Chapter Six

POLICY OF WITHDRAWAL AND NON-INTERFERENCE

Lord Ellenborough's Nepal Policy

The succession of Lord Auckland by Lord Ellenborough, in February 1842, signalled a change in the policy of the British government towards the state of Nepal. Viewed in the context of the Afghan imbroglio, Lord Auckland's departure from India appeared as a virtual recall. Commissioned to salvage the wreck, caused by his predecessor, Lord Ellenborough "very soon showed that he believed his mission to be a reversal of his predecessor's measures and the succession of his predecessor's men." His dislike of Auckland's policy was as deep as his distrust of Auckland's men. This is demonstrated, more than any other event, in his Nepal policy. Auckland's policy of active, though limited, intervention, through strengthening the Resident's influence, was reversed for the policy of withdrawal and non-interference; and Hodgson, an 'Aucklander', the

(1) W.W. Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson (London, 1896) 204.

(2) Ibid.
'Political civilian' was changed for Major Henry (later Sir) Lawrence, the 'Soldier Political'—a class of men, for whom Lord Ellenborough had a particular fancy.

Lord Ellenborough's policy in Nepal was one of scrupulous non-interference in her internal politics. He inculcated in the Political Agents the principles of "justice and moderation" in dealing with the rulers of States, a scrupulous regard for their personal dignity, a sincere desire for their well-being, "even the necessary acts of authority" being "clothed with the veil of courtesy and regard."

He regarded Nepal as a foreign state, independent of the British government in every way. To him, Lord Auckland's policy in Nepal seemed erroneous, unjust and risky. It was unprecedented too; for never in the history of their relations with Nepal, had the British compelled the King of Nepal to set up a ministry of their own choice, and never had the Resident been allowed to act openly as a powerful political lever. It was a "false position", Lord Ellenborough saw; and sooner the British withdrew from that

(3) Hodgson to G. Clerk, 12 July 1872, Hodgson to R.L.M., 20 December 1879, H.M.B.L., Vol. 10; Hunter, n. 1, 204-34.

position, the better. Hence this withdrawal from the unprecedented and erroneous policy of intervention to the familiar one of non-interference was, Lord Ellenborough could claim, equivalent to a return from an uncertain and perilous course to a beaten and, therefore, safe track. Ellenborough gave out that he was averse as much to extend the British government's territorial limits as to widen its sphere of political activity and influence.

**Disquiet in Nepal**

The departure of Lord Auckland from India, was followed by recrudescence of restlessness in Nepal. The British Government's delay in retrieving their lost position in Afghanistan by prompt reduction of the Afghans, was attributed to their weakness. It bred fresh commotions; anti-British spirit, for a while driven beneath the surface, raised its head; the war-party fretted; the King grew restive; fresh troubles were ahead.

The King was eager to overthrow the 'Peace-Ministry', and free himself from its retaining influence. But he

---


lacked the nerve to do it himself. Hence, he set his son, the Heir-Apparent, upon the Ministers and the 'peace-party'. The Heir-apparent, a semi-insane stripling of eleven, revelled in revolting cruelties and barbarous eccentricities. Oppression of harmless people was his pastime; maiming of limbs, crushing people under elephant's feet, setting peoples' houses on fire, merciless flogging of respectable persons, ducking his young wives in pools, were some of his sadistic pranks. With the covert encouragement of the King, he freely indulged in these atrocities, to the consternation and alarm of all. All suffered alike; the Junior Queen and members of the royal family, the Ministers and nobles, peoples, high and low; none was spared.

In this troubled water, the members of the 'war-party' merrily fished. They rallied around the young Prince, "the divine incarnation", as they called him; they wormed into his confidence, by exhorting him to wrest the throne from his imbecile father, to expel the Resident, to crush the ministers, and to fulfil his divinely ordained mission by a war with the British. Such heady wine drove the young prince to successive orgies of violence. There were universal signs of despair, cries and groans; the nobles fretted and fumed; all were indignant; yet none

dared restrain the prince. The Ministry was wholly powerless, its members quivering in fright; the doom of the existing régime seemed near at hand.

The Kasinath Case

The situation came to a head on 23 April 1842, when an attempt was made on the Residency, on the pretence of forcibly taking away an Indian merchant from the custody of the Resident. This merchant, Kasinath by name, had extensive business at Kathmandu. Involved in a civil suit in the Court of Kathmandu, he had been living for some time past in the Residency. The Court demanded his surrender, but Hodgson refused compliance. On 23 April 1842, the King, accompanied by the Heir-Apparent and two thousand soldiers, came to the Residency, determined to compel the Resident. The King himself tried, by physical force, to take away the merchant, but Hodgson cordoned the latter with his arms, sternly telling the King, "that either you take both of us or neither." The King's nerves failed and, in spite of repeated exhortations of the Heir-Apparent and the soldiers to apply force on the Resident himself, he withdrew. His wrath was later assuaged by the persuasions of the Ministers. It was by singular tact, patience and

(8) Ibid.; S.C., 3 August 1842, 82.

(9) S.C., 3 August 1842, 66, 89; Narrative of Principal Events in Nepal from 1840 to the end of 1851 by Captain Nicholetts, Assistant Resident, P.C., 11 November 1953, 25, sub anno 1842.
imperturbability, that Hodgson tackled the situation. He was inured to such critical state of affairs. He bore the crisis with patient fortitude, when the King fumed in fury, the Heir-Apparent was wild with frenzy, the ministers and chiefs were utterly obfuscated, helplessly looking on at the excited soldiers yelling for blood.

Hodgson is censured: the recall of Hodgson

Hodgson, greatly worried, wrote post-haste to the Government to call the Durbar sternly to account for its attempt to "deforce" the Resident on the 23 April. He further suggested that an army of demonstration be instantly placed on the frontier, with a view to disabusing the Durbar of the idea that Afghanistan had absorbed all the forces of the British. General Oglander's and Colonel Oliver's force had earlier effectively controlled the bellicose spirit of the Durbar. The tortured nobles were eager for British intervention. Hodgson was pressed by the Ministers and other "valuable and numerous friends" to give them vigorous backing. A strong policy was unum necessarium, or else the friendly régime would crumble.

Lord Ellenborough, stewed in the Afghan juice, felt greatly distressed at the above intelligence. His first

(10) Resident to Government, 3 May 1842, S.C., 3 August 1842, 82.
reaction was that of rage. He scathingly censured Hodgson for having overstepped his powers as an accredited agent to a Court, foreign and independent. In coming to an open issue with the King of such a country, Hodgson was accused of having acted "in a manner so entirely contrary to the known views and wishes" of the Government. He had compromised his own honour, and had sullied that of his government, by going too far in the defence of a British-Indian subject. Neither the "laws of nations" nor the Treaty with Nepal/ entitled him to go that far. It was not the King who misbehaved with the Resident, but the latter who showed "want of personal consideration for a friendly and independent sovereign," Ellenborough contended. Hodgson was asked to convey to the King that the Governor-General would like to defer receiving his (King's) complimentary mission, till the "cloud of misunderstanding had passed over the sun of friendship." He was summoned to meet the Governor-General personally, and explain the incident of 23 April. This letter of the Governor-General was dated 8 May 1842; its burden portended the change in Government's Nepal policy, following the change in the office of the Governor-General.

(11) Government to Resident, 8 May 1842, S.C., 3 August 1842, 67; same to same, 12 June 1842, S.C., 7 September 1842, 78.
The letter gave Hodgson "equal pain and perplexity." He did not deliver it to the King, fearing that its "get-tough" policy would make the King more presumptuous, and undo the good results of the policy hitherto followed. He warned the King that the Governor-General would not receive his compliments, unless and until he tendered an unqualified apology for his mis-behaviour on 23 April.

He made another frantic effort to convince Lord Ellenborough that strong policy was the only suitable policy in regard to Nepal; and that he should always back the Resident up to the hilt to buoy up his influence in the Durbar, and so sustain a régime, conducive to the British interests. This would convince the Durbar that the change in Governor-Generalship did not mean change in British policy towards Nepal.

(12) "It seemed to me impossible to follow such a course as prescribed by the letter of 8 May 1842 and, as his Lordship declared that his object was peace, I ventured to disobey orders which I thought would certainly imperil it." Autobiographical Memoranda written by Hodgson in 1881, Hodgson MSS., quoted in Hunter, n. 1, 216.

(13) Ibid., Governor-General's Despatch to Secret Committee, 17 May 1842, 8; Ibid., 8 June 1842, 16. When new Governor-General assumed office, the Durbar used to send him compliments.

(14) Resident to Government, 16 May 1842, S.C., 3 August 1842, 87; Hodgson to Laidcock, Foreign Secretary, 16 May 1842, same to same, 17 May 1842, 17 May 1842, Ibid., 88-9; Resident to Government, 5 June 1842, S.C., 7 September 1842, 77.
Hodgson warned the Government:

"But if I show or you show that I am distrusted or the Ministers distrusted, a crash may occur, which you could not arrest. My acts and advices have been those of the Ministers, and thus I have had all the success that has hitherto been mine. I shall succeed further and again if you be firm, but if not, the deepest hypocrite alive (the Raja) will speedily though softly undo all that I have achieved." (16)

Lord Ellenborough was furious. He again censured Hodgson for not delivering the letter of 8 May to the King,

"In direct disobedience of the instructions you received ... it may tend to produce serious embarrassment to the Government, by compelling it to adopt an extreme course with respect to the Raja of Nepal at a time when it is certainly not desirable to create a division of the British forces and to impose new burdens on the finances." (16)

Hodgson was informed on 21 June 1842 that he would be relieved of his charge at the earliest convenient time.

Ellenborough was concerned that his (Hodgson's) provocative diplomacy might spark off a premature issue with Nepal at such a critical time.

(15) Hodgson to Haddock, 16 May 1842, S.C., 5 August 1842, 88.
(16) Government to Resident, 21 June 1842, quoted in Law, n. 4, 197. "You appear to imagine that the language of courtesy to a sovereign is inconsistent with firmness, but neither in private nor in public life is moderation in words inconsistent with resolution in action." Same to same, 3 June 1842, S.C., 5 August 1842, 91.
(17) Government to Resident, 21 June 1842, quoted in Hunter, n. 1, 212. The next day Lord Ellenborough recanted this order of recall in a private letter, asking Hodgson to keep the said order as a "profound secret". The order of recall was issued without consultation with the Councillors, all of whom recognised the great merit of Hodgson. Haddock to Hodgson, 22 June 1842, quoted in Ibid., 217.
Hodgson defends Auckland's Policy

Hodgson was now convinced that Lord Ellenborough was determined to reverse Lord Auckland's policy, in disregard of its merits. He was convinced, too, that such a reversal would be ruinous for British interests. In a spirited defence of the policy of active, though limited, intervention, Hodgson pointed out the compelling necessity of its adoption, the urgent expediency of its maintenance, its present utility and prospective advantages. He surveyed the emergence of the 'peace-party' as a counterpoise to the 'war-party', the formation of a friendly regime under the 'moral aegis' of the Resident, and "with the sanction and approval" of the British Government, its programmes and pledges, its achievements and successes—all to impress upon Lord Ellenborough of the pressing necessity and great benefits of the existing policy and the grave risks of its reversal.

(18) "I hope the present Ruler of India will not be so mad as to run blindfold upon his own course, contrary to such testimony to the long tried sufficiency of my politics here. He seemed prejudiced, as are all of them at first." Hodgson to Mother, 30 May 1842, H.M.B.L., Vol. 16, 5; same to father, 29 July 1842, Ibid., Vol. 9, 50.

(19) Resident to Government, 16 May 1842, S.C., 3 August 1842, 87; Hodgson to Daddick, 16 May 1842, 17 May 1842, Ibid., 88-9; Resident to Government, 31 May 1842, Ibid., 95; same to same, 5 June 1842, S.C., 7 September 1842, 77.
The Resident and the Ministers had so long worked on "quid pro quo" principle, each requiring the other's help. The latter and the 'peace party' were "the sole pillars of our hope", "peace keepers in the meanwhile ... invaluable allies, by and by, if need be." Political necessity and benefit apart, there was moral obligation of the British. Instrumental in elevating them to power, the British Government had virtually committed themselves to their fate. They had shared the Resident's anxieties, and had suffered tirades and tortures for their anglophil policy. Having gone so far with them, it was "unlawful and objectionable" to get away from these "valuable and long-tried cooperators."

(20) "I am sure that our interests would be sadly wounded by the desertion of all our numerous and powerful friends, more particularly in the event of another inevitable contest with Nepal, precipitated against all our wishes and efforts by the Heir-Apparent whose character seems to utterly preclude hope." Resident to Government, 29 April 1842, S.C., 3 August 1842, 66.

"... this Ministry, so created and upheld, in defiance of the Palace, has vindicated the trust reposed in it as our declared 'sole stay' in relation to Nepal." Same to same, 12 June 1842, S.C., 7 September 1842, 84; Ibid., 87-8.

"The lives, the honours and everything of the Ministers are now at stake here and a false step with you may do mischief incredible." Hodgson to Maddock, 16 May 1842, S.C., 5 August 1842, 83.

"... there are none others in Nepal comparable with them for talents, goodwill towards us, experience or influence ...." Resident to Government, 5 June 1842, S.C., 7 September 1842, 77.
Above all, apart from its utility as anis aler, the existing régime was serving as a nucleus of British influence. If the interests of the Ministers and other friendly nobles were protected now, they would feel immensely obliged to the British Government. In future, they would rely on the latter; may be they would even be led to acquiesce in a modified national independence to repose under the aegis of the British suzerainty." In short, the abrupt dissolution of connexions with the friendly régime would be tantamount to the snipping of the only artery through which the influence of the British government worked in Nepal—an influence, which had not only restrained the war spirit in the Durbar, but which might in future bring about "some effective change" in the administration of Nepal, conducive to British interests. The issue, hence, was not merely the retention of some persons in power, but safeguarding the British interests in Nepal, and paving the way for the predominance of British influence in future. The Resident's "own safety, interests and honour ... [were] at stake" along with those of the Ministers; the future of British relation with Nepal thus depended on the issue of continued support to the existing régime.

(21) Same to same, 22 June 1842, ibid., 88.

(22) "... the maintenance of this British party at Kathmandu offers us incalculably valuable appliances for the eventual costless coercion" of the Durbar. Same to same, 12 June 1842, ibid., 84.

(contd. on next page)
Lord Ellenborough was unmoved. It was useless to support a régime, which, in spite of constant galvanisation by the British government, had failed to muster even the strength necessary for its very survival. Nothing could be expected of the Ministers, who were perpetually fearful of the very forces they were expected to subdue. Since they had now absolutely no influence in the Durbar, their continuance in power or fall was a "matter of indifference" to the British government. Lord Ellenborough saw little justification in "the expediency, necessity and humbleness of Residential influence," to bolster up the régime. It was impolitic for the British government to commit itself to a particular régime, for thereby, "it loses a portion of its power, when it departs from its dignity and places itself in a state of subordinate cooperation with the Ministers of Nepal." (24)

"It [the Ministry] was confessedly a pie allo - a temporary measure of urgent expediency in order to maintain our position here and elsewhere against fraudulent and forceful encroachment that might precipitate a premature rupture, and in order likewise to obtain the means of cheap and radical coercion of Nepal should her continued ill-will necessitate it." Same to same, 22 June 1842, Ibid., 88.

(25) "To the British government it is a matter of indifference who are the Ministers of Nepal unless in so far as the influence of the Ministers might affect the question of peace or war, in which alone we are interested." Government to Resident, 5 June 1842, S.C., 7 September 1842, 75.

(24) Ibid.
It was a "radically faulty" policy to thrust upon a sovereign independent King a regime which he intensely disliked. It was a "false position". Instead of paving the way for peaceful and friendly relations, such a policy would breed perpetual sources of discord and conflict between the two governments. It was a policy "fraught with future evil and should at the earliest practicable period (25) be suffered to expire." The first step to change a policy was to remove the means through which it worked. Hence, much as he professed to value Hodgson's ability and worth, Lord Ellenborough gave him to understand that,

"if a change of system should be adopted in treating with the Nepal government, you are so mixed up with a party there that you would be unable to act efficiently in carrying out such new system. It would succeed better in other, even if much less able, hands." (26)

(25) Government to Resident, 8 August 1842, S.C., 19 October 1842, 64. "I have expressed to Mr. Hodgson my disapprobation of the system which has been recently introduced at Kathmandu of depending for the maintenance of friendly relations with the State of Nepal in a Cabinet formed on party principles, which places the Minister, supposed to be attached to British interests in constant opposition to a court party which becomes, of consequence, opposed to such interests. Such a system can only be productive of irritation in the mind of the Sovereign without any certainty of ensuring peace - the object for which it was introduced...." Governor-General to Secret Committee, 8 July 1842, 21.

(26) Lord Ellenborough to Hodgson, 6 July 1842, quoted in Law, n. 4, 197.

"It must be evident to your Hon'ble Committee that it is not practicable to retrace our steps to a more prudent and legitimate course of conduct in our relations with the Government of Nepal, while Mr. Hodgson with whom the present erroneous system is identified remains Resident at Kathmandoo." Governor-General to Secret Committee, 8 July 1842, 21.
Hodgson realised that the Governor-General was adamant. He could only plead that the change should be gradually and quietly effected, so that it left no trail of bitterness in his erstwhile friends and no seed of future danger. He wanted time for disengaging himself from the 'Peace-party',

"gradually preparing them for the contented admission that the support they have heretofore desired from the Resident was not designed and is not calculated for permanency." (27)

Above all, Hodgson begged, the change should be deferred till wars in Afghanistan and China were over.

Lord Ellenborough relented. He realised that none but Hodgson could, without risk, effect the desired change in policy. To him was, hence, entrusted the task of gradual withdrawal of support to the Ministry and the 'Peace-Party', and the gradual dissolution of his intimate connection with .

(27) Resident to Government, 22 August 1842, S.C., 8 March 1843, 86A.

"... were their Ministers' official link to me kindly and carefully dissolved, they would therefore be found to rejoin our banner in case of the inevitable occurrence of rupture." Same to same, 22 June 1842, S.C., 7 September 1842, 88.

"I only asked time to lay aside the alliance with the Nepalese chiefs promising the Governor-General that I could and would fall back presently into old track of purely diplomatic relations and still preserve peace which would be risked by his mode of procedure." Hodgson to Marshman, 4 October 1874, H.H.B.K.*, Vol. 9, 191.
them. A small corps of cavalry was also sent to the
Nepal frontier as a measure of precaution.

Hodgson implements the new Policy

By September 1842 wars had ceased in Afghanistan
and China. Hodgson was relieved; the heated spirit in the
Durbar cooled off. The King hastened to congratulate the
Governor-General on the British success; the dacoits
sheltered in Nepalese Tarai were surrendered. Hodgson found
that the time had come to carry out Lord Ellenborough's
mandate. He began to draw himself away from the Minister,
exhorting them to be self-reliant.

The recession of his influence led to further
weakening of the Ministry, aggravation of political instabi-
ity and the increasing sway of the 'war-party'. The Heir-
Apparent grew more violent; he had set his heart firmly

(28) Government to Resident, 8 August 1842, S.C.,
19 October 1842, 64; Hodgson to father, 6 December 1842,
H.M.B.L., Vol. 16, 7-8; same to same, 29 July 1842, 6 Septem-
ber 1842, Ibid., Vol. 9, 30, 37.

Hodgson was asked to "gradually bringing back the
policy of your mission to the only safe and legitimate
course - that of abstaining from interference in the internal
affairs of the state to which you are deputed and relying
for the due protection of British interests upon knowledge
entertained by the British power." Government to Resident,
8 August 1842, S.C., 19 October 1842, 64.

(29) Lord Auckland, on Hodgson's suggestion, had
withdrawn the frontier force in February 1842; Lord
Ellenborough had dissolved it in spite of Hodgson's strong
pleading against dissolution. Hodgson to Ellenborough,
7 March 1842 (copy), S.C., 30 March 1844, 34; 4 January 1843,
52.

(30) S.C., 5 October 1842, 148; 9 November 1842, 83;
2 November 1842, 65.
on the throne. All who ventured opposition to him were brutally tortured; even the King had his fill of insult and injury. To stave off a forced abdication, the King had to yield considerable power to his son. The result was a dual government, an anomalous state of affairs, when both asserted powers, yet both evaded responsibility. The administration degenerated into a mess; a reign of terror followed in its wake, with life insecure and honour imperilled. Hodgson duly reported these matters to Government, but the latter viewed them as domestic events which did not warrant much notice, let alone action. They did not object to divided authority in Nepal administration, although they refused to recognise the Heir-Apparent's claims to the joint sovereignty of the state.

The tortured nobles were disheartened by Hodgson's "rigid neutrality." They rallied around the Junior Queen, who was as much disgusted with the weak King, as opposed to the Heir-Apparent's bid for the throne. A strong willed

---

(31) S.C., 28 September 1842, 78; 16 November 1842, 84-5; Wheeler, n. 6, 19-26.

(32) S.C., 22 March 1843, 72; 21 December 1842, 82-84A; 28 September 1842, 78-9; 19 October 1842, 67; Lord Ellenborough to Queen Victoria, 19 December 1842, quoted in Lord Colchester, ed., History of Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough in his Correspondence with the Duke of Wellington (London, 1874) 58-9.
lady, she commanded wide support among the nobles, and even the soldiers pledged cooperation to her for restraining the young prince. A league was formed with her leadership, determined to press the King to end the vicious dual government for a stable administration.

Hodgson was happy with this development, more so at the popularity of the Junior Queen. She was one of the main pillars of the 'peace-party', a warm, if secret, ally of the Resident, to whom she had always looked for the protection of her life from the wrath of the late Queen and her henchmen, the Pandes. Hodgson was even inclined to help her sneak away from Nepal to India whence she could be used as "a valuable auxiliary in various ways" against the Durbar. But the Government were opposed to this for fear of grave political complications.

(33) Wheeler, n. 6, 24-9.

(34) "Let him [Matebar Singh] be informed that my only reliance is on the Company .... I rather look to you [Hodgson]. What a mother can do in your behalf, I will do, what a son can do in my behalf, do you. In you is my reliance for the protection of my children and myself. I am wholly devoted to the Company. Let it protect me ...." Bella (Hodgson's pseudonym for the Queen) to Resident, 23 June 1842, S.C.*, 10 August 1842, 122.

(35) Resident to Government, 3 July 1842, Ibid., 123; same to same, 24 June 1842, Ibid., 122; Government to Resident, 11 July 1842, Ibid., 124. Government were, however, prepared to give her political asylum should she escape to India, Ibid.
Hodgson wanted the peace-loving nobles to remain united under the Junior Queen, in whose ascendancy lay the project of a stable administration. She alone could hold the 'peace-party' together, when the Resident had withdrawn himself from it.

The Chantaries alone, of all, opposed the Queen's ascendancy, fearing that it would affect the line of succession to the throne. But their opposition was of little avail when all others supported the Queen. The Chantaries tried to bring in the Resident to their support but in vain. Hodgson continued to maintain "rigid neutrality", giving the Ministers a distinct understanding that,

"the Governor-General desires only peace and friendship with the Nepalese.... He has no partiality or preference as to the Ministerial agency through which those ends are attained." (36)

---

(36) "Bella's success and safety even must be the result of consummate prudence, on her part and that of her friends, amongst whom I reckon myself, but wholly without power to help her much-to-be desired advancement .... Still Bella may succeed by end by ...." Resident to Government, 10 December 1841, S.C., 28 February 1842, 64.

"With Bella gained and union among themselves, the Ministers, I told Phobogenite (Hodgson's pseudonym for Fateh Jang) ... might, in my judgement, defy the palace faction .... Let them be united then ...." Same to same, 31 May 1842, S.C., 3 August 1842, 95.

(37) "The Premier still attempted to draw the Resident into their proceedings, but the Resident stood steadily aloof; though were he authorised to interfere as arbitrator by and bye, he might perhaps prevent violence and bring about speedy and permanent good." Wheeler, n. 6, 25.

(38) Hodgson to Maddock, 11 September 1842, S.C., 5 October 1842, 148; 9 November 1842, 83; 22 March 1843, 72.
In December 1842, all the civil and military officers, backed by eight thousand troops unanimously drew a petition of right, demanding immediate end of the pernicious dual rule, and the establishment of a stable administration with just and sound principles, securing the rights and liberties of nobles and the people at large. The petition assumed the character of a national demand, which the King had to acquiesce in.

The peaceful domestic revolution enhanced the political power of the Queen. In January 1843, the King conceded to her the supreme executive power, with an undertaking to abide by her counsel in all matters of state.

But the wily King soon made Chautari Fateh Jang Shah, the Mukhtear (Minister), with the power of directing all matters relating to revenue, justice, judiciary and household affairs. He was given the power of patronage, as also the honour of being the King's exclusive counsel. Hodgson was concerned at such schemes of the King to exploit the rivalry between the Chautarias and the Queen, and to sow dissensions.

(39) S.C., 4 January 1843, 54-60; Wheeler, n. 6, 25-9.

(40) Ibid. "There has been a most respectable revolution in Nepal. The Ranee is now regent, and she is most friendly to us and disposed to us. I trust we may look to long-continued quiet on that side." Ellenborough to Duke of Wellington, 18 January 1843, quoted in Colchester, n. 32, 321.
among the nobles, with a view to negativing the late (41)
peaceful revolution.

Yet he could do nothing but only hope that the
Hukhteer and the Queen would sink their mutual jealousy;
while the one would ably administer the state, the other
would restrain the King. All implored Hodgson's intervention,
but to no effect.

Hatabar Singh in Nepal

The queen, to strengthen her hands, managed to bring
Hatabar Singh, so long in exile in India, back to Nepal. His
return, in April 1843, was hailed at Kathmandu as the home-
coming of a dashing hero; all looked to him as the fittest
person at that hour; he was lionised, by the army in particular.
His first object now was to wreak sanguinary vengeance on those
who killed his great uncle, Bhim Sen Thapa under false charges.
Hodgson tried hard to prevent such bloody events, by impressing
on the King "the high expediency of putting an end to the
hereditary revenges", which denuded his court of nobles. This
wise counsel had no effect. Some Pandes were sacked.

(41) S.C., 1 March 1843, 59-60; 8 March 1843, 88.
(42) S.C., 22 March 1843, 72; 1 March 1843, 62.
(43) Wheeler, n. 6, 31. Hodgson disfavoured Hatabar's
return to Nepal. An ambitious man, he craved for all power or
none at all. His return, Hodgson apprehended, would create
a stir in the Durbar. But Lord Ellenborough was bent upon ending
the 'enomalous position' of Hatabar, and allow him to return
to Nepal. S.C., 28 February 1842, 67; 3 August 1842, 72-3.
(44) S.C., 24 May 1843, 664; Nicoletti's Report, n. 9,
Sub anno 1843.
By the middle of 1843, normalcy had been restored in the Durbar; "extended cooperation" was rendered to deal with the dacoit menace on the border; situation had manifestly improved.

Recall of Hodgson

Hodgson now begged Lord Ellenborough to allow him to stay for a year more (i.e. till the end of 1844), which would enable him to compile a comprehensive report on Nepal

"as would not fail to be particularly useful in the very probable event of our being sooner or later compelled to subdue and occupy the country."

His influence was now as widely ramified as his esteem was deep among all sections of the Nepalese people.

But Lord Ellenborough had since long made up his mind to recall Hodgson. His removal had been decided in May 1842, rather in a fit of impulsiveness than in sober judgement and wise reflection. The decision was solely his own, and had been taken without any adequate knowledge of the Nepalese situation. It was supported by none; for all felt its harshness and unjustifiability. The order was, hence, recanted,

(45) P.C., 14 June 1843, 506.
though not officially. Since then, Hodgson had stayed in Nepal virtually on sufferance; for Lord Ellenborough admitted that his substitute was not readily available, and his abrupt removal would be harmful to British interests. He was thus allowed to stay on till October 1842, when his removal was a "settled" affair. Hodgson was then asked to inform the King about it. The King deplored "the loss of so familiar and severely tried a friend whom he had known since his childhood." He as well as Matbar begged the Governor-General not to withdraw Hodgson whose stay in Nepal was "gratifying and beneficial to him (King)", and to whom alone was he indebted for the safety of his throne and kingdom from a fatal war with the British — a war which his evil advisers were dragging him to. But neither this royal desire nor the appeals of Hodgson could move Lord Ellenborough. In December 1843, Major Henry Lawrence took charge from Hodgson.

(47) Lord Ellenborough's attitude to Hodgson was opposed by members of his Council and other prominent officers, all of whom entertained highest esteem for Hodgson, who had saved the British from a perilous war with Nepal between 1837 and 1842. For details see Hunter, n. 1, 204-34.

(48) Lord Ellenborough to Hodgson, 24 October 1842, S.C., 8 March 1843, 27.

(49) Khuresta from Raja of Nepal to Lord Ellenborough, 7 Saway 1900; Ellenborough to Raja, 27 October 1843, S.C., 19 August 1843, 8; 14 October 1843, 15-8; 4 November 1843, 39-41; King Rajendra to Lokraman, 1900, Aswin Sudi 9, Rot 23; Matbar to Lokraman, 1900, Kartik Sudi 14, Rot 1, Baburam Collections.

(50) S.C., 20 January 1844, 1; Wheeler, n. 6, 39.
Hodgson's departure from Nepal was a touching sight. In open Durbar, the King wept like a child for the loss of, whom he called, the "Saviour of Nepal"; the nobles deeply moved, filed past in silent grief; the soldiers grim and steady stood to attention; the winding streets of Kathmandu were thronged by people eager to catch the last glimpse of a man, who came in his teens to live with them, and who had so closely interested himself in their life and culture, the tricks and turns of their politics; all were moved. Thus ended, amidst paean of praise and pangs of grief, the political career of the greatest British Resident in Nepal, whose diplomatic labours were as valuable to his country as his scholastic ones to the world of knowledge. A versatile personality, dexterous, shrewd and intriguing, he influenced the course of Indo-Nepalese relations as no other Resident had ever done. He was more than an accredited representative of his government; he was the architect of the British policy in Nepal during his long Residentship. He brought new ideas into his office, and sought to carry them through amidst many political vicissitudes.


(52) Hodgson himself acknowledged that his long stay and intimate knowledge of all aspects of Nepalese life alone enabled him to establish the political influence, deemed essential for the stormy period. Extract of Hodgson's Letter to Dr. Rost, 24 November 1874, H.M.B.L., Vol. 9, 210.
With his departure the curtain dropped on the most momentous epoch of the history of British relations with Nepal - an epoch of strain and stress, conflict and commotion, hostility and belated rapprochement.

II

Lawrence's ideas about Nepal

Lawrence came to Nepal, commissioned to carry Lord Ellenborough's policy to fruition. The Governor-General himself, as others, soundly briefed him, before he took over charge in December 1843. He was to work on two maxims; scrupulous non-interference in the internal politics of the Court; and conciliatory cordiality to the King. His duty was that of a vigilant observer of the Court politics; and not that of a meddler, or an arbitrator in political disputes.

(55) Hodgson resigned the Civil Service after laying down his office in Nepal in December 1843. His recall was regretted by all; the Court of Directors were "annoyed" with Ellenborough on this score. Law, n. 4, 195. The recall of Hodgson fitted into Lord Ellenborough's general attempts at allaying the apprehensions of the Indian States, created, as he alleged, by the 'expansionist' and 'interventionist' policy of his predecessor. The Political Agents were a "monstrous body", who were "riding high" during Lord Auckland's regime, with an "enlarged sense of their importance." This sense, he was determined to curb. A.H. Impey, Lord Ellenborough (Cambridge, 1939) 148; Law, n. 4, 26-8, 193-9.

Hodgson lived till 1894, as the greatest authority on Nepal and the neighbouring areas. During his last days he made vigorous efforts to defend his policy in Nepal in a series of letters to many. H.M.B.L., Vols. 9-11, 16; Notes on the Services of B.H. Hodgson, collected by a friend (Calcutta, 1833).
He was to safeguard British interests and offer friendly advice to the King, but only when asked to do so, and only when such advice was likely to be acceptable to the King and prove beneficial to British interests. It was now the settled policy of the Government to let the Nepalese alone, and not to "advise, remonstrate or dictate", till their (British) interests demanded it.

"The main object is to identify oneself [i.e., the Resident] with the real and best interests of the state. When they feel that such is the case and that the object is worked at in a kind, conciliatory and single-minded manner, considerable influence will probably be maintained." (54)

The object was to be realised by "evenness of temper, courtesy of demeanour, absence of dictation or obtrusiveness." Lawrence was advised to avoid the temptation of counselling the parties, even if such counsels were likely to yield the desired dividends. He was to uphold the dignity and honour of the British government, by acting in a cautious, plain and above-board manner; for "we must not only mean what is right but appear to do so." The best course to avoid the eddies of party-wrangles was to observe a "mean between too great confidence and too ready suspicion." (55)

---

(54) Thomason, Lieutenant-Governor of the North Western Province, to Lawrence, 18 November 1843, quoted in H.E. Edwardes; and H. Herivale, Life of Sir Henry Lawrence (London, 1873) 321-2.

(55) Ibid.; Ellenborough to Lawrence, 23 December 1843, quoted in Law, n. 4, 200. George Clerk, Governor-General's Agent in Ludhiana, wrote to Lawrence on 2 February 1843, that the wisest policy was "to let people along and keep aloof"
Shortly after reaching Nepal, Lawrence was convinced of the errors in Hodgson's policy. He scorned "Hodgson's unmanly concessions and oriental subtleties", without, however, pausing to think that Hodgson's policy of alternate firmness and moderation, of assertion and timely acquiescence, could alone deal with the trying situation in which he had to work.

He found it difficult to snap the tangled skein of relations established by his predecessor with all parties in the state. Hodgson had left, but his influence was still felt. Lawrence attributed his initial difficulties to his predecessor's meddlesome policy.

"... but I cannot but feel that to his Hodgson's conduct towards all the leading men of Nepal, the Gurus, the Chantaries, Pandes, Thapas and the Raja himself, most of my present difficulties are to be attributed." (56)

but aloof with all courtesy." Quoted in Edwardes and Kerivale, n. 54, 323; Letter of Thomason to Lawrence, Ibid., 321-2. Lawrence was advised to be "so conciliatory" to the King in his dealings "that it may not be felt as an intrusion on the independence of the Maharaja." Quoted in H. Edwardes, The Necessary Hell (London, 1953) 90-2; P.C., 5 October 1844, 270.


"... they made such a fool of Mr. Hodgson, that they are puzzled about me. Mr. Hodgson mixed up with their intrigues, and with outstretched hands, in my presence, called himself the Raja's servant. So you can imagine the system, that has prevailed." Lawrence to Honoria (his wife), quoted in H. Diver, Honoria Lawrence (London, 1936) 258. "... Mr. H. was one day master, the next slave." Lawrence to Dr. Login, Ibid., 258.

(57) Resident (Lawrence) to Government, 6 February 1844, S.C., 16 March 1844, 29. "When then it is remembered that Mr. Hodgson was ten years Resident, that for the last four years, especially, he identified himself with the Durbar, and that during that period he took part in what were called two great movements of the people, the difficulty of my position will be understood ...." Ibid.
Hodgson shifted his alliance from one party to another too frequently to earn lasting confidence of any. His bid to increase his influence by incessant intrigues had greatly lowered the British Government's prestige, Lawrence held; his relation with the King "was rather that of a servant than of an ambassador."

Much of the recent tension in Indo-Nepalese relations, Lawrence strongly contended, was due to the exaggerated fear of armed strength of Nepal and her propensities to invade the undefended British territory below. Hodgson had created this boggy, with the result that the officials on the border saw "a tiger in every ravine or a regiment of Garkhas in every jungle." The Nepalese army, held Lawrence, however formidable in their mountain fastness, was little capable of offensive operations. The conquest of Nepal, he held, was not a difficult task. Thirty thousand soldiers were enough to achieve it in three months with no risk of setback. Half the number recommended by Hodgson (i.e., 12000), coupled with some fortifications in the border, was sufficient to protect the frontier. In short, Lawrence's views on the "utter nullity" of the Nepal army were in sharp contrast to Hodgson's views on the great strength of the same.

(58) Ibid.

(59) Resident to Government, 27 December 1843, S.C., 30 March 1844, 20. "I believe an undue opinion of Nepalese power and Nepalese aggressive intentions prevail." Lawrence held firm opinion that the Nepalese were convinced of the superior strength of the British; and that they would never risk an unprompted rupture with them, except during serious crisis of the British in India. Resident to Government, 15 December 1843, S.C., 20 January 1844, 1.

(contd. on next page)
From the beginning, Lawrence strove at instilling confidence into the weak King. Ever since he came of age, the latter had passed through successive crises in the state; many attempts had hitherto been made to cause his abdication; he had become peevish and suspicious, the result of being in a state of perpetual alarm. Hodgson himself was a warm advocate of the policy of alarming the King to submission; he had encouraged the Junior Queen and Matabar to weaken the King, and to look upon him as the "darkest and vilest and most dangerous of deluders and that no mortal man can give himself to that person and, live." Hodgson had warned Matabar "to avoid the Maharaja if he valued his life," and to look upon the Queen as "the hope of Nepal." All these, Lawrence saw, had bred a morbid fear in the King's mind, and this fear provided the key to all his past misconduct. Though timid and vacillating, Lawrence saw in him an extremely well-informed person, very far from one, held by Hodgson as worthless and unreliable. Lawrence strove hard to impart

"Hodgson always told Government that we had everything to lose and nothing to gain by quarreling with Nepal. I differ in opinion on every point. I am sure we could seize the country in three months, perhaps in one, with 30,000 men, and that it would be more valuable to us than the Punjab, giving us the snowy range for our eastern boundary and sanatoria all along the Oudh etc. border ... but I think the fair and honest way of dealing with the Gurkhas is to let them distinctly know our power, so that they may not commit themselves...." Lawrence to Clerk, 15 January 1845, quoted in Morison, n. 56, 129.


"His Highness seems to have been long impressed with a notion that the British foreign policy is aggressive." His intrigues and attempts to form confederacies stemmed from the idea that by these alone could he avert a conquest of Nepal by the British. Ibid.
strength to the King, convincing him of the pacific policy of the British towards his state. He impressed on the King that, though overwhelmingly powerful, the British government were most forbearing and eager to live in perfect friendship and cordiality with their weaker neighbours like Nepal. The King was advised to refrain from creating or countenancing dissensions among the chiefs, which led to feuds and bloodshed. He was encouraged to give a bold lead to the country towards unity, thereby earning for himself strength at home and respect abroad. The first step towards this, Lawrence suggested, was to end the anomalous position of the Heir-Apparent and the divided authority in the state which the British did not recognise, and which caused much political inconvenience.

As regards the Queen, Lawrence was wholly opposed to Hodgson's scheme of strengthening her influence in the Durbar. Emboldened by his Hodgson's moral support, the ambitious woman, was now scheming to set upon the throne her own eldest son, even at the cost of her husband, the King, and her step-son, the Heir-Apparent. Lawrence, unlike Hodgson, saw no good in the event of her regency.

---

(61) Translation of a Yeddah of the Resident to the King, 11 December 1843, Ibid.

"Look on me as the organ of a friendly government and as furnished with instructions based on truth, friendship and cordiality which I dare not end cannot deviate ...." Ibid.
much less so, if it were achieved, as contemplated, by violence.

Lawrence and Mataabar

As to Mataabar Singh, Lawrence had to play his cards with extreme caution and dexterity. The most powerful person in the state, the cynosure of the army, he had been made Minister a few days after Lawrence's take-over. Dashing, shrewd and ambitious, he was hotheaded, impetuous, given to frequent fits of violent outbursts. His had been a steady rise to supreme power; add to this his great knowledge of British government, and friendship with many influential chiefs in Lahore. He had come to Nepal as an ally of the Queen, scheming against the King; he himself bore a deep grudge against the King whom he hated as one responsible for all the troubles suffered by himself and his clan, the Thapas. In fine, Mataabar was a difficult man to handle; to deal with him

(62) "Mr. Hodgson informed me that her [Renee's] character is good, though her capacity untried.... Under any circumstances, I can see no real advantage to the Lady in her being forced into the political arena." Resident to Government, 15 December 1843, Ibid.

(63) Mataabar was made the Minister on 25 December 1843. Wheeler, n. 6, 40. Dr. L. Rose and Margaret Fisher, however, hold that Mataabar became Minister in April 1843. England, India, Nepal, Tibet, China - 1766-1958 (University of California, Berkeley, 1959) 7. In July 1843 Mataabar was only "referred to as the new Minister." Wheeler, n. 6, 35.
Lawrence was advised to be "unyielding in grave matters (64) but accommodating in minor ones."

From the outset Matabar ingratiated himself with Lawrence by profuse professions of friendliness and open support to the British government, hoping to win him over. He disfavoured Lawrence's direct communications with the King and made abortive attempts to sow discord between them. Lawrence refused to be dragged into party-wrangles, and remained unresponsive to all overtures of Matabar for an alliance with him. He consistently discouraged the ambitious Minister from playing into the hands of the Queen, with a view to wreaking vengeance on the King.

Meanwhile Matabar fast consolidated his position in the Durbar. He won over the principal Cheutaries, the most numerous and powerful faction in the Court, to his side. Embassies were sent to Lahore, Gwalior, Bhutan and Sikkim, less as anti-British gestures than as means to pander to the King's fascination for intrigues. Lawrence advised the

(64) Clerk to Lawrence, 2 February 1843, quoted in Edwards and Herivale, n. 54, 324; Ellenborough to Lawrence, 8 February 1844, ibid., 329.

(65) Matabar said to Lawrence, "I will support your position and honour Sir, and do you the same to mine," thus, in fact, offering an offensive and defensive alliance. Resident to Government, 15 December 1843, S.C., 20 January 1844, 1.

Government to wink at these, convinced as he was that in the past much had been made of these bubbles. A mild warning was, however, given to the Court that these intrigues created unnecessary misunderstanding between the two States.

Mathebar's growing power unnerved the King, who was aware that nothing short of plenary authority would satisfy the ambitious Thapa. The Minister played upon the fear of the King and secured a Lal Mohar, vesting him with supreme executive power. A similar Lal Mohar was wrung by the Queen, enabling her to assume sovereign authority if the King did anything prejudicial to the country's interest. The Heir-Apparent was wild with jealousy; for his powers ebbed correspondingly with the increasing sway of the Queen and the Minister. Confusion became worse confounded; instead of one, there were now three rulers of Nepal. Mathebar pressed the King to give him more powers; to compel him to do so, he even sought to involve the King in difficulties with the Residency. The Resident was worried over these pressures on the hapless King. But since the Government saw in these

(67) Ibid., 65-6; P.C., 6 July 1844, 154-6; Wheeler, n. 6, 41.

(68) S.C., 30 March 1844, 55-6; Lal Mohar to Mathebar Singh Thapa, no date, Itihas Prakash (Kathmandu) Anka 1 (2012-1-1) 41-6.

(69) Wheeler, n. 6, 44.
party-wrengles nothing adverse to their interests, (70) Lawrence had to maintain an air of disinterestedness. Matabar was emboldened; he made a pretence of resigning his office, unless the King ended division of royal authority. Lawrence was in a dilemma. He could not suffer the abdication of the King any more than he could openly restrain the imperious Minister. He tried hard to counsel moderation on the latter, all the while studiously declining to support his bid for absolute ascendancy in the Court. All efforts of Matabar to impress on others that the Resident was his ally, thus, failed; Lawrence had given him clear understanding that he totally disapproved of his overvaulting ambitions directed against the King. Lord Ellenborough's directive on this point was clear:

"In the event of Matabar Singh again adverting to such topics, you should inform that you are to represent the British government at the Court of Maharaja; you cannot suffer any subject implying the existence of designs against His Highness." (72)

(70) S.C., 16 March 1844, 29-31.

(71) "Matabar Singh in the same breath declared his intention of resigning and urged me to a step which by gratifying the Heir apparent would strengthen his own position as Minister." Resident to Government, 25 March 1844, S.C., 18 May 1844, 33; Wheeler, n. 6, 46.

"Matabar Singh's efforts have been increasingly to induce me to declare myself his partisan ... he has endeavoured to melt me by his danger. Throughout he has cut off all communication with the Residency except through himself or his creatures." Lawrence's Journal, 1-15 October 1844, Morrison, n. 56, 140.

(72) S.C., 17 February 1844, 13.
The enemies of Matabar, the Pandes especially, sought to excite the King against the Minister. Sensing danger, Matabar secured their incarceration, with the obvious object of executing them. Lawrence could only warn the Minister of the evils of such revengeful deeds. Matabar shrugged him away, commenting,

"These Feringhees do not understand chess. If I do not kill my enemies, my enemies will certainly kill me. It is a mere question of first move." (73)

Besides, Matabar pleaded, how could he implement his friendly policy towards the British when the anti-British elements were still in the Court?

Matabar's star was now at its apogee. Lawrence looked on him as a gifted administrator, the only able man in Nepal. Yet he was concerned that power had gone to the head of the impetuous man, and that he was inviting trouble for himself.

To the Government Lawrence reported,

"If the troops are as well disposed to Matabar Singh as he effects to believe, I should not be surprised unless in the interim he is cut off, that father and son (i.e. King and the Heir-Apparent) both fall, with several of the Chautarias, and that the Ranees eldest son is

(73) Quoted in Edwardes and Herivale, n. 54, 334.

"The Resident said to him [Matabar], 'I tell you ... that is best for yourself and your people in such matters. If it was right to kill all our opponents, it would be impossible to do so; one might be put out of the way; but the single murder created many enemies'. He quickly replied, 'no difficulty at all; give the word and I could kill every chief in Nipal'. The Resident tried on this, as on other occasions, to convince him that his own, and certainly his children's eventual safety, depended on his present discretion and moderation." Wheeler, n. 6, 56.
placed on the guddee to the supersession of the elder (late) Ranee and that Matabar Singh governs the country with all the authority of his late uncle Bhim Sen.** (74)

Conspiracy against Matabar

All seemed going well for Matabar; but in reality, all boded ill. Success had whetted his ambition, power had made him rash and impolitic. He was walking too closely on the footsteps of his great-uncle; he was aiming higher and higher. What is worst, his vaunting ambition drove the Queen, her erstwhile patroness, to bitter enmity. Matabar refused to play second fiddle to her; he veered more to the minor Heir-Apparent, hoping to instal him on the throne; this done, he [Matabar] would rule in regal sway as bid his great-uncle. The Queen regarded this desertion as open enmity, and begun spinning schemes to destroy the Minister. Matabar had, evidently, overshot himself.

The King chuckled with concealed glee. He had intense dread of the Minister; yet the latter was too powerful to be sacked openly; recourse was, hence, had to trickery. The Queen took Jang Bahadur, Matabar’s own nephew, and her

---

(74) Resident to Government, 30 September 1844, S.C., 26 October 1844, 33. Lawrence repeatedly cautioned Matabar, but to no effect. Edwards, n. 55, 92; Morison, n. 56, 141-2.

own favourite, Gagan Singh, into confidence. The latter being loaded with favours, Matabar became all the more bitter towards the Queen, and all the more desperate. He pressed the King to concede to him the powers of Premier for life, a wholly unprecedented measure. The King yielded; Matabar leaped one step further by securing a royal declaration that the Heir-Apparent, his protege, would enjoy all the sovereign powers, except those over the mint and foreign relations.

The British government did not interfere in the scramble for power between the King, the Heir-Apparent, the Queen and the Minister. Power being divided in so many hands, an anomalous state of affairs was the natural sequel. Since non-intervention was the declared policy of the Government, the Resident had to remain but a mute witness. He was enjoined by the Government

"to continue to keep quite separate from all parties and factions, looking upon the Raja as the Ruler of the State and treating him as such and regarding all his subjects and including the Heir-Apparent in the station, position and degree in which His Highness may please to place them." (78)

(76) Gagan Singh Khawas was a male attendant in the Queen's private chamber. Matabar suspected that the Queen was using him as a tool to become the Regent and make Gagan Singh the Minister. Wheeler, n. 6, 56.


The Resident saw that the King was being fast
eclipsed by the Prince and the Minister. He was convinced
that "whatever we may do short of military interference,
the Prince and the Minister will be the defacto rulers." Lawrence did not regret it much, for he frankly admitted Matabar's great ability, and practical knowledge of the British government; if he became the virtual ruler of the state, the existing anomalous state would be terminated to the benefit of all. The Resident had given enough indication to the King that the British government were always behind him in his legitimate authority; yet if he had not used this moral support to stem the fast erosion of his powers, the British could do nothing further to save him. The only thing they were now vitally interested in was that the change of power should be peaceful and non-violent. The present anomalous state of affairs was suffered, for Lawrence held that:

"If the system lasts we shall gain by the present
dual arrangement, if it does not, we can then call on the Maharaja, either to assert his rights or abdicate." (80)

Fall of Matabar

Meanwhile the conspiracy to destroy the Minister had reached its maturity. The acquiescence in all the ambitious

(79) Resident to Government, 29 January 1845, Ibid., 110.

(80) Ibid.
schemes of Matabar, which he regarded as manifest weaknesses of his opponents, was really designed to make him power-drunk. The King especially had given him a long rope to lull his suspicion about his (King's) real motives, and (81) to make him complacent and off guard.

On the fateful night of 17 May 1845, Matabar was suddenly summoned to the Queen's apartment, on the pretext of her sudden illness. Unarmed, Matabar entered the Chamber, (82) and was almost immediately shot dead from behind.

The Resident was taken completely by surprise. He sincerely regretted it. He even admitted that had he had any inkling of the event, he would have taken all means to (83) save him. It was generally believed that the Queen had hatched the plot, and Jang Bahadur, the minister's nephew, (84) executed it, presumably under duress.

(81) Diver, n. 56, 269; Edwardes, n. 55, 91-2.

(82) Resident to Government, 18 May 1845, S.C., 13 June 1845, 15; Nichollet's Report, Subano 1845; Wheeler, n. 6, 62.

(83) "If my voice would have saved Matabar Singh's life, I should most probably have remonstrated with the Raja, but as the whole affair was over, before I heard of his danger, I restricted myself to the representation in favour of his family and friends." Resident to Government, 24 May 1845, S.C., 13 June 1845, 17.

(84) Lawrence held that the Queen and the King were both very sore with the Minister; both had compassed the murder; Jang Bahadur was an accomplice but he was not the actual murderer. Resident to Government, 18 May 1845, 24 May 1845, S.C., 13 June 1845, 15, 17. Jang Bahadur personally tried to convince Lawrence that he did not commit the murder. Ibid. (contd. on next page)
Such then was the horrid finale of a career, meteoric in rise, no less so in fall. Matabar is a tragic figure in the history of Nepal. Dashing, heroic, forthright, energetic, he was, nevertheless, impetuous, incautious, arrogant, with a vaulting ambition. During his short rule, he had made his mark as a firm administrator, the like of whom Nepal had not known since his great-uncle. But for his inordinate ambition, intemperance and 'hotspur' nature, he would have permanently etched his impress on the politics of Nepal. He had the energy and ability of Bhim Sen, without his tact, sagacity and discretion, the primary needs of a Minister in those trying times.

"In the Durbar, Matabar Singh was a lion among a pack of curs; every man humbled before him; they all barked enough now that he was dead. The Minister was a dangerous man, but he had very good points, much energy and considerable ability. It would be difficult to find such another man in Nepal. Nepal had lost her right arm," so held Resident Lawrence. (85)

Years later, however, being firmly entrenched in power, Jang Bahadur always boasted of having killed his uncle under the orders of the King. Nicholett's Report, Sub anno, 1845; Report on the State of Nepal. Its Government, Army and Resources, By Captain Cavenagh, R.M., Vol. 369, 1845-5.

His son Pudma Jung corroborates it. He says that there was estrangement between Jang Bahadur and Matabar, on the latter's refusal to intervene in the execution of Devi Bahadur, the former's cousin, at the fiat of the Queen. Both being ambitious characters, a clash lay in the logic of events. Pudma Jung Bahadur, n. 75, 49-55. Jang Bahadur himself admitted it during his England tour. L. Oliphant, Journey to Kathmandu (London, 1862) 104-5; cf. H. Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal (London, 1880) i, 347-8.

(85) Wheeler, n. 6, 61-2. "... Matabar Singh, who with all his faults was at least the best man in Nepal...." Resident to Government, 28 May 1845, 13 June 1845, 19.
During his Ministership, he was cordial with the Resident and peaceably disposed to the British government. Ready cooperation was extended in regard to the suppression of border crimes and settlement of boundary disputes.

Above all, his tragic death set the pace for a succession of decapitations and blood-baths in the years following. With prophetic foresight, Lawrence observed,

"After all, it is only a question of time between certain families in Nepal; so much blood has been shed during the last half century and there is so much to avenge, that sooner or later each individual must look to judicial murder or assassination as his probable fate." (87)

The reactions of the British government to the execution of Matabar, was little short of cool indifference. They accepted the King’s statement that the murder was a "judicial execution, merited by the crimes of his late Minister, Matabar Singh, and regarded accordingly with abhorrence by the Governor General in Council." It was inexpedient to stigmatise the action of the sovereign of an independent state, the British held.

(86) P.G., 29 June 1844, 124-7; 5 October 1844, 263-9.

(87) Resident to Government, 24 May 1845, S.C., 13 June 1845, 17.

The Queen was now again in the ascendent. Her favourite Gagan Singh stood high in civil administration, while Jang Bahadur did so in the military department. The Heir-Apparent, shorn of all real power, nursed his grief at his ally's death. After much wrangling for power, a coalition ministry was set up with Chandraia Fateh Jang Shah as its nominal head, and Kajees Gagan Singh, Abhiman Rana and Dalbhenjan Pande as three other members. Jang Bahadur was made a General, with three regiments under his command. Soon after, he was made the fifth or military member of the ministry. The coalition was evidently a compromise as much between the members of the Royal family as between the Ministers themselves; an ill-assorted union, it lacked all promise of stability. The Resident advised the Ministers to give up mutual jealousies and act in unison for the welfare of the state. All parties tried to find favour with the Resident. Quiet had seemingly been restored; yet it was a lull before the storm. Two incidents, however, took place, which put the cordial relations between the two states to a test. One was the first Sikh War; the other, the abortive Patna Conspiracy of 1845-46.

(89) S.C., 25 October 1845, 1; 29 November 1845, 38, 40; Buddhimen Vamsavali (Nepali, V.S. 1935).

(90) Jung Bahadur and Gagan Singh were the Queen's nominees while the rest were of the King's.

(91) S.C., 29 November 1845, 38.
Nepal and the first Anglo-Sikh
War (1846).

Throughout the tense period of the first Anglo-Sikh
War in 1846, the Resident was watchful and firm. A section
in the Nepal Durbar was restless, but the party/squabbles
prevented its manifestation in any form other than vocal
sympathy for the Sikhs. A grand council at Kathmandu
deliberated on the repeated solicitations of the Sikhs for
help. Jang Bahadur and Gagan Singh counselled the King and
the Queen to have no truck with the Sikhs. The King, on their
advice, twice offered his troops to the British for employment
against the Sikhs; twice the offer was declined. "Utmost
friendliness" was maintained throughout the war. The Resident
confidently held:

"that neither the Sovereign nor the Heir-Apparent
nor any party of weight in the Nepal Durbar has or
has had a serious thought of venturing on a
collision with the British power." (93)

The King, however, asked for a reward of a territory
in Kumaon or elsewhere as a price for his neutrality. But
it was turned down as a "sturdy and shameless begging".

(92) Ibid., 40; S.C., 28 February 1846, 21; 25 July
1846, 129-32.

(93) Resident to Government, 6 March 1846, S.C., 25
July 1846, 142. Lawrence left Nepal in December 1845. Russell
Colvin came as Resident in February 1846. Captain Wheeler
officiated in the intervening period. P.C., 13 June 1846,
484-90.

(94) S.C., 25 July 1846, 150. Colvin to Currie,
Foreign Secretary, 7 April 1846, Same to Lawrence, 7 April
1846, N.R., Vol. 7, Oidfield, n. 84, 352. In a letter to
Lokraman, the Nepalese Vahil in Calcutta, the King asked him
to coax the British to cede the coveted territory to Nepal.
The Resident's keen eyes discerned that Nepal was none too happy over the effectual reduction of Lahore, the only state to which she could look for help during any troubles with the British in future. Her congratulations on British victory could ill conceal her genuine uneasiness.

The Patna Conspiracy (1845-46)

About the same time a widespread conspiracy, with Babu Kunwar Singh as its spearhead, was unearthed at Patna. The conspiracy aimed at setting up a league of Hindu and Muslim powers, with the Kings of Delhi, Nepal and Lahore as its principal components. Attempts at sowing disloyalty in the British Indian army were made too. Letters bearing the name of Kunwar Singh and the Patna Nawab were believed to have been sent to Nepal. It was suspected that Khawaja Hussain Ali Khan and Kunwar Singh, the two principal accomplices had been to Nepal; and that the King of Nepal had assured them of military aid in order to "erase the names and marks of the Europeans from Hindoostan." The principal Rajas and Zamindars of Bihar were believed to have been active members of the conspiracy. The apprehension of Nepalese complicity turned out, however, to be baseless. Resident Colvin strongly doubted if Kunwar Singh had ever been to Nepal.

(95) "All reports tend to prove that Nepal is full of mourners for the defeat of the Sikhs." Offg. Resident to Government, 10 January 1846, S.C., 28 February 1846, 21; S.C., 25 July 1846, 142.
although there were reasons to hold that Khweja Hussain Ali had found political asylum in Nepal Tarai. There was not "the least hope of assistance and support" of Nepal to this conspiracy, Colvin held. But, when the conspiracy petered out, many accomplices escaped to Nepal Tarai.

The attitude of Nepal in both the above incidents point to her dawning consciousness that the British power were now too overwhelming to be challenged. A decade of party conflicts and the resultant political anarchy had weakened the morale of the state of Nepal and had taken a fair toll of its energy.

The Rise of Jung Bahadur Rana

In the Durbar, the Queen was firmly entrenched in power. Her favourite Gagen Singh, a plebiscite by birth and a parvana, excited the envy of his colleagues in the cabinet by his bid for supreme power with the help of his patroness. The Chautarias chafed under the Queen's predominance. Jung

(96) S.C., 28 February 1846, 24, 25 July 1846, 144-5; E.J.P.C., 14 January 1846, 95-101; 21 January 1846, 40-51; 23 January 1846, 45-450; 1 April 1846, 70-4; K.K. Datta, Biography of Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh (Patna, 1957) 64-8; P.C., 28 February 1846, 12-4; 4 April 1846, 3-4; Important Judicial Bundles, Alphabet M, No.37, S.C.R.C., Patna.

(97) "... But Kathmandu is a place where the extreme disparity between the means and resources of the Nepal State and of the British government is, I believe, thoroughly appreciated ... I should have very great confidence in our not having to apprehend actual attack or important injury from this State ..." Resident to Government, 6 March 1846, S.C., 25 July 1846, 142.
Bahadur and Gagan Singh were envious of each other. The King was uneasy, knowing that the Queen was scheming to forcibly depose him, with the help of her henchman. Reports of illicit relations between the Queen and Gagan Singh made him all the more bitter against them. The stage was again set for bloody feuds between the ambitious nobles. The observant eyes of the Resident discerned that the fate of Gagan Singh was fast closing in on him.

The Kot Massacre (1846)

On 14 September 1846, Gagan Singh was murdered by an assassin, supposedly at the instance of the King. His death drove the Queen to frenzy. A sabre in hand, she came out to the Kot, a Court of assembly for military affairs, bewailing wildly on the corpse, and vowing vengeance on those responsible for the murder. On her urgent summons all the important civil and military chiefs, followed by all the soldiers assembled at the place. Jang Bahadur too came, much ahead of others, with all his brothers, and his own army, all fully armed. He guarded the Kot with his own men, as if prepared to deal with an anticipated emergency. The Queen suspected Kaji Bir Kishore Pande, a sworn enemy of the deceased.

(98) "Perhaps at no distant date, General Gagan Singh will share the fate which has befallen so many of his predecessors in power at Kathmandu." Ibid.; S&C., 13 June 1845, 19; 27 March 1847, 113; 4 July 1845, 11; 31 October 1846, 167; Wheeler, n. 6, 68-70; Nichollet's Report, Sub anno, 1846.
as the murderer, and ordered his instant execution. The King refused to sanction it, without a fair judicial trial. The Queen went mad with fury; nothing but bloody vengeance could assuage her wrath. In such a tense situation, Kaji Abhiman Reno, a member of the Coalition Cabinet, attempted to draw in his own retinue of soldiers, presumably as a measure of precaution. Jang Bahadur was quick to draw the Queen's eyes to this, putting into her ears that Abhiman was scheming some mischief. The Queen, already biased against Abhiman for his known adherence to the King, ordered his immediate execution. The order, this time, was promptly carried out. An orgy of violence followed suit; all present resorted to indiscriminate murder. Within a short while, the whole place lay littered with gory corpses of thirty-one chiefs, the flower of the Nepalese nobility. In this bloody event, Jang Bahadur and his six brothers played conspicuous roles, and prepared, as it seemed, they were, emerged almost unscathed.

Bloodshed over, Jang Bahadur was invested with the office of Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal. Thus was inaugurated, amidst blood and mangled corpses, "groans of

(99) Offg. Assistant Resident to Government, 15 September 1846, Same to Same, 17 September 1846, same to same, 24 September 1846, S.C.; 31 October 1846, 151-60; Pudma Jung, n. 74, 63-77, Oldfield, n. 84, 356-68, 370 f.n.
death, shouts of triumph and cries of despair", a rule, which for more than a century held Nepal in its iron hold, the rule of the Ranas. It is necessary now to look more closely into the past of the Rana family, particularly into that of Jang Bahadur, the first Rana Prime Minister of Nepal.

Jang Bahadur, His Character

The Ranas, a Kshatriya clan, trace their descent to a branch of the Sisodia Rajputs of Chittore, who migrated to Western Nepal in the wake of Muslim inroads into Rajasthan. Jang Bahadur's great-grandfather, Ram Krishna Kunwar, and grandfather, Ranjit Kunwar, were great fighters, who played conspicuous roles in the conquest of the Nepal Valley by the Gurkhas, and the consolidation of their power. His father, Balnarsing Kunwar, was a prominent member of the Court, during the rule of Ram Bahadur Shah, and later.

Jang Bahadur inherited the soldierly qualities of his family, and since his non-age had given ample demonstrations of bravery and shrewdness. During the rule of Bhim Sen, his distant relative, he, like his father, was a staunch adherent of the great Minister. Yet, during the Pande ascendancy,

(100) Ibid.; Pudma Jung, n. 75, 76-9; S.C., 26 December 1846, 157; 31 October 1846, 165; Lal Mohar to Jang Bahadur, 1903, Aswin Vadi 11, Fall 4, Baburam Collections; Rajendra to Jang Bahadur, 1903, Kartik Vadi 12, Ibid.
while all other adherents of the Thapas suffered grave misfortune, Jang Bahadur, somehow managed to elude the vengeance of rivals. With the revival of Thapa power under Matabar Singh, his uncle, Jang Bahadur rose to influence and power, leaning all the while on the latter. He was made the chief judge of Kathmandu, with command over three thousand soldiers. His ambition soared high. He crept into the confidence of the Queen, through the help of a lovely court-maid. He had now set his heart upon a goal loftier than what his uncle could lead him to. He was a calm but vigilant observer of the party/conflicts, the twists and turns of politics in the Court. Shrewd and cunning, he bided time, spinning his future plans. His heroic feats and Thapa connection endeared him to the army, which he exploited all along his rule as the chief prop of his power. Much as his heroic qualities were appreciated by the Resident, his unscrupulous, shrewd, untrustworthy character was not unknown to them. Inordinate ambition and absolute lack of moral

(101) Pudma Jung Bahadur Rana, n. 75, 1-77; P.V. Rana, Nepali Rana Gharanako Sankhipta Vansavali (Nepali, Kathmandu, 2014)

(102) "... he is decidedly the best qualified chief in Nepal to command the army. He is active and intellectual and possesses many soldierly accomplishments, but it is impossible if any party can trust him." Resident (Lawrence) to Government, 28 May 1845, S.C., 13 June 1845, 19. Lawrence had very "poor" opinion of Jang Bahadur's "moral character." Ibid., 17. Hodgson held Jang Bahadur as a "distinguished soldier and the most popular man here with the army ... a man unequivocally respected." S.C., 19 August 1843, 7. Jung Bahadur often went to the Residency in official as well as unofficial capacity. "General Jung Bahadur is certainly a most ambitious man and subtle politician and has played his cards well of late years." Offg. Asstt. Resident to Government, 4 November 1846, S.C., 26 December 1846, 157.
qualms welded in him a nature, which stopped at nothing to realise its object. Above all, he was a time-server, a political weather-cock, responding to the wind of events in the Court with easy resilience. No attachment was too deep for him, no consideration, family ties or political affiliation, were strong enough to restrain him from the object, on which he set his heart. An unscrupulous turn-coat, adept in volte-face, his policy was to cling to the safest and strongest power of the moment, and spurn it when it was unlikely to serve his own interests any longer. Such a man could not but be conspicuous at such a time.
Resident Lawrence had seen in him the traits of the "coming men" of Nepal.