Situated between the Tibetan plateau and the plains of the subcontinent - the modern-day giants of China and India - Nepal has long prospered from its location as a resting place for traders, travelers and pilgrims. A cultural mixing pot, it has bridged cultures and absorbed elements of its neighbours, yet retained a unique character. Though known in the world as a spiritual centre and a land blessed with natural scenic beauty, Nepal suffered from its own kind of an inherent political conflict. Nepal for long retained its identity as a “monarchial Hindu state” in the international arena, but the turn of events in the year 2006 overhauled this reputation of the country and Nepal transformed into a “secular, democratic, republican state.” Such drastic changes do not occur overnight and are consequent of prolonged interplay of various socio-political, historical and economic factors. The exploration and examination of such factors is the primary objective of the present study. Thus, an analysis of a political system in transition in its most critical and formative period is endeavored.

The present research thesis is divided into seven parts (chapters):

Chapter I : Introduction
Chapter II : Geo Political Profile
Chapter III : People’s Movement I (1990)
Chapter IV : The Period between the two Janaandolans
Chapter V : The Janaandolan of 2006
Chapter VI : Present Working of the Democratic System
Chapter VII : Conclusion
Chapter I as the title “Introduction” suggests begins with a brief introduction to the thesis stating the prevailing conditions of the Nepal along with illustrating the objectives of the present study. Then a few suggestions for the prevailing political challenges are given. Followed is the Review of literature of 37 books which have served as the foundation for this present thesis and the research methodology followed.

Chapter II, “Geo Political Profile” describes the geographical location and a brief political history of Nepal. Nepal is the largest of the Himalayan country, and a landlocked state of the South Asian Region. Sandwiched between the two Asian giants - India and China\(^1\), Nepal serves as the buffer state between the two countries. Being a landlocked state, it is dependent on others for a transit access to sea. Nepal is characterised by an un-uniform topography and is of roughly trapezoidal shape. Nepal is broadly divided into three, east-west running geographical regions - The Mountain Region, The Hill Region and The Terai Region. Nepal is as ethnically diverse as its topography of plains, broad valleys and high mountains. The Physical divisions of Nepal correspond roughly to the broad outlines of its well-marked racial and religious zones. The Nepali populace is a mixed race of both Mongoloid and Indianized stocks. There also exist to this day remnants of the indigenous communities, whose habitation predates the advent of the former two elements. All the languages spoken in Nepal are the national languages. Nepali is the official languages of Nepal, with almost 60 percent of the population speaking it. However, all languages spoken in Nepal can be used for official purposes and documentation. The influence of Hinduism and Buddhism is markedly visible in Nepali religious and cultural life. Nepal had been referred to in ancient Indian scriptures like Mahabharata, Puranas, Jain and Buddhist scriptures. Kautilya's Arthashastra of 4\(^{th}\) century B.C. also takes notice of Nepal. It is
the claimed birthplace of Gautam Buddha, the propounder of Buddhism. Till 12th century Nepal was under the control of various Indian dynasties. At the end of 14th century the country was divided among 78 small principalities. The task of unification of country was accomplished by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1765 A.D. He is honoured as "the Father of Modern Nepal". His descendants carried forward the task of consolidation of the Kingdom. After 1800, and particularly following the defeat of the Gorkhalis by the British in the war of 1814-16, the heirs of Prithvi Narayan Shah proved incapable of maintaining firm political control over Nepal. A period of internal turmoil followed until Jung Bahadur Rana, a scion of Kunwar nobility, consolidated power following the Kot massacre of 1846.

Jang Bahadur laid the foundation of a strong Rana Family Rule. He obtained a royal decree from the erstwhile ruler king Surendra which established a hereditary control over the post of Prime Minister of the Rana Family, concentrating all the administrative powers in the hands on the Prime Minister and reducing the king to a titular head. The chapter then deals in detail with the reigns of the following Rana prime ministers.

The following **Chapter – III People's Movement-I (1990)**, illustrates the causes, events and aftermath of the first Janandolan (People’s Movement) of 1990. The chapter begins by discussing the evolution of Nepali political system through different stages, which are as follows:

1. Constitutive Monarchy (1768 to 1774)

2. Diminishing Monarchy (1775-1846)

3. Captive Monarchy (1846-1951)
4. Revolting Monarchy (1950-51)

5. Monarchy fostering Democracy (1951-1955)


7. Assertive Monarchy (1960-1990)


The wave of political, social and economic awareness emerged in the country in late 19th century. The National Movement for independence of India had a great impact on the minds of educated Nepali youth who participated in it with the aim that the end of British Rule over India would render a death blow to the Rana Oligarchy in Nepal. The movement against the Rana rule began as early as the British exited India in 1947 under the leadership of Nepali Congress. In order to pacify the agitating people Ranas introduced the first written Constitution of Nepal called "The Government of Nepal Act, 2004 V.S. (AD 1948). This constitution, superficially changed the Rana system. It established a bicameral legislative body. The entire membership of one house and a majority of the other was selected by the prime minister, who could reject any measure that the legislature might pass. There was a cabinet of at least five members, of whom at least two were chosen from among the few elected members of the legislature.

The act also specified that a panchayat system of local self-government would be inaugurated in the villages, towns, and districts. It enumerated certain fundamental rights and duties, which included freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, and
worship; equality before the law; free elementary education for all; and equal and universal suffrage. Despite the appearance of reform, the alterations made in the Rana system by the constitution were slight. The more conservative Ranas perceived the constitution as a dangerous precedent, forced Padma Shamsher to resign, and suspended promulgation of the constitution. The constitution became effective in September 1950.

Some "B" and "C" class Ranas who were disqualified from succession to the throne of Prime Ministership by the 1948 Constitution joined hands with the anti-Rana forces who were later joined by the monarch also. On November 6, 1950, King Tribhuwan along with his three sons, their wives and sons, and two queens left the Palace on the pretext of a hunting expedition and took refuge in the Indian Embassy. Four days later, he along with his family was flown to New Delhi by a special plane. The Nepali Congress launched a nationwide liberation struggle against the Ranarchy. In the meantime Padma Shamsher the erstwhile Rana prime minister installed Gyanendra, King Tribhuwan's grandson who was left behind, on the throne of Nepal. He sought recognition from Britain, United States of America and India in favour of the infant King, which was denied by the three countries. The people of Kathmandu broke out into spontaneous demonstrations which the Rana police failed to suppress. At last, Maharaja Mohan Shumsher accepted the suggestions given by the Indian Prime Minister Pt. Nehru and recognized King Tribhuwan as the real and constitutional monarch of Nepal. He also agreed to form an interim government of fourteen members having half of the popular representatives and to hold elections to form a Constituent Assembly by 1952. The political parties were also granted a legal
sanction. This was known as the Delhi Agreement, signed between the three parties – the King, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress on Feb. 12, 1951 at Delhi.

King Tribhuwan returned to Nepal on February 15, 1951 and on Feb. 18, issued a historic proclamation inaugurating the new political system of Nepal known as the “Interim Constitution of Nepal, 1951.” This day marked the termination of over a century of autocratic and despotic rule of the Rana family over Nepal. The interim constitution, ratified the end of the authority of the prime minister and the system surrounding that office. It also reasserted the king's supreme executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The king exercised his executive authority through, and was aided and advised by, a Council of Ministers, which he appointed and which served at his pleasure.

The constitution also established a Supreme Court, made the king supreme commander of the armed forces, reiterated and enlarged upon the fundamental rights included in the Rana constitution, and proclaimed numerous social and economic objectives of the government. These objectives were to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order in which social, economic, and political justice pervaded all the institutions of national life.

The Interim Constitution of 1951 led to the formation of the first ever democratic government with the representatives of the Ranas and the Nepali Congress, as per the provisions of the Delhi Agreement. But this government fell as it comprised of the heterogeneous elements and a new cabinet comprising solely the Nepali Congress ministers was formed. This government too fell in the wake of the Raksha Dal
Mutiny. The political instability necessitated a system of direct rule by the King in 1952. But again the King was forced to appoint a new democratic government in 1953. This period was marked with great political instability as not a single democratic government lasted for more than one or one and a half years. In the meantime, King Tribhuwan died in March 1955 in Switzerland, and his death came as a rude shock to democracy in Nepal. The new monarch King Mahendra has no liking for the democratic system. He was a bitter critic of political parties and supported feudalistic elements against them. Under him Nepali democracy suffered a setback but it was operational somehow. It was again under his reign that the Constitution of 1959 formed and promulgated.

For this new Constitution, it can be said that it was at best a political concession and a gift from a sovereign Monarch to his people. It provided for a cautious delegation of powers to the elected body and the elected chief. Both were to function under the eyes and nose of the monarch who was empowered to do away with the whole system any day, in his own discretion. And the King did exactly the same by scrapping the democratic experiment in December 1960 on the pretext that the democratic government had misused power and encouraged corrupt practices. Two years later King Mahendra introduced a new governing system which was inspired by the "Guided Democracy" of Indonesia and the "Basic Democracy" of Pakistan. This new system known as the Panchayat Constitution of 1962. This new Constitution aimed to make the institution of Kingship extremely strong and powerful, by making the King the source of sovereignty. The most remarkable innovation of this Constitution was a four tier partyless Panchayat System and a judicial system partially free and partially under the royal control.
King Mahendra died in 1972 and was succeeded by his son Birendra, who was seen as a progressive and modern person and political parties pinned their hopes for reforms on him. King Birendra, however, was in no mood to alter the system, yet introduced a few reforms. These reforms failed to contain the discontentment against the system which burst out in the form of a people's movement in the year 1990. It sparked off when on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1990, a procession of Nepali students came into clash with another procession brought out in favor of Panchayat system. The police opened fire and killed and injured unspecified number of people. The fire of revolt gradually spread all over the country and the King finally succumbed to the popular demand on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1990 by meeting the political leaders and later declaring the deletion of the word of "Partyless" and lifting ban on the political parties.

Chapter IV entitled, "The Period between the Two Janaandolans" illustrates the happening of those events that followed the People's Movement of 1990 and ultimately led to the second People's Movement of 2006. Following the movement of 1990, an interim government was formed comprising of the members of Nepali Congress, United Left Front, Palace nominees and independents. This government formulated and promulgated a new Constitution for the Kingdom of Nepal on 9 November 1990, which completely dismantled the old Panchayat System and provided for a Constitutional Monarchy. This Constitution may be considered a compromise between the Palace and the Congress, while slightly marginlising the Left Front. Nonetheless, as compared to the earlier Constitutions of Nepal, this system marked a drastic advance in the evolution of a democratic, constitutional order in the country.
Thereafter, general elections were held in May 1991 in Nepal, the Nepali Congress emerged as the majority party and formed the government under the leadership of G.P. Koirala. But the NC government fell, owing to the inner discord in the party. Consequently mid-term elections were held in the year 1994, in which, CPN (UML) emerged as the single largest party (but falling short of simple majority), followed by the Nepali Congress. King Birendra invited Man Mohan Adhikari to form the government. This Adhikari Government TOO fell and was replaced by the NC government headed by Sher Bahadur Deuba in 1995. The Deuba government was also short-lived and was replaced in 1996 by a new coalition government of the CPN-UML and RPP lead by Lokendra Bahadur Chand. This government had the life of six months and was followed by two more short-lived coalition governments, until new elections were conducted in 1999. The Nepali Congress again emerged as the majority party and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai assumed the premiership. However, inner factionalism made Bhattarai to relinquish the post, to be replaced by G.P. Koirala. However, the monarchy in Nepal suffered its greatest setback in June 2001, when Crown Prince Dipendra assassinated his parents King Birendra and Queen Aishwary and other family members and then short himself. Consequently, the throne of Nepal now went to Gyanendra, late King Birendra's younger brother.

Chapter V, "The Janaandolan of 2006" describes the factors, events and the consequences of the people's movement of 2006. This movement started as a small armed struggle in six remote districts of Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot, Salyan, Gorkha and Sindhuli in 1996. The party engineering this insurgency was CPN(M). This party also participated in 1990 movement with the demand for total abolition of the institution of monarchy. When the King submitted to popular pressure in 1990, the Left Front was
divided, one faction that joined hands with the NC and the Palace, and the other faction that continued with the struggle. The parties of this faction, CPN (Mashal), CPN (Fourth Congress) and Sarbhaba Sramik Sangathan merged to form CPN-M. Initially this movement was regarded as a matter of law and order and the government mobilized the Nepal Police to contain the insurgency. Nepali police was also criticised for committing brutalities and human rights violations. The government tried to tackle the Maoist problem by adopting a two pronged strategy of negotiations and military action. However things changed drastically after accession of King Gyanendra. On 1st February 2005, in response to the inability of the relatively democratic government to restore peace and order, King Gyanendra imposed Emergency and assumed total control of the government, suspended fundamental rights and cracked down on political parties, student organisations and other groups. This action of the King brought the political parties and the Maoist rebels closer. In October 2005, the seven major political parties formed Seven Party Alliance (SPA) to struggle against the autocratic rule of the King. Later in November 2005 the SPA and the Maoists reached a 12- point understanding and joined hands to abolish the autocratic rule of King Gyanendra.

As planned, the Seven Party Alliance launched a nationwide general strike and non-cooperation movement on April 6, 2006. King Gyanendra used iron fist to contain this Janaandolan. But ultimately on April 24, 2006, mounting popular resistance brought the beleaguered Monarch to his knees, who agreed to hand over power to the SPA. The old parliament was re-instated and G.P. Koirala became the Prime Minister. On June 16, 2006 Koirala and Maoist Supremo Prachanda signed a historical 8-point agreement. As per this agreement, the Maoists gave up arms and joined the main
stream politics. Their long standing demand of formation of a new Constituent Assembly and abolishing the institution of monarchy were accepted. This agreement marked the end of the decade long armed conflict in Nepal.

**Chapter VI,** entitled "Present Working of the Democratic System", traces the events that followed the end of the April 2006 Democracy Movement, till the present date. As per the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the SPA and the Maoists, an interim Constitution was promulgated on 15th January, 2007. This Constitution made a stark departure from the previous Constitutions of Nepal, by vesting the sovereign authority of the country in the hands of people rather than the King. It also provided numerous rights and freedoms to Nepali people. The Interim Constitution mandated the formation of a popularly elected Constituent Assembly to democratically formulate a new Constitution for Nepal within a period of two years. It also abolished monarchy and declared Nepal a republic state. Accordingly, elections to the first Constituent Assembly of Nepal were held on 10th April 2008. The CPN-M, emerged as the single largest party in polls but falling short of majority. Eventually the Maoists formed the government in July 2008 under the premiership of Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda", with the support of CPN (UML), the MPRT and 18 other fringe parties. Dr. Ram Baran Yadav and Paramanad Jha were earlier elected to the posts of the President and the Vice-President respectively, by the constituent Assembly.

However, the lack of clear majority of any party in the CA sparked off another era of political wrangling and instability of Nepal. Prachanda's government fell a year later on the issue of dismissal of the army chief Gen. Rookmangud Katawal, that resulted in a clash between the powers of the President and the Prime Minister. He was
succeeded by Madhav Kumar Nepal of CPN(UML) who too led a coalition government of 22 parties. The Maoists now started protesting against the President as well as the government, both within the CA and on streets. This derailed the peace process and the Constitution – drafting process. Therefore Prime Minister Nepal, entered into a deal with other political parties on 28th May 2010. As per the deal, the term of the CA was extended by a year, and Nepal resigned to give way for the formation of a new government. But the formation of this new government proved a Herculean task as there was no mutual agreement among the political parties on certain outstanding issues in the peace process, prominent being the merger of Maoist guerillas into the Nepal Army. The situation of political deadlock finally concluded on 3rd February 2011, when Jhalanath Khanal of CPN (UML) was elected as the new prime minister as a result of the agreement reached between him and the Maoist Supremo Prachanda. But Khanal government was not able to achieve anything substantial except extending the term of the CA again. The political parties signed another deal on the midnight of 28-29 May 2011. The deal extended the life of CA by three months and mandated Khanal to step down, so that a new national unity government could be formed. Khanal was succeeded by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai of CPN(M) in August 2011. The major achievements of his government were extension of the CA by another three months (i.e. till 30 November 2011) and integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist fighters. But the Constitution drafting process remained well behind the schedule and while the parties were considering another CA extension, the Supreme court of Nepal declared, that this shall be the last extension and ordered fresh elections to the CA if the Constitution was not drafted till the new deadline (i.e. 28th May 2012). As expected, the new deadline too passed unment and the CA was dissolved on the midnight of 27th May 2012.
But conducting new elections to the CA again proved contentions and finally it was decided by the political parties to form a new national consensus government under the headship of the Chief Justice of Nepal, Khil Raj Regmi. Regmi was sworn in as the Prime Minister on 14th March 2013 and a High Level Political Mechanism comprising of four major parties was formed the very next day to assist the Regmi government. He was entrusted the task of holding elections by 21st June 2013. However due to the conditions of political inconsensus, the elections were postponed to 19th November 2013. When elections were finally held on the aforesaid date, they were by and large peaceful except one major incident of violence. When the results were declared, the Nepali Congress emerged as the single largest party, but again falling short of majority. Eventually the Nepali Congress signed an agreement with the CPN-UML for government formation and Sushil Koirala of NC became the new Prime Minister of 10th Feb. 2013. He leads a coalition government of the NC, the CPN-UML and a few other fringe parties, and is now entrusted with the task of timely framing of a new Constitution for Nepal.

The present thesis ends with Chapter VII, "Conclusion" that summarises all the Chapters illustrated above. Some of the challenges and problems that are creating obstacles in the smoother transition of the Nepali polity have been enumerated like, petty interests and temptations of political leaders unwanted and unconstitutional role of money and muscle powers; lack of institutionalisation of the motion of Constitutionalism, etc. Some suggestions and remedial measures have also been given like a more participatory model of democracy should be adopted, boost to judicial activism should be given, political commitment of leaders is required, effective mechanism should be set up to enforce law and order, etc.