immense economic problem; they were also a tremendous psychological problem. Naturally motivated by communal passions, whose victims they were, they gave a new lease of life to the dying communal and revivalist forces in India.<sup>2</sup> Uprooted from their hearths and homes, they became the most unstable element in the parliamentary democracy which was to emerge after the republican constitution was adopted in 1950. Extensive preparations were undertaken soon after for the 'first general elections' in the 'world's most populous democracy'<sup>3</sup>, where universal

1. K. M. Pannikar, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat*, London, 1955, p. 102.
2. The refugees were the chief support of the communal parties after the Partition. The *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* was organised shortly before the first general elections as the political wing of the most militant communal organisation, the *Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh* (RSS). A *Ram Raja Parishad* was organised by the Hindu priests though it was short-lived. The *Hindu Mahasabha*, an older but relatively weak organisation of the Hindus, and the *Akalis*, the militant section among the Sikhs, still exist.
3. The preparations for the general elections started as soon as the Constitution was adopted and engaged the attention of the Government for full two years. An idea of the magnitude of the task can be had from the following statistics: *electorate*, 176,600,000; *polling booths*, 224,000; staff required to conduct them: *presiding officers*, 56,000; *clerks*, 280,000; *policemen*, 224,000; and that when the elections everywhere were not conducted on the same day so that some staff could be diverted from one place to another; cost, approximately Rs. 100 million. Major tasks for the first elections were: preparation of electrical rolls, delimitation of constituencies, fixing of emblems and booths, preparation of ballot boxes, etc.

adult franchise was being exercised for the first time, amidst widespread illiteracy, a highly stratified cast-ridden society, the 'breakwaters' of former 'Indian' India (where as a result of more than a century's protected autocracy landed feudal interests held considerable sway), and an inexperienced personnel for the conduct of elections. With the communists threatening an insurrection in Telangana and fractionalism weakening the Congress, the latter had a whole-time job preparing for the elections which came in January 1952.

The integration of states was an equally long and absorbing process spread over several years despite its firm and deft handling by the 'iron man', Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, who was ill throughout the latter part of 1950 and eventually passed away in December. Most states were merged in several stages and the process continued till January 1950, when they were organically integrated into the Indian Union as Part B States of the Constitution. Some resentment on the part of the former rulers was not too serious to be mentioned, but it must be noted that the process was not smooth in all cases. The railways, post and telegraph, audit and account, federal revenue and currency of these states could not be integrated with the Union till April 1950. *The armed forces were integrated one year later and full and final financial integration could not be completed before 1953.*

Hyderabad had to be captured by a 'police action' in November 1949 and Kashmir, which acceded on 27 October 1947, five days after it was invaded by Pakistan, remained the scene of military action till the cease-fire of 1 January 1949. Its case still hangs on before world assemblies and not a little of the energies of defence and external affairs ministries of the Government of India have been absorbed by this problem state and our rival Pakistan.

The worst condition was that of the northern border. Almost the whole of it was dotted with small estates about which the British had not bothered since they had controlled the region beyond them. There were at least 21 petty states with a total area of 11,000 sq. miles on the Punjab border alone, which were merged in April-August 1948 in a province called Himachal Pradesh, to be governed by a Lieutenant-Governor, but it took a much longer time to solve the tangled skein of political interests which raised their head both inside the new state as well as in the adjacent province of Punjab. Border states of U.P. were merged in December 1949 and manipur, Tripura and Cooch-



## Prelude to India

behar in Bengal-Assam by January, 1950. The Nefa (North-East Frontier Agency) areas and Naga hills were integrated an year later.

Political integration of the border was not the full solution of the problem either. A few hill stations, developed as pleasure-polo grounds for British officers on leave, or a few cantonments to drill up the *jawans* in a salubrious climate, were the only 'blessings' of the British rule in this region. Communication were poor and maps inadequate. Until today much of the Himalayan region is an anthropological laboratory of primitive peoples, approached mostly by white slave traffickers.

All these difficulties must have pursued the Government of India when it was called upon to determine its attitude toward the advent of communists into Tibet<sup>1</sup> and there was also an awareness of India's military weakness as against China.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese revolution must have weighed heavily on Nehru's mind even before the 200,000 Chinese troops entered the Korean war in November 1950 to turn the scales against the United States army, for he was to tell the Indian parliament repeatedly that, among the big changes that had taken place in the world since the last war, one was the rise of a united and strong China.<sup>3</sup>

### THE FIRST REBUFF

CONSEQUENTLY, THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT KNEW THAT nothing was to be gained by rushing to the aid of a 'weak'

1. Mr. Nehru told later, "...in the early days after independence and partition, our hands were full, as this House knows, and we had to face difficult situations in our own country. *We ignored, if I may say so, Tibet.*"—*LS*, 27 April 59, emphasis added. It was not that India completely ignored Tibet, but she had to do so in a large measure. The pre-occupation of the Indian government with other problems must also be viewed in the context that while, Mr. Nehru has been solely responsible for external affairs, *most major decisions with regards to government policy in other spheres too are never made without his consultation.* Since the death of Sardar Patel, in particular, he is the colossus without whom nothing moves in the Government.
2. "Our army, navy and air force are not worth mentioning as compared to the armadas of other nations", Nehru said in a speech at the XI session of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Lucknow, 3 Oct 50, *Speeches*, Vol. II, p. 161.
3. "Forget for a moment the broad policies it pursues—communist or near-communist, or whatever it may be. The fact is, and it is a major fact of the middle of the twentieth century, that China has become a great power—united and strong...Countries like China and India, once they get rid of foreign domination and internal disunity, inevitably become strong; there is nothing to stop them. They have the ability and the capacity".—*LS*, 30 Sept. 54, *Speeches* III, pp. 263-4.

Tibet against a powerful China. On the other hand, something could be saved by a cautious diplomacy. So, when the Chinese forces prepared to move into Tibet, India took the matter with Peking discreetly. On 5 August 1950, Gen. Sen Po-chen announced the intention of Chinese forces to enter Tibet, and on 26 August, the Indian ambassador *informally* suggested to the Chinese Government the desirability of settling the Tibetan question peacefully. He got an assurance that, while China regarded Tibet as its integral part, she had no intention to force the issue and every willingness to *negotiate* a settlement with the Tibetan spokesmen.<sup>1</sup>

Either the Chinese ambassador arriving in New Delhi in the following month informed his government about some impossible demands of the Tibetan mission then in India, or the Chinese were determined to have it their own way, they moved their troops toward Tibet. It was only after being informed of the entry of Chinese troops into Tibet, and probably also the fall of Chamdo, that the Government of India took its next step, which was a Note delivered to Peking on 21 October. It is interesting that this Note expressed solicitude, not for Tibet but for China, stating that the Indian government's interest was solely in a peaceful settlement of the issue. It said, "A military action at the present time against Tibet will give those countries which are unfriendly to China a handle for anti-Chinese propaganda...; on the eve of a decision by the (U.N.) Assembly...to those who are opposed to the admission of the People's Government to the United Nations...; the time factor is extremely important...; an incautious move at the present time *even in a matter which is within its own sphere* may prejudice the position of China in the eyes of the world."<sup>2</sup>

The Chinese must have chuckled at this apparently unsure, insincere and tactful approach. They did not care to reply and, on 24 October, *Hsinhua* announced a general mobilisation

1. We do not know whether this *aide memoire* or its reply was published. It has been referred to by the Chinese in their Note of 16 Nov and also by Chinese commentators, e.g., in *Concerning the Question of Tibet*, p. 197.
2. Emphasis added. This and the following Notes were released by the *Hsinhua* in November. Prior to that, the Government of India released three of them. For text see, *Current Background*, U. S. Dept. of State, American Consulate-General, Hongkong, No 31, 27 Nov. 50; reproduced in Margaret W. Fisher & Joan V. Bondurant, *Indian Views on Sino-Indian Relations*, India Press Digests Monograph Series No. 1, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Feb 1956.

directive. Thereupon, the Government of India took a slightly stern attitude in its next Note of 26 October. It regretted that units of the People's Liberation Army were ordered to advance on an *invasion* of Tibet without any intimation of the same to India and complained that it was not in accordance with the assurance given by the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister to the Indian ambassador, who, "while reiterating the resolve of the Chinese Government to 'liberate' Tibet, had expressed a continued desire to do so by peaceful means." The Note pointed out that the Tibetan delegation had left for Peking and that it was delayed, among other things, due to a "*lack of knowledge on the part of the Tibetan delegation of dealing with other countries.*" The Government of India expressed "their deep regret that, in spite of friendly and *disinterested* advice repeatedly tendered by them, the Chinese government should have decided to seek a solution of the problem of their relations with Tibet by force."

The Chinese knew that the Indian advice was *not* disinterested and they considered it uncalled for. A lack of knowledge on the part of Tibetans in dealing with the Chinese was indeed ludicrous, and calling China as an 'other country', or the Chinese entry into Tibet an 'invasion', was a challenge to the Chinese claim over Tibet. So they considered consultations with India, no less than India's advocacy of their cause, as an attempt on India's part to interfere in what they called their internal problem. In a reply to the above two Notes on 30 October, they affirmed categorically that "Tibet is an integral part of the Chinese territory", its problem "entirely a domestic problem of China in which no foreign interference will be tolerated", and the PLA must enter Tibet to "liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontiers of China". They accused the Tibetan delegation of delaying its departure "under outside instigation", rebuffed India for relating this issue with that of China's admission to the U.N., and alleged that *India had been affected by foreign influences* to call the Chinese action deplorable.

The Government of India, used to the delicacies of the English language at the hand of British diplomats, and not gauging the extent of Chinese vehemence with regards to Tibet question, was staggered at this reply to their polite bread-and-butter Notes. It was "amazed" at the insinuation of foreign influence and emphatically repudiated it, both with regards to its own action as well as to that of the Tibetan delegation. In its reply the following day, it restated its general policy

“to check the drift to war”, in which “they (Indian Government) have often been misunderstood and criticised”, but to which they had adhered “regardless of the displeasure of great nations.” It announced that *India had no political or territorial ambitions in Tibet and she did not seek any novel privileged position for herself.*

The situation, however, called for more than pious declarations of lofty principles, and so in this Note, for the first time, India made explicit the following points :

1. Tibet's autonomy “is a fact which the Chinese government were themselves willing to recognise and foster”. An “adjustment” and “reconciliation” of the “legitimate Tibetan claim to autonomy within the framework of Chinese suzerainty” should, therefore, be obtained ‘by peaceful means’.

2. India's concern was not an “unwarranted interference” in China's internal affairs, but a well-meant advice by a friendly government which had a natural interest in the solution of the problems concerning its neighbours.

3. Indian government admitted having “advised” the Tibetan government, but since there was “no justification whatsoever” for military operations and an attempt to impose a decision by force”, it was “no longer in a position to advise the Tibetan delegation to proceed to Peking unless the Chinese government think it fit to order their troops to halt their advance into Tibet”.

4. “At the same time”, the Indian Note said, “certain rights have grown out of usage and agreements which are natural among neighbours with close cultural and commercial relations. These relations have found expression in the presence of an agent of the Indian government in Lhasa, existence of trade agencies at Gyantse and Yatung, and maintenance of post and telegraph at the trade route” and “a small military escort” for the protection of this trade route “sanctioned for over 40 years”. The Indian government were “anxious that these establishments, which are to the mutual interest of India and Tibet, and do not detract in any way from Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, should continue”.

5. Favouring peaceful settlement of international disputes, it stated that recent developments in Tibet had affected “our friendly relations”.

This was the first and last strong Note sent by India on the question, but it was an example of utter confusion and uncer-

tainty. It accepted Tibet as Chinese, denied that India had any political ambitions in Tibet, but talked of rights which 'do not detract in any way from Chinese suzerainty'. Extra-territorial rights, communications and military escort—how could they be deemed by any country as not abridging its authority? By admitting its advisory role with the Tibetan delegation, the Government of India laid itself open to the charge of collusion, and it was quite apparent from this first bout that the word 'autonomy' must mean differently to the two countries, just as they used two different words 'suzerainty' and 'sovereignty' when referring to Chinese authority over Tibet.

The Chinese in their reply of 16 November were quick to welcome the "renewed declaration of the Indian government that it has no political or territorial ambitions in China's Tibet", and quietly ignored 'the 'certain rights' referred to by India, expressing the hope that "the problems relating to Sino-Indian diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with respect to Tibet may be solved properly through normal diplomatic channels." They nailed the point by regretting that the Indian government was making a domestic problem "an international dispute calculated to increase world tension", again alleged foreign influences and forces in Tibet, claimed that they had kept the Indian government informed, and gave their interpretation of the word autonomy as "according to the provisions of the Common Programme adopted by the Central People's Political Consultative Conference", granted to the national minorities "within the confines of Chinese sovereignty." This, they said, was conceded by the Indian government in its *aide memoire* to the Chinese government dated 26 August, but "when the Chinese government actually exercised its sovereign rights", they accused, the "Indian government attempted to influence and obstruct" this operation.

It was abundantly clear that the two governments had basic differences on the question and they spoke different languages with different intents, but in the foreign policy debate in the Indian parliament on 6-7 December 1950, Mr. Nehru gave no hint of this difference of approach. He merely informed the House that he had insisted on Tibetan autonomy within Chinese suzerainty. He called suzerainty a historical fact but added that it was suzerainty and not sovereignty. "It is not quite clear from whom they were going to liberate it (Tibet)", he said sarcastically. "They say there might be foreign intrigues in Tibet; I cannot say much about it because I do not know. Indeed one can hardly talk about war between Tibet and China.

Tibet is not in a position to carry out war and, obviously, Tibet is no threat to China...the action of China came as a surprise to us...we expressed our earnest hope that the matter would be settled peacefully... We also made clear that we had no territorial or political ambitions in regard to Tibet and that our relations were cultural and commercial...<sup>1</sup>.

There was heated discussion in the Indian parliament, but neither parliament nor the press or the people at that time noted the loss of face which India had suffered on account of these Notes.<sup>2</sup> Some members linked the Tibetan issue with the question of defence. Nehru seemed to agree with them but asked, "But what is defence. Most people seem to imagine that defence consists in large numbers of people marching up and down with guns". He rightly pointed out that defence included the economic capacity and industrial potential of a country, *whose balance could not be very much upset for defence requirements*. He thereby laid his finger on the real problem before India and angrily retorted, "Some honourable Members seem to think that I should issue an ultimatum to China, that I should warn them not to do this or that, or that I should send them a letter saying that it is foolish to follow the doctrine of communism. I don't see how it is going to help anybody.." Regarding communist activities in India, he promised that his government's policy had not been tender and "It is not going to be a tender policy".<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the issue was not between communism and anti-communism; it was one between a powerful China and a relatively weak India. India could do nothing because she did not have the strength to force her interpretation on China. Under the circumstances, it was best to harp on her own and presume that her opponent meant the same thing. In the meantime, an armed insurrection had broken out in Nepal which engaged the Government of India's major attention. The Tibetan question was

1. *Parliament*, 6 Dec. 50, *Speeches*, II, pp. 174-175.

2. In 1959, the Indian press recalled them e.g., the *Statesman* on 22 Mar, "Unhappiness in India and other surrounding countries over Tibetan, developments is magnified by a sense of helplessness...after the *rebuff* of 1950, when India was plainly told by China to mind her own business and it was insultingly suggested that Delhi's attitude had been affected by hostile foreign influences, it is clearly useless to expect Indian friendship to cause the Chinese to modify their attitude in the slightest". The *Hindustan Standard* wrote on 24 Mar, "India's protest against the Chinese use of force in 'Tibet in 1950 met with a *rebuff* from Peking and later the Sino-Indian treaty on the 'Tibet region of China' was the basis of *formally unconditional acceptance of China's 'rights' there*".

3. *Parliament*, 7 Dec. 50, *Speeches* II, pp. 181, 185.

## *Prelude to India*

shelved in the United Nations, and India let history shape itself in Tibet.

We do not know what advice the Indian government gave the Tibetan delegation when its two members met the external affairs ministry before proceeding to Peking. Asked in his press conference on 13 March 1951, whether there had been any change in the Chinese attitude since the exchange of Notes, Mr. Nehru replied that the "Chinese attitude for the past quarter of a century or more had been that Tibet was an integral part of China". He implied thereby that he had acquiesced in the situation. The agreement between the Tibetans and Chinese in May 1951 could not be to the liking of the Indian government but it made no comments. The verbal sabre-rattling in the first instance had brought India no benefits except the strain of embittered relations with her powerful neighbour, though the Indian ambassador reported that, by the end of 1950, "the stiffness which had entered into our relations with China as a result of the Tibetan controversy had by this time totally disappeared".<sup>1</sup> The first diplomatic exchange had heavily underlined the differences of approach between the two countries, but the Indian Prime Minister preferred to ignore them.

In February 1952, the Indian ambassador again gave a statement of the existing Indian rights in Tibet and reiterated India's willingness to arrive at a mutually satisfactory settlement. Premier Chou En-lai replied that there was "no difficulty in safeguarding the economic and cultural interests of India in Tibet".<sup>2</sup> It was a conclusive answer that the question of India having any political rights in Tibet was closed for ever.

### AN UNEASY COMPROMISE

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA NOW MADE A RESOLUTE ATTEMPT TO improve its relations with China. Its attitude on the Korean question was helpful. It consistently pleaded for China's entry into the U.N.O. In April 1952, the Prime Minister's sister, Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, led the first official cultural delegation to China, to be followed by a rice agreement between China and India on 26 May 1952. In September, N. Raghavan succeeded K.M. Pannikar as Indian ambassador to Peking and, on 12 June 1953, India agreed to serve on the Neutral Nation's Repatriation Commission on Korea. The foundation of a friendly atmosphere thus laid, India opened negotiations on Tibet on 31

1. K. M. Pannikar, *op. cit.* p. 116.

2. Mr. Nehru disclosed this in *Lok Sabha* on 25 Nov 59. There may have been more diplomatic exchanges on the subject which we do not know.

December 1953. It took four months to arrive at a 'trade and cultural intercourse' agreement (signed on 29 April 1954) to 'facilitate pilgrimage and travel' and 'promote trade and cultural intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India.'

The agreement, valid for 8 years, allowed the three Indian trade agencies in Tibet to continue, but established three Chinese agencies reciprocally at New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong in India, with equal status and privileges. It specified markets, places of pilgrimage and routes for Indo-Tibetan trade and pilgrimage, and also provided for less rigorous application of passport and other regulations for bonafide traders, pilgrims, porters and mule-drivers, and inhabitants of border districts visiting friends and relatives. The Government of India promised to withdraw its military escorts then stationed in Tibet and hand over the communications and rest houses 'at reasonable price.'<sup>1</sup> It was permitted to keep the land on lease, and its buildings in its trade agencies.<sup>2</sup>

The negotiations had been prolonged and explanations for delay were given in 'illness among negotiators', 'a civilised' refusal by Chinese to be hustled', 'difficulties in translation, and the Chinese 'love of exactitude'. The Chinese might have delayed till India's role as POW custodian in Korea was over on 20 January 1954, but K. L. Shridharani learned from 'Delhi insiders' that India, "unable to think of Tibet as an absolutely foreign country," wanted "facilities that go beyond the usual routine of diplomatic relations," whereas Peking was anxious to show that "India could not inherit the traditions left behind in Tibet by British imperialism." The Chinese wanted three equal trading posts in India which the volume of trade did not justify. They "wanted a trade establishment in strategic Simla, but Nehru succeeded in giving that right in Delhi instead, an area under the direct scrutiny of the Indian government."<sup>3</sup> Even "before the Chinese had agreed to negotiate, Indian commentators had taken for granted that concessions with respect to Indian 'privileges' in Tibet were 'inevitable' and had hoped that in return India might be permitted to reopen her Consulate in Kashgar (Sinkiang). But the Chinese government considered Sinkiang to be a closed area, so that when negotiations opened, India

1. The price was waived by India the very next day. Indian troops withdrew from Tibet on 1 April 55.
2. For text, see *Foreign Policy of India, Text of Documents Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, Oct 58, pp 85-93*
3. *ABP*, 22 Feb 54, 7 June 54.



had already given up attempts for Kashgar and it was not on the agenda."<sup>1</sup>

The agreement confirmed India's complete surrender of any claims on Tibet and was a recognition of China's full sovereign rights in that region. Implicitly, it acquiesced in the status Tibet had accept in 1951. Yet there were optimistic commentators who hailed it as a great achievement. "India may well assume that what was secured in the early part of this century by Lord Curzon's forceful diplomacy has been substantially preserved," wrote the *Indian Express*,<sup>2</sup> we do not know on what grounds, shaming both Lord Curzon and republican India for their respective ideologies.

Posterity may ask as to who played the April Fool but everybody was happy at the amicable agreement reached with a reputedly 'difficult' Peking. The *Times of India* agreed that "our rights and privileges in Tibet had become obsolete" and that India's "vital trade and cultural interesrts were safeguarded by putting them on a more stable basis".<sup>3</sup> The *National Herald* noted that when a "new Chinese government in Peking decided on pulling Tibet closely into the framework of Chinese unity", the old autonomy under "loose" Chinese suzerainty had become unworkable. "China's first moves caused suspicions in India...but an exchange of Notes removed the misunderstanding", it explained (reflecting Mr. Nehru's own wistful mood?), and added that India relinquished facilities "without any mortification or regret" because she had maintained them for the safety of routes at a time when Tibet herself could not guarantee it. "When these functions are taken over and can be performed by the Chinese, India's main purpose is achieved".<sup>4</sup>

This could not be a new discovery but the seeking of bright elements in a bad bargain for at the same time it was being anticipated that, with the Chinese firm control of Tibet, the pattern of Indian trade with Tibet was bound to change and dwindle. It could no longer be worked to the advantage of Indian traders who, in the past, used to fix their own terms and conditions. The *Amrit Bazar Patrika* duly recognised that,

1. Fisher & Bondurant, *op. cit.*
2. 1 May 54.
3. 1 May 54.
4. 1 May 54.

with Peking taking the trade out of private hands,<sup>1</sup> the "Indian traders compelled to deal with a monopolistic organisation will find themselves at a disadvantage, with the result that the trade channels would eventually dry up".<sup>2</sup> The *Hindu* vainly hoped that the geographical position of India would help in her necessarily continuing to serve as a source of supply for a variety of products which Tibet needs, and as an outlet for Tibetan exports.<sup>3</sup>

The only opposition to Nehru's Tibet policy came from the most uncompromising fighter against communism, the Praja Socialist Party which failed to focus the issues in correct perspective or suggest an alternative course due to its overtones of anti-communism. "We are not sure that buffer states have lost their utility for ever" wailed the *Vigil* of Mr. J. B. Kriplani.<sup>4</sup> M.A. Venkatrao called it a "failure to recognise the inward needs of the situation in the strategical defence of India." This need, he was the only one to point out, was "a non-militarisation of the Himalayan frontiers".<sup>5</sup> The PSP called it a folly to recognise China's authority over Tibet, which would provide "open door" for "indirect political and diplomatic infiltration and espionage in India". It criticised the Indian government for not consulting Nepal and Tibet, and called the agreement "the first international document to set a seal on the abolition of Tibet's autonomy".<sup>6</sup> So it was in the sense in which India interpreted the word 'autonomy'. Tibet had finally ceased to be a buffer which the British had made it exactly 50 years ago.

The above views were also echoed by the Jana Singh whose organ, the *Organiser*, also warned of infiltration.<sup>7</sup> The *Tribune*

1. Peking did not take trade out of private hands then but it did regulate it to provide relief to Tibetan traders. The question of Indo-Tibetan trade cropped up later, as it was bound to.
2. 1 May 54.
3. 1 May 54.
4. 22 May 54
5. *Mysindia*, Mysore, 30 May 54.
6. Incidentally, the PSP compared Tibet to Kashmir and argued that, while India accepted the principle of a plebiscite in Kashmir, she should also apply the same principle to Tibet. A spokesman of the Party in Kashmir told the author in 1959 that while Nasser's rise had meant the loss of West Asian and African markets to India, the incorporation of Tibet into China would mean not only the drying up of Indian trade in Tibet but also the dumping of Chinese goods in Indian markets through the Himalayan routes, which was a frightful possibility "we cannot tolerate".
7. 10 May 54.

said that the emergence of a strong and united China made it impossible for the Government of India to "maintain the old balance of power which the British had left behind" so that the central Asian borders "need be watched more attentively than ever before".<sup>1</sup> The *Hindustan Times* lifted its finger toward Nepal which was "the gate through which infiltration can take place. In a word, Nepal assumes special position as a bastion of democracy in this sub-continent", it concluded.<sup>2</sup> And Nepal was to become the scene of India's blunder diplomacy in subsequent years.

Facing parliament with the Tibet agreement in September 1954, Prime Minister Nehru lashed out at his critics with his usual fervour. "Several honourable Members have referred to the 'melancoly chapter of Tibet'. I really donot understand", he said. "What did any honourable Member of this House expect us to do in regard to Tibet at any time?" Admonishing the members to read the history of Tibet, China and British India, he asked, "Where did we come into the picture unless we wanted to assume the *aggressive role of interfering with other countries*?", and replied, "... We donot go like Don Quixote with lance in hand against everything we dislike; we put up with these things because we would be, *without making any difference*, only getting into trouble."<sup>3</sup> It was a voice of wisdom as much as of helplessness.

## LOSS OF A BUFFER

NOW WHAT COULD INDIA HAVE DONE EXCEPT PULLING OUT

- 1 1 May 54.
- 2 4 May 54.
3. *LS*, 30 Sep. 54, *Speeches*, III, p. 263 Nehru also told in 1959, "All kinds of extra-territorial privileges were imposed on Tibet because Tibet was weak and there was the British empire. With some variations, we inherited these when India became independent. Regardless of what happened in Tibet or China or anywhere, we could not according to our own policy, maintain our forces in a foreign country, even if there had been no change in Tibet...Apparently some people seem to imagine that we have surrendered some privileges in Tibet. The privileges we surrendered in Tibet were privileges we do not seek to have in any other country in the world, Tibet or any other." *LS* 30 Mar 59.

He was more frank in the debate in RS on 9 Dec. 59. He said "They were sitting in Tibet. Our telling them that we did not recognise it would mean nothing...Our saying anything to them would make no difference. It is rather infantile to think that they would have been frightened by our saying something. The result would have been that they would have achieved their dominance over Tibet completely and the only thing is that we would have qurelled with them and we would have come near breaking point with them".

of Tibet and formalising her relations with China thereafter ? From all accounts, "It is not a debatable issue that India did not have the military strength to push back the Chinese armies once they had started rolling into Tibet".<sup>1</sup> Yet the same critic who accepts this reality also says, "To defend the independence of Tibet with all the resources at her disposal should have been an article of faith for the Government of India."<sup>2</sup> No one seems to know how India could have helped Tibet's march from autonomy to independence, but virulent critics called Indian helplessness in the face of China's advance as the Great *bhoo-dana* of Tibet.

After the lapse of time, it is reasonable to conclude now that the Tibetan cause (as also the border question which followed it) suffered a distortion by falling into the hands of virulent anti-communists and those in India who opposed the Government's policy of nonalignment. It was never considered from the objective viewpoint of India's national interests, or of Tibet's, with the result that a coherent policy could not be followed and the Indian government was bedevilled with the problem of arguing with its own conscience. If diplomacy consists in a right appraisal and balancing of forces for and against an objective, the Government of India failed in having even a clear objective. For example, the complete unanimity in this regard between the Chinese Kuomintang and Chinese Communists shows that Tibet (or the border question) had nothing to do with communism or its enemies. It was merely a question of Chinese great nation aspirations in Tibet and the Himalayas and India's counter steps to safeguard her interests before the Chinese could challenge her. The Indian government, however, never challenged the fictitious medieval concept of Chinese suzerainty or sovereignty in Tibet; all it could think of with regard to Tibet were its own imperial extra-territorial rights. Tibet was a feudatory outpost of the Manchu empire, converted into a piece of Chinese motherland, both by the Chinese republicans as well as communists, and India could not help it grow otherwise into an independent republic of Tibet.<sup>3</sup> Before it became

1. Giri Lal Jain, *Panchsheela and After*, Asia Publishing House, 1960, p. 42.
2. *ibid.*
3. The interests of Tibet, India and world peace demanded independence of Tibet and Sinkiang even as peoples republics like Outer Mongolia. However if the "bourgeois" government of India was powerless to effect it, the communist parties of India or the Soviet Union did not have the farsight or boldness to advise their Chinese brethren to desist from their great power ambitions.

## *Prelude to India*

a question of military strength, it was one of clarity of objectives and of timely vigour to attain them.

If India wanted Tibet to be independent, she had to prepare for it. If that were the Indian objective, Indian leaders coming into the helm of affairs since June 1946 should have done something to raise Tibet's status and to modernise its government and external relations before October 1950 when the Chinese armies entered Tibet. They even had an opportunity in 1947 when Lhasa sent a telegram to Delhi making exorbitant territorial claims upon India. Instead of ignoring the telegram, they could seize it as a pretext to negotiate and enter into a new treaty with Tibet, thus obviating the necessity of depending upon the doubtful Simla Convention. They could wrest a new guarantee of the Indo-Tibetan border from the Dalai's government in return for Indian support to strengthen Tibet's freedom and defences, possibly by reforming Tibet's political structure. China indeed should have rejected the results of such "aggressive Indian diplomacy", but India would have gained another bargaining counter in her subsequent deal with China.

In continuation with this line of thought, some one suggested that, in place of polite Notes and brave words to the Chinese during August-November 1950, India could have sent a contingent to die on the other side of the Tibetan border, thus creating an international crisis with its inevitable reference to the comity of nations. An adroit mixture of Indian courage and world opinion might have led to the emergence of a 'People's Republic of Tibet' in place of the 'Tibet Region of the People's Republic of China'. In the present context of Sino-Soviet dispute, it is evident that it could make a big difference to the problem of India's border defence.

The Indian government could do nothing of the kind because it had no anticipation and appreciation of the nature and magnitude of the Himalayan problem until it had lost Tibet to the Chinese. It could not attend to the Himalayas before Communist victory in China because it had no prevision that, whatever the character of the Chinese government, India would have to face the question of settling her northern border. All it was moved by was the threat of Chinese communism. Again, in common with other Western governments, it was blind to the force of the Chinese Revolution and could not anti-

cipate its success until the U.S. Senate had written off China.<sup>1</sup> And when the Revolution did come, with characteristic "bourgeois" weakness, it was numbed by its might. From the beginning, it accepted Tibet as lost and installed on the border question as long as the going was good.

It is not advocated here that India should have initiated a policy of brinkmanship with massive resistance to the Chinese in Tibet, because it is a fact of history that Dalai's Tibet was never independent and Lamaist Tibet could not continue to exist independent and isolated in the world of today any more than it did earlier. The condition precedent to Tibet's independence was its modernisation and uplift with Indian, Soviet or Chinese help. The Chinese could step in where the other two failed and nothing that India could do could have arrested the Chinese march into Tibet in 1950. However, if the Indian government were clear in their objectives and had pursued them with courage and imagination from the beginning, they might have made a better bargain out of a bad situation. Granting Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, they could still strive for the neutralisation of the Himalayan region and refuse to recognise Chinese "sovereignty" until they had obtained a clearer guarantee about the Indo Tibetan border. If the Chinese could declare that their armies must enter Tibet in order to defend the frontiers of China, India could likewise declare her clear interest in the southern reaches of Tibet in order to defend the frontiers of India.

Finally, once the Indian government had known that it could not help the independence of Tibet, it should also have realised that it could not preserve its extra-territorial rights therein. Republican India had neither the inclination nor the strength to force an unequal treaty on China.<sup>2</sup> Then she should have forsaken it with grace. Once Tibet was firmly integrated into China, there was no point in harping upon

1. If the Indian government had their own intelligence, they should have known by the middle of 1948 that the balance of forces had shifted in favour of Chinese Communists. With the fall of Mukden on 1 Nov 48, the communists controlled the whole of Manchuria and North and Central East China. Peking fell on 1 January 1949 and by July 1949, the fate of Chiang on the mainland of China was sealed for ever.
2. Indian government's weakness in playing any effective role in Tibet is clear from the fact that it could not find a person to replace the British representative in Lhasa for nearly three years.

Tibet's 'autonomy'.<sup>1</sup> The task since 1951 was the settlement and strengthening of the border. Instead, India entered into a fruitless war of attrition with China over the Dalai Lama's fate in 1959.

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1. The major question faced since 1911 by the Chinese—both KMT as well Communists—was the establishment of a strong central government which could pull all the regions of China into a unified state. The Chinese were, consequently, sensitive towards demands of regional autonomy and could never agree that autonomy should mean semi or quasi-independence.

whether Nepal's defences were sufficient to withstand Chinese aggression, a Nepali asks whether he or the Indians would be the first to suffer from a breakdown of their defence? Evidently, Nepal must be run over by the Chinese before they could enter India through Nepal and the Nepali denies that he would cut his nose to spite India. In other words, every Nepali is, traditionally, more ready to defend the freedom of his country than he thinks Indians are and he is proud of the fact that his country did not lose her independence when the entire subcontinents of China and India were a prey to Western imperialism. If Nepal's independence was a fortuitous circumstance attendant upon a failure of British arms, ingenuity or inclination, a Nepali says, the "compelling factors of geography" have not changed to his detriment. Today, if India and China do not protect her independence against each other in their own interests, the situation could be saved by international action.

There can be no sillier statement than that Nepal was drifting towards Communist China to the point of becoming inimical to India, or to the extent of embracing communism, unless Indians drive her to the point of no return. Even communism cannot enter an independent country without some measure of native support and conditions in Nepal do not support even a parliamentary democracy, let alone communism. While we would consider this point later in greater detail, it should be clear to us that if the Nepali King or people chose the way of communism, it would be beyond Indian arms and ingenuity to stop them from going Red. Above all, our anxiety to stop any country from choosing the path it likes runs counter to our professions of neutrality and coexistence.

Need we go into the question whether India should follow a policy of nonalignment and coexistence, or become a knight-errand of the defenders of the "free world"? It would be beyond the scope of this book to discuss India's foreign policy and its merits, but we may remember, by the way, that our refusal to be preoccupied with the communist danger to the world arose out of our keen desire to be out of the cold war that threatens the sanity of our world. Our fight against Chinese aggression is not a war against world communism. We also believe that what is good for us is good for others in a similar situation. Then, can we blame the Nepalis for their wish to keep the cold war out of their small country flanked by two opposing social and economic systems? By considering Nepal our 'special sphere', whose freedom or stability should be our concern, we not only expose ourselves to the charge of incipient imperialism,



but also take upon ourselves the burdens which we cannot shoulder. With our hands full with the defence of our own border and the problems of economic development, and singeing with linguistic discords that disturb our emotional integration, why must we add unfounded fears to our responsibilities? We have a large subcontinent to manage and there is no doubt that the countries of far and near would follow our lead when we have made a good job of defending and governing ourselves. India is not economically or militarily in a position to take over and face Nepal's problems.

What is the problem of India's defence? After wrestling with this problem for the last many years and especially in the last one year, we should be more realistic in our appraisal of the situation. If a large-scale Chinese invasion of India was ever possible, it should be less feared now because the Chinese have once tried and failed in the attempt. For one reason that it cannot be attempted without exploding a world war for which the Soviet Union is wholly unwilling. For another, that the element of surprise shall never again enter the Sino-Indian war and it must be a long and drawn-out affair. We are already on our guard against a nibbling of our territory and have realised that we have to build our defence potential. Building of roads and checkposts over our far-flung border, and building the morale of the people inhabiting the border regions, is the steady task which we should be pursuing, and must more vigorously pursue in the coming years. More than that, we must build our defence industries and quickly increase production on a war-footing. The solution of the defence problem lies within our frontiers, in the hands of our own people and government, and not in bullying the neighbours that lie between us and communist China.

Indian policy towards Nepal has suffered from the beginning from this preliminary, ill-founded notion that defence of Nepal was a part of Indian defence and that, as a corollary, the defence of Nepal was India's responsibility. Our solicentiousness was resented because it smacked of the White Man's burden, because it is proved that an attitude of big brotherliness provokes 'ungrateful' resistance among the people it claims to serve. What is surprising is that while we resent the same attitudes in the West, we have displayed them in our relations with our own smaller neighbours.

#### FORWARD SCHOOL

THE FAULT AROSE OUT OF OUR UNCRITICAL ACCEPTANCE OF the "forward" school of defence which the British advocated

in the nineteenth century and which we inherited together with such other institutions and outlooks as the Indian administration and its blue-eyed boys, the I.C.S., the cricket commentary, or the summer exodus to the hills. That kind of defence, it must be firmly stated, has now become completely out-of-date, neither possible nor feasible in the world of today.

To disabuse our mind of the possibility of practising "forward" defence today, we must clearly know what it means. It means reaching beyond India's frontiers to adjacent countries and integrating them with the system of defending what were then called the "scientific" frontiers of India. For this purpose, the British thought it necessary to occupy Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Ceylon, East Africa and Aden which sealed the southern sea approaches to India. In the north, they advocated the annexation of Afghanistan and other Himalayan states to the Indian empire, but wars with Afghanistan and Nepal gave a lesson that "in Asia, where victories cease, difficulties begin".<sup>1</sup> When they found it unprofitable to subjugate the turbulent peoples of the high Himalayas, their pattern of dominance changed to the twin objectives of controlling their external relations and freezing their static societies, so as to prevent the possibility of either their becoming sufficiently strong to challenge British authority, or to allow the influence of any other power to grow in their territories. Britain, thus, developed a kind of Monroe doctrine to maintain her predominant influence in countries adjacent to India.<sup>2</sup>

The Chinese had called Tibet the palm and Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and Tsayul (Nepa) as the five fingers of Tibet. With considerable Tibetan religious and cultural influence, these territories were bound to be a source of worry to any Indian government. So, by the end of the nineteenth century, Ladakh and Nepa were integrated into the Indian empire, and Bhutan and Sikkim were converted into Indian protectorates. Nepal retained her independence but her contacts with the north were totally snapped because beyond the five fingers, it was really the palm which formed the kingpin of India's defence of the Himalayas. Cleverly discovering their opportunity in the popular strength and semi-sovereignty of the lamaist church, the British buttressed it after their first expedition and brought home to the Tibetan government that the alternative to an acceptance of British terms was the wiping away of lamaist authority by means of

1. Duke of Wellington to Lord Auckland in 1839; quoted by Sir Francis Younghusband,
2. Sir Alfred Lyall.

Chinese reforms on the one hand and British arms on the other. The Dalais heeded to their advice and kept the Chinese 'at bay'.

Armed with her predecessor's wisdom, it was free India's desire to preserve the status quo in all the four states<sup>1</sup>, but the story of the past one decade is the story of her uniform failure everywhere primarily because the times had changed. The government of free India could not vigorously pursue the aim of preserving its sphere of influence because it owed its existence to the waning of the British empire whose torn mantle it was ashamed to wear. It could be amusing, if it were not so painful for the Indian people, to find Nehru's government at pains to deny its imperialist connections and seeking ideological justifications for its fruitless actions, while assuming attitudes which unknowingly owe their origin to the old "forward" school of defence. It sought to do this by treaties, by a "firm declaration" that their defence was India's responsibility, by increased technical assistance, and by generally supporting their rulers to assure them that their own security lay in their dependence upon India. Only in one case, where India helped a country to grow self-reliant, that country (Nepal) was the first to go out of India's orbit of influence, despite its cultural and economic ties, because as it stood on its legs, we did not appreciate its eagerness to get out of its playpan.

It should be obvious to us that there are no "scientific" frontiers of countries any more in this atomic age, that a gathering of neighbours for a common system of defence can only be called by military pacts whose futility has been proved, that protectorates cannot be maintained even by the USA in Latin America, that Imperialist occupation is rendered impossible by the growth of freedom, and that India is in no position to enforce a Monroe doctrine in her part of the world. Having lost Tibet irretrievably to the Chinese, India must not count upon isolating the Himalayan states from China, or upon controlling their external relations for any length of time. This applies to Nepal today and will be true for Sikkim and Bhutan tomorrow.

### IDEALS AND SELF INTEREST

THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE ABOVE IMPERIAL TECHNIC IN OUR times is sound diplomacy based on genuine friendship, which in turn is based upon enlightened self-interest. The Himalayan states may not remain for a greater length of time India's protectorates, but they share with India the urge to develop-

1. Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet.

ment, trade and cultural exchange, and voluntary aid for defence. They are *not* hotbeds of communism and their rulers' interests lie in better relationship with India, subject to the discretion of *not* inviting the ire of their northern neighbour. They need Indian capital investment in their future industries, and Indian technical assistance. They want us to support them to enhance their stability, and not to have a doctrinaire approach to their problems to serve an ideology. In their smooth growth to economic viability, in the emergence of an educated and enlightened class among their peoples, in their closer intergration with the plains below by means of better means of communication, lies the improvement of their friendly relations with India, and incidentally, the possibility of their becoming willing bulwarks of India's defence. Any other policy of pressure or coercion is bound to recoil upon us, for we shall as surely be driving them over to the Chinese as they wish to escape this contingency today.

It must also be remembered that the Himalayan states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim are not buffer states between India and China in the proper sense of the term, since they do not cover the entire range of China-India border. China can invade India, without violating their integrity and while professing love for them as events have shown, which buttresses their desire to "keep out" of any Sino-Indian conflict. Only Tibet as a buffer could satisfy India's wish to keep the Chinese frontier at a safe distance but that was not to be. Consequently, India must build the defence on her own border with China first, before she assumes the responsibility of defending the northern borders of these Himalayan states.

Geography cannot be denied and it would be futile for the Nepalis to refute that Nepal is, in a limited sense, a buffer state sandwiched between two larger neighbours. When they protest against the use of the word "buffer", they are more sentimental than reasonable, but one can be made more amenable to reason by not being rubbed the wrong way. I have no doubt that the Nepali government and people are keenly aware of the difficulties inherent in the situation of their land-logged country. A pronouncement. "The problem of Asia at present is predominantly economic", says a pamphlet published by the Nepal Government, which continues to say that the failure of parliamentary democracy in many Asian countries was a natural and inevitable result of "seeking to provide a predominantly political solution to a predominantly economic problem." What Nepal

## *Bulwarks of India's Defence*

needs today, it concludes, is "pre-eminently development politics" and her goal is "a viable economy".<sup>1</sup>

Whether we agree with this analysis of their national situation or not, what is important for us is to understand their analyses, since we do not deny them the right of choice. In passing, it may be pointed out that a proper study of the reasons that led to the failure of parliamentary democracy in large parts of Asia and Africa has yet to be made before we pass our judgment upon this phenomenon. Where Nepal is concerned, her stress seems to be on the right point. Her political stability can be achieved only as a "product of stable and strong economy".<sup>2</sup> She may cease to be a 'buffer' when she has acquired economic strength, like Switzerland,<sup>3</sup> and when she has opened up her trade with countries other than China and India.<sup>4</sup> For the rest, she must depend upon the native shrewdness of all peoples who have to coexist with stronger neighbours. If the South forbears them with its claims of special interests, those will always be rebutted by an equal claim of the North. If we call this playing one against the other, we have to accept it as the normal mode of self-defence in our divided world. It may be as distasteful to us as having to fight gravitation when we want to soar into space, but our individual and national lives acquire their firmness on the ground, thanks to this benevolent force of gravitating self-interest. If the strong nations of the world were to form an axis to suppress the weak, where would the poorer ones be? Unless the thieves sometime fall out among themselves, this would be a hellish world to live.

The best India can do is to help Nepali defence as and when the Nepalis demand it, and where we are not content with the guarantees of our defence, fill in the lacuna on our side of the border. If geography compels, since there is no natural barrier between India and Nepal, we should treat the Indo-Nepal border the same way as we are treating the rest of our international border. We may establish checkposts and defence installations and carefully screen all incoming and outgoing men and goods. That could give us a greater sense

1. *Panchayat Democracy for National Prosperity*, Press Secretariat, Royal Palace, Kathmandu, May 1962.
2. Vishwa Bandhu Thapa, Minister of National Guidance, *National Guidance, its Origin and Functions*, Department of Publicity and Broadcasting, His Majesty's Government, Kathmandu, 1962.
3. Most Nepalis like to compare their country with Switzerland. It is a laudable ambition of every Nepali patriot to develop his country into a Switzerland of Asia.
4. Hence, the attempt to open trade relations with Pakistan.

of security, as also reduce the smuggling of goods or arms which form a perpetual source of dispute between the two countries. At the present juncture, Nepal Government might welcome this step rather than consider it unfriendly.

In this connection, it is essential to sound a warning that our international relations are liable to be cramped if we start judging every country at the touchstone of her support or neutrality in our present border dispute or even war with *China*. In world politics, it is too much for us to expect that another country would pull our chestnuts out of fire, or that she would model her own diplomatic relations with any country with our moods and fancies in view, not even in gratefulness to what we might do for her benefit. Again, the parallel between India and U.S.A. is clear; acceptance of aid without strings is the name we have given to the inability of the recipient to do a good turn in return to the giver. If you do render aid, you do so in your own "enlightened self-interest" and you thereby protect your own "way of life" against ugly encroachments. A bit of charity is tonic for the troubled soul of the wealthy.

Finally, before we close this preliminary to our study of Indo-Nepali relations, we must look at the Nepali viewpoint with regards to our handling of the Tibetan and border affairs. Their chief grudge is that India never consulted Nepal, or even informed her, before she made in 1950 (what they say) the great 'land-gift' of Tibet to China, nor when she formalised Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1954. If the Nepal Government were consulted in 1950, in all probability, they may not have advocated a policy of massive resistance to *China*, nor was India bound to accept such advice, when then, that the present day Nepali would not have argued *India*.

The necessity of consultation, over matters of common interest (as Tibet was a matter of common concern to both India and Nepal) is not merely to avoid hurt sentiments. At times it becomes a test of our friendship, or even a test of one's intent to respect the other's sovereignty. So in this case, the Nepali feels that India did not treat Nepal as an equal and independent country. Soon enough, Nepal found an occasion to pay *back our discourtesy*, when she took economic assistance from China without prior consultation with India, much to our chagrin.

The Nepali argument in this regard gathers strength from yet another incident which followed the Chinese occupation of Tibet. In September 1951, the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-lai, invited a tripartite conference between China, India and Nepal to discuss the common problem of Tibet and India **ignored this suggestion**, presumably, without referring it to Nepal.<sup>1</sup> One fails to see why the Indian government **disregarded** a tripartite conference in 1951, when Nepal would unquestionably have stood with India, unless it was nursing a fond hope that Nepal could be kept isolated from China in times to come. Instead of restricting the conference to these three countries, the Government of India could well have enlarged its scope, by inviting many more countries to the proposed roundtable, including USSR and Pakistan, and aiming at the "neutralisation" of the Himalayan region.

When a history of Indian diplomacy comes to be written, it will be recorded that India's Himalayan policy was neither bold nor imaginative, neither militant nor idealistic. The one approach needed an assertion of India's claims born of actualities of the preceding half a century, even though it meant a reference to the expansive but *unifying* role of British imperialism on the Indian sub-continent; the other required a clean break from the nineteenth century diplomacy with a clear enunciation of the right of self-determination for all the Himalayan peoples, from Tibet to Sikkim, and a demand from China to guarantee their neutrality. On the latter proposal, India could have derived support from all countries fringing the Himalayas, because each would have little to lose and much to gain. The tranquility and stability of the Himalayan region was a boon which should have been prized more than our dubitable advantages in Bhutan or Kashmir.

If such a solution was to be thought of by a bold and imaginative foreign minister, the proposals in the Himalayan Conference would probably have boiled down to an independent Tibet together with independent Bhutan and Sikkim. It is immaterial whether such a conference could be held at all, or would have been to no purpose, for India would have generated a friendly force among the Himalayan states which could be the surest bulwark of her defence from Chinese

1. Nehru disclosed in *Lok Sabha* on 25 November 1959 that Chou En-lai had, in an informal conversation with the Indian ambassador, said, "The question of stabilisation of the Tibetan frontier was a matter of common interest to India, Nepal and China and it could best be done by discussions between the three countries."

encroachments, while if she had succeeded, the independence of Kashmir would have been a small price paid for the independence of Tibet and for our lasting friendship with Pakistan.

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NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY



## CHAPTER THREE

# *Pasupati and Manjusri*

GEOGRAPHICALLY, NEPAL IS A PART OF THE INDIAN SUB-continent and its narrow strip, barely 90 miles wide, is lost to a casual observer on the Indian maps between the Great and Lesser Himalayas. The sacred Ganga drains all her waters brought to it by her numerous rivers, making the entire region sacred to a Hindu as a gift of Pasupatinatha (*Siva*) and the source of the pure waters mythically arising from Kailas. Since the Muslim invasions of the eleventh century, Nepal became a hinterland for small chieftains who were driven out of India by their conquests. Thus, in the fourteenth century went Hari Singh Dev from Tirhut to found his kingdom and with him scores of *brahmins* who spread their religion and enabled Jaya Sthiti Malla to codify their laws. Thus again in the seventeenth century, stray Rajput clans, unable to hold their own against the mighty Mughals, wandered into Nepal to settle in Gurkha, later to conquer the whole country and establish a dynasty which rules her to this day as a representative of Providence (*Visnu*)

Earlier, Buddhism had come to the country under the missionary zeal of the early Indian Budhists, supported by the blessings if not the arms of the Great Asoka.<sup>1</sup> Under its influence, illustrious families of Nepal had begun to connect themselves, genuinely or fictitiously, to the Buddhist nobility of India. The rulers of first century Nepal were called *Licchavis* and claimed to come from the sacred stock from which came the holy Buddha; and so did the later indigenous dynasties, not content with their suspicious ancestories and wanting to equalise themselves with the princes of India. The *brahmin* always knew how to graft an extrinsic branch upon the old stump, even though the holy genealogies left by him are doubtful to sustain their claims, and by his efforts, Buddhism was also to become brahminised in times to come.

1. Siddhartha was born in the Tarai, on Nepali territory, but he attained his enlightenment (Buddhahood) and began preaching in India. So Buddhism is initially an Indian religion.

It is in the above sense that the best historian of Nepal called her history *a prelude to the history of India*. "Nepal is India in the course of her making" he wrote, "on a territory as conveniently restricted as a laboratory: an observer can easily encompass the chain of facts which modern India has drawn from primitive India. He understands by what means a handful of Aryans, carried by an adventurous march into the Punjab, and come in contact with a multitude of barbarians, managed to subjugate her, frame her, make her docile, organise her and propagate her dialect." Nepal under the *Licchavis* was spiritually an extension of Indian Buddhism: Nepal under the *Mallas*, of Indian Brahminism. The Gurkha conquest completed her annexation, as it were, to brahminic India.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, "the Nepalis, though they imitated India, welcomed the brahminic pantheon and relegated to it their own stone, fetish and image, sheltered Indian pilgrims, merchants, quacks, beggars, adventurers and vagabonds, and swallowed with simple credulity (common to all hills folk) their tales and miracles, they never pledged their independence to any one beyond their borders". Nor did they allow the British rulers of India to annex Nepal to their empire, because by that time they had learnt the Japanese lesson that Europe's entry into their land in any garb spelled disaster to their freedom. "First the bible, then the trading stations, then canons" had also become a Nepali proverb. The first Gurkha ruler, Prithvi Narain Shaha, who is said to have profited by British training and firearms to make his conquests, nevertheless, expelled all Christian missionaries from the Nepali soil.

## UNDER THE SHADOW

DURING NEPAL'S WAR WITH TIBET-CHINA IN 1791-2, THE British compelled her to a trade pact and sent a military mission to help, but the Nepalis preferred to conclude a hasty peace with China and sent the British mission packing back in three weeks. In 1814-16, however, the British defeated Nepal in a war, forced her to cede a part of her territory—Sikkim and *Darjeeling in the east and Kumaon, Garhwal and Simla in the west—and admit a British resident in Kathmandu*. After 1829, when a furious struggle for power raged among the Nepali nobles, they consolidated their foothold, which became permanent after the Rana prime ministers usurped power in 1846.

1. Sylvain Levi, *L' Nepal*, from the English translation in typescript (unpublished), available at the Indian Council of World Affairs Library, New Delhi.

The trend of linking up Nepal's interests with those of the British in India started with Jung Bahadur Rana in that year. With Tibet equally dominated by British power, Nepal was sealed on both sides and she came under the (British) Indian sphere of influence. "Although Nepal did not form part of the Asia-wide empire of Great Britain, she was well within her shadow".<sup>1</sup>

Not that the British would not have liked to conquer Nepal and annex her to their Crown. There were many British viceroys in Calcutta, and secretaries of state in London, who advocated a forward policy and saw in the conquest of Nepal a road opening out to central Asia and Tibet where by the beginning of the twentieth century they were afraid of growing Russian influence. But the very fear of Russian intervention in Tibet forbade them any advance in Nepal. Nor did they wish to repeat their painful experience of two Nepali operations, especially when they found the Rana rulers docile enough to subserve British interests.

It is true that the British resident was never allowed such authority or control as exercised by his counterparts in Indian states, and he was not permitted to move out of specified limits in Kathmandu. He did not even assume that advisory role which various British agents played in Lhasa. In 1920, his status was changed to an Envoy and in 1934, he became a minister plenipotentiary in a British legation. But it cannot be denied too that the Rana rulers purchased safety for their isolated autarchy and unlimited right to exploit their own people by letting the British manage their external relations and foreign trade, by showing their "heroism and loyalty" to the English Crown during the Indian "Mutiny of 1857", and by sending 200,000 Gurkha troops to serve the British empire overseas and during the world wars. "During the Rana regime, if India was a slave, Nepal was dominated by the colonial rulers of a slave-state" and she was "not sovereign under a century of Rana-cruelty".<sup>2</sup> "The Ranas were safe in Nepal so long as the British were safe in Delhi".<sup>3</sup> It was only in June 1947 when the British were leaving India that the British legation in Kathmandu was raised to the status of an Embassy, signifying their hands off from Nepal.

1. Khanal, Y.N., *Background of Nepal's Foreign Policy*, Dept. of Publicity, H.M.G., Kathmandu.
2. Yami, Dharma Ratna, *The Study of Critical Situation in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1958.
3. Tuladhar, T.R., *Nepal-China, A Story of Friendship*, Dept. of Publicity, H.M.G., Kathmandu.

## CHILDREN OF MANJUSRI

DESPITE THIS LONG ASSOCIATION WITH INDIA, HOWEVER, Nepal never became her cultural offshoot, the reason being that she was as much in contact with the north as with the south. For India, China was a 'distant neighbour'; for Nepal, she was always within striking distance and Nepal had continuous intercourse with her in peace and war. The Himalayas were not effective barriers to its own peoples, even when they did not possess the resources of modern science and industry. The Nepalis and Tibetans, Afghans or Kashmiris, had made war upon each other and constantly taken their arms, commercial and cultural traffic up and down the difficult passes between India, Tibet and Sinkiang. So Nepal's pictures of mythical age emerge from China: the first legendary god to thrust his spear into the rocks and let out the captive waters which released the valley of Kathmandu was Manjusri, a Chinese god.<sup>1</sup>

As far back as the eighth century, the first Tibetan King, Tsrong Tsang Gampo carried Bhrikuti, a Nepali princess, who spread Buddhism and Nepali art in Tibet. In the last quarter of the thirteenth century, a master-architect, sculptor and painter, named Anika, went from Nepal, to be called Min Hui at the court of Kublai Khan, where he introduced the pagoda style of architecture. In 1271 A. D., he built the Great white Dagoba in the Miaoying monastery near Peking which attracts visitors to this day. Nepali Buddhism in the east and on the high mountains follows lamaism, and mountain-dwellers—*sherpas*, *limbus* and *kiratis*—look to the north for trade, culture, religion and inspiration. The native population is of mongoloid stock. On the whole, the Himalayan region has so different a terrain and climate from the rest of the Indian subcontinent that conditions of life and culture of its peoples are bound to be fundamentally different from those of Indians.

Nepal fought two wars with Tibet, one in 1790-92 and the other in 1856 as a result of which Tibet became Nepal's overlord for half a century. The kingdom of Nepal sent mission to Peking every five years until the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty<sup>2</sup> and Nepal carried free merchandise through its own trade emporia in Tibet. King Prithvi Narain Shaha expelled the Capuchin monks who were refugees from Tibet, having been thrown out of that country, The Nepali Prime Minister Bhim

1. The Chinese Emperor was considered an embodiment of Manjusri and technically, Nepal was a vassal of China for some time, though China never exercised any practical authority over Nepal.
2. The last Nepali mission was sent in 1908.

Sen Thapa appealed to the Imperial court in Peking in 1816 to help him fight the British. In a hundred years of Rana rule however, Nepal was completely cut off from China and contacts of all sorts, physical, cultural, economic or political were withheld. "The imperialist forces were too shrewd; the feudal elements, too self-seeking and un-national".<sup>1</sup>

This is again not to say that the Nepalis are a cultural offshoot of Tibet or China. Having borrowed extensively from both China and India, in the elements of her civilisation, as in her man-power, Nepal developed a unique culture of her own which made her, in the words of a former prime minister of the country, "a cord of friendship between India and China".<sup>2</sup> Her influx of races foreign to India was so softened by brahminic penetration that an Indian never felt an alien spirit among the Nepali people while he discovered innumerable traits, customs and conventions identical to his own. Nepal cooked the Tibetan and Indian elements well in her own laboratory to evolve her own synthesis quite early.

To take an example, in Nepal unlike India, Brahminism and Buddhism were never in combat; they developed side by side in relative peace and mutual give and take to the extent that it is hard to distinguish a Nepali Hindu from a Nepali Biddhist. If one hill in Kathmandu is consecrated to the Buddhist *Swayambhu*, the other is dedicated to *Pasupatinatha* or *Narayana*. Chinese (or Nepali ?) type pagodas shelter Hindu gods and rich carvings on Buddhist temples remind one of Hindu temples in India.

Nepali art has its own harmony and its own rhythm which is a direct expression of their own sensibility. It was not captured by society for biological ends. Like the Chinese it has constantly recognised the spiritual function of art; like the Indian, it is self-contained and bound up with her religious mythology. The Nepali artist felt free to weave an unending texture of innumerable plastic forms over the surfaces of temple in wood or metal. His fantastic and sometimes monstrous inventions wander unchecked by physical barriers across the northern Himalayas. To this day, much of the metal work in Tibet is carried out by Nepali craftsmen.

Thus, to conclude, Nepal is a cultural entity distinguished from her neighbours, though she has amply borrowed from both of them. She has more in common with India than with

1. Tuladhar, *op.cit.*

2. Tanka Prasad Acharya, quoted by B. R. Misra, 'Nepal and India-China Differences', *Echo* weekly, Kathmandu, 10 Sep 59.

China because throughout her history, she has been in living contact with the warm south. Pasupatinatha and other shrines in Nepal have been important pilgrimages for Indians. Woe to him in Nepal who does not harbour the ambition of expiating his sins at the bathing ghats of Banaras once in a life time. Nepal is geographically a part of the subcontinent of India. There are no barriers of mind or spirit between the two countries but what are created from either side.

On the other hand, "while tension might be the staple diet of agitated politicians in her neighbouring countries", Nepal could not afford to throw away her "borders of peace" with either. So, when the British withdrew from India, the Nepali public opinion veered round to the thought that Nepal must maintain good relations with both India and China. "It was worked up generally against those, whether in India or in Nepal, who would be happy to see Nepal-Tibet border smouldering".<sup>1</sup>

There were material and psychological reasons for Nepal's eagerness to open her relations with China so soon as she was free to do so after India's independence. It was natural for her to extend her life-line in two directions instead of one, and to balance India's possible over-insistence upon her "cultural and political ties" with Nepal. Opening her relations with the outside world meant also an assertion of her sovereignty in external affairs attained after a long century. Her "consciousness of a neighbourhood other than Indian and the need for survival as an independent sovereign nation through the maintenance of a balance between old friends and new"<sup>2</sup> create an urge to remain uninvolved in a Sino-Indian dispute. As a buffer between the two, Nepal would like herself and even Bhutan and Sikkim to remain truly neutral.<sup>3</sup> This also explains her somewhat self-conscious effort to assert her sovereignty and individuality,

## HANDS ACROSS THE TARAI

A HUNDRED YEARS OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA AND RANA RULE in Nepal had made Nepal wholly dependent upon India. Nepalis needed neither visa nor permit to journey to the Indian plains and the rebel nobles of Nepal sought shelter and much needed

1. B. R. Misra, *op. cit.*
2. Prem Bhatia, 'Prospect and Retrospect; Nepali Sensitiveness and Nationalism,' *TI*, 2 Feb 60.
3. Speaking to pressmen in Kathmandu on 29 Nov 59, then Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala, thought that Bhutan was fully sovereign, though he pleaded ignorance about its exact relationship with India, *IE*, 1 Dec 59.

succour of sweet British promises in India—Banaras being an important place of pilgrimage, as well as a centre for Nepali politics. The Nepalis went to Indian universities for higher education and in some areas of Western Nepal, as many as 70% of the people move out to India in some parts of the year; those living in Tarai have business and family relations in adjacent Indian districts.<sup>1</sup> Over a lakh of Nepalis have settled in India and 20,000 Gurkhas serve in the Indian army. The postal system was run by India till 1957 and India still remains her only outlet to world trade, until the Lhasa-Kathmandu road becomes a reality.

Nepali nationalism matured under the powerful inspiration of Indian nationalist and socialist movements because, under the Rana regime, no political activity was possible inside Nepal. Numerous Nepali leaders took their apprenticeship in Indian national struggles. Some of the future ministers of Nepal got schooling in diplomacy in the parlours of a doyen of Indian statesmanship, the late Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, or in social democracy from Jai Prakash Narain, then considered an authority on 'scientific socialism' though of a fading colour.<sup>2</sup> Though a Praja Parishad was clandestinely formed in Nepal in 1935, a more powerful Nepali National Congress was formed in India in 1946. After the withdrawal of British power from India, this nascent Nepali nationalism clamoured for support from the Government of India and sought alliances with Indian political leaders in Calcutta, Patna and other Indian states adjoining Nepal.

The Government of India had no special treatment for Nepal or other Himalayan States on its agenda until the challenge of Chinese communism forced its attention towards the border.<sup>3</sup>

1. The same is true of eastern Nepal and highlands where people gravitate to Tibet during certain months.
2. The 'strong-man' of Nepali Congress, the former Home Minister, S. P. Upadhyaya, was a disciple of late Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. Former Nepali Congress Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala, was a follower of Jai Prakash Narain and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia at different times.
3. Nehru told Parliament on 6 Dec 50, "Our interest in the internal conditions of Nepal has become still more acute and personal, because of the developments across our borders, to be frank, *especially those in China and Tibet*. Besides our sympathetic interest in Nepal, we were also interested in the security of our own country. From time immemorial the Himalayas have provided us with magnificent frontier. Of course, they are no longer as impassable as they used to be, but they are still fairly effective. We cannot allow that barrier to be penetrated because it is also the principal barrier to India. Therefore, much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot allow anything to go wrong in Nepal or permit that barrier to be crossed or weakened, because that would be a risk to our own security."—*Speeches II*, p. 177.

Among the Indian leaders, only Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia fought an exemplary skirmish on Nepali territory to draw the attention of his government to the need of formulating a Himalayan policy. But if we take his word for it, when he suggested that India might help the replacement of Ranacracy by a democratic government in Nepal, Indian 'reactionaries' favoured the view that any change in Nepal might lead to confusion and anarchy and pave the way for communism there.<sup>1</sup> In any case, "Though the Government of India favoured the democratisation of the Rana regime, it was not prepared to do anything which would expose it to the charge of interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring kingdom. The Nepali leaders won whatever support they could from the Socialist Party in opposition."<sup>2</sup>

### LOYAL FRIENDSHIP

INDEPENDENT OF THE WILL (OR LACK OF WILL) OF THE Government of India, however, a set of circumstances were hastening the downfall of the Rana regime. Under the hereditary Rana prime ministers, the monarchy of Nepal was a prisoner, having signed away all its powers to the Ranas in 1876. There was no constitution, no fundamental rights, no proper judiciary and no defined law, hence, no equality before the law. Nepal was a personal domain of her rulers. In November 1945, Nepal came to be ruled by a "comparatively liberal though weak-willed" prime minister, Padam Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, who leaned on the lesser nobility among the Ranas in order to counteract the influence of his brothers. Aware of the growing restlessness among the educated Nepalis consequent upon the British withdrawal from India, he invited two Indian experts<sup>3</sup> to frame a constitution. In February 1948, he announced proposals for the grant of fundamental freedoms, formation of an independent judiciary and public service commission, release of political prisoners, establishment of *panchayats* (self-governing village bodies) and a bicameral legislature with partly responsible ministers to rule the nation.

Prime Minister Nehru deserves credit for advising Padam Shumsher to promise these reforms to the people. The constitution so framed was, however, rejected by the Ranas, then

1. Lohia, Ram Manohar, *Third Front*.

2. Jain, Giri Lal, *India Meets China in Nepal*, pp 13-14.

3. Dr. R. U. Singh, a professor of law in Lucknow University, and Sri Prakash, Indian barrister and Congress leader.



basking in the moonshine of American flattery, whose influence had greatly increased since 1947. The proposals cost Padam Shumsher his prime-ministership and he was forced to resign in May 1948, to be succeeded by Mohan Shamsher Rana. It was probably "due to the Ranas gradually being inclined more and more to be agents of Anglo-American bloc, that India should have taken interest" in Nepal<sup>1</sup>. India interpreted Rana government's tendency to "lean on the USA as a counterblast to Indian influence". Nepal threatened to become a potential seat of cold war, but as the need to protect Nepal from Chinese 'invasion or subversion' grew, "the USA and India came to realise that their aims in Nepal were identical" and that "they must not set themselves up as rival suitors for favours in Kathmandu".<sup>2</sup> So far the old diplomacy of counteracting rival influences of friends or foes!

The Indian government now also felt the need of concluding new treaties with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. "Apparently such a step was considered necessary to ensure that the rulers of these strategically important states were prepared to show the same sense of loyal friendship to the new regime in India which they had earlier shown to the British. This appears to be a valid assessment in view of the fact that the new treaties were modelled after the existing ones."<sup>3</sup> The Nepali Prime Minister, Mohan Shamsher, was persuaded to visit Delhi in February 1950, primarily to negotiate the new treaty and only in the second place to be told that enlightened interest demanded of him to "meet popular wishes at least half way"<sup>4</sup> On 17 March 1950, Nehru informed the Indian parliament that he had advised the Rana Government "to bring themselves in line with democratic forces". He also declared that "Geographically, Nepal is almost a part of India... although she is an independent country. It is not possible for the Indian government to tolerate an invasion of Nepal from anywhere' even though there is no military alliance between the two countries" because it "would involve the safety of India".<sup>5</sup>

On 31 July 1950, an "everlasting"—to be terminated on either side by one year's notice—Indo-Nepali Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed in Kathmandu which abrogated all previous treaties between British India and Nepal and recog-

1. Yami, *op. cit.*
2. Prem Bhatia, *op. cit.*
3. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 14, emphasis provided.
4. *The Tribune*, Ambala, 21 Feb 60, editorial.
5. *Speeches II*, pp 145-6.

nised Nepal's "sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence". But it enjoined upon the two governments to "inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring state."<sup>1</sup> An exchange of letters on the same day further laid down that "Neither government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two governments shall consult each other and devise effective counter-measures."<sup>2</sup> By a treaty of trade and commerce, the transit of goods and manufactures through Indian territory was regulated under mutually agreed conditions.

By another treaty of "perpetual peace and friendship" with Great Britain on 30 October, Nepal was freed from the earlier treaty of 1923 and the conventions which British India had exercised during a hundred years of Rana rule. The treaty substantially preserved the old commercial relationship with Britain, accorded her and the Commonwealth the most-favoured nation treatment and continued the British recruitment of Gurkha troops from Nepal.

Subsequent developments in Nepal have not changed this basic legal document on which India's relations with Nepal are based till today. So we might pause here to examine it. It is evident that while the Indian government felt it had "responsibilities and special interests" in Nepal, the Nepalis always insisted on their *complete independence* "throughout history" and more so since British withdrawal from India. Nationalist Nepalis would not deny that Nepal was only semi-independent during the Rana-British period and that her complete sovereignty was restored only in July-October 1950 with the seal of recognition contained in the new Indo-Nepali and British-Nepali treaties. But if Nepal's sovereignty was the outcome of India's success in making the British quit the Indian subcontinent, they argue, it was just as Nepal's limitations were prescribed by India's failure to resist to expanding British empire a century ago.

India never conquered Nepal and she cannot claim her special interests in all the countries that were freed at the same time that India attained her independence.

In 1947, under a tripartite agreement, the U. K. had retained the right to recruit Gurkha troops and continue diplomatic

1. Text in *Foreign Policy of India*, pp 21-3.

2. quoted by Nehru in Indian Parliament, 27 Nov 59.

relations with Nepal. An agreement for exchange of diplomatic representatives had also been signed between Nepal and the U. S. A. The Indian government had been powerless to prevent this and it felt the impact of changed circumstances wherein it could not monopolise Nepal's external relations. Nonetheless, it hoped to play a big role in the shaping of Nepal's political orientation.

Now if India wanted "*the same sense of loyal friendship to the new regime in India which they had earlier shown to the British*", then she was cheated out of this inheritance by force of circumstances or faulty diplomacy. The Indo-Nepal treaty merely asked both the governments to inform each other of their stresses and strains of international politics, a condition which, say the Nepalis, India violated when she failed to inform them about developments in Tibet and on the Sino-Indian border. The treaty was not a defensive and offensive alliance and the Indian representatives brought no pressure upon the Rana Government to cede any special rights to India—not even the pressure of resurgent Nepali nationalism. It must be said to the credit of British diplomacy that Britain did not anticipate matters; she only followed Indian treaty with a similar one of her own.

The strangest phenomenon in Nehru's diplomacy is that it has tried to win and assert by mere declarations and verbal statements what it lost willingly in written and signed treaties. It shows the ambivalence of a liberal mind arraigned against a captive heart which can neither get rid of its compulsions to serve its narrow interests nor seize the opportunities to serve an ideology. Nehru's earlier statement of March 1950 declaring India's unilateral protection to Nepal was resented by the Nepalis as an enunciation of India's special rights. The Indo-Nepali treaty in July that year was a disclaimer of these supposed rights. Nehru's clarification of his stand in December that year sowed fresh confusions regarding the meaning of the treaty and India's intentions towards this kingdom.

"When we came into the picture", Mr. Nehru said, "we assured Nepal that we could not only respect her independence but see, so far as we could, that she developed into a strong and progressive country. *We went further in this respect than the British Government had done* and Nepal began to develop other foreign relations. Frankly, we donot like and shall not brook any foreign interfearence in Nepal. We recognised Nepal as an independent country and wish her well. But...no other

country can have intimate relationship with Nepal as ours is. We would like every other country to appreciate the intimate geographical and cultural relationship that exists between India and Nepal".<sup>1</sup> According to a columnist, these last words were a warning to the British Government reinforced by the unexpected support which India received from Washington.<sup>2</sup>

The Nepalis were decidedly not of the same opinion regarding their "intimate relationship" with India. The Indian Prime Minister's illusion was probably nursed by the role he was then playing in bringing the Nepali King and Prime Minister together. For in the meantime a 'liberation' movement against the Rana rule had taken to arms with the blessings of the hitherto captive King Tribhuvan. It was led by the Nepali Congress which had emerged in 1950 as a united front of nationalist forces. As King Tribhuvan took asylum in the Indian Embassy on 6 November 1950, later to be flown to New Delhi by the Indian government, the Nepali insurgents began their march from the Indian border, captured the *Tarai* and threatened to bomb Kathmandu. *The Nepal Government accused India of allowing the rebels to operate from the Indian soil and of interfering in Nepal's internal affairs*, but the Indian government stood by its recognition of King Tribhuvan (in India) as the supreme head of the state. When Nepali insurgents failed to capture Kathmandu, and were driven back, negotiations opened between the Nepal and India governments.

### OPPORTUNITY AND COMPLUSION

IN FACT, THE "DRAMATIC MOVE ON THE PART OF KING Tribhuvan and the insurrection which followed it were both an opportunity and a compulsion for the Government of India to take a firm stand on the question of democratisation of the Nepalese regime."<sup>3</sup> The weakness of the rebels and the isolation of the Nepali people was apparent from the fact that the rebellion nearly collapsed in two weeks, *despite the handicap imposed by India upon the Rana Government that it could not use Indian territory for movement of its troops*. Nehru advised the Nepal Government a middle way: to call an elected constituent assembly, from an interim government consisting of popular representatives and restore King Tribhuvan to the throne. Talks continued for two months after which King

1. Foreign policy debate in Parliament, 6 Dec 50, *Speeches II*, pp 176-7, emphasis added.
2. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
3. *ibid*, p. 19

Tribhuvan was accepted as an effective sovereign committed to a constitutional monarchy. Immediate formation of an interim cabinet on the basis of parity between Ranas and popular representatives and elections by 1952 were also agreed upon.

The above settlement was rejected by all the political parties of Nepal as falling short of a "complete transfer of power" to the people.<sup>1</sup> So the negotiations dragged on for another month between the representatives of the Nepali Congress and Rana Government, in the presence of the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, King Tribhuvan and the Indian Prime Minister. Ultimately, the Nepali Congress was persuaded to call off its operations and share fifty-fifty power with the Ranas in an interim government. King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu on 15 February 1951. Three days later the interim government was sworn in.

Thus began a new chapter in the history of Nepal which ended its medieval isolation and brought it to stand in the whirlpool of modern life. It was called a nationalist and democratic revolution of the first order at that time and so it seemed, but there were sharp observers even then who realised that logically, "what took place in Nepal was not a revolution".<sup>2</sup> It was not the first time in history that the interests of a King had collided with those of feudalism and the king had fought feudalism with the help of the people. The only difference between what happened in Nepal and similar episodes in world history was that the denouement had taken place in the second half of the twentieth century, that the Nepali leaders who hit the public eye were educated in modern schools of socialism and democracy, and that the ailing King, outside his realm, was aided in his counsels by a modern democratic government. Hence, the trappings of modern verbiage and the tremendous hopes aroused in India. To the simple and illiterate people of Nepal, inhabiting the different parts of His Majesty's mountainous realm, who were cut off from each other and from the world for want of means of transport and communication, the King had always possessed a divine right to rule the land of Pasupatinatha, a right which he had asserted *at his pleasure* once again to earn the title of the "Father of the Nation".

1. M. P. Koirala, Nepali Congress leader, described it on 10 Jan 51 in one word as "disillusionment". Quoted by K. P. Karunakaran, *India in World Affairs*, (1950-53), Oxford, pp 195.

2. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

On 18 February, in a colourful ceremony held at his palace, attended by Indian and British ambassadors, loyal nobility and popular leaders, His Majesty proclaimed amnesty to all persons guilty of political offences, many of whom had returned after years of exile, restored all property confiscated for such offences, promised the calling of a constituent assembly to draft the constitution of the state, and set up an interim government consisting of victorious leaders of the Nepali Congress, taking oath and helm of affairs forthwith. Renouncing the customary feudal form "to all the nobles, clergy, land-owners, merchants, civil and military officers", he addressed directly "to our beloved people", a form signifying, to wit, that all the intermediary classes between him and the people lay thereafter at his mercy and would stay in the political arena at his pleasure and command.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# *Tudor Revolution*

DESPITE THE GREAT HOPES AROUSED IN NEPAL AND IN India by the 1951 Revolution—revolution undoubtedly it was of a major import, Nepal's democracy was not yet come. To appreciate the fate of Nepali democracy in subsequent years, we should examine the relationship of forces that led to the 1951 Restoration.

Under Ranarchy, Nepal was broadly divided into a landed nobility and an illiterate peasantry spread over isolated habitations and divided by tribal loyalties. Nepal's cottage-craftsmen (the Newars) plied their trade in Kathmandu and a few other towns, untouched by, and indifferent to, changes in government. The valiant classes in Nepal went out to join the British army and guard the Sovereign that paid liquid cash which came in handy to their dependents at home. The few Nepalis educated in India, if they did not belong to the nobility, had no option but to eke a living in exile rather than try their luck in the stagnant administration of their home country which paid them as little as it accorded them no safety from the uncertainties of a feudal-aristocratic power.

There are few large towns in Nepal ; even Kathmandu is a sprawling village by modern standards. Its nucleus is a crowded bazar surrounded by still more crowded lanes and hovels whose filth and monotony is broken by an equal number of amazingly carved temples and shrines, surrounded by numerous palaces concealing their revelries behind their high walls and dominating the adjacent fields which grow corn or vegetable under their shadow. Since Pasupatinatha would not allow his beloved vehicle, the sacred bull, to be harnessed under his stern gaze, these fields are tilled by a hand hoe, and the tiller unto this day stands in perpetual awe of the castle that overlooks his miserable piece of land.

### NOBLE REVOLUTIONARIES

UNTOUCHED BY THE NORH WIND OR THE SOUTH, THE RANAS

could continue to rule indefinitely in the bowl of the Kathmandu valley but for their own interencine conflicts and the recurrent dreams of those sections of the nobility whom they had outmanoeuvred. The generations of the King's family, the *Shahas*, and of the family of the prime minister who preceded them, the *Thopas*, were born to be as resolute enemies of the Ranas as C-class Ranas born of concubines of the almighty prime ministers, but denied the privilege of sharing state power. In terms of economic power, the *Shahas*, the *Thapas* and the C-class Ranas had enough wealth to buy whole armies which could challenge any state power in Nepal.<sup>1</sup> The brahmin, exempt from death sentence by an old law, and more loyal to the King in memory of his ancestors who had sung praises of His Majesty, could provide leadership to an anti-Rana movement.<sup>2</sup>

The anti-Rana movement arose mainly in India among the few hundreds of educated rebels facing a blank future. It was led by brahmins and supported by the anti-Rana sections of Nepali nobility. Inside Nepal, following a discontent among C-class Ranas, Tanka Prasad Acharya had tried to organise in 1935 a *Praja Parishad* (People's Council) but, despite the support of the powerless King Tribhuvan, the party was firmly suppressed at its very first attempt of political activity in 1940. The Nepali rebels in India participated in the Quit India movement in 1942 and thereby established their links with the Indian socialists, notably Jai Prakash Narain and Ram Manohar Lohia, and with Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. When in 1946 they formed the Nepali National Congress in Banaras, their only support inside Nepal (supposedly) was Tanka Prasad Acharya, then in jail, whom they elected their president *in absentia*. It is typical of such emigre organisations formed without reference to the masses of people at home that within two years it was divided between B. P. Koirala and D. R. Regmi, the latter then gravitating towards communists to counter the former's socialism. What is more significant is that the two contending leaders were financed by two C-class Ranas, namely, Subarna *Shamsher* and *Mahabir Shamsher* respectively.<sup>3</sup>

1. Among the "democratic" leaders, General Subarna Shamsher Rana, Bharat Shamsher Rana, Mahabir Shamsher Rana and several others are estimated to possess millions of rupees in property, stock and cash in India, Britain, France, Switzerland and the U.S.A.
2. Most 'democratic' leaders of Nepal, other than Ranas, Thapas and Shahas, are brahmins, such as the Koirala brothers, S. P. Upadhyaya, Tanka Prasad Acharya, Bhadra Kali Misra and D. R. Regmi.
3. Yami, *op. cit.* Incidentally, Dr. Regmi lost to B. P. Koirala his leadership in the Congress partly because his financier soon became bankrupt.



In 1948, another member of the nobility, Mahendra Bikram Shahā, was able to draw the bulk of the disgruntled C-class Ranas into the fold of an organisation called the Nepali Democratic Congress of which he became the President. He brought with him the secret and implicit support of King Tribhuvan and he was also the first to gather the support of Gurkha ex-service men by "coming out of the narrow circle of merely abusing the Ranas"<sup>1</sup> and giving a more positive nationalist orientation to the Nepali movement. Finally, when the Nepali National Congress merged with the Nepali Democratic Congress in March 1950, the resulting organisation, the Nepali Congress, became the rallying ground of all Nepali rebels in and out of Nepal. Its real strength, however, lay in the finances provided by the Ranas, though its apparant leadership went to the "socialist" Koiralas. In this coalition of the lame and the blind, the Nepali Congress elected not B. P., but M. P. Koirala as its President, because the latter, having worked as a district officer (*subba*) under the Rana regime, was more amenable to the financing Ranas than his doctrinaire step-brother. Mr. Regmi, who was even more of a "scholar", found no place in the Nepali Congress and had to be content with his own splinter flag of the Nepali National Congress.

The major strength of the Nepali political formation developing in India then lay in the finances of disgruntled Ranas and the moral support of the King. Among the masses, the only section it counted upon was of the educated Nepalis seeking administrative jobs, whom we might call the gentry, and some ex-service men looking out for adventure. The royal and feudal suspicions against B. P. Koirala's "socialism" were reflected at the outset in their choice of M. P. Koirala to head the new organisation, and the "family" feud between the two brothers, which was later fought at all levels, was an expression of the implicit conflict between the royalists and the republicans in the Congress party. On the other hand, the "socialist" leadership of the Nepali Congress could not convert it into a socialist party, but it prevented the non-socialist and purely democratic and nationalist elements from finding a significant place in the organisation.<sup>2</sup> The Nepali Congress thus could not become a full-fledged united front of all anti-Rana elements even during the course of its struggle and insurrection. In addition to Mr. Regmi, Dr. K. I. Singh had his own band of followers who refused to fight shoulder to shoulder with it.

1. *ibid.*

2. *ibid.*

The veteran nationalist leader, Mr. Tanka Prasad Acharya, released from prison after the Revolution, could not be wooed by the Nepali Congress leaders either and he revived his own Praja Parishad.

The people of Nepal did not count. If at all, they heard some rumblings in the suburbs of the capital, or in the marshes adjoining the Indian border, and they rejoiced in a change because they wanted, first and foremost, a rule of law wherein their life and property was no more invaded by arbitrary and rapacious nobles. As they loved and worshipped their King, they were shocked to know that all these years His Majesty had not been ruling at all over their hills and vales and that he was held in check by a usurper's rule of the sword. Little wonder then that they had suffered so much! They only nursed the hope that Restoration may bring some land reforms, some opportunity of education and employment to their growing children, and some more contact with the world beyond their forests and the mountains. They knew little about democracy and cared less.

There had been no agricultural revolution in Nepal. The restoration of monarchy was neither the result nor the cause of such a revolution. So there was no large-scale capitalist farming, no prosperous peasantry, no landless labour and certainly no proletariat or working class. There was not even a floating population of unemployed in the towns or countryside as all "vagabonds" and deserter "villeins" trekked to India to become sentries in Indian business houses or soldiers in the army. There had been no industrial or even a mercantile revolution in the country. We know that in the absence of waterways, rails, roads or communications, overland routes are hazardous, freights high and risks of trade numerous. Consequently, internal markets are small and primitive and foreign trade restricted to luxury goods.

There are few statistics of any kind available in Nepal today. So an appraisal of her economy or class structure can not be made with scientific accuracy, but the only rich class in Nepal with some accumulated wealth has been the feudal nobility which invested its 'capital' in cash and stocks mainly in adjoining India. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that it was the nobility, particularly that section of it which bereft of state power was not preoccupied with statecraft, that controlled all the trade, commerce, urban property and the little manufacture the country possessed. This section of nobility

in course of time grew strong enough to demand some elbow room to become more respectable and grow richer. It resented the curbs imposed by arbitrary Rana and monopolies exercised by the ruling clique and its courtiers and hangers-on. To this extent the nobility became 'progressive' but a partially (or mainly) feudal and partially urban propertied class of merchants could not take the place of an entrepreneurial middle class which "enlivens democracy," just as the non-working classes could not listen to the call of international socialism which Mr. B. P. Koirala claimed to represent. In addition, there was no civil service and no national consciousness as distinct from tribal loyalties. Whatever national cohesiveness the country possessed was symbolised in the person of the King.

### MONARCHICAL REVOLUTION.

BY THEMSELVES THE NEPALI REVOLUTIONARIES IN EXILE could have achieved precious little in 1951, but the support lent them by the monarchy and 'left' nobility converted them into a viable force capable of fighting for, if not of winning, power. It robbed them, however, of sentimental patriotism and genuine idealism which must characterise all rebels in their initial stages. nobility injected its own experience of palace intrigue and manouvers into the national movement which needed self-sacrificing pursuit of the cause for at least a decade to come. The revolutionaries, in fact, ceased to be revolutionaries even before they formed the government. They were merely politicians hoping for a new dawn in their country, once a new dawn had appeared on the Indian subcontinent.

The new pattern of power, therefore, was an uneasy compromise between the Rana feudal elements and the educated gentry. Subsequent events proved more poignantly that the political leaders were not in touch with the solid reality of their inaccessible country, save what they saw in Kathmandu, where all modern education and political and economic power was concentrated. During the next one decade too, political parties and leaders made little attempt to establish their living contact with the immense backlog of human mass which inhabited the mountain fastnesses of the sparsely populated countryside, and to exercise an educative influence upon them. This inert mass would, in the years to come, refuse to throw its weight on either side, while governments may come and go in the nation's capital.

Intelligent political observers in Nepal as well as in India did realise quite early that "Nepal had been pushed into an

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of democracy dear to the nationalist-socialist leaders was to be achieved.

It is interesting to compare the situation in Nepal in 1951 with the rise of Tudor absolutism in England. According to a writer, "Henry VII, founder to the new monarchy was in the fullest sense a symbolic figure. Winning his kingdom by force of arms he consolidated it by the homespun qualities of thrift, cunning, diplomacy and double-dealing. The relative strength of the Crown and the nobility had been greatly altered to the advantage of the former. Henry had the support of the merchants, the clothiers, the town artisans, of all those who valued security and feared above all things the resumption of civil war. It is important to note that this support came from what we may begin to call the *rural bourgeoisie* as well as from the *middle classes in the towns*. With this support Henry was able to go forward steadily to destroy every possibility of opposition and to lay the foundations of a despotism that was to last a century. The Tudor monarchy rested on the fact that the bourgeoisie—the merchant classes of the towns and the more progressive of the lesser gentry in the country—was strong enough in the sixteenth century to keep in power any Government that promised them the elbow room to grow rich, but not strong enough to desire direct political power. Though relying on the bourgeoisie as their main supporters the Tudors made little use of Parliament..."<sup>1</sup> In Elizabethan settlement Protestantism assumed the form most compatible with the monarchy and with the system of local government created by the Tudors. Many of the nobles, observing how profitable Protestantism in England had been for their class, joined the party of the reformers.<sup>2</sup> In Nepal, nobles found it convenient to be constitutional monarchists or republicans.

## STAPLE DIET

CONTRARY TO THE WISHES OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE, WISHES which were fondly transformed into expectations, the abortive revolution forebode no good to India or to Indo-Nepali relations. The Indian people and government, by aiding the Nepali rebels and King Tribhuvan, had created inveterate foes among the Rana nobles who owned huge fortunes not only in Nepal but also in property and cash in India and England. The revolution did not end their political power, nor did it touch their economic power. Very soon the Rana elements

1. Morton, A.L., *A People's History of England*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1951, pp 177-78.
2. *ibid*, pp. 196-7.

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insisting upon strict observance of protocol by all its representatives in Kathmandu. And it would be interesting to know whose bright idea it was that the Indian embassy in Kathmandu should be housed in the buildings of the former British Legation there.

What seem to be incidental errors to a cursory observer may indeed be expressions of the inner compulsions of governments as of individuals. We know now, for instance, that New Delhi did not "take it for granted that democracy or popular government was indispensable for Nepal", as it claimed latter<sup>1</sup>. The Government of India wanted essentially a minimum of disturbance and the maintenance of a status quo in Nepal as elsewhere. Consequently, when called upon to play the role of a champion of democracy, it did so haltingly, halfheartedly and inefficiently. In addition, thanks to its inner compulsions, it might have found in the weakness of the Rana regime, as in the instability of post-Rana regimes, its opportunity to demand *continued loyalty* from Nepal governments. The fact that all the three parties to the 1951 drama, the Ranas, the King and the Nepali insurgents, had to take counsels of the Government of India should have bloated the sense of importance of the Indian advisers and convinced them that they had arrived on the Nepali scene. In nursing such a feeling they were blind to the historical perspective that, in the second half of the twentieth century, as it was impossible to limit Nepal's external relations, it was also increasingly impossible to 'advise' politicians who depended upon vote-catching devices in order to reach the Crown.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the universal expectation in India that the Nepali Congress leaders should be more pro-Indian than others, because of their Indian schooling, was bound to prove as illusory as the British hope to receive loyalty from every Harrow-trained Indian. When Indian commentators talked of the relationship or conflicts between India and Nepal as being of an "inter-family nature", they were wandering into the middle ages in which a horizontal division of society permitted kings and queens to form family relationships with the rulers of other domains. In modern times, nation-states, once constituted, have gathered their own momentum, inspiring their citizens to distinguish themselves from other nation-states and formulating policies which are in

1. New Delhi has not yet supported the liberalisation of regimes in Bhutan and Sikkim, though they are as steadily passing out of Indian tutelage as Nepal has done. See also footnote 3, p. 37.

