Chapter Two

BEGINNING OF POLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND FALL OF THE RANAS
On the whole, the Rana Government took enough precaution to prevent the outbreak of any organized movement in the country. At first, the only form of opposition which it faced came from among the members of the old nobility - the Thapas and the Baisniats, who wanted to avenge the wrongs done to them and to their ancestors. Sometimes, the Chautarias, the non-Rana Bharadars and even the King himself joined these men to conspire against the Rana Prime Minister. In the prevailing conditions of factional intrigue among the ruling Ranas, the formation of such secret plots became not only easy but frequent. But, more often than not, these conspiracies were motivated by the urge for simple blood-revenge which had nothing to do with the idea of better government or popular rule. Nevertheless, these abortive attempts to overthrow the Rana regime set the stage for the development of later popular movements in Nepal.

With the beginning of the twentieth century there also developed a movement for religious and social reforms in Nepal.
Though this movement was easily suppressed, it broadened the social basis of opposition to the Rana rule. By the thirties some young men who had come in contact with the Indian terrorist groups began to form secret political societies in Nepal. Like the earlier family plots of the nineteenth century, these societies aimed at the physical extermination of the Ranas, but they seemed also to have developed some vague ideas about democratic rule. When these secret societies failed, the Nepalese residing in India started an organized movement which forced the Rana rulers to declare a limited measure of constitutional and political reforms. But in view of the growing popular disaffection against the rule these reforms failed to make any impression. Finally, the anti-Rana forces led by the Nepali Congress invaded their country in 1950, which culminated in the fall of the century old family regime.

Thus, the origin and development of the anti-Rana movement can be studied in four stages: first, the court intrigues of the non-Rana nobility and Bharadars in the nineteenth century; second, the beginning of social and religious reforms; third, the secret clubs of the thirties of which the Praja Parishad was the most famous and, last, the anti-Rana agitation organized from India.

Court Intrigues of the non-Rana families

Though by adopting the methods of a despot, Jang Bahadur had attained supreme power, some survivors of the old families still plotted against him. In 1847 when the deposed King, Rajendra Bikram Shah, made a futile attempt to invade Nepal, a
large number of exiled Thapas and Basniats joined him. (1) Later, a younger generation of the Thapas came of age and sullenly awaited "an opportunity to revenge the death of Mathabar Singh at Jang's hands." (2) Among the Chautarias, Guru Prasad Shah made several attempts on the life of Jang Bahadur but, failing in all these attempts, he finally reconciled himself to his fate. (3) In 1851 the King's brother, Upendra Bikram Shah, laid a plot with Badri Nara Singh, Jang Bahadur's brother, but before it could mature he and his associates were rounded up and sent to Allahabad to be kept in the custody of the British Government. (4)

Though, in this manner, more than half a dozen plots against the life of Jang Bahadur failed, they showed that neither the Shah rulers nor the non-Rana families had reconciled themselves to the rule of the usurper. This was proved again after the death of Jang Bahadur when the Crown Prince, Trailokya Bikram Shah (1848-1878 A.D.), formed a close group of conspirators and enlisted the support of his brother-in-law Jagat Jang. (5) who aimed to oust his uncle, Prime Minister Ranoddip Singh. (6) But Trailokya Bikram's

(1) On 25 March 1847, at the head of a small army, King Rajendra Bikram reached Segowli. There his men began to desert him. After a brief skirmish, the King was captured in July and sent to Kathmandu. For full details see General Pudma Jung Bahadur Rana, Life of Maharaaj Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal (Allahabad, 1909) 91-9.


(3) Pudma Jung, n. 1, 97-100.

(4) Ibid., 155-61.

(5) Trailokya Bikram's two sisters were married to Jang Bahadur's two sons - Jagat Jang and Jeet Jang.

(6) For details of the conspiracy see Baburam Acharya, "Rana Shahi ra Gada Yantra," Sarada (Kathmandu), 21 (Chait, 2013 Bikram Samvat / B.S. / 1 ) 1-8.
untimely death and Jagat Jang's subsequent humiliation caused the dissolution of this group.

The next concerted attempt by the "non-Rana elements of the nobility" (7) was made under the direction of Narendra Bikram Shah, the uncle of King Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah (1881-1911 A.D.). Narendra actually wanted to replace his minor nephew and rule the kingdom with the help of a new set of ministers. (8) With the help of his two close associates, Bikram Singh Thapa and Sangram Sur, he secretly enlisted the support of a large number of army officers to slaughter all the prominent Ranas at a fixed place. Accordingly, 6 January 1881 was fixed as the appointed date. But again at this stage the secret informers of Dhir Shamsher, the Commander-in-Chief, unearthed the plot. By 1882 all the ring-leaders, including Narendra Bikram Shah, were arrested and some of them were hanged. (9)

The failure of this attempt disheartened the non-Rana faction of the Nepalese aristocracy. The main reason why such attempts failed to succeed was the lack of a common objective among the conspirators themselves. Some of them joined hands only to take revenge upon the Ranas, some wanted to set up their own rule, while there were still others for whom such plots were a necessary part of their every day court life. As a result, it was not


(9) According to Acharya these were the first martyrs of the Rana rule. Among those executed were Col. Bikram Singh Thapa, Col. Amar Bikram Singh, Captain Shamsher Jang and his brother, six Thapas, Major Sangram Sur and his brothers, 5 Bisth, Ensign Ranadal, Subedar Pahalvan, 2 Karkis, Col. Indra Singh Tandon, Adjutant Banka Adhikari, Capt. Faud Singh Gurung, Subedar Jog Bikram Pande, Capt. Bhaktarwar Shahi, Lt. Chattra Dvaaj Shahi and another person. Acharya, n. 6, 7.
difficult for the Rana police to unearth such plots by planting secret informers among the conspirators. Secondly, on the whole the state army, excepting a handful of officers and their men, remained loyal to the regime. Lastly, these plots had no popular basis so as to start any organized revolt which could have upset the political hegemony of the Rana family. As a result, with the arrest of any important member of a secret group, the group dissolved by itself.

Beginning of Social and Religious Reform Movement

At the close of the nineteenth century, some enlightened Nepalese came to be drawn towards the socio-religious movements then running in full swing in India. A few of them embraced the teachings of the Arya Samaj led by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. One of them, Madhav Raj Joshi (10) founded, in 1896, an office of the Arya Samaj at Kathmandu. His preaching soon attracted wide attention and it was said that even Maharaja Mohan Shamsher once invited him to listen to his lecture. But Madhav Raj's popularity became an eye-sore to the Rajgurus and priestly classes who regarded him as an intruder in their sacred field. They pressed the Maharaja to take action against him. As a result, Madhav Raj was publicly disgraced and sent out of the country. In 1905 he returned to India and settled at Darjeeling.

But the beginning made by Madhav Raj Joshi was not completely lost. The threads of his teachings were picked up by a younger

(10) By caste, a Newari.
generation of the Arya Samajists who came under fire, for the second time, in 1920 when their leaders Tulsi Meher, Chakra Bahadur and Amar Raj Joshi were arrested. But, undeterred, the Samajists carried on their work under different names. At this stage, the non-cooperation movement started by Gandhi also began to make its influence felt upon a section of the people. A few educated Nepalese in India openly joined Gandhi's movement. Among the returning Nepalese soldiers who had fought in the Great War, there were many who got imbued with new ideas which they began to spread among their fellowmen. Thus, by the twenties, a new set of leaders emerged in Nepal among whom Subba Devi Prasad Sapkota, Krishna Prasad Koirala and Dharani Dhar Sharma were the most important. Subba Devi Prasad, who was an officer in the Foreign Department of the Rana Government, came to Banaras to start a weekly, the Gorkhali, which wrote boldly about the real character of the Rana regime. (11) Krishna Prasad Koirala of Biratnagar who was deeply influenced by the teachings of Gandhi expressed his liberal ideas through his Nepali poems. (12) In 1926, another disciple of Gandhi, Tulsi Meher, started a movement to popularize the Charkha which soon landed him in jail. Later some other persons who were influenced by the teachings of Gandhi began to propagate against the practice of meat-eating, cruelty to animals and so on.

(11) It was closed in 1922 under the pressure of the British Government. See Ramji Upadhyay, Nepal Ko Itihas arthat Digdarsan (Banaras, 1950) 75.

(12) Father of M. P. Koirala and B. P. Koirala. He was known as "Nepal's Gandhi." His free thinking made him so obnoxious to the rule that he and his family members were banished from Nepal. His later sufferings are described by B. P. Koirala in "Mero Jeevan Katha," Pragati (Kathmandu), 2 (Asadh-Sravana, 2011 B.S.) 123-32.
By this time, the ideas of nationalism also began to spread in Nepal. The writings of Krishna Prasad Koirala and Dharanidhar Sharma's *Naiyadhya* which "ushered in the twilight of modernity," (13) the revival of historical interest through the works of Surya Bikram Gyavali and Lekhnath Paudiyal's forceful novel, *Pinjda ko Suga* (14) helped the growth of a national outlook among the new generation of literate Nepalese. In 1926, Subba Krishna Lal wrote a small booklet named *Makaii Ka Khetti* in which he praised the virtues of native dogs as against those of the European ones which immediately brought upon him the ire of Chandra Shamsher. (15) Krishna Lal was thrown into prison where he ultimately died.

But the impact of new ideas was making itself felt more and more. A number of young men who had managed to receive higher education in India returned, at this time, to Nepal with a new outlook. Among a section of the lower official classes also a rumbling discontent was fast growing up. In 1937, some of these men started a school at Kathmandu to impart education on modern lines. But, fearful of such a venture, the Rana Government ordered the closure of the school and sentenced about 28 teachers to long terms of imprisonment. (16)


(15) The exact line which he wrote runs as follows: "We care more for the foreign dog than for the native one, but when it comes to guard ourselves against thieves and robbers, it is the native dog and not the foreign one, sleeping in the sofa, that proves more useful." Quoted in *ibid.*, 355.

During the thirties Sukra Raj Sastri, a reputed Sanskrit scholar, started the Nepali Nagarik Adhikar Samiti (Nepali People's Rights Committee) with a view to conduct agitation on a purely socio-religious plane. It held large meetings at Kathmandu where famous scholars like Sukra Raj Sastri and Muralidhar Pandit gave their Gitaprayachan (interpretations of the Gita) which impinged tremendously on the minds of the listeners. (17)

Recalling these days in his reminiscences Pandit Muralidhar explained why the Samiti worked on a purely religious basis:

We decided to impart political consciousness through the medium of the Mahabharata stories. Lessons were drawn through citing examples from current life. It was no small act to try even that at a time when tongues were cut off even for mere blabbing. (18)

But the Samiti's exclusive concern with spiritual aspects of life made some of its younger adherents restive. Finally, at a big meeting, a Newari youth named Gangalal openly started abusing the rulers which produced great sensation in

(17) Recounting his reminiscences, Ganeshman Singh told this writer:

At these meetings Muralidhar Pandit began teaching, through the medium of the Puranas, the qualities and duties of an ideal ruler. Sometimes he contrasted Rama with the Rana rulers and the meaning of his subtle lessons did not escape the grasp of the listeners. These meetings drew a great number of people, including even the scions of the Rana family. It was rumoured that even the King attended these meetings in cognito. These meetings greatly alarmed the Rana Prime Minister, but he left them undisturbed because of the fear of infringing religious sentiments of the people.

(18) Muralidhar Bhattarai, Nepal Kranti Va Mera Jail Jeevana (Kathmandu, 1953) 3.
Kathmandu. (19) But this incident led to the arrest of both Sastri and Gangalal which also put an untimely end to the Samiti's work.

Secret Clubs and the Praja Parishad

The impracticability of organizing even normal social activities brought home the conviction to a section of the Nepalese that only underground terrorist activities could succeed in Nepal. Hence, as early as 1931, a handful of men founded a secret society called the Prachanda Gurkha which aimed to establish a democratic rule by ending the Rana regime. But before this club could even begin its work its members were arrested and thrown into prison. But the sense of frustrated revenge drove another extremist group to found, in 1935, under a thick cloak of secrecy, the Praja Parishad, in the very heart of Kathmandu. Some leading members of the Parishad were Tanka Prasad Acharya, Dasarath Chandra, Ram Hari Sharma and the physical instructor of the King, Dharma Bhakta. It was even reported that the King was secretly associated with it.

(19) To reproduce what Ganeshman Singh said about this incident

Then one day a great religious procession was taken out from Asantol to Indra Chowk / Bazar places in Kathmandu /
It was an unprecedented event in our history. The entire route of the procession was packed with crowds, and from windows and verandahs women threw flowers and vermilion.

At the end, a mass meeting was held at Indrachowk where Sukra Raj Sastri gave his Gitaprayachan. He discussed only spiritual matters which disgusted some members of the younger blood, like Gangalal and others. They demanded to speak at the meeting and, forgetting the time and place, they told their listeners that they were worse than dogs since they allowed the Banas to kick them without even protesting. The police were only waiting for such an occasion and they jumped into the crowd. Somehow, the people managed to save Gangalal, but Sukra Raj was arrested. Later, Gangalal was also apprehended.

See also, Dharma Ratna Yemi, Nepal Ko Kura (Kathmandu, 1956) 194.
The Parishad's aim was to end the Rana Sirkar (Government) and establish a democratic government under the aegis of the monarch. (20) It decided to function on two levels, first, to educate the people in political movements and, second, to assassinate some important Ranas to bring a swift change in the Government. (21) Some of the secret leaflets circulated by the Parishad at this time created great sensation in Kathmandu.

The Praja Parishad, however, could not work for a long time. In 1940, either through betrayal or vigorous police investigation, the Ranas came to know the names of its organizers. In October 1940 about 500 persons were arrested. After a brief trial, Dharma Bhakta, Dasarath Chandra, Gangalal and Sukra Raj Sastri were executed. Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ramhari Sharma, Chuda Prasad, Ganeshman Singh, Hari Krishna, Govinda Prasad Sharma, Puskarnath and Bal Chandra were awarded long terms of imprisonment. (22) A few workers of the Parishad, however, managed to escape to India where they spread stories about the sacrifice, courage and great heroism of the martyrs.

The Praja Parishad failed for three important reasons. First, under the existing conditions, it was not possible for it to carry on sustained political agitation without attracting the

(21) Ibid., 5.
(22) Sharma, n. 14, 365-6. Another event of importance was the revolt of the Gurkha soldiers at Almora who were about to be sent abroad for war duties. The issue was a small one, but the Gurkha Subedar who had led the revolt was taken to Nepal and hanged.

notice of the Rana rulers. Secondly, the fear of the Government was so deeply ingrained in the minds of the people that it was too much to expect any open response from them through the distribution of a few leaflets. Finally, the membership of the Parishad had grown far too numerous to be kept a secret any more.

But, inspite of its failure, the importance of the Praja Parishad movement cannot be minimized. It infused new courage and confidence in the anti-Rana elements. It set the stage for successive struggles on a larger scale. Above all, its activities became a part of the Nepalese legend.

Anti-Rana Movement in India

For a long time, the exiled groups of Nepalese had carried on a kind of anti-Rana agitation in India, but due to the overzealous watch maintained over them by the British Government they could not build up any active movement. In 1921, however, a beginning was made when Thakur Chandan Singh, a retired soldier, founded the Gurkha League and a weekly paper called the Gurkha Sansar which was later renamed the Tarun Gurkha. On the political plane, Chandan Singh had no definite views, but his angry outbursts through the columns of his weekly created a stir among the literate sections of the Nepalese then living in India. After a few years, however, Chandan Singh was forced to stop his activities "as a result of the betrayal practised by his associates who walked into the Rana's parlour." (23)

By this time, a growing number of educated Nepalese came closer to the Indian freedom movement. In 1942, during the 'Quit India' movement, some of them were arrested among whom were B. P. Koirala, K. P. Upadhyay and D. R. Regmi. In the same year, the people of Saptari in Eastern Terai broke open the jail gates of Hanuman Nagar to release the revolutionary socialist leaders of India, Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and others who were interned by the Rana Government when they escaped into Nepal to seek political asylum. As a result, a reign of terror was let loose in that district and some 22 arrests were made. (24) These incidents and contacts with the Indian national movement made the enlightened Nepalese realize that until the British colonial rule had ended in India, it was not possible for them to fight against the Ranas. When, therefore, in 1946, the Interim Government was formed in India as a prelude to India's achievement of freedom, a new wave of enthusiasm flooded them. In January 1947, the exiled Nepalese, especially youth and students, gathered together to form the Nepali Rashtriya Congress at Calcutta. (25) At the same time, the first rumbling of discontent among the people of the Terai, where a serious famine was raging, began to be heard. (26) On 4 March 1947, the mill workers of Biratnagar struck work and began the first organized strike in Nepal. In response to their call, B. P. Koirala and other leaders of the Rashtriya Congress joined the strike which turned from a small employer-employee conflict

(24) Sharma, n. 14, 392.
(25) For details see Chapter Six.
(26) Gorkhapatra (Kathmandu), 46 (4 Asvin 2003 B.S.) 2.
into a full-fledged political battle. The Rana Government sent an armed contingent to suppress the strike. It resorted to firing which resulted in the killing of several unarmed men and women. (27) On 24 March, B. P. Koirala, G. P. Koirala, Balchandra Sharma and other leaders of the strike were rounded up and sent to Kathmandu. At Calcutta, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress held an emergency meeting and sent an ultimatum to the Rana Government asking it to put an end to its policy of coercion. (28) When the latter did not respond, a general conference of Congress workers was held at Jogbani (North Bihar) where it was decided to launch a Civil Disobedience movement in Nepal from 13 April 1947. (29) The movement which was first launched at Biratnagar, through individual satyagraha, soon spread to other districts. At Birganj the students of a local school brought out a long procession which was also joined by a few civil servants. At Kathmandu the students organized a big demonstration which shouted the death of the Rana regime. In other parts of the Terai like Janakpur, Ilam etc., popular response to the Satyagraha was spontaneous and it appeared as if, for the first time, a mass movement was in the making in Nepal. (30)


(28) Ibid., 53-4.

(29) The Conference was attended by 125 delegates. Dr. Lohia was also present. At this time, however, the Rashtriya Congress decided that only Nepalese should participate in the Satyagraha. Ibid., 55.

(30) Ibid., 58-68.
As a sequel, on 16 May 1947, Prime Minister Padma Shamsher announced that he was ready to carry out political reforms provided the Rashtriya Congress agreed to withdraw the Satyagraha. On 2 June, after a long and heated discussion among the members, the Rashtriya Congress called off the movement. It did so because of two reasons. First, the offer seemed to give it a partial victory over the Ranas. Secondly, it also found out that as yet its organizational resources were too limited to give a call for a nation-wide movement. Hence the Rashtriya Congress found it advisable to call off the movement. (31)

Reforms of Padma Shamsher 1947-8

According to his proclamation of 16 May 1947, Maharaja Padma Shamsher declared that he would form a Reform Committee to suggest changes in the administration so that it could be carried on by "an assembly of elected and nominated members." (32) As a first step, he suggested that elections to local Panchayats (village councils), municipalities and district boards would be held within a year. He also gave the assurance to establish an

(31) Some sources state that the Satyagraha was suspended because Nehru personally asked the Congress leaders to do so. See ibid., 73, and Nepal Today, 1st issue (25 July 1947) 9-11.

The Rana Government also quoted Nehru while asking the Rashtriya Congress to suspend the movement. Gorakhpatra, 47 (17 Jaith 2004 B.S.) 1.

When interviewed by this writer, K. P. Upadhyay, who was at that time the General Secretary of the Congress, stated that the movement was withdrawn because of Nehru's personal intervention.

(32) Gorakhpatra, 47 (4 Jaith 2004 B.S.) 1, 4.
independent judicial system, to publish annual budget, to give grants in aid to private schools and to establish Consular Offices in India and other countries. (33) To help the Reform Committee, he also invited a panel of Indian legal experts to Nepal in June 1947. (34)

Meanwhile, to try the reform scheme in part, an election to the Kathmandu Municipality, described as a "provisional autonomous local council," (35) was held in the month of June. For the purpose of the election, the capital was divided into 21 wards which were asked to send four names each to the Municipal Goswara (office). (36) Each candidate was required to collect the signatures of 15 prominent citizens from his ward to make his nomination paper valid. There was one seat for each ward and it was laid down that the candidate receiving the highest number of votes would be declared elected. (37)

(33) Ibid., 4.
(34) The experts were Sri Prakash, Raghunath Singh and R. U. Singh.
(37) Ibid.
In a sense, this election was the first experiment in democratic methods in Nepalese history. (38) Its significance is yet more heightened when it is noted that, in spite of official control, some independents and sympathisers of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress were elected to the Kathmandu Municipality.

This limited freedom for political activities in Nepal as granted during the election, emboldened the people. In July 1947, the students of Kathmandu broke out into a strike and demanded the introduction of new subjects in their curriculum, amenities in their hostel life and enhanced salary for their teachers. (39) As the movement gained considerable public sympathy, Padma Shamsher was obliged to announce that he would fulfil the demands of the students. But this ready submission on his part made the conservative Ranas very angry. They began accusing him of surrendering old rights and mismanaging the entire administration. Led by Mohan Shamsher these die-hard Ranas grew bolder and forced Padma Shamsher to retire from active political life. (40) But before he did so, Padma Shamsher promulgated, on 26 January 1948, the Government of Nepal Act, 2004

(38) In his speech of 26 January 1948 Padma Shamsher stated that even in 1851 a "parliamentary cutcher" /Court/ was established at Basantpur, but due to popular disapproval, the experiment was dropped. Again in 1918 an attempt was made in the same direction with the introduction of an elective system in the municipality of the capital. "But there was much disorder in the city during the election, and communal quarrels and breaches of the peace occurred among the city dwellers, who had been living heretofore in peace and mutual cooperation, and so the election had to be abandoned ..."


(40) See Dhundi Rai Bhandari, Nepal Ko Aitihasik Vivechana (Banaras, 1959) 325.
(1948 A.D.) which came to be known as the first written Constitution of Nepal.

II

The Rana Constitution or the Government of Nepal Act, 2004 B.S. (1948 A.D.)

In many ways the Constitutional Act of 1948 represented a compromise between two groups of the Ranas viz., the one trying to liberalize the administration and the other resisting all kinds of innovation. In essence, this Act did not contemplate any change in the prerogative rights of the Prime Minister as "vested through the instruments of their sacred Panjapatras by Sree Panch Maharajadhiraja of Nepal." (41) Article 3 of the Act (42) laid down that the law governing the succession of Sri 5 Maharajadhiraja (King) and Sri 3 Maharaja (Prime Minister), "shall for all time be inalienable and unalterable." Thus, the old order of family rule was kept intact. But, in another sense, by regularizing the structure of the Government under various heads and departments, the Act, as Padma Shamsher observed, "translated into action the deep aspirations I have entertained for such a long time to bring about an improvement in the administration of the country." (43)

(42) Since the Act was given the status of a constitution, the term Article instead of Section has been used throughout.
(43) Padma Shamsher's Speech, n. 38, 1.
These aspirations were, as the Preamble stated, first, to bring Nepal in line with the advanced nations of the world and, second, to provide for "closer association of our dear people in every branch of administration and thus bring about enhanced prosperity and happiness to our people."

**Features of the Rana Constitution**

The most important features of the Act were the provisions for the establishment of a Council of Ministers, a bi-cameral Legislature and a Judiciary under a Pradhan Nyavalaya (High Court). The executive authority, as in the past, was to be exercised by the Maharaja either directly or through officers subordinate to him. He was, however, to be assisted by a Council of Ministers of at least five members, two of whom were to be chosen from among the elected members of the Legislature \( \text{Article 7 b.} \). The Council was to transact all executive business and

- to lay down the general policy of the State,
- scrutinize the budget of the various departments,
- give final consideration to the government bills to be placed before the Legislature,
- and to bring about co-ordination and co-operation between the various departments of administration \( \text{Article 11-a.} \).

The Ministers were to hold office for a term of four years but they could be dismissed if they ceased to command the confidence of the Maharaja Prime Minister \( \text{Article 9.} \).

The Act envisaged the establishment of a comprehensive legislative structure beginning from the Gram Panchayat (village council), as the lowest unit, to a Central Legislature containing two Houses - the Bharadari Sabha and the Rashtra Sabha. The Gram Panchayat representing a village or a group of villages was to
consist of 5 to 15 members to be elected by adult franchise. The Nazar Panchayat representing a town or city was to contain 10 to 50 elected members. The Pradhan Panchayat (Heads of the councils) of several Gram and Nazar Panchayats were to elect from among themselves 15 to 20 members to form the Zilla Panchayat (district council). The Panchayats of all these categories were to work within their areas and look after education, health, transport, bunds, bridges, and public buildings etc. Articles 16, 17, 18 and 19.

The Rashtra Sabha at the centre was to contain 42 elected and 28 nominated members (Schedule A). The Bharadari Sabha was to comprise between 20 to 30 members to be nominated by the Maharaja "to represent as far as possible the chief national interests and activities" (Article 22).

The Legislature was to be a permanent body with one-fourth of its members retiring at the end of every year. The two Chambers were given equal status, though demands for grants were to be submitted first in the Rashtra Sabha and then to the Bharadari Sabha (Article 39).

The jurisdiction of the Legislature was, however, severely limited. The list of expenditure charged upon the revenues of the State (44) could not be discussed, nor could a demand for a grant

(44) Article 38(c) enumerated the following expenditure charged upon the revenues of the State -

(i) Civil Lists of the Maharajadhiraj and of the Maharaja,
(ii) expenditure on the armed forces,
(iii) pay, pension and allowances of public servants employed by the Maharaja,

...(contd. on next page)
be made without the recommendation of the Maharaja. Articles 38 d and 39 d. Nothing could be said or done in the Legislature so as to interfere with

the succession, position, rights, and privileges of His Majesty Sree 5 Maharajadhiraj or His Highness Sree 3 Maharaja as by ancient law, custom and usages established Article 34 b.

Further, the Prime Minister was empowered to promulgate emergency regulations which were to have the force of law for six months Article 46. He could, at any time,

(i) assume to himself all and any of the powers vested by this Act upon any body or authority

(ii) declare that such questions as are defined in this Act shall be conducted in the manner prescribed by him in his discretion Article 47 a.

Part V of the Act relating to the administration of justice stated that "Justice shall be cheap and speedy" Article 48. It was provided that the Maharaja should appoint a Judicial Committee (45) to act as the Supreme Court of Appeal in special cases, to frame

Contd. from last page

(iv) expenditure on foreign affairs,

(v) expenditure for maintaining peace and order in the country and items classified for being spent at the exclusive discretion of the Maharaja,

(vi) salaries and allowances of the Ministers, the Advocate-General and the Auditor-General,

(vii) expenditure on religious Guthis and Trusts,

(viii) interests on loans and charges on account of Sinking Fund,

(ix) Any other expenditure declared by the Act or any other law to be so charged.

(45) To be appointed from among members of the Legislature, consisting of not more than 12 members including two members from outside the Legislature.
rules and regulations for the administration of justice, and to resolve any difference arising out of the interpretation of any provision of the Act Articles 52 and 67. Article 53 provided for the establishment of a Pradhan Nyavalaya (High Court), consisting of a Chief Justice and other judges not exceeding 12, to be appointed by the Prime Minister. It was to work as a Court of Records and was given jurisdiction to supervise over the lower courts, to issue general rules and to prescribe forms "in which books, entries and accounts shall be kept by the officers of any such courts" Articles 55 and 56.

The Act empowered the Prime Minister to remove a judge on grounds of "gross misbehaviour or infirmity, physical or mental" on the recommendation of the Judicial Committee to be set up by him Article 54. Moreover, his rights to grant pardon, reprieve, respite or remission of punishments were guaranteed.

Thus, on the whole, the Government of Nepal Act of 2004 B.S. preserved all the traditional rights which belonged to the Maharaja Prime Minister since the days of Jang Bahadur. The Central Legislature, inspite of its elected members, was so circumscribed in its rights and jurisdiction that it could not work better than the Bharadar Sabha of earlier times. The Judiciary as envisaged by the Act was to exist only in form, as an adjunct of the family despotism.

Its Importance

Yet, the passing of the Constitutional Act was an important landmark in the history of modern Nepal. By regularizing the system
of government in which so long the personal wishes, likes and dislikes of a single individual had wielded the force of law, Padma Shamsher laid down constitutional checks on the Rana rule. Secondly, by admitting two elected members to the Council of Ministers, the Act recognized that henceforward even the non-Rana members had the right, howsoever limited, to participate in official transactions. Thirdly, the principle of representative rule was incorporated so far as elections to Gram and Nagar Panchayats were concerned. Fourthly, certain fundamental rights, at least in form, were granted to the people. (46) Again, by guaranteeing freedom of speech and immunity from arrest to the members of the Legislature during its sessions, the Act provided certain democratic rights where there had been none. Fifthly, the mention of an Auditor General "to examine and audit the accounts of the State" Article 62 a, and a Public Service Commission "for the purpose of selecting qualified candidates to all civil posts under the Government" Article 65 a indicated, in theory, that new ideas had begun making inroads into the forbidden land of the Ranas. This fact is made more evident from the objectives of the Government as laid down by Article 60,

As soon after the commencement of this Act as expedient, the Government shall provide for universal, free compulsory elementary education, and (sic) technical and higher education will be provided by the State to the extent necessary to prepare candidates for wider opportunities of service of the people of Nepal ...  

(46) Such as freedom of person, freedom of speech, liberty of the press, freedom of assembly and discussion etc. were granted by Article 4. These appeared, however, too sweeping to be true.
Five years back to say even a part of this would have meant an act of treason. Hence the Act of 1948 marked an important advance upon the previous state of affairs. But before the Act could be implemented, Padma Shamsher left for India from where he sent his letter of abdication on 26 April 1948. (47)

III

Revolt of 1950-1: End of the Rana System

Maharaja Mohan Shamsher, the new Prime Minister, stood for everything that ran contrary to the liberal views of Padma Shamsher. In his first public speech, he declared that he had come to bear the responsibility of ruling the country "in accordance with the traditional usages and custom of the forefathers." (48) As if to prove this, he issued a proclamation banning the Nepali Rashtriya Congress throughout the kingdom. (49) Even the limited autonomy which was conferred on the Kathmandu Municipality was withdrawn. Similarly, the new Ains (laws) which Mohan Shamsher promulgated, in 1949, relating to freedom of person, of expression and of association, made a mockery of the fundamental rights mentioned in the Government of Nepal Act. In brief these Ains categorically laid down that any expression, speech or assembly against the interests of the regime would be considered as a cognizable

(47) Sharma, n. 14, 377.
(49) Gorkhapatra, 47 (31 Chait 2004 B.S.) 1.
offence. (50) Thus, for all practical purposes, the brief era of reform as initiated by Padma Shamsher came to a close.

Birth of the Praja Panchayat

As hopes about the immediate realization of reforms began to recede, a group of young men led by Tripubar Singh, Gopal Prasad Rimal and Bijay Bahadur Malla founded, in October 1948, the Nepal Praja Panchayat at Kathmandu. This organization proposed to work entirely in accordance with the spirit of the Rana Constitution and demanded its immediate implementation. (51) At this time, a contingent of Rashtriya Congress workers led by B. P. Koirala reached Kathmandu to lay the foundation of a network of underground activities in Nepal. But somehow the Rana police came to know of this fact and rounded up B. P. Koirala and the leaders of the Praja Panchayat.

As news about these arrests reached India, the Congress ranks decided to wage a second round of non-violent movement in Nepal. They received further impetus when B. P. Koirala and his associates began a historic hunger-strike in jail which lasted 21 days. (52) Finally, bowing under pressure, Mohan Shamsher released B. P. Koirala and assured him that his Government would carry out the reforms. (53)

(50) See Maulik-Hak-Sambandhi-Ain (Gorkhapatra Press, Kathmandu, 1949) 1-4.

(51) Regmi, n. 7, 303-4. The author suggests that the Praja Panchayat had nothing to do with the Rashtriya Congress.

(52) Sharma, n. 14, 399.

(53) In a press conference, Koirala stated "After my release I had a long talk with the Maharaja and on my presentation of the people's point of view to him, he seemed to be genuinely anxious to do something to ease the situation. ... he left me in no doubt that the Government would concede them if they got a breathing space."

See Nepal Today, 5. issue (July 1949) 7.
On the basis of this assurance, B. P. Koirala advised his followers to stay the proposed Satyagraha for a while.

But soon it became clear that the Rana Government was not eager to fulfil its promises. All hopes about reforms turned out to be mere delusion and the Rashtriya Congress organ, the Nepal Today, bitterly commented

Hoping for reforms from the selfish Ranas is like hoping for milk from a dry cow. The salvation of the Nepalese lies in struggle, not in compromisory (sic) attitude. Too much of this attitude has already been exhibited, further exhibition will be dangerous and possibly suicidal. (54)

In August, B. P. Koirala also issued a statement from Patna accusing Mohan Shamsher of "going back" on his promise and of "pursuing ruthless policy of repression." (55) Thus the prospect of a peaceful change-over from the Rana despotism to popular democratic rule came to an end for all time.

Politics of Cold War in Nepal

Notwithstanding these developments, Mohan Shamsher stuck fast to the policy of maintaining the status quo as long as possible. When coercion and force did not suffice to achieve this end, he began a two-fold policy of dubbing the Rashtriya Congress as anti-national and of seeking closer links with America and Great Britain. He propagated the view that the pro-Congress elements in India were trying to subvert Nepal's independence. Even India was

(54) Nepal Today, 7 issue (September 1949) 3.
(55) Ibid., 1.
accused, though indirectly, of encouraging anti-national elements in order to impose her control over Nepalese affairs. (56)

It is true that the Indian Government advised the Rana Government at this time "to make an effort to keep pace with" (57) the rapidly changing world. But Mohan Shamsher completely misunderstood this advice. On the one hand, he came to believe that India was anxious about her own security and wanted Nepal's assistance to deal with threats from Pakistan and China. (58) On the other hand, considering India's interest in Nepal's internal conditions as undue interference, the Maharaja made overtures to the Western powers to keep Nepal's former position intact. Both the United States and Great Britain responded to his call because it did not conflict with the general objectives of their foreign policies. (59)

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(56) In an editorial comment, the Gorkhanaptra wrote that the anti-India elements were gathering arms in India with the full knowledge of the Indian Government. Gorkhanaptra, 51 (16 Asvin, 2007 B.S.) 2.

(57) Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, 1949-53 (Publication Division, Delhi, 1954) 175.

(58) During his visit to India in early 1950, Mohan Shamsher declared at Banaras, "We shall give assistance to India whenever she needs it and come to her succour when she is in danger." The Hindu (Madras), 16 February 1950.

(59) The British policy was guided by the traditional understanding that the Ranas had been always faithful to British interests, and secondly, it wanted a continuous flow of the Gurkha soldiers to fight the rebels in Malaya. The American attitude was mainly guided by the British policy. America was also keen to recognize Nepal's importance as a strategic base. For further study on the subject see Werner Levy, "Government and Politics in Nepal," Far Eastern Survey (FES) (New York), 21 (December, 1952) 5-9; Girja Shanker Bajpai, "Nepal and Indo-Nepalese Relations," in Indian Yearbook of International Affairs (Madras, 1954) 3-8; K. P. Karunakaran, India in World Affairs 1950-53 (Oxford University Press, London, 1958) Chapter VIII, 189-200, and Girilal Jain, India Meets China in Nepal (Bombay, 1959) 7-26.
All this dragged Nepal into the midst of cold-war politics and made India anxious about her own security in the northern region.

Broadly speaking, India's policy towards Nepal was guided by three main considerations - first, to keep Nepal away from cold-war tensions; secondly, to strengthen her northern border against Communist China's expansionist policy in Tibet, and, thirdly, to help Nepal achieve political and economic stability which alone could have been her best guarantee against foreign intervention under the circumstances. These objectives were explained by Nehru in the Indian Parliament on 17 March 1950 when he declared that it was not possible for the Indian Government "to tolerate an invasion of Nepal from anywhere" (60) and that, owing to geographical and other intimate ties, the interests of the two countries were identical. He added

Freedom interests us in the abstract as well as in the guise of a practical and, in the context of Asia, a necessary step. If it does not come, forces that will ultimately disrupt freedom itself will be created and encouraged. We have accordingly advised the Government of Nepal, in all earnestness, to bring themselves into line with democratic forces that are stirring in the world today. Not to do so is not only wrong but also unwise from the point of view of what is happening in the world today. (61)

Convening the Rana Parliament

It was perhaps under the pressure of the Government of India, that Mohan Shamsher made, at least, a fake attempt to introduce some reforms. On 22 September 1950, he convened a Legislative

(60) Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, n. 57, 147.
(61) Ibid., 147.
Assembly which he described as the "Parliament of Nepal." (62)

He also declared that he had co-opted two elected members of the Assembly in his Council of Ministers in accordance with the provisions of Padma Shamsher's Constitution. (63) Further, his Government also claimed that it had set up about 158 Gram Panchayats during the year on the basis of adult franchise. (64)

If anything, these measures reflected a very poor attempt on the part of the Prime Minister to carry out the promised reforms. They failed to satisfy the pro-reform elements, and the prevailing mood of the time was aptly expressed by the Nepal Today from Calcutta:

What can be more ridiculous than the set-up of Parliament in a country where elementary civil rights are denied, where people demanding the introduction of the Constitution, now supposed to be introduced by the Maharaja, are still rotting behind the prison bars? The age of befooling the world by such self-exposing assertions is long past. The feudal autocrats of Nepal are befooling themselves by such ridiculous announcements. (65)

The King's Flight and the Revolt of November 1950

Had Mohan Shamsher declared his reforms some years earlier there would have been some possibility of avoiding the catastrophe which now confronted him. The anti-Rana movement took a sharp turn when the Nepali Rashtriya Congress merged with another

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(63) Ibid.

(64) Colonel Subarna Shamsher's Report, n. 35, 3-4.

party, the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress, in April 1950 to form the Nepali Congress. (66) In September 1950, the Nepali Congress took a historic decision at its Bairgania Conference to launch a liberation campaign in Nepal. At Kathmandu, trouble brewed to boiling point when a new conspiracy was unearthed involving some top-ranking Ranas. (67) It was even alleged that King Tribhuvan was secretly in contact with the conspirators. (68)

This incident made the Rana Government more watchful about the movements of the King. The latter, on the other hand, fearing harm to his personal safety, began to lay plans to escape from the palace where he was virtually kept a prisoner. Finally, on 6 November 1950, the King and his family left the palace and took refuge in the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu. Four days later, a special plane brought the King and his family to India. It was an unheard of event in Nepalese history. It focussed the attention of the entire world on the developments in this little kingdom. Instead of a mere family feud, the insurrection which followed the King's daring escape changed the whole course of politics in Nepal.

(66) The formation of the Nepali Congress has been fully discussed in Chapter Six.

(67) The revelation followed the arrest of Sunder Raj Chalise who was a prominent worker of the Nepali Congress. His connections with ex-Commanding General Hiranya Shamsher were well-known. Later the ex-Commander's son-in-law, Captain Pratap Bikram Shah, was also arrested. See Gorkhapatra, 51 (20 Ashvin, 2007 B.S.) 1.

(68) See Sharma, n. 14, 383.
The Liberation Struggle

As soon as the King reached India, the Nepali Congress launched its liberation struggle. "An unauthorized air-craft" (69) dropped Nepali Congress leaflets on Birganj and Kathmandu and about 300 armed men of the Congress "made a surprise attack on Birganj and captured the Governor and other officials." (70) After a brief scuffle with the Rana troops they set up a parallel Government at Birganj. (71) Simultaneously, the Congress liberation force called the Mukti Sena struck at other places. In Eastern Terai, an assault on Biratnagar failed due to the stiff resistance of the state troops. A similar attempt to penetrate into Amlekhganj, an important oil and railway centre, proved unsuccessful as a reinforcement of the Rana army reached there in time. In Western Terai, the rebels under Dr. K. I. Singh captured Parasi, a small town 9 miles off Bhairawa, on 13 November 1950. But their attempt to march on Bhairawa failed after a short skirmish with the state troops. Undaunted by this reverse, Singh re-organized his Mukti Sena to resort to a kind of guerilla warfare which succeeded in completely disrupting administration in the entire


(70) Press Communique through the Delhi Embassy on Insurgent Activities on 12 November 1950. Ibid., 1.

(71) Detailed accounts of the armed insurrection can be found in Sharma, n. 14, 404-16; Ram Hari Joshi, Nepal Ko November Kranti (Patna, 1952); Nirmal Lama, Birganj Akraram ra Budsingh Gurung (Kathmandu, n.d.) and D. R. Regmi, Wither Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952) 107-15.
Butwal district. Meanwhile, the rebellion spread from village to village in the form of loot, arson and stray murder of Zamindars and money-lenders. (72) By January 1951, the rebel forces captured Dang, Deokhuri, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Palpa in Western Terai. In the east, however, Birganj fell to the advancing Rana army on 20 November after two days of bitter fighting. With its loss, the fate of the Mukti Sena followed, more or less, an indifferent course.

In view of the greater military strength of the Ranas it does not appear that the Mukti Sena could have held on to its ground for a long time. In the first place, the Mukti Sena was not an organized army; it represented a motley organization of students, ex-soldiers and mere mercenaries. Secondly, its operations and campaigns were conducted in a very uncertain manner. There was little co-ordination or co-operation among the various divisions of the liberation army. Even the Congress leaders were not united in their objectives and the opposite directions towards which they pulled their ranks made military campaigns ineffectual. (73)

Thirdly, the supply of arms and ammunition to the Mukti Sena was too insufficient to conduct a protracted warfare. Finally, contrary to the presumption of the Mukti Sena, the state troops remained staunchly loyal to the regime. As the Rana Government boasted

(72) For details see Kashi Prasad Srivastava, Nepal Ki Kahani (Delhi, 1955) 148-63. The writer of the book himself took an active part in the insurrection.

(73) In the west, differences between K. I. Singh and Gopal Shamsher caused enough trouble among the ranks. Singh's grievance against some of the top Congress leaders was responsible for his rebellion in 1951.
The Army of Nepal is a jewel of the State, and our gallant soldiers have ever displayed and are displaying now unexampled heroism and promptitude when they fight the enemies of the country. (74)

IV

The Delhi Settlement of 1951

It was not therefore on military victories that the success of the Nepali Congress depended. But the popular upsurge which followed in the wake of the insurrection scared the Rana circles. Even the people of Kathmandu broke out into spontaneous demonstrations which the Rana police failed to suppress. (75)

The two other factors which helped the liberation movement were, first, the moral support it received from the fugitive King and, second, the firm attitude which the Indian Government adopted towards the Ranas at this time. King Tribhuvan's flight not only dealt an irreparable blow to the Rana prestige, but it made the people anxious about the safety of their Monarch whom they regarded as a divine being. In order to allay their fears, Mohan Shamashehr hastily convened a special Bharadari, consisting of 120 members of the nobility, Raigurus and officers, and proclaimed the three year-old grand-son of Tribhuvan, Gyanendra Bikram Shah, as the Maharajadhiraj of Nepal. (76) In doing so, he had perhaps expected

(75) Sharma, n. 14, 414-16.
(76) See Government of Nepal's Communique regarding King Tribhuvan's abdication. Bulletin No. 23 (Department of Publicity, HM Government, Kathmandu) (Typescript).
the support of the British Government. But the Indian Government strongly opposed this stand and made it clear that it would not brook any foreign interference in the affairs of Nepal. Speaking in the Indian Parliament on 6 December 1950, Prime Minister Nehru reiterated that India would continue to give recognition to Tribhuvan as the head of the State. (77) He declared that he "would like every other country to appreciate the intimate geographical and cultural relationship that exists between India and Nepal." (78) On Nepal's internal conditions Nehru stated

> We have tried, for what it is worth, to advise Nepal to act in a manner so as to prevent any major upheaval. We have tried to find a way, a middle way, if you like, which will ensure the progress of Nepal and the introduction of or some advance in the ways of democracy in Nepal. We have searched for a way which would, at the same time, avoid the total uprooting of the ancient order. (79)

On 8 December 1950, the Indian Government submitted a memorandum to the Government of Nepal in which it suggested the following constitutional reforms. First, a constituent assembly "composed entirely of properly elected members should be brought into being as soon as possible." (80) Secondly, pending the formation of the assembly, an interim government "which will include persons representative of popular opinion and enjoying public confidence," (81) should be established. It should also

(77) Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, n. 57, 177.
(78) Ibid., 175.
(79) Ibid., 176-7.
(80) Quoted in Karunakaran, n. 59, 194.
(81) Ibid.
include members of the Rana family one of whom should be the Prime Minister. "This body should act as a cabinet on the principle of joint responsibility and should frame its own rules of business." (82) Thirdly, King Tribhuvan should continue as King "in the interests of the realm." (83)

The Government of Nepal acknowledged the receipt of the memorandum on 19 December. Five days later a special session of "Parliament" was convened at the Singha Darbar and the Maharaja placed the following proposals before the Assembly:

(i) to convene a constituent assembly within three years on the basis of adult franchise to frame a new Constitution for Nepal;

(ii) to set up a cabinet of 9 members of which at least 3 would be popular representatives and the cabinet would function on the basis of joint responsibility;

(iii) the provisions of the Government of Nepal Act of 1948 would continue to be operative until the Constitution was framed;

(iv) the formation of political parties would be allowed "provided they keep within the law" and

(v) the Nepalese, residing abroad could return to Nepal barring the "traitors and criminals." (84)

These proposals could hardly satisfy the leaders of the Nepali Congress and the Indian Government. By keeping silent on the subject of Tribhuvan's return, they virtually rejected India's proposals of 8 December. As a matter of course the Government of India rejected Mohan Shamsher's gesture.

(82) Ibid.

(83) Ibid.

Meanwhile, serious differences among members of the ruling family led to the resignation of 40 Ranas from high offices in the Army and the Government. This sudden development took the Prime Minister unawares and he was forced to re-open negotiations with the Government of India through Bijay Shamsher and Narendra Mani Dixit. The talks concluded on 1 January 1951 and a week later, the Nepalese "Parliament" and the Bharadari adopted in substance all the suggestions made by the Government of India. According to the fresh decision, the Government of Nepal agreed to recognize King Tribhuvan as King of Nepal, to form an interim cabinet of 14 members half of whom would be popular representatives, to hold elections to a constituent assembly by 1952, to give legal sanction to political parties functioning within or outside Nepal and to proclaim a general amnesty "after arms taken up since November last are laid down, violence abjured, and a ceasefire effected." (85) Explaining this changed stand Mohan Shamsher stated in a public declaration of 8 January:

The circumstances in which His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva was installed on the throne have been known to all. But as no friendly country, having diplomatic relations with us, has recognized the new King and as it has been seen that there is suspense and unrest among the people pending the settlement of this question, and seeing how mischief mongers have used the name of the King in the perpetration of disturbances, looting, arson, indignity over women, culminating in the taking of many innocent lives, and as according to the friendly suggestions made during discussions by the Government of India that His Majesty King Tribhuvan should

(85) "His Highness the Maharaja summons special sitting of the Parliament and Bharadari to consider Constitutional Reforms," ibid., 2.
continue to be King of Nepal, ... I have now to announce that the Government of Nepal consider the decision of Parliament and Bharadari a wise one and endorse it. (86)

The announcement was welcomed by the Government of India and King Tribhuvan. The latter in a statement of 10 January 1951 appealed to the liberation army to put down arms in the interest of the country. (87) After slight vacillation, the Nepali Congress also declared a cease-fire on 16 January. The tripartite talks between the King, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress commenced in New Delhi in the first week of February 1951. At the Conference the Nepali Congress placed the following four demands as basis for discussion: (i) that all the seven popular representatives in the interim cabinet should be the nominees of the Nepali Congress; (ii) that the key portfolios should be allotted to the popular representatives so that they could be in control of the administration of the State; (iii) that the cabinet should be responsible to the King so long as a duly elected Parliament was not set up and (iv) that reforms should be proclaimed by the King. (88)

As discussions continued, K. I. Singh with his 300 armed band embarked on a course of indiscriminate violence in Western Terai. As a result, the Rana Government was forced to come to an early decision. On 12 February a settlement was finally reached to the satisfaction of all the parties. According to the terms of the agreement, the number of ministers in the proposed interim

(86) Declaration by His Highness the Maharaja on 8 January 1951, Ibid., 3.

(87) The Hindu, 11 January 1951.

(88) Ibid., 29 January 1951.
council was brought down from 14 to 10 of whom half were to be Congress nominees and other half the Ranas. Three days later King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu amidst scenes of great popular festivity. On 18 February 1951, a new Government was installed by a royal proclamation. The long family rule of the Ranas came to an end that day.

**Causes of Failure of the Ranas**

The factors which led to the failure of Mohan Shamsher were partly internal and partly external. In the first place, inspite of the over-centralization of power in the hands of the Prime Minister, the Rana state machinery was too weak to meet the new challenge. Its survival had depended on the submission of the subjects to medieval methods of oppression. But once the idea of defiance entered the public mind, the Rana system collapsed like a house of cards. Its authority ceased to exist beyond the capital while in the districts the local officials began to act on their own in total disregard of their higher authorities. Again, the divisions among the important families of the Ranas created new problems for the Prime Minister. His inability to enforce his decisions showed that he had lost the powers of a despot. As a result, chaos reigned at all levels of the administration. But the greatest shock to the Rana Government came from a totally unsuspected quarter. The sudden flight of the King threw it into a state of panic and disorder while it drew the attention of the world to the events happening in Nepal. The King's moral support to the revolt as started by the Nepali Congress
gave it the shape of a national liberation movement. At the same time the stand taken by the Indian Government in favour of King Tribhuvan shook the foundations of the Rana regime. It signified a radical departure from the old British policy of stabilizing the Rana misrule at the cost of the people. Finally, Mohan Shamsher failed to appreciate the far reaching significance of the Asian nationalist movement. He could not believe that the newly awakened aspirations for democratic rule and national independence could also overtake his country. But when this happened, he proved unequal to meet the challenge. Hence, the old order collapsed.