

The Himalaya as a Frontier

Ram Rahul

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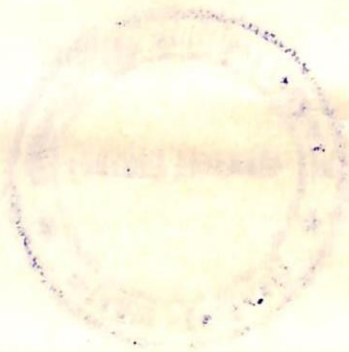
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PREFACE

The Himalaya, by which we mean the Himalaya mountain system which stands astride the landmass of Asia for more than 2,000 miles from Afghanistan to Burma, has been a source of inspiration from times immemorial to all humanity and has provided spiritual and material sustenance—especially to the large masses of the people of Central and South Asia. It has always served as a zone marking off Central from South Asia and China from India.

This book, *The Himalaya as a Frontier*, is the first of its kind. It deals with the frontier countries of Bhutan, the Tibet region of China, the Sikkim region of India and Nepal. As such, it is concerned with the relations that Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan have maintained both between and among themselves and with China and India. It also focuses on the role of the Bon, Buddhist and Hindu religions in the history and politics of these countries. Bon was the religion of Tibet before the advent of Buddhism there. Until recently, Tibet was a theocracy. Both Buddhism and Hinduism have been the state religions of Nepal. Of course, Nepal has never been a theocracy. Bhutan was a theocracy until 1907—the year of the foundation of the present monarchy.

I begin the book with Tibet. Owing to its geographical situation, Tibet has always had a great influence on the historical and political development of the Himalaya frontier countries and particularly Bhutan. Indeed, it can be described as a source and fountain of their civilizations. Moreover, although Tibet is not a natural part of China, it became an integral part of it politically in the summer of 1951. Next comes Sikkim, which is a natural part of India. Sikkim became an integral part of India in the summer of 1975.

(The book ends at this point of time.) Until then, it was a protectorate of India. Then there are Nepal and Bhutan, the only countries in the Himalaya to be the members of the United Nations. Bhutan joined the United Nations on 21 September 1971. I conclude the book with certain observations on the trends now discernible in the situation in the Himalaya.

The papers at the end of the book include treaties as well as notes and agreements between China and Tibet, between China and India on the question of Tibet, between India and Sikkim, between China and Nepal on the question of Tibet, between India and Nepal, and between India and Bhutan since the emergence of new China and new India. These are essential to any effort to understand the political developments as well as inter-state relations in the Himalaya since 1947-50. There is a vast array of writings on the Himalaya, but my bibliography lists only just a few selected books on the subject of the Himalaya as a frontier. There is no book on the Himalaya as a frontier. I shall feel gratified if my book, whatever its limitations and/or shortcomings, proves useful in this connection.

This study is dedicated to Jawaharlal Nehru, who adored the Himalaya, and hence understood my mad longing to be forever wandering there. He also gave me my first research appointment to work on the Himalaya frontier. Thanks are due to Rammanohar Lohia, who gave me help in understanding the importance of the Himalaya as a frontier between China and India, T.C. Bose and J.N. Das of the Dibrugarh University, who read the first draft of this study and offered comments that enabled me to improve it. My thanks are also due to Thomas Abraham and A.K. Damodaran of the Ministry of External Affairs, B.B. Lal (Governor of Sikkim), K.P.S. Menon (Foreign Secretary, 1948-52), who have always taken keen interest in my frontier studies.

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INTRODUCTION

The prime function of a frontier is to mark off one area from another, one state from another, and the people of one state from those of another. On this view, the great Himalaya range of mountains is a great divide—the natural demarcation—between Central Asia and South Asia. The central crest of the Himalaya has always served as an impregnable barrier, a mighty wall, between Tibet in the north and India, Bhutan, and Nepal in the south.

There are two parts of the Himalaya, that is, the northern, Central Asian part and the southern, South Asian part. The northern part mainly consists of Tibet, which adjoins China in the north and east and India, Bhutan, and Nepal in the south and west. The northern part is known as the "Land of Snows." It has always been of concern to both China and India. The southern part consists of India, Bhutan, and Nepal. It is known as *Himachal*, mountainous area covered with snow. It has always been a part of India.

Tibet lies in the northern slopes of the Himalaya. It is by and large a plateau whose political centre has always been central Tibet. The name is Arabic—from the Tibetan expression *Toh Po* (Upper Tibet). The name *Bhota*, Sanskrit expression for Tibet, is perhaps from the word *Boda* (occurring in the coins of Kanishka).

The history and politics of Tibet have been rooted in and shaped by the distinct character of the land and its people. The structure of political, religious, and social life in Tibet was bound up with the land system. Rights over land implied all kinds of social duties and political functions. The aristocracy and the monasteries owned most of the country's land and property and shared the power and

responsibility of its administration. Thus the landlords, the aristocracy, and the monasteries dominated the national politics. The role of the institution of the Dalai Lama has been unique not only in the history and politics of Tibet and Central Asia but also of the Himalaya and Siberia.

Sikkim, along with Bhutan, lies in the southern slopes of the western half of the eastern Himalaya. It adjoins Tibet in the north and constitutes, so to speak, a wedge between Bhutan in the east and Nepal in the west. Originally, it did not have a formal name. In the course of time, it came to be known as *Denzong* (rice country). This was because rice grows abundantly in Sikkim. The name Sikkim from the Sanskrit word *sukham* (happiness), that is, the land of prosperity, is a later Nepali expression. The early history of the Lepchas, the indigenous people of Sikkim, is also obscure. The Lepchas call themselves *Rongpa* (ravine people). The expression *Lepcha* is Nepali.

Nepal lies in the southern slopes of the eastern half of the central Himalaya between the Mechi river in the east and the Kali river in the west. It adjoins Tibet in the north and India in the east, south, and west. It has a unique character formed and forged by its geographical position. Owing to its strategic location, it is a vital point in the defence of the glacis of the Himalaya.

Nothing definite can be said about the origin of the name Nepal. According to a legend, Ne Muni entered the Bagmati Valley from the south, bringing with him a prince to reign over it. Ne Muni commanded so much respect that the Valley came to be known after him as *Nepal* (country raised and protected by Ne Muni). Thus tradition reserves the name Nepal to the Bagmati Valley only. The name was used to cover the whole area which constitutes presentday Nepal only after Raja Prithvinarayan Shah of the hill kingdom of Gorkha, west of the Bagmati Valley, conquered the kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhatgaon in 1768-69. The Bagmati Valley is now generally known as the Kathmandu Valley. With its great heritage, it stands out as the leading cultural region of Nepal.

There were other centres of power, like the kingdoms and principalities of the Karnali and Kosi basins in that part of the Himalaya. Upon their subsequent annexation by the Gorkhas, the name Nepal was extended to denote them also. Thus the Bagmati basin, which is but a portion of what constitutes Nepal today, was

all that was denoted by the name Nepal till the second half of the 18th century.

As it expanded, Gorkha power inevitably clashed with the British in India and the Manchus in China, both of which were at this time getting actively and deeply involved in the politics of the kingdoms of the Himalaya—Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim. It is through the erstwhile kingdoms of the Bagmati Valley that the traditional routes between Central Asia and South Asia run. The Gorkha conquest of the kingdoms of the Bagmati Valley disrupted normal trade between India and Tibet, harming British commercial interests in and beyond the Himalaya. Being the rising power in India then, the British started taking an interest in the politics of the Himalayan kingdoms and tried to mediate on behalf of those who had suffered from Gorkha conquest. Almost all the Himalayan kingdoms, including those conquered by the Gorkhas, had direct racial or religious connection. The Gorkha expansion disturbed the age-old relations between the Himalayan kingdoms. This led to the intervention of Manchu China in Nepalese-Tibetan affairs in 1792. Manchu China then exercised suzerainty over Tibet. An agreement eventually reached between Manchu China and Nepal ended the war between Nepal and Tibet. It also enjoined Nepal to send a mission to China every five years. On the basis of the 1792 agreement, and on the strength of this mission, Manchu China preferred a claim to suzerainty over Nepal. The arrangement lasted almost until the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911.

Bhutan, along with Sikkim, lies in the southern slopes of the western half of the eastern Himalaya. It adjoins Tibet in the north and India in the east, south, and west. Like Nepal, it is a vital point in the defence of the glaxis of the Himalaya.

Bhutan's traditional name is *Mon Yul* (low country) or *Lho Mon Yul* (southern low country). The name Bhutan derives from the Sanskrit expression *bhotanta* (the borderland of Tibet). The Bhutanese however call their country *Drug Yul* (land of the Drugpa) a subset of Kagyupa Buddhism. Until the time of Lama Ngawang Namgyal in the first half of the 17th century, there was never any authority exercising real control over the entire country.

The entire southern part of the Himalaya from Kamarupa in the east to Kashmir in the west was a part of India in the ancient period. With the dissolution of the unifying forces in north India after the death of Raja Harsha of Kanauj in A.D. 647, it succumbed

to the influence of Tibet, which was then all-powerful. The foundations of Buddhism were then being laid in Tibet. Tibet's ascendancy even changed the ethnic complexion of upper southern Himalaya. Even chiefs from various parts of Tibet founded independent kingdoms. This, however, did not result in Tibet establishing an enduring political influence there.

The Muslim advent in north India in the 11th and 12th centuries however transformed the entire socio-political set-up. (The Muslims, who, under Muhammad-ibn al-Qasim, began to raid Sind in western India for the first time in 712, took considerably longer to penetrate into the rest of India.) Under the pressure of new forces all major kingdoms in the Himalaya collapsed one after another. Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khalji (*d.* 1210), one of the commanders of the first Muslim dynasty in India (the one founded by Qutub-ud-din Aibak in 1206), attempted an invasion of the Himalaya in 1206. He had sacked the Odantapuri and Vikramasila monasteries of Magadha in 1200 and had taken possession of Gaur/Lakhnauti by *c.* 1203. Muhammad Shah Tughluq (*r.* 1325-51) attempted an invasion of the central Himalaya in 1337-38. Shams-ud-din Ilyas of Bengal (1345-57), too, invaded Nepal in 1350.

The Mughals, who originally came from Central Asia, established themselves only in parts of north India by 1526-27. They made it a point to establish their supremacy over all kingdoms in the southern Himalaya. In order to maintain this policy, Akbar (*r.* 1556-1605) brought Kashmir under his control in 1585 and made Ladakh a *de facto* part of his empire. In 1665, Ladakh became a regular part of the Mughal empire during Aurangzeb's times (*r.* 1658-1707). Both Jahangir and Shah Jahan tried to push the frontiers of the Mughal empire to the farthest point in the east. Mir Jumla, one of Aurangzeb's generals, marched on Assam early in 1662. The peace treaty concluded in January 1663 provided for the cession of all territory west of the Bharali river to the Mughal empire.

Later, Rajput princes migrated to the Himalaya, where a large number of independent kingdoms, like that of Gorkha, sprang up as a result of their adventures. Hindu culture and ethnic traditions swept the entire lower Himalaya, absorbing or mingling with the local cultural and ethnic complexes. However, the newly founded kingdoms in the Himalaya recognized the supremacy of the sultans and shahs of Delhi.

The British became the *de facto* rulers of Bengal in 1764. It took them another century, however, to establish themselves throughout the country. They became interested in the commercial potentialities of the Himalaya frontier countries only after they reached the foothills of the Himalaya in 1767. Earlier attempts designed to achieve the objective of increased trade and commerce failed. The Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-15 provided the British with their first major breakthrough in the Himalaya. While the Anglo-Nepalese treaty of 1816 carried the British frontier of Kumaun and Garhwal up to the watershed of the Himalaya separating India from Tibet, the British territory thenceforward became conterminous with the Manchu empire of China for the first time. Special treaty relations with Kashmir and the Panjab during 1816-70 led to the extension of British influence into Central Asia. Increased contact with Central Asia, growing Russian influence there, and the isolationist policies of Tibet towards the end of the 19th century, gave a new turn to British policy in the Himalaya. The British fought Tibet in 1888 (on Sikkimese territory) and again in 1903-04. They secured a buffer position for Tibet by three consecutive and separate agreements with Tibet, China, and Russia on 7 September 1904, 27 April 1906, and 31 August 1907 respectively.

This situation in the Himalaya continued until the attainment of independence by India on 15 August 1947 and the emergence of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949. Sovereign India entered into fresh treaties with Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim, and formulated a policy towards each of them based both on political and strategic considerations. A proper understanding of the Himalaya as a frontier became essential when Tibet underwent a change of status under the People's Republic of China in the summer of 1951.

Chapter III

SIKKIM

Sikkim does not appear separately in the early political complex of the southern Himalaya frontier—it then formed part of the adjoining countries in the eastern Himalaya. According to the tradition of Lamaism, Padmasambhava of India visited and hallowed the eastern Himalaya, including the region of Sikkim, during his travels in Tibet in A.D. 8th century. Since then, adherents of Lamaism in the Himalaya have looked upon the Sikkim region as a holy land worthy of pilgrimage. Later, this part came under the control of the Khen/Khyan dynasty of the Kamata Rajya. Khen rule lasted from the latter half of the 13th century to the end of the 15th. Lepcha chiefs looked after their respective domains till the emergence of the kingdom of Sikkim in 1642. The writ of the subadar/governor of Bengal ended with the northern limit of the *Morang/Tarai* (lowland) marches. (The name Morang is an old term for the Tarai now preserved in the name of Morang district in Nepal, north of Purnea district in Bihar.)

In 1642 three lamas—Lhatsun Chhenpo, Sempa Chhenpo, and Rigzin Chhenpo of Tibet—who belonged to the three subjects of Lhatsunpa, Kathogpa, and Ngadakpa respectively of the Nyingmapa sect of Lamaism, consecrated Phuntshog Namgyal (1604-70) as the first religious ruler of the Lepcha land with the title of *Chhogyal* (king who rules according to *Chho*—righteous law, and enforces respect for it) at Yoksam in western Sikkim. (The ancestors of Phuntshog Namgyal had migrated from eastern Tibet to the Sikkim region sometime in the 15th century.) In the political parlance of medieval Tibet, this was a common nomenclature for the kings of Tibet and for the kings of countries drawing their

After the invasion of Tibet by the Dzungar Mongols in 1717, the Mondoling hierarch fled to Sikkim with his family. He had a daughter of Chhogyal Gyurmi's age, whom he gave in marriage to the Chhogyal. The lady was so plain-looking that the Chhogyal would not live with her or have anything to do with her. The Chhogyal removed himself to the Dechheling Monastery near Gezing, while the Gyalmo continued to live at Rabdentse. Gyurmi Namgyal came increasingly under the influence of the Lepchas and their form of worship. This led to fights between the *bon thing* (Lepcha priests) and the lamas. The first battles between the Bhotiyas and the Lepchas were as much over religion as over land. The Lepcha resistance continued until the early 19th century.

Gyurmi Namgyal built the first Karmapa monastery in Sikkim at Ralang in 1730 to please the Ninth Karmapa hierarch Wangchuk Dorji during a pilgrimage by the king to holy places in Tibet. Several other Karmapa monasteries in Sikkim, like Phodang and Rumtek (a Lepcha village west of Gangtok), were built in 1740. The present Karmapa hierarch, along with his entourage, has been living at Rumtek since his escape from Tibet in the summer of 1957. The Karmapa monasteries in Sikkim are as flourishing and prosperous as ever.

After Gyurmi Namgyal's death, a dispute arose regarding succession between the Bhotiyas and the Lepchas in which the Lepchas supported Namgyal Phuntshog Namgyal's accession. After five years of dispute, the Bhotiyas and Lepchas reached an agreement with the mediation of the Tibetans, which confirmed Namgyal Phuntshog Namgyal on the throne of Sikkim, and gave the Lepchas a greater share in the administration of the country. Tibet sent one Rabden Sarpa to act as regent until Namgyal Phuntshog Namgyal came of age. Rabden Sarpa introduced several administrative measures like the introduction of a system of land taxation in the country for the first time.

Internal instability in Sikkim coincided with the rise of Desi Shidar of Bhutan and Raja Prithvinarayan Shah of Gorkha in the late 1760s. Bhutan attacked Sikkim in 1770 and occupied the entire country east of the Tista river. During 1774-75 Nepal invaded Sikkim and took most of its territory west of the Singli ridge.

It may be noted here in passing that Prithvinarayan Shah used to address Chhogyal Namgyal Phuntshog Namgyal as *Sikkimpati*

(lord of Sikkim). Perhaps he did so on the analogy of the Tibetan mode of addressing the Chhogyal of Sikkim as *Sachopa* (which meant, at best, warden of marches).

The Gorkha generals also made deep inroads into Sikkim. A territorial settlement negotiated at the intervention of Tibet in 1775 fixed the boundary between Nepal and Sikkim at the Sango Chhu, Sangdi Dzung, Malliyang, and the Lha Chhu (the Kankayi river of Nepal), a western tributary of the Mechi river. In 1779-80 the Gorkhas broke the settlement of 1775, but the virile Lepchas held them for nine long years. Only in 1788, the Gorkhas were able to defeat them and occupy Ilam on the Kankayi river and the larger part of western Sikkim. They occupied the entire lower Tista basin in 1788-90, but were persuaded to stop their advance into north Sikkim only after they had been allowed to annex the frontier district of Nyalam of Tibet.

The Nepalese invasion on Sikkim eventually became an invasion on its society and culture as well. So much so that the Nepalis, who started settling down in south Sikkim in the latter part of the 19th century, now constitute the majority of the Sikkimese population. The Lepchas (and the Bhotiyas), the original inhabitants of Sikkim, are now in a minority in their own homeland. They are a peaceful people. In the face of the expansion of the Nepali-speaking people in Sikkim, they have been withdrawing into the fastnesses of north Sikkim. The impact of Nepalese culture on Lepcha life and culture is so deep that many of the southern Lepchas have even lost their mother tongue. On the other hand, the Nepali-speaking people have become so entrenched in Sikkim that they have started demanding its merger with Nepal.

Chhogyal Tenzin Namgyal (1769-93), who ascended the throne of Sikkim in 1780, escaped to north Sikkim to solicit aid from Tibet. Tibet, also involved in a conflict with Nepal then, could render no assistance to Sikkim. Eventually, in 1792 Manchu China, then suzerain of Tibet, came to the rescue of Tibet and imposed harsh terms on Nepal. The Government of Tibet appropriated Tenzin Namgyal's ancestral estates in central Tibet which had been granted by the Sixth Dalai Lama. It also took the Chhumbi Valley, and thus made the Cho La and Jelep La ranges the northern and eastern boundaries respectively of Sikkim. On the western side, the Gorkhas were left in possession of

Sikkimese territory up to the Singli ridge. Tenzin Namgyal's successors blamed Bhutan for causing the trouble between Nepal and Sikkim. Bhutan at first befriended Nepal, for it wanted Nepal to recognize the legitimacy of its hold over Sikkimese territory that it had annexed east of the Tista river in 1770. However, in the 1780s, when it realized the threat posed by Gorkha power to its possessions, it reversed its policy and started siding with Sikkim in order to contain Nepal.

Tsugphu Namgyal (1785-1863), the son of a Lepcha mother, succeeded Tenzin Namgyal on his death in Lhasa in 1793 and returned to Rabdentse. He shifted his capital to Tumlong in north Sikkim in 1814. Rabdentse was too close to the aggressive Gorkhas of Nepal.

Sikkim eventually turned to the British for help against the Gorkhas. The Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-15 brought the British and Sikkim in contact for the first time. Owing to Sikkim's strategic importance, the British accepted the former as an ally in their war with Nepal. Under the Anglo-Nepalese Treaty of Peace signed at the conclusion of the war, Nepal surrendered to the British the Morang strip at the foot of the Sikkim hills, which was originally part of Sikkim, but had been annexed by Nepal in 1788-90. Subsequently, on 10 February 1817, the British agent on the Purnea frontier concluded a treaty with the agents of Chhogyal Tsugphu Namgyal at Tetuliya. By this treaty, obviously to use Sikkim as a barrier against any further attempt on the part of the Gorkhas to extend their power, the British restored to Tsugphu Namgyal the whole of lower Sikkim, bounded on the east by the Tista and on the west by the Mechi river and the Singli range. The Government of the English East India Company virtually assumed the position of lord paramount of Sikkim. It secured the right of arbitration in disputes between Sikkim and Nepal and any other neighbouring state. Sikkim undertook to furnish troops whenever requisitioned and to allow free passage for merchants etc. The principles underlying the treaty, however, repeatedly gave rise to much misunderstanding between the British and Sikkim in subsequent years in the course of its implementation. The treaty established the boundary between Nepal and Sikkim along the Mechi river and the Singli ridge.

The British made it a practice to address the Chhogyal of Sikkim as Sikkimpatī. Perhaps, they had in mind the Nepalese

practice initiated by Prithvinarayan Shah and continued by his successors.

Security against foreign aggression did not, however, end the old feuds between the Bhotiyas and the Lepchas in Sikkim. The Lepchas, who had formed the vanguard of Sikkimese resistance to the Gorkha invaders, opposed any sort of domination by the Bhotiyas. Tsugphu Namgyal and his group, which could not tolerate the Lepcha resistance, got a Lepcha Minister assassinated in 1826, whereupon several hundred Lepchas migrated to Ilam in Nepal. Abetted by the Gorkhas, they frequently raided western Sikkim causing several frontier disputes between Nepal and Sikkim. In pursuance of the terms of the Treaty of 1817, Sikkim referred the matter to the Company for arbitration. This gave an opportunity to the British to influence the course of events in the strategic area of Sikkim. In 1828 J.W. Grant, the British commercial resident at Maldah and Captain George William Aylmer Lloyd, commander of the frontier force at Tetuliya, went to Sikkim on deputation to settle the frontier disputes. As a result of their intervention, the Lepcha infiltrators from Nepal were compelled to return.

About this time the Company learnt of the Darjeeling (place of Dorji) hill tract from officers deputed by it for exploratory work. It occurred to them that it was an ideal site for a sanatorium for the convalescence of British troops, and that it could also serve as a base for pursuing British political and commercial interests in the eastern Himalaya. The Government of Sikkim was at first reluctant to part with the tract for any consideration. Later, however, compelled by circumstances, especially the constant Lepcha unrest and the passive attitude of Tibet towards Sikkim, Tsugphu Namgyal presented the Darjeeling tract to the British government on 1 February 1835. Instead of an equivalent tract in exchange, the Company sanctioned an annual subsidy of Rs 3,000 as compensation to Sikkim in 1841 (which was increased to Rs 6,000 in 1846). By acquiring Darjeeling, the British further deterred the Gorkhas from pursuing their ambition in the area.

The Company placed the Darjeeling tract under a superintendent, who looked after not only its administration and development, but also the political relations between the Company and Sikkim. This had the intended effect of curbing Nepalese ambition

protectorate, a large number of Nepali-speaking people migrated to Sikkim and settled down there. The British encouraged this development apparently in the belief that it would help restrain the pro-Tibetan Bhotiyas. Later, they used the Nepali-speaking settlers to help develop Sikkim.

The treaty of 1861 checked Tibetan influence in Sikkim for sometime, although it had left Sikkim's relations with Tibet and China undefined. The court intrigues initiated by Tokhang Donyer Namgyal continued until his death in 1886. The Government of Tibet supported his faction. The terms of the 1861 treaty—especially the ones relating to roads, the large-scale influx of the Nepali-speaking people, and the farming out of the Sikkimese copper mines to Nepalese merchants from Darjeeling—were treated as detrimental to the interest of Sikkim.

The Imperial Government of Manchu China itself showed no concern about the matter, obviously owing to certain internal problems. Nor was it able, for the same reason, to prevent the Government of Tibet from formulating a policy of its own towards Sikkim-British relations, although under the regulations of 1793, it had charged the Amban in Lhasa with exclusive responsibility for the conduct of Tibet's relations with Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal.

In 1873 the Amban in Lhasa addressed a communication to Thutob Namgyal calling upon him not to encourage road-building in Sikkim and to prevent British officers from crossing the Tibetan frontier. Not only that. In the summer of 1875 the Tibetans massed troops on their side of the Cho La range. However, although the British had learnt of the correspondence between the Amban and Thutob Namgyal through the officers they had deputed for investigating the possibility of re-establishing trade with Tibet, they overlooked the threat from Tibet in view of the conclusion of an Anglo-Chinese Convention in Chefoo on 13 September 1876. In 1878 Ashley Eden, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, proposed an arrangement limiting the settlement of the Nepali-speaking people to the south of a line drawn across Sikkim from east to west just a few miles to the north of Gangtok. An influential section of the Bhotiyas vehemently opposed this proposal; there were riots at Rhenok between the Bhotiyas and the Nepali-speaking people in 1880. However, a modification of the proposal of 1878 brought about a *rapprochement*.

Sikkim became an unwilling buffer through the vicissitudes of Anglo-Tibetan relations in the latter half of the 19th century. Despite the fact that Thutob Namgyal had come to power with British support, he drifted away from British influence and succumbed to pressures from the anti-British Bhotiyas and Tibetans. In 1883 he went to Tibet with his family where the Tibetan government gave him an unusually fine welcome. Early in 1886 Thutob Namgyal abruptly disavowed his subordination to the Government of India. In July 1887, when the Tibetans set up a post at Lingtu, south of the Jelep La, he condoned the Tibetan occupation of Sikkimese territory. (The withdrawal of the commercial mission of Colman Macaulay, a secretary to the Government of Bengal, to Tibet in 1886 for exploring the possibilities of trade with that country, in deference to Chinese wishes, had probably emboldened the Tibetans in their venture.) The British stopped their annual subsidy, but even then Thutob Namgyal refused to return to Sikkim. He returned only after making a petition to Amban Sheng-t'ai in 1887. The petition related mainly to the violation of religion brought about by the entry of the Westerners into Tibet as traders and to the protection of religion.

Unable to invoke the 1861 treaty in the face of this attitude of Thutob Namgyal, the Government of India resorted to a military solution of the problem. The Tibetans were driven out of Lingtu by September 1888. On 5 June 1889, the Government of India created a political agency and appointed a political officer at Gangtok primarily to act as an observer on the Tibetan frontier, and eventually to conduct relations with Bhutan and Tibet. It also exercised effective influence in the administration of Sikkim through him. The first political officer reorganized the system of administration in Sikkim. He set up a three-member state council to advise Thutob Namgyal in the administration of the state, and conducted land settlement and forest and mineral surveys. He made forests the exclusive property of the government.

The Government of India also entered into negotiations with Amban Sheng-t'ai to settle issues relating to Sikkim and Tibet. In his proposals, Sheng-t'ai insisted upon the continuance of *de jure* dependence of Sikkim on Tibet and China, a position wholly unacceptable to the Government of India. However, a new set of Chinese proposals, recognizing the supremacy of the Government of India over Sikkim and acquiescing in Sikkim's giving up the

practice of sending presents to Tibet, became the basis of a settlement. On 7 March 1890, Viceroy Lansdowne and Amban Sheng-t'ai signed a convention in Calcutta which made the Government of India solely responsible for the internal and external affairs of Sikkim. The relevant article of the convention ran as follows:

It is admitted that the British government whose protectorate over the Sikkim state is hereby recognized has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that state and except through and with the permission of the British government neither the ruler of the state nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal, with any other country.

The convention also defined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet on the basis of the watershed principle. The upper waters of the Tista river system marked this boundary. The Government of India also secured a supplementary agreement concerning trade between India and Tibet on 5 December 1893.

The British and Chinese made these agreements without consulting the Tibetans. Therefore, Tibet considered the agreements as imposed upon it by China. The Tibetan authorities refused to recognize the line of delimitation defined by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890.

Nevertheless, Thutob Namgyal continued to defy the Government of India, and tried to go out of Sikkim via Nepal in the spring of 1892. However, before he could cross the Nepalese-Tibetan frontier near Walong, the Nepalese authorities friendly to the British, apprehended him and handed him over to the Government of India, which took the opportunity to retire him from his administrative function. He remained under surveillance at Kurseong in the Darjeeling district while the political officer carried on the administration of Sikkim with the assistance of the state council. Thutob Namgyal was restored to power in November 1895, only after he had given an undertaking of good behaviour to the Government of India.

Thutob Namgyal's brother Thinle Namgyal and son Tsoda Namgyal remained in Tibet despite several warnings from the Government of India. Thutob Namgyal's younger brother Sidkyong Tulku (1879-1914) was recognized as heir apparent in

February 1899. He succeeded to the throne on the death of Thutob Namgyal in February 1914.

In view of frequent frontier violations by the Tibetans, the British and Chinese agreed in the summer of 1894 to appoint a joint boundary commission to demarcate the Sikkimese-Tibetan boundary on the ground. In April 1895, when a British party reached the frontier to mark the demarcation line between Sikkim and Tibet, the Chinese and the Tibetans failed to show up at the site to participate in its realization. The Political Officer in Sikkim, the leader of the British party, however, erected a few boundary pillars on the Jelep La and the neighbouring passes leading into the Chhumbi Valley. The demarcation of the rest of the frontier, especially around the Giagang plateau, a strip of territory at the head of the Lachhen Valley in the area of the Tista watershed (belonging to Sikkim according to the 1890 Convention) was postponed.

The Tibetans, who regarded the 1890 Convention as invalid on the ground that they had not signed it, claimed and occupied the Giagang plateau. There had never been any formal borderline between Sikkim and Tibet, and the border people used to graze their cattle wherever they pleased. In May 1902, the Government of India asserted its treaty rights and expelled Tibetan personnel at the Giagang post, and took the opportunity to complete the work of boundary survey and demarcation left unfinished in May 1895.

British relations with Tibet, however, continued to worsen. The process culminated in the British military expedition to Tibet in 1903. The Anglo-Tibetan Convention signed in Lhasa on 7 September 1904, consequent upon the success of British arms, obtained Tibetan endorsement of the Sikkimese-Tibetan boundary as defined in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, as also of the British commercial rights in Tibet.

The Maharaja of Sikkim and his courtiers attended the various *darbars* held in Delhi like other princes of India. The Maharaja also joined the chamber of princes like other princes. The Government of India Act of 1935 included Sikkim in the list of Indian states.

There occurred no important event in Sikkim until the British withdrawal from India in the summer of 1947 and the lapse of British paramountcy over Sikkim. On 27 February 1948, India and

Sikkim formalized an interim arrangement, called the "Standstill Agreement," intended to cover the period of negotiations initiated to work out a fresh treaty between the two countries. This governed relations between new India and Sikkim until 5 December 1950, when the Government of India and the Maharaja of Sikkim signed a treaty at Gangtok providing for the continuance of Sikkim as a protectorate of India in view of its geographical and strategic position. The Treaty of 1950 put Sikkim's external relations, defence, and strategic communications under the Government of India. It marked a big step in strengthening India's frontier defence, especially in the context of the developments in Tibet, China, and Central Asia. It also made the Government of India ultimately responsible for the maintenance of sound administration and law and order in Sikkim. It entitled Sikkim to receive a subsidy of Rs 300,000 a year from India "so long as the terms of this treaty are duly observed by the Government of Sikkim."

As a princely state of India, Sikkim was under the paramountcy of the British crown. By making Sikkim its protectorate, new India secured for itself rights compatible with Sikkim's internal autonomy. The Government of India would have been well within its rights if absorption of Sikkim into the Indian Union had been contemplated as in the case of other princely states.

It may, however, be noted in passing that China, which had accepted British sovereignty over Sikkim under the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, refused to accept in 1960 the special position that India had gained in Sikkim under the Indo-Sikkimese Treaty of 1950. It made clear its unwillingness, as it did in the case of Bhutan, to discuss with the Government of India the question of the Sikkimese-Tibetan boundary. It had been discussing these matters with the Maharaja of Sikkim over the head of the Government of India in utter disregard of India's responsibility for the conduct of Sikkim's external affairs.

The post-1947 years witnessed the growth of a movement of democratic forces in Sikkim. The socio-political set-up of the country was such that, despite their minority position in the total population of the country, the Bhotiyas controlled the government and owned large land-holdings. Obviously the people of Nepalese origin, forming the bulk of Sikkim's population, largely controlled the democratic movement in Sikkim. They demanded democratic rights for the masses, and abolition of forced labour and

zamindari (landlordism) in Sikkim. On 1 May 1949, leaders of the democratic movement organized a *satyagrah* (demonstration) at Gangtok in order to obtain a democratic set-up for the country. They also petitioned Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru asking him to enable the representatives of Sikkim to participate in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly. Nehru pointed out to them the difficulties in doing so on constitutional grounds. On the occasion of his visit to Sikkim on 27 April 1952, he met leaders of all the political parties individually. The democratic movement, led by the Sikkim Congress, formed on 7 December 1947, also demanded Sikkim's accession to India.

India's intervention in the matter led to the formation of a popular government on 9 May 1949. Soon, however, tension arose between the Sikkim Darbar and the popular ministry over the question of distribution of powers and responsibilities. This finally led to the dismissal of the ministry on 6 June 1949, and to the appointment of a senior Indian official as *Dewan* (chief minister). The first Dewan took office as the head of the administration on 11 August 1949. The letter of the Government of India stated that "if there is any difference of opinion between the Maharaja and the Dewan on any important matter, it will be referred to the Government of India and decided in accordance with their advice." The Sikkim Darbar interpreted this letter in a manner that suited its own interests. It led to much misunderstanding on several occasions.

Demands for the promotion of welfare of the people widened the range of governmental activity. Maharaja Tashi Namgyal (til' the time of his death on 2 December 1963) devoted his energies to improve the lot of his people, a predominantly peasant community. The Maharaja, who had introduced a public welfare administration and established schools, hospitals, etc. in Sikkim in the 1930s, carried out several democratic and social reforms in the 1950s.

Owing to pressure from the Government of India, two general elections were held in Sikkim between 1954 and 1961 but no elected body could run its full course. Declaration of the "state of emergency" in Sikkim on 14 November 1962, following trouble on the Sino-Indian frontier in October 1962, vested all powers in the Maharaja, who dissolved the state council but allowed the executive council to continue to function. The holding of elections was

suspended for an indefinite period. The third and fourth elections held in March 1967 and April 1970 respectively gave rise to a host of problems of far-reaching significance.

In 1965 the Government of India agreed to address the Maharaja of Sikkim as His Highness the Chhogyal and his consort as Her Highness the Gyalmo in accordance with the express wish of Palden Thondup Namgyal, who ascended the throne of Sikkim on 4 April 1965.

In February 1967, the Government of India agreed at the insistence of the Chhogyal to internationalize the boundary between India and Sikkim, even though Sikkim was a protectorate of India. During Mrs Gandhi's visit to Sikkim on 5-6 May 1968, the Government of India decided to rename India's residency in Sikkim as India House, as the expression residency had colonial connotations. This was another example of India's good faith about treating Sikkim as an autonomous entity.

However, the situation began to change after the fifth election to the Sikkim council in January 1973. Events following the elections came to have a special bearing on the political and constitutional developments in Sikkim. The Sikkim Janata Congress and the Sikkim National Congress, two of Sikkim's leading political parties, demanded comprehensive electoral, political, and administrative reforms in the country. In April 1973, Sikkim went through a great turmoil and upheaval which resulted in a total collapse of the administration. On 6 April 1973, in response to a request from Chhogyal Palden Thondup, the Indian army took over the responsibility of maintaining law and order. On 8 April 1973, India's Political Officer took over the entire administration of Sikkim.

Sikkimese leaders suspended their agitation on 13 April 1973, as Chhogyal Palden Thondup promised speedy introduction of constitutional reforms and the convening of an all-party conference to work out a programme of reforms. A tripartite agreement concluded between the Chhogyal, the representatives of the three leading political parties of Sikkim, and the Government of India on 8 May 1973, provided for a democratic set-up for Sikkim. To ensure equitable representation for all the different sections of Sikkim's population like the Lepchas, the Bhotiyas, the Tsongs, the Nepali-speaking people, etc., it provided for a popularly elected assembly on the basis of the principle of one man, one vote. The idea was that no single section of the

population should acquire a dominant position on ethnic grounds. While intending to keep the Chhogyal as the constitutional head of Sikkim, the agreement forbade discussion of the office of the Chhogyal or any member of his family. Also, despite intense anti-Chhogyal feeling among the people of Sikkim, it was decided at the instance of the Government of India to continue the office of Chhogyal.

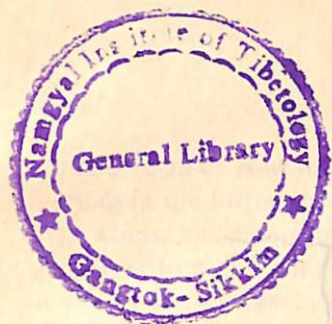
The Chhogyal, however, along with the Sikkim National Party, later opposed the principle of one man, one vote. In the crucial fresh elections to the Sikkim assembly held under the supervision of a representative of the Election Commission of India in April 1974, the Sikkim Congress (the party resulting from a merger of the Sikkim Janata Congress and the Sikkim National Congress), under the inspiring leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorji, won an overwhelming majority of the seats. The Sikkim National Party, which claimed to represent the Bhotiyas and the Lepchas, was badly mauled. On 11 May 1974, the new assembly passed a resolution to make the Chhogyal the constitutional head of Sikkim. The Government of Sikkim Bill, which the assembly unanimously passed on 20 June 1974, allocated most of the powers of the Chhogyal to the assembly and the council of ministers. Chhogyal Palden Thondup, despite his promise to introduce constitutional reforms in the country in April 1973 and his consent to the tripartite agreement of 1973, tried to obstruct the passage and enforcement of the Bill of 1974. The deteriorating law and order situation in Sikkim as a result of the Chhogyal's sudden *volte face* led the Government of Sikkim to request the Government of India in June 1974 for the status of an "associate state" within the Indian Union. The Chhogyal eventually, though reluctantly, gave his consent to the Bill on 4 July 1974, but could not reconcile himself to his status as only the constitutional head. In September 1974, the Government of India amended the Indian Constitution to accord to Sikkim the status of an Associate State of the Indian Union, and provided for its representation in Parliament.

Chhogyal Palden Thondup then attempted to internationalize the question of Sikkim by disputing India's sovereignty over it. This posed a danger to India's security and integrity. The Government of India, therefore, accepted the request made in a Sikkim Assembly resolution (passed on 10 April 1975) to make Sikkim a constituent state of the Indian Union. The resolution had

the further endorsement of the people of Sikkim through a referendum held on 14 April 1975. On 14 May 1975, Sikkim became a state of the Union of India. With this, the institution of Chhogyal was also abolished. This was a turning point in Sikkim's political history. The wheel of history will have come full circle if and when the Chhumbi Valley also returns to Sikkim.

Sikkim's joining the Indian Union completed the process of integration of Indian states into the Union of India—a geopolitical inevitability which started with the British withdrawal from India in the summer of 1947. China protested against the integration of Sikkim into India. Perhaps China did so just for the sake of form. Or, maybe it was a measure of retaliation for India's protest against China's incorporation of Tibet.

However it may be, Sikkim is an important Indian State whose march towards progress and prosperity nobody can halt.



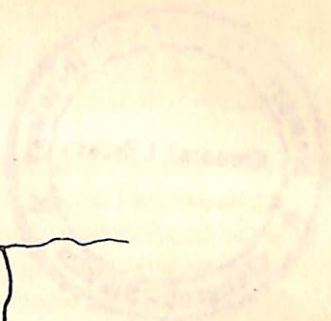
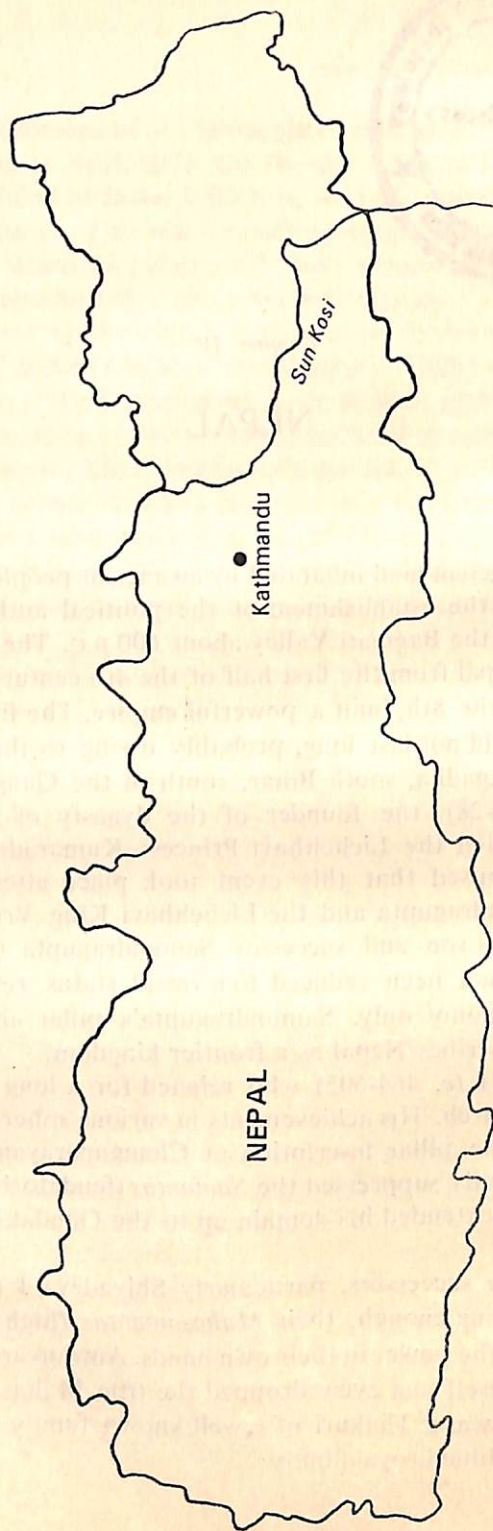
Chapter IV

NEPAL

Nepal is an ancient land inhabited by an ancient people. Its history goes back to the establishment of the political authority of the Kirat tribe in the Bagmati Valley about 600 B.C. The Lichchhavis who ruled Nepal from the first half of the 4th century A.D. to the latter half of the 8th, built a powerful empire. The first phase of their power did not last long, probably owing to the rise of the Guptas in Magadha, south Bihar, south of the Ganga. Chandragupta I (320-28), the founder of the dynasty of the imperial Guptas, married the Lichchhavi Princess Kumaradevi. It is now generally surmised that this event took place after the battle between Chandragupta and the Lichchhavi King Vrishadeva. By the time of his son and successor Samundragupta (328-76), the Lichchhavis had been reduced to a vassal status, retaining their internal autonomy only. Samundragupta's pillar inscription at Allahabad describes Nepal as a frontier kingdom.

Manadeva I (c. 464-505) who reigned for a long time, was a powerful monarch. His achievements in various spheres have been recorded in the pillar inscription at Changunarayan near Kathmandu. He firmly suppressed the *Samantas* (feudatories with local loyalties) and extended his domain up to the Gandaki river in the west.

Manadeva's successors, particularly Shivadeva I (c. 590-604), not being strong enough, their *Mahasamantas* (high feudatories) took much of the power in their own hands. Amshuvarman took all power for himself and even dropped the title Mahasamanta from his name. He was a Thakuri of a well known family who married into the Lichchhavi royal family.



The reign of Amshuvarman (r. 605-21) is one of the brightest periods in the history of ancient Nepal. The large number of charters, coins, and inscriptions of Amshuvarman, and the account of Nepal written by Hsuan Tsang (who was at Vaishali, north Bihar, north of the Ganga in c. 637, when Amshuvarman was already dead) speak highly of his administrative and literary genius. Suppression of the unruly *Samantas* and tribal chiefs in the east and south was one of his achievements. The nature of his relations with Tibet, which had just entered upon its empire building phase under Songtsen Gampo, is somewhat obscure. The admission of Hsuan Tsang and the Chinese annals of the Tang dynasty regarding Amshuvarman's independent position, however, dispel all doubt about his acceptance of Tibetan suzerainty.

On Amshuvarman's death, the Lichchhavis regained control over Nepal which exercised a strong cultural influence on Tibet by transferring Buddhism and its own artistic idioms. With the growth of close relations between Nepal and Tibet, the former became well known to China as well. In 648-49, during the reign of Narendradeva, son and successor of Udayadeva II, who is believed to have succeeded his father to the kingship in 643 with the help of Tibet, the Nepalese and Tibetan forces combined to avenge an insult offered by a chief of Tirhut (Tirabhukti) to an embassy from China, led by Wang Hiuén Tse and proceeding to Harsha's court. This chief of Tirhut is described incorrectly in Chinese accounts as the usurper of Harsha's throne.

Shivadeva II (r. 684-705), who had close relations with Gaur and Magadha, frustrated the attempt of King Dusong Mangpo Jelung Nampo, briefly King Dusong (676-704), of Tibet to annex certain frontier districts even though the power and authority of the latter were greater than any other ruler of ancient Tibet.

Adi Shankaracharya (c. 788-820) set up a *matha*, and made regular arrangements for worship in the temple of Pashupati in the Bagmati Valley. Tradition requires all priests of the Pashupati temple to come from south India. The King of Nepal on his part shares with the Shankaracharyas the right to worship in the *sanctum sanctorum* of Puri, Shringeri, and Rameshvaram.

Almost nothing is known about the early period of the Thakuri dynasty (880-1200). Raja Gunakamadeva (r. 949-94) founded at the confluence of the Bagmati and Vishnumati rivers a town named Kantipur, later called Kathmandu, after a big wooden

house built there out of a single tree. In 1041, during the reign of Raja Lakshmikamadeva (r. 1024-41), Srijnan Dipankar of the Monastic University of Vikramasila, known as Atisha to the Tibetans, visited Nepal on his way to Tibet. Lakshmikamadeva ruled in peace, but there were disturbances towards the end of his rule. On the death of Raja Shankaradeva (r. 1067-82), the Valley witnessed confusion. In 1097 Nanyadeva of Mithila in the eastern Tarai of modern Nepal made a predatory attack on the Bagmati Valley. During the time of Gunakamadeva II (r. 1187-95), the Thakuri dynasty went into oblivion, and the Malla dynasty (1200-1769), founded by Ari Malla (r. 1200-16), replaced it.

Patan is one of the most ancient cities of the Bagmati Valley. According to legend, Ashoka (r. 273-32 B.C.) of the Maurya dynasty (322-185 B.C.) visited it around 250 B.C. Though the early history of the city is still obscure, it was without doubt a major Buddhist centre with numerous monasteries. The Tibetans, who regularly visited the Bagmati Valley from the 7th century onwards in search of Buddhist teachers and texts, leave us in no doubt about the strength of Buddhism in Nepal during the next few hundred years. However, from the evidence of Chhojopa (1187-1264), the Tibetan monk who visited Nepal in 1226 and stayed for eight years at the Swayambhu Chaitya close to Kathmandu and other sources, we may safely infer that monasticism in Patan was in decline during the 12th century and virtually disappeared by the end of the 13th century. The decline of Buddhism was perhaps owing to the new Malla dynasty, which was devoted to Sanatana Dharma, and supported the shrines and temples of the Hindu gods and goddesses.

Raja Harisimha of Simroungarh, later Makwanpur, arrived in the hills of presentday eastern Nepal in 1324, having fled thither in order not to attract any attack upon himself by the army of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq, which was on its way from Bengal to Delhi. Later, he went to the Pashupati temple in the Bagmati Valley on pilgrimage. One of his relatives had a daughter named Rajalla, who became the wife of Raja Jayasthiti Raj Malla of Kathmandu (1360-1400). After subduing Tirhut, the army of Sultan Shams-ud-din Ilyas invaded Nepal in 1350 and plundered, looted, and ransacked the shrines and temples of the Bagmati Valley. Jayasimha Malla, a feudatory from Banepa, restored Pashupati.

From a background obscured by this chaos, Jayasthiti Raj

Malla (r. 1380-1400) emerged as the deliverer and unifier of the Bagmati Valley, and as one of the most notable rulers in the history of medieval Nepal. He asserted his supremacy over the other chiefs of the Valley. His position became all the stronger after the death of Jayarjuna Malla (r. 1361-80) in 1380, the *de jure* sovereign of the kingdom. Tradition remembers him as a patron of literature and as the initiator of many social and economic reforms in Nepal.

Raja Yaksha Malla (r. 1428-82) was the most distinguished among the Malla kings. He subdued and combined all the kingdoms and principalities of the Bagmati Valley into one strong kingdom, the boundaries of which extended up to Morang in the east, Tibet in the north, and Gorkha in the west—the farthest limits that the Malla domain ever gained. He divided his vast territory among his sons. This eventually led to the downfall of the Mallas in 1768-69, when Raja Prithvinarayan Shah of Gorkha attacked and conquered the kingdoms of the Bagmati Valley.

The history of Nepal before 1768-69 is not representative of the whole of Nepal as it is understood today. There were a number of centres of power in the central Himalaya in addition to the Bagmati Valley. On the eve of the rise of the house of Gorkha in 1559, the other main centres of power between the Mechi and Kali rivers, which mark the eastern and western limits of Nepal today, were the Kirat chiefs and the Raja of Morang; the Limbu chiefs and the Chhogyal of Sikkim; the *Choubisi Rajya* (twenty-four kingdoms) of the Gandaki river basin, including Palpa, Nuwakot, Kaski, Lamjung, and Gorkha; the *Baisi Rajya* (twenty-two kingdoms) of the Karnali river basin like Pyuthan, Sallyan, Dullu, Jajarkot, Doti, Achham, Bajhang, Jumla, etc.; and the Gyalpo of Mustang. The Rajas of Choudandi, Makwanpur, and Morang were of the Sen dynasty. The kingdom of Morang was ruled by a branch of the Sen dynasty of Makwanpur. The territory of the Makwanpur kingdom lay in the Tarai, extending from the Chitaun forest in the west to the Kosi river in the east, and bordering on north Bihar and the southern limits of the Malla kings of Bhatgaon and Patan. Most of the Baisi and Choubisi kingdoms were under the rule of Hindu Rajput princes descended from those who had fled from the plains into the hills in the 13th and 14th centuries.

The early history of most of these kingdoms is still obscure.

Nawakot, situated on the left bank of the Trishuli river on a ridge of Mount Dhaibung, twenty miles northwest of Kathmandu, was frustrated after a bitter fight with the garrison of the fort.

In 1742, when Prithvinaryan Shah ascended the throne of Gorkha, the kingdom merely touched the western limits of the Bagmati Valley, even though the Gorkhas had conquered several neighbouring hill states and had emerged as a strong power. Prithvinaryan Shah streamlined the administration and made it efficient. He also organized a highly disciplined and well trained army equipped with modern weapons, and set out to conquer the Bagmati Valley. Kathmandu fell to him on 15 September 1768, and by November 1769, the rest of the Valley also came under his sway.

In response to an appeal from Raja Jayaprakash Malla (*r.c.* 1735-68) of Kathmandu, the Government of the English East India Company sought to forestall the Gorkha conquest of the Bagmati Valley by dispatching a military expedition thither in September 1768. The British objective was to safeguard the customary trade between Bengal and Tibet through Nepal. The expedition, however, proved fatuous. It only sowed a feeling of hostility in the Gorkha mind towards the British. As for Prithvinaryan Shah, all his life he remained suspicious of British intentions.

The emergence of Prithvinaryan Shah as the supreme ruler in the Bagmati Valley marked a watershed in the history not just of the central Himalaya but of the entire Himalaya. After his conquest of the Valley, Prithvinaryan Shah set out to annex the hill states east and west of the Valley. His armies began their advance into the Kirat country in 1773, while Ilam fell to them in 1774. The invaders erected a number of forts to secure communications with the plains and to facilitate an eastern offensive. In return for the support of the chiefs of the Limbu tribe, flanking his armies on all sides, Prithvinaryan Shah assured them internal autonomy under their own chiefs. He also initiated the process of forming alliances with neighbouring countries like Bhutan against the then rising British power in north Bengal. To secure his southeastern frontiers against the British, he conquered Choudandi in 1773 and Morang in 1774. (He had already conquered Makwanpur in 1762.) By 1775 he had annexed the entire Kosi basin bounded on the east by the Mechi river. Nepal now extended from Gorkha in the west to Sikkim in the east. Prithvinaryan

Lama Chhodub Gyatso, who was the Ninth Karmapa hierach and who had sought refuge in Nepal, the Gorkhas again invaded Tibet in 1791. When they reached Shigatse, Manchu China, suzerain of Tibet, intervened. The Manchu army chased the Gorkhas right up to the northern gates of the Bagmati Valley, compelling Bahadur Shah to accept peace on Manchu terms.

The peace, concluded in Nawakot in September 1792, accorded Manchu China the status of suzerain over Nepal. Nepal undertook to send a mission to Peking once every five years with gifts from the King of Nepal to the Emperor of China. The Manchus and the Gorkhas also agreed to define the Nepalese-Tibetan boundary. This decision could thus be regarded as marking the beginning of boundary-making in the Himalaya. Thus, the Gorkha adventure in Tibet put a stop to Gorkha expansion in the north and the east. The war with Tibet compelled the Gorkhas temporarily to withdraw from Kumaun as well. It may, however, be noted here that, according to both Manchu and Nepalese sources, there was, at the conclusion of the war, no treaty in the form of any single written document signed by both parties. The two parties merely exchanged letters.

Raja Ran Bahadur Shah (*r.* 1794-99) abdicated in 1799 in favour of his one-and-a-half-year-old illegitimate son (born of his concubine Kantavati, a Maithili Brahman widow), Prince Girvanayuddha Vikram (1797-1816), owing to the strong opposition of the feudal and military leaders of the country on his continuance as monarch. The Pandes, who became ministers after Ran Bahadur Shah's abdication and retirement to Varanasi, pursued a policy of expansion. During 1803-09 the Gorkhas annexed western Sikkim in the east, the long strip of the Tarai (including Gorakhpur) in the south, and Garhwal and other hill principalities further to the west. According to the folk tradition of Garhwal, the wife of the then envoy of Garhwal to Nepal, a daughter of the Rajguru of Nepal, returned to Nepal because she had been neglected. Perhaps this brought about the Gorkha invasion and conquest of Garhwal in 1803-04. The Thapas, who succeeded the Pandes in 1804, vigorously pursued the same policy of expansion.

Since the time of King Girvanayuddha, the appellation Vikram has formed part of the name of every monarch in Nepal.

By 1809 the Gorkha armies reached the Tista river, which then formed the western bounds of Bhutan. Of course, as with

Tibet in the 1770s, Nepal was not able to persuade Bhutan to function as a bridge to or as a link with Burma against the British in India. By the end of the 18th century, they welded by means of both war and diplomacy, the congeries of the mutually warring hill states into the vigorous Kingdom of Nepal. They made expansion by conquest, the main plank of their state policy, and organization of a strong army their first care.

The Gorkha encroachments upon the low lands lying within the British dominions in India brought on a conflict between Nepal and the English East India Company. The quarrel centred on the Gorkha claim to certain parts of Purnea, Saran, Gorakhpur, and Bareilly districts. There was also a dispute over the extradition of dacoits and runaway criminals. On 1 November 1814, in view of the failure of its forces on the frontier to eject the Gorkhas, the Company declared war. At first, the odds seemed to be against the Company. Later, however, it achieved success in its campaigns on the Kumaun, Garhwal, and the western Himalaya fronts, and compelled the Gorkhas to surrender.

On the eve of the war with the Company, Nepal's power was at its zenith. Its territories stretched for nearly a thousand miles from the Tista river in the east to the Sutlej river in the west. The Anglo-Nepalese Treaty of Peace signed at Sugauli on 2 December 1815, and ratified on 4 March 1816, fixed the Kali river as the western limit of Nepal and the Mechi river as the eastern limit. Nepal transferred Kumaun and Garhwal to the Company. It also gave up the hill principalities further west and conceded to the Company all the lands it had laid claim to prior to 1814. It accepted the right of the Company to arbitrate in disputes between itself and Sikkim. Above all, it consented to establish diplomatic relations with the Company. The Company stationed a resident in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. This resident gradually arrogated to himself the same rights as the residents that the Company had stationed in those princely states in India which had accepted its paramountcy. The residency in Nepal also served as a observation post on Chinese activity in Tibet.

To obtain access to the wool-producing districts of western Tibet and secure the routes that led to them, the Company retained the territory between the Kali and Sutlej rivers. In the interest of ensuring for itself the use of trade routes to Tibet passing through the Arun and Karnali valleys, it also seriously considered

annexing the territories east and west of the Arun and Karnali rivers respectively or setting them up as separate political entities under potentates subservient to them. On 8 December 1816, for various considerations, it returned to Nepal a portion of the territory that had been ceded to it.

China made it evident to both Nepal and the Company that it had no serious objection to the latter's stationing a resident in Nepal. All the same, the Gorkhas tried their best to get rid of the resident by pretending that China did not want him there.

In 1829 the Company and the Gorkhas signed an agreement establishing procedures for re-erecting any sign or structure put up to indicate the alignment of the boundary, such as "a minaret, a pillar, or a stone" whenever destroyed.

Bhimsen Thapa who had been the Mukhtiyar (Prime Minister) of Nepal since 1804 found it hard to reconcile himself to the humiliation implied in the Treaty of 1816. He, therefore, tried to set up certain other powers against the Company. The Company could not object to Nepal's establishing direct contact with other powers as there was nothing in the Treaty of Sugauli forbidding Nepal to do so. Following negotiations in November 1839, Nepal agreed to give up its right to deal with any Indian power beyond the Ganga without the consent of the Company. This was a setback, albeit temporary, for Nepal's manœuvres against the Company. The manœuvres were resumed after some time and continued until the overthrow of the anti-British Pandes from power on 1 November 1840.

Bhimsen Thapa was set on disturbing the pro-Company alignment of forces in the Himalaya, for opposition to the Company was not so much a matter of principle with him as a practical instrument in perpetuating his ascendancy in the politics of Nepal. He used this instrument to gain the unswerving loyalty of the army—a decisive factor in Nepal's politics. However, the death in 1832 of the Queen Mother, Lalita Tripura Sundari, who had been regent since 1816, weakened Bhimsen Thapa's position. King Rajendra Vikram Shah, who had attained majority in 1831, deposed Bhimsen Thapa in 1837. The latter committed suicide in 1839.

Nepal enjoyed a spell of peace under Matabar Singh Thapa, a nephew of Bhimsen, who was well disposed towards the Company.

There was, however, much palace intrigue during his time. Ultimately, in May 1845, Matabar Singh was assassinated. The chaos that had been witnessed since 1832 culminated on the night of 14 September 1846, in the Kot massacre—a grim event in which a large number of influential Nepalis were killed. Jang Bahadur, son of a sister of Matabar Singh Thapa, played a significant part in the Kot massacre. With the elimination of all those capable of challenging his power, Jang Bahadur became prime minister and assumed the title of Rana.

In 1847 Jang Bahadur Rana exiled both King Rajendra Vikram (r. 1831-47), his queen Rajyalakshmi Devi, and their followers and installed Prince Surendra (b. 1829) on the throne. In 1850 he crossed the sea to go to England and Europe. He profited much by his visit abroad. In 1854 he issued the legal code, which included, among other things, a clause which stated: "The Shastras as well as the laws permit men of the four *varnas* and the thirty-six *jats* to marry their younger and elder sisters-in-law."

In the summer of 1855 Jang Bahadur invaded Tibet, ostensibly to punish the Tibetans for their alleged misbehaviour towards the Nepalese traders in Tibet. Actually, it was China's inability to help Tibet that prompted Jang Bahadur to invade Tibet, for, even as the Opium War (1839-42) had prevented China from protecting Tibet against the invasion of the Dogras of Jammu during 1841-42, the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64) made it impossible for China to come to the rescue of Tibet from the Nepalese invasion of 1855-56. On 24 March 1856, after a short period of hostilities and protracted negotiations, the Nepalis and the Tibetans signed a treaty of peace in Kathmandu. Both sides acknowledged in the preamble the suzerainty of China. Nepal bound itself to give "all assistance that may be in its power to the Government of Tibet, if the troops of any other Raja invaded that country." The Tibetans bound themselves annually to pay Rs 10,000 to Nepal. Nepal gained important political and commercial concessions in Tibet where certain areas of the frontier district of Kyirong became part of Nepal. Nepalese citizens in Tibet secured certain extraterritorial rights there. They continued to enjoy those rights and privileges until as recently as 20 September 1956, when under the Sino-Nepalese Agreement, Nepal accepted the principle of China's sovereignty over Tibet and abdicated its special position there.

On 6 August 1856, Jang Bahadur obtained from King Surendra Vikram (1829-81) absolute right to the office of Prime Minister with the title of Maharaja. The king himself took the title of Maharajadhiraj. The title Maharaja and the absolute authority were made hereditary in his family. Jang Bahadur was not only prime minister but also the supreme commander-in-chief, his second or nearest brother being Mukhtiyar and commander-in-chief or chief sahib working directly under the prime minister. He also set up the roll of succession to the office of Prime Minister.

Jang Bahadur continued in office till his death on 25 February 1877, except for a brief interval (1 August 1856 to 25 May 1857) when, consequent upon his resigning, his brother Ram Bahadur became prime minister. Ranoddip Singh succeeded Jang Bahadur. Bir Shamsher, Ranoddip Singh's nephew, assassinated him on 22 November 1885 and became prime minister. Deva Shamsher, who succeeded Bir Shamsher on his death on 5 March 1901, was prime minister for only three months (March-June 1901). His efforts to encourage the spread of education in Nepal and to abolish slavery from the country alarmed the Ranas, who ousted him. Chandra Shamsher and other Ranas looked upon Deva Shamsher's reforms as harmful to Rana interests and consequently secured his abdication immediately. With Chandra Shamsher succeeding Deva Shamsher on 25 June 1901, succession to the office of Prime Minister became an orderly affair.

The British found a trusted friend in Jang Bahadur. Nepal gave military aid to the British during the rebellion of 1857-58. Jang Bahadur personally marched with a Nepalese army to aid the British in suppressing the rebellion in Avadh in 1857. The British rewarded him suitably for his most valuable personal services. By a treaty signed in Kathmandu on 1 November 1860, the Government of India restored to Nepal the entire lowlands of the western Tarai between the rivers Kali and Rapti. Nepal had annexed this area during 1800-14 and had later ceded it to the Company after the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-15. The territory ceded was 520-square kilometres in extent. Actually, the Government of India became the protector of the Ranas in Nepal. It allowed the Ranas a free hand in the management of the affairs of Nepal. The arrangement ended only with the British departure from India in the summer of 1947.

From the time of Jang Bahadur to the time of the British

departure from India in 1947, except for the brief interval of 1885-1900, Nepal's relations with the British remained mostly cordial. Despite the Nepalese-Tibetan Treaty of 1856, which provided that the Government of Nepal would come to the assistance of Tibet in the event of any foreign invasion, Nepal helped the Government of India at the time of the British military expedition to Tibet in 1903-04. During the First World War (1914-18) and also the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919), Nepal helped the Government of India. It supported the Government of India in its quarrel with Government of Tibet because the ascendancy of any other power in Tibet would have endangered the trade and other interests of Nepal guaranteed by the treaty of 1856. Curzon accepted the offer of yaks and transport by Chandra Shamsher to show to the Government of Tibet that Nepal was on the British side.

In 1919 the Government of India changed the designation of its representative in Kathmandu from resident to "British envoy at the court of Nepal." It did so to emphasize that Nepal was different from the princely states in India, in view of Nepal's sensitivity to any impugment of its independent status. It also concluded a treaty of friendship with Nepal in Kathmandu on 21 December 1923. The treaty recognized Nepal's independence and its right to procure arms and ammunition. It also cancelled the engagement of 1839 forbidding Nepal to establish links with the princely states in India. These steps did not, however, amount to any recognition of Nepal as a fully sovereign state.

Except for the abolition of the practices of *sati* and slavery by Chandra Shamsher (1901-29), the establishment of the bureaus of agriculture and industry by Juddha Shamsher (1932-45) and the enactment of the Government of Nepal Act of 1948 by Padma Shamsher (1945-48), the Rana period cannot be considered a bright period in the history of modern Nepal. The Ranas used their absolute authority only to perpetuate their own position and power in the country. In fact, the first Rana Prime Minister, Jang Bahadur, seemed to have aimed at achieving sovereign position in Nepal but had failed to achieve that purpose. He had, however, succeeded in achieving *de facto* sovereignty over Nepal. His successors inherited this position. Chandra Shamsher even obtained the formal consent of King Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah Deva (r. 1881-1911) to assume, in advance, all public acts of his prime minister as having the full royal

approval. He also put the scions of the Rana family into three categories—A, B, and C—and changed the roll of succession first set up by Jang Bahadur. Chandra Shamsher perfected and consolidated the polity that the Ranas had built up. The King of Nepal, isolated from politics, gradually became a virtual prisoner of his Rana prime minister.

Since the time of King Prithvi the appellation Bir Bikram Shah Deva has formed part of the name of every monarch in Nepal.

Rana despotism did not long remain unchallenged. There were several plots against Rana rule devised mostly by groups of discontented nobles belonging to non-Rana families, even though they did not succeed. Owing to the impact made by the freedom movement in India, and the gradual spread of education in the Bagmati Valley in the first part of the 20th century, public feeling too turned against Rana absolutism. There arose socio-cultural and socio-religious organizations within the country like the Prachand Gorkha and the Praja Parishad in the 1920s and the 1930s, indicating popular disaffection with the Rana regime. The ruling Rana clique spared no effort to suppress these parties and the individuals connected with them or behind them. It charged even King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Deva (*r.* 1911-55) with complicity in a plot against Maharaja Juddha Shamsher. In 1940 Juddha Shamsher made an unsuccessful bid to dethrone King Tribhuvan.

A strong opposition developed against the Rana regime in the 1940s. Large number of Nepali youths, who had either participated in or witnessed the Quit India movement in the summer of 1942, started organizations like the All India Nepali Congress (Varanasi, 1946) and the Nepali National Congress (Calcutta, 1947). In March 1947, the Nepali National Congress launched a non-violent agitation at Biratnagar in the eastern Tarai. Gradually this agitation spread to other parts in the Tarai and ultimately to the Bagmati Valley itself. Unable to resist the demand for a democratic form of government under a constitutional monarchy, Maharaja Padma Shamsher promulgated the Act of 1948. This Act had been drafted in consultation with two eminent jurists from India, Sri Prakasa of Varanasi and R.U. Singh of the University of Delhi. The Ranas were unhappy with it because it was much too radical and the people rejected it because it sought to keep intact the prerogatives of the Ranas. The

Act merely pretended to fulfil the popular demand. The agitation in the Bagmati Valley, therefore, continued unabated. Under the force of circumstances, Padma Shamsher abdicated his office in favour of Mohan Shamsher in April 1948.

There also emerged other political parties like the Nepal Praja Panchayat in Kathmandu and the Nepali Democratic Congress in Calcutta (1948); the latter consisting of exiled members of the Rana family and having at its disposal all their material resources. The Nepali Congress, formed by the merger of the Nepali Democratic Congress with a section of the Nepali National Congress, decided in April 1950 to launch an agitation for the establishment of a fully democratic government in the country.

Maharaja Mohan Shamsher (1948-51) dubbed the Nepali Congress as an anti-national body and accused it of trying to subvert Nepal's independence with the help of India. At the same time, he sought closer links with both Britain and America. India advised him to make an effort to keep pace with the rapidly changing world. Mohan Shamsher resented the advice and accused India of trying to influence and interfere in the Nepalese affairs. However, developments beyond the Himalaya and Tibet in 1949-50 seemed to threaten the integrity of both India and Nepal. Recognition of the need for perpetual goodwill between them eventually led to the signing of the Indo-Nepalese Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in Kathmandu on 31 July 1950. The treaty specifically provided for co-operation and consultation between India and Nepal in matters of common concern to them such as defence. It envisaged special relations between India and Nepal.

Certain anti-Rana politicians like Tanka Prasad Acharya of the Praja Parishad, then in gaol, were particularly critical of the provision relating to special relations between India and Nepal. According to them, this provision put limits on Nepal's sovereignty. However, when Tanka Prasad Acharya himself was Premier of Nepal (1956-57), he rejected the view that the treaty of 1950 circumscribed Nepal's freedom of action in any way.

On 6 November 1950, King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Deva escaped to the Indian embassy in Kathmandu along with the heir apparent, Prince Mahendra. This event was followed on 11 November 1950, by an armed insurrection started by the Nepali Congress. By January 1951, several important areas in east, south,

and west Nepal were aflame with revolt. The insurrectionists seized many district headquarters. On 6 December 1950, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated in the Parliament that India recognized King Tribhuvan as Head of the State of Nepal. In view of the the intimate geographical and cultural relations obtaining between India and Nepal, he further stated: "Frankly, we do not like and shall not brook any foreign interference in Nepal." On 8 December 1950, the Government of India sent a memorandum to the Government of Nepal which said that its primary objective was only to strengthen the independence of Nepal and to enable it to make progress and grow strong. It also suggested that the Government of Nepal should adopt such constitutional changes as would satisfy popular opinion and important non-official Nepalese organizations.

The changes suggested by India included, among other things, the setting up of an interim government under a Rana prime minister, with both Rana and popular ministers equally represented in it. They also provided for the continuance of King Tribhuvan as King of Nepal. Having regard to the circumstances then obtaining, the Ranas accepted the proposals. On 10 January 1951, King Tribhuvan appealed to the insurrectionists to put down arms in the interest of the country. Leaders of the Nepali Congress at first ignored the appeal. However, on 16 January 1951, after discussions with the the Government of India, they announced a cease-fire in Nepal. On 12 February 1951, King Tribhuvan, the Ranas, and the leaders of the Nepali Congress formally announced their acceptance of the Indian proposals. (This accord between the King, the Ranas, and the leaders of the Nepali Congress later came to be known as the Delhi Settlement of 1951). On 15 February 1951, King Tribhuvan returned home amid scenes of jubilation and festivity. Mohan Shamsher, the last Rana prime minister to rule absolutely, became the first Prime Minister of the Interim Government of Nepal set up by King Tribhuvan under the *Nepal ko Antarim Vidhan* (Interim Constitution of Nepal) promulgated by him on 10 April 1951.

In the post-1951 years, the Government of India came in for much blame over the Delhi Settlement. The Nepalese accused India of betraying the cause of democracy in Nepal and of stifling the natural aspirations of the people of Nepal. Actually, India had no options. Perhaps one option was to integrate Nepal with India.

It is believed that Tribhuvan did suggest such a course of action, but Prime Minister Nehru turned it down.

King Tribhuvan, with the full support of the anti-Rana elements and the approval of the Government of India, abolished the hereditary rule of the Ranas, withdrew all the powers which his ancestor King Surendra Vikram had given to them, and assumed full royal powers which had been in complete abeyance for more than a century. He announced that the ministers of the interim government would hold office only during his pleasure and would be responsible to him. In April 1952, he made himself supreme commander-in-chief of the army, an office that had remained with the Rana prime minister for more than a century. By the Special Circumstances Power Act promulgated on 9 September 1952, he invested all executive powers in himself. By another proclamation on 10 January 1954, he made it absolutely clear that he wielded supreme legislative, executive, and judicial powers in Nepal, and that he alone exercised supreme authority in the country.

On 1 August 1955, China and Nepal established diplomatic relations. On 21 March 1960, they signed a 5-Article Agreement in respect of their common boundary on the basis of the recommendations made by a joint committee composed of an equal number of delegates from each side, as also an agreement on economic aid. On 28 April 1960, there came the Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Finally, on 5 October 1961, during the visit of King Mahendra (*r.* 1955-71) to China, the two countries signed a boundary treaty.

Thus, by 1961 under King Mahendra, the process of Nepal's emergence as a full-fledged sovereign, independent modern state with well-defined relations with all neighbouring states and as a member of the United Nations reached its climax.

POLITICS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Ram Rahul

“Geopolitically speaking very few regions of the world today are as important as Central Asia. But, curiously, apart from the Sino-Soviet tension in the area, it has remained out of the news. The volume under review will help to focus attention on Central Asia which for its purposes is larger than that usually indicated by the term. The author deals with a region bounded by the Great Wall of China in the east, by the Caspian Sea and the Orals in the west, by Siberia in the north, and by the Himalayas, the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush in the south.

“The treatment throughout is historical and written in lucid style. Two of the most interesting chapters are those on the mullahs and the lamas and their influence on Central Asian politics. Take, for instance, the lamas. Among other things, Professor shows clearly the part they have played since the 13th century in Sino-Tibetan relations. Today their dominance over political Tibet is at an end, but this should in no way eclipse the fascinating story of their centuries-old dealings with the Chinese emperors. The Manchus, we are told, were no admirers of the lamas and yet they patronized Buddhism. The author has ascribed this to their appreciation of Buddhism ‘as a political instrument in the subjugation and control of Mongolia and Tibet’.

“The brief accounts of the evolution of the Indian, Chinese and Russian frontiers to their present shapes are handy and helpful. The survey of India’s border relations with Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal since the days of the British is of special interest. The NEFA and Ladakh borders have naturally been discussed, but with both clarity and brevity. Regarding the 4,500-mile-long Sino-Soviet frontier, the author has provided a good backgrounder to the current dispute, starting from the Russian drive eastwards in the 17th century.”

—*Statesman*