Chapter Nine:

JANG BAHADUR AND HIS POLICY OF FRIENDLY ISOLATION

The political history of British India, we are told, passed into its humdrum phase after the 'Mutiny'. So did the history of British relations with Nepal. The 'Mutiny' was the last of the exciting events in Indo-Nepalese relations. After it the relations flowed through a settled course - the course of peace and stability. Not that there were no rifts in the lute, nor was the course always even and smooth. Misunderstanding and misgivings did crop up, but they did not assume great complexity. There were jolts and jerks, but not too many or too frequent ups and downs, no crises, no breaches of relations. One might miss the note of effusive cordiality or open friendliness in the tune, but there was no mistaking the ring of stability and tranquillity.

This is due to Jang Bahadur's policy of peace and friendly isolation. To this policy his successors too were firmly wedded. Naturally, this became hereafter the guiding maxim of Nepal in her relations with British India. This policy, in its turn, was the product of various factors; to these we must now turn our attention.

Problems of boundary-settlement

One of the first tasks of Jang Bahadur after his return from India in April 1858 was to clearly demarcate the
Indo-Nepalese boundary skirting Bihar, Oudh, Rohilkhand, and Gorkhpur in British India. An ill-defined, ill-demarcated frontier was a prolific source of disputes between the two states, and an incubator of political difficulties. The rivers demarcating the boundary were often erratic in their course, thus aggravating the problem. The last two decades of Jang Bahadur's rule were engaged in the solution of these problems.

In regard to the disputed lands on the frontier demarcated by the rivers the British government framed the principle,

"that the deep stream should be taken to be the boundary, except in cases where land capable of identification was cut off by the ordinary process of alluvion and diluvion, and that in the case of a sudden change in the course of the river, the country which ruled over the territory cut off by the change, should continue to rule over it, although the deep stream had formerly been the boundary." (2)

That is, if a chunk of land was suddenly cut off from one state by avulsion, or a sudden change in the course of the

(1) Foreign Political-A, April 1860, 479, 497-501; December 1865, 331-5 (K.W.); December 1861, 150-3; April 1862, 103-10; May 1862, 117-20; July 1862, 142; September 1862, 37-42; June 1865, 181; December 1864, 255-7; May 1870, 223-35; September 1863, 67-74; January 1869, 191; August 1873, 29-44.

(2) F.P-A, December 1861, 150-3 (K.W.). The Court of Directors instructed that in all cases of alluvion, the main stream should be regarded as the boundary, irrespective of other circumstances. But in cases of sudden change in the course of the river, the boundary in each case should be determined on its own merits.
river, and could still be identified, it should continue to be regarded as a part of the same state, notwithstanding its separation. But in case of accretion formed by gradual, slow and imperceptible process of alluvion, the land so separated would belong to the state possessing the bank on which the gradual increment took place.

Where the boundary line traversed the cultivated land, it followed the village boundaries "on the principle of giving and taking", and when it passed through forests the line was carried straight from pillar to pillar.

The principles were thus laid down, but their rigid application by the British engendered much soreness in Jang Bahadur; boundary disputes were often prolonged mainly on the score of the interpretation of these principles. The British government were firmly opposed to part with the disputed lands, and Jang Bahadur was equally obdurate. If the British officers alleged that Jang Bahadur's claims were extravagant, the latter charged the British government with summary rejection of the just stand of his state. To avoid these recurrent disputes the Magistrates of the border districts in India were asked by the Government to undertake annual tours.

(3) F&P-A, January 1869, 191; October 1871, 654-76 (K.W.).
(4) F&P-A, April 1860, 501.
and to report on the state of boundary pillars and other allied matters. Besides, the irrigation projects of the British government on the border districts bred misunderstanding; for they often caused inundation of the bordering Nepalese lands. In short, the long course of boundary disputes, the wrangles over claims and counterclaims left a trail of bitterness in Jang Bahadur's mind. This bitterness was accentuated when he handled another problem - the problem of border crimes and the extradition of criminals between British India and Nepal.

Border crimes and extradition

In the sixtees of the 19th century the crime situation on the Indo-Nepalese border assumed a disquieting magnitude. Celerity and vigour were essential on the part of either government to tackle the problem. Cattle-lifting, revenue defalcation and affrays by subjects of either state were frequent, particularly in the region north-eastward of

(5) Bhagalpur Collectorate Records, State Central Records Office, Bihar, Patna; Memo by Col. Bacon for Secretary, Foreign Department, Government of India, 28 April 1871, S.G.P.C., September 1874, 15-7.


The British government experienced much difficulty in persuading Jang Bahadur to exchange some lands in Nepal for an equivalent or more land in the British territory. Necessity for this exchange arose while implementing the Sareda Canal Project. Foreign Department Revenue Irrigation-A, December 1870, 1-11; January 1871, 2-3; February 1872, 1-23; July 1872, 8-10. See also Important Bundles, Judicial Department, Basta No.7, Alphabet N and P, Nos. 38-43, S.G.R.G., Bihar, Patna.
Motiharee, and between the rivers Kosi and Mechi. The border being an open one, the criminals of one state could easily escape to the other to avoid punishment. The border police of either state was inadequate and inefficient. The insalubrity of the Tarai area made it impossible for Jang Bahadur to station permanent police posts there. The British Government contemplated to organise an efficient police force on the Oudh border and introduce some form of village responsibility for the crimes; they suggested Jang Bahadur to do so in his state.

The allied problem of extradition of criminals continued to be as irritating as it was before the Treaty of 1855. The British authorities showed uniform reluctance to surrender the fugitive Nepalese criminals. The said treaty was called the "reciprocity Treaty", but it was a misnomer; for the Resident himself admitted that

"... not a single criminal has ever yet been given up under its terms to the Nepalese Government." (9)

But the British magistrates were most insistent in their demands for the extradition of Indian offenders, holding that the Nepalese officers should surrender those fugitives

(8) See Chapter Seven, pages 388-96.
"not as a matter of obligation but as a matter of comity."

The Nepalese naturally regarded the said Treaty as an one-sided arrangement; in consequence, they were disobliging, discontented, evasive to the requisitions of the British magistrates.

Jang Bahadur was very sore, for the Treaty of 1855 did not, in spite of his pleadings, provide for the extradition of cattle-lifters and revenue defaulters. The legal technicalities made the extradition procedure cumbrous and dilatory, to his further annoyance. The Resident himself bore this out:

"The extradition act", he admitted, "is so faulty, the process it lays down so cumbrous, that extra intelligence and zeal on the part of district officers are required to prevent constant failures of justice and resulting irritation on the part of the native states bordering on British territories." (10)

All told, the British government realised that the border police should be thoroughly reorganised on a firmer and more efficient basis, and that Jang Bahadur should be persuaded to do so in his territory; the cooperation between the two governments was essential for dealing effectively (11) with a problem that concerned both.

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(11) F.P-A., November 1863, 99; December 1864, 49; March 1865, 226-8.
In December 1864, the British government appointed Mr. J.D. Gordon to report on the state of crimes on the border, and to investigate the charges of Jang Bahadur that cattle-stealing and plunder in Nepalese territory by the British subjects were "almost of weekly occurrence" throughout the two hundred mile frontier in Bihar.

Gordon's report brought out in bold relief the ramshackle police organisation on the border. An organisation with small police posts, twenty to thirty miles apart, and each manned by only four constables, was bound to fall far short of adequacy and efficiency. From the rivers Mechi to the Gandak, i.e., throughout the entire frontier of the Lower Provinces where crime was most rampant, there was not a single police officer above the rank of a head constable. These ill-manned police outposts had large inland jurisdiction and multifarious duties; naturally they were hardly able to cope with the high incidence of border crimes. As "conclusive proof of inefficient police arrangements", Gordon cited the prevalence of cattle-stealing "to a very large extent", the stealers being mostly British subjects. As to the extradition problem, Gordon made pointed reference to the procedural


(13) F.P-A., June 1865, 1-7; August 1865, 83.
dilatoriness of the Extradition Act, and to Jang Bahadur's opposition to the reciprocal arrangement of the police of one state to go to the other state for the apprehension of fugitive offenders. Lack of cooperation between the officials of either state was manifest, and ill-feeling and soreness were rife. Gordon held that the much-needed cooperation between the officials would not be possible as long as the British government discouraged their officers from entertaining complaints from and holding communications with their Nepalese counterparts. This negative attitude was outdated in view of the changed situation on the border, the constant intercourse between the people there, and the resultant increase of administrative problems. He suggested

"the organisation, at once, of an efficient police force, the departure from the non-interference policy, a reconsideration of the Treaty of 1855, and a slightly simplified procedure." (14)

Principle of reciprocity, he urged, should be the guiding maxim for the two governments. His report further established that much of Jang Bahadur's charges, particularly those of intentional non-cooperation of the British officers, were either exaggerated or based on misinformation.

(14) "The inefficiency of the police arrangements and the present inapplicability of the non-interference system ... formerly approved and handed down to our officers are the main obstacles to successful operation against frontier crime, but these obstacles are capable of removal, and they must be removed. Report of Gordon, 11 April 1865, E.P-A., August 1865, 83."
The Supreme Government accepted all the recommendations of Gordon, although the Government of Bengal disfavoured the formation of a separate frontier police force. In November 1866 a special police establishment was set up at Champaran. The magistrates were henceforth required to undertake periodical tours on the border and to report on the situation of crimes there. They were asked to exert all their efforts to eradicate the menace to law and order. The Government held that

"so much crime does abound on the frontier as urgently demand[s] active measures of reform . . . . But the more the Government of India does on its part towards securing efficient police arrangements, the greater is the chance that its example may sooner or later be followed by the Nepal Durbar. Under any circumstances, however, it is plainly the duty of the British Government to enforce the best police arrangements in their power . . . the policy has (hitherto) been to discourage complaint, even communications, between the officials of the two governments." (16)

Jang Bahadur was repeatedly asked to reorganise his police force on the border, but to little effect. His aversion to the suggestion that the British police would enter Nepal in pursuit of the fugitive offenders was "marked and unmistakable"; his officers in the Tarai showed the "most

(15) Ibid., 84; Important Bundles, Judicial Department, Basta No.7, Alphabet N and P, Nos.38-43, S.C.R.O., Patna; Patna Commissioners' Records, Judicial Department (Bundles), 1873; F.G.P.C., November 1869, 71-5.

(16) F.P-A., August 1865, 84.
culpable supineness" in checking the high incidence of border crimes. In consequence, there was little abatement in crime, notwithstanding the British government's determination "not to cease working until thorough and complete order is restored on the border." Resident Ramsey ceaselessly remonstrated against the inefficiency of the Nepalese police and the lukewarmness of the officers, with the vain hope "that the Durbar may at last be shamed into action by repeated appeals and remonstrances."

The British magistrates realised the "utter hopelessness" of their efforts, for the Nepalese officers often sought to shuffle the responsibility of suppressing the crimes to their shoulders. Some of them even complained of undue softness of the Viceroy, Lord Lawrence, towards Jang Bahadur.

(17) F.P-A., October 1866, 73-4, 150-1; December 1866, 32-4; December 1865, 135.

(18) F.P-A., October 1866, 121, 130.

(19) John Beames, Magistrate of Champaran (1866-7) was very critical of the Nepalese authorities. He was censured by Lord Lawrence. He wrote in his memoirs,

"Sir John Lawrence treated him [Jang Bahadur] with extreme deference, and we could expect no support from Government when protecting the interests of our own subjects against him."

The latter ceaselessly complained that his state suffered greatly on account of the escape and non-surrender of cattle-lifters and revenue defaulters. The British government relented in 1866, and by a supplement to the Treaty of 1855, made provision for the extradition of persons charged with these two offences.

Matters registered some improvement, but the dilatoriness in the extradition rules and the lukewarmness of the Nepalese officers continued to prevent a solution to the problem. As for the extradition rules, the Secretary of State had clearly enjoined:

"that the object of extradition treaties is not to protect criminals by pedantic adhesion to forms but to further the cause of justice by enabling competent tribunals to investigate the guilt of innocence of parties against whom a credible charge is made." (21)

Yet this dictum was hardly honoured by the British magistrates. For expediting the extradition of criminals, the British government mooted several proposals. But Jang Bahadur was little enthusiastic about them; for he rightly pleaded that his officers were not conversant with the British laws and regulations on which the British proposals

(20) F.P-A., October 1866, 130; C.U. Aitchison, Treaties, Engagements and Sanads (Calcutta, 1929) XIV, 73.

(21) Secretary of State to the Governor-General in Council, 28 February 1867, Bhagalpur Collectorate Records, S.C.R.O., Patna.
were based. After much initial opposition, however, Jang Bahadur agreed that whenever a British subject committed a crime in the Nepalese territory and then escaped to British territory, the obligation to prevent or redress such crime lay primarily with the British government, and vice-versa. Jang Bahadur's attitude to the border crimes and extradition question was viewed by the British government as non-cooperative and irritating, if not unfriendly. This view was reinforced by his commercial policy, particularly in so far as it affected the British interests.

Commercial issues

The same absolutism of Jang Bahadur prevailing in the political sphere was seen in his commercial policy too. The policy had two facets: first, the desire to monopolise the lucrative Indo-Nepalese trade, and secondly, the extreme opposition to a closer commercial intercourse with the British government in India.

Over oil, tobacco, sugar, grain of all sorts, cotton, salt, ghee and such necessaries of life he established a ramified system of monopoly to the great distress of the common people and great detriment to free trade. All the

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(22) F.P.A., December 1877, 38-40 (K.W.); August 1874, 66; October 1866, 131; June 1868, 203; February 1868, 101; October 1873, 429-31.

(23) S.C., 26 December 1856, 47; P.C., 14 October 1859, 168.
senior civil and military officers of the realm, all his brothers and close kin were engaged in this monopolistic (24) trade. Sometimes monopoly rights were sold to favoured merchants who remitted a share of their huge profit to Jang Bahadur or his henchmen. Exorbitant prices prevailed in the market for the worst stuff; and while Jang Bahadur and the Ranas accumulated wealth, the lot of the common people became increasingly deplorable. Resident Ramsay reported that

"The absence of all opposition to the despotic party now in power has enabled the Sardars to establish these monopolies, one after the other, to the injury of trade and the serious inconvenience of the people." (26)

When the monopolists created artificial scarcity of goods Jang Bahadur solicited the British government’s help for the supply of those goods from India at reasonable prices. The British government usually refused to help on such

(24) "... Jang Bahadur and his brothers and other Sardars are monopolising every branch of trade that they can lay their hands upon; they are not content with average fair profits, but are determined to beat down all competition and to have the markets in their own hands." P.C., 26 August 1859, 211.

(25) Sahu Dhanmanarain was one such merchant; he was Jang Bahadur’s "confidential adviser in all commercial and financial matters." Having an extensive business in India and Tibet, he was the richest Nepali merchant of his times.

(26) Resident to Government, 18 February 1856, P.C., 27 March 1856, 86.
occasions; for such help amounted to playing into the hands of the ravenous monopolists.

This desire to absorb the lucrative trade with India in his own hands led Jang Bahadur to impose increasing restrictions and disabilities on the Indian merchants at Kathmandu who, since generations, had plied a brisk trade between India and Nepal. They had not only to compete with the monopolists, favoured by the Nepal government, but also to pay both import and export duties at rates far in excess of those fixed by the Engagement of 1839. They suffered much economic loss; many closed their concerns at Kathmandu. In consequence, the Nepalese people too suffered; for the Indian merchants were, for generations past, the chief purveyors of Indian goods at reasonable rates. Strongly condemning Jang Bahadur, Resident Ramsay urged the Government to exert political pressure on the Durbar for the abandonment of its ruinous economic policy. He held that the monopoly system

(27) But at the time of scarcity in Nepal, as in 1873-74, the British government helped Jang Bahadur in purchasing grain from India at moderate rates. Foreign General-B, July 1874, 133-41.

(28) They had a floating capital of 10-12 lakhs of rupees at Kathmandu. They helped the local merchants with loans at reasonable interest. S.C., 26 December 1856, 47.

(29) Aitchison, n. 20, 68. Article VI of the Engagement provided that Nepal government would not levy any imposts other than those stipulated in the list of duties appended to the said engagement.

(30) S.C., 26 December 1856, 47; P.C., 13 August 1858, 98; 26 August 1859, 211.
"is seriously and most visibly affecting the well-being of the people, and the real prosperity of the country; and which sooner or later must act injuriously, if it has not already done so, upon our commercial interests by restricting within even narrower bounds our present trade with Nepal." (31)

Interference with the Indian merchants greatly reduced the volume of imports from India, and correspondingly enhanced (32) the prices of goods at Kathmandu.

The policy of the British government regarding this issue was to firmly remonstrate against the particularly prohibitive measures towards the Indian merchants, while disclaiming any right to interfere in Nepal's general economic (33) policy. They pressed Jang Bahadur not to levy any impost on the Indian merchants other than that provided for in the Engagement of 1839. The Engagement had, however, remained ever since it was entered into, in effect, a dead letter. The British government knew it well; yet they found no readier expedient to restrain Jang Bahadur's harmful economic policy than by obliging him to observe this practically defunct (34) agreement. The monopoly system continued to be one of "the

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(31) Ibid.
(32) Ibid.
(34) F.P-A., December 1862, 402. Resident Ramsey admitted that the Engagement was still-born, and doubted if ever it was seriously recognised as a definite and formal agreement binding the two governments.
crying abuses of Nepalese economic system"; yet the British government, as a matter of policy, forebore from taking the matter up with its author.

Jeng Bahadur had ultimately to yield to the British pressure; he lifted the prohibitive imposts from the Indian merchants. But he did not change his policy; he carried it through by indirect means. He set up a number of marts on the Oudh border and took effective steps to develop them, with a view to forcing the Indo-Nepalese trade through them alone. These marts were leased to his closest kin and confidants. The Nepalese merchants were prohibited from taking their goods to the Indian marts on the border; their transactions were restricted to these newly established marts. In consequence, the Indian marts which plied flourishing trade with Nepal only a few years back were "now nearly ruined." The Indian subjects were prohibited from grazing their cattle in the adjoining Nepalese territories, except on payment of a fixed duty. Duties were levied on Indian merchants who did not have houses in the marts set up by the Nepal government. Unauthorised imposts were freely levied on them by the customs officers of Nepal. Heavy duties levied on both imports and exports, their variability, and the strict injunction on the

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Nepalese traders to trade in the Indian marts caused (37) injury to both the Indian merchants and the Nepalese. As for the latter, Resident Ramsay alleged:

"In fact it is clear that they [Nepalese traders] are interfered with upon one plea or other; they are hampered by the Durbar and made to conform to a particular line of policy, without reference to their individual interests, that the Minister may think to follow." (38)

Resident Ramsay urged that unless Jang Bahadur abandoned his policy, the British government should take retaliatory economic measures. Nothing but strong political pressure on Jang Bahadur himself could mend matters, he (39) held.

"Jang Bahadur is himself", Ramsay alleged, "the obstacle to all free intercourse between Nepal and British provinces; he is the main spring, the director of Gorkha's policies. All restrictions emanate from himself, and not as he wishes to make it believed, from the Sardars; there is not a Sardar in the country who has a voice in the matter. His Excellency's power is absolute; he can do what he pleases; his word is law; his government is the most perfect autocracy that can be imagined; he could throw open the country tomorrow to English merchants if he so willed, and without a dissentient voice being heard." (40)

(38) "The nobles here from Jang Bahadur downwards are all dabbling in some petty speculation or other, reckless of the poverty they occasion, and of the lasting injuries they inflict, provided they can obtain a little present profit. They are killing the goose ... for the sake of its golden eggs." P.C., 26 August 1859, 211. "... a system that was utterly unknown during the regime of the Thapas and Pandas ... and upon no other principle than that might is right." Ibid.
(39) F.P-A., August 1864, 51.
(40) Resident to Government, 6 July 1864, Ibid.
There was little hope of Jang Bahadur's facilitating greater commercial intercourse between the two states. What along Ramsay urged, was the withdrawal of the restrictions to their age-old trade relations. But the Government, under Lord Lawrence, were averse to making this commercial question a polemical political issue.

Jang Bahadur's attitude to the English merchants' efforts to establish trade relations with Nepal was far more discouraging. He apprehended that their entry into Nepal would bring in its train the dominance of the British finance-capital, and the resultant inexorable political influence. A freer and unrestricted commercial intercourse with British India through the agency of the Indian and British merchants would, he apprehended, result in economic and eventually political subjection of Nepal to the British Indian empire. Hence, throughout his rule he consistently opposed all attempts

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(41) "Regarding the high export duties levied at Nepal Ganga [a mart on the Oudh border] on all Nepalese goods and products ... His Excellency [Lord Lawrence] does not think it will serve any good purpose to interfere in the matter." Government to Resident, 11 August 1864, E.F.P-A., August 1864, 52.

(42) P.C., 26 August 1869, 211. In 1856-7 Jang Bahadur refused permission to Mr. Cameron, an English merchant in whom Lord Clarendon had taken personal interest, and for whom Resident Ramsay personally pleaded, to trade with Nepal. In 1858-9 Norris, a British merchant in N.W. Provinces, made futile efforts to engage in timber trade with Nepal. Lord Canning had personally recommended his case to the King of Nepal. P.C., 31 December 1858, 1719; E.F.P-A., August 1864, 51.
of the British in this regard, resenting them as interference in Nepal's internal affairs. The history of the East India Company in India drove in him a morbid fear that political dominance inevitably followed in the wake of commercial privileges. These privileges, he knew, often assumed political character; they engendered complications; they gave excuses to the British for intervention. The exclusion of foreigners was the cherished policy of Nepal, and Jang Bahadur followed it as unflinchingly as his predecessors. Resident Ramsay testified to this thus:

"So wary is he [Jang Bahadur] and so suspicious that we are merely biding our time warily for an opportunity to insert the point of the wedge, that we may gradually obtain a firm footing in the country, that I think he would rather counsel the cession to us of a considerable slice of it than consent to a system of free trade and permit English merchants to have transactions in it." (43)

During the closing decade of his rule the question of free trade between India and Nepal gained a spirited revival. At this time the British were making earnest efforts to develop trade relations with Tibet and Central Asia through Sikkim and Nepal. Efforts were made to persuade Jang Bahadur to relax his restrictive commercial policy and to profit by

(43) F.C., 26 August 1859, 211. In vain did Captain Cavenagh hope in 1852 that in Jang Bahadur's "comparatively speaking enlightened order," a "new era" would dawn upon Nepal, when she would be the great channel of trade between Britain and China. Report of Cavenagh, 1852, F.M., Vol. 360, 71.

(44) F.P-A., February 1875, 24-27A.
an extended trade in the Himalayan region in which Nepal always served as an entrepot. The Society for the Encourage-
ment of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (with which Hodgson, 
the ex-Resident of Nepal, and Dr. Campbell, the ex-Superinten-
dent of Darjeeling, were closely associated) in England urged 
the Government of India to obtain from Jang Bahadur free 
passage for British-Indian and European goods and merchants 
(45) to the Tibetan frontier. The commercial interests in England 
pressed the Government of India to abandon their policy of 
non-interference in Nepal, and to exert political pressure 
to open it up along with Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet for the 
sake of larger investment of British capital and easier flow 
of trade. Nepal offered good prospects for tea gardens, 
orchards, plantation, woollen mills, saw-mills and such other 
productive industries which could be profitably developed with 
a European enterprise only if the self-insulting and distrustful 
policy of the Nepa! Government could be over-come. Since the 
Nepalese merchants were free to ply trade in India, it was 
demanded that the Nepal government should give like privileges 
(46) to the Indian and British merchants.

(45) See Chapter Eleven.

Resident Girdlestone disfavoured exerting political pressure on Jang Bahadur on this score. He knew Jang Bahadur's strong sentiment in this regard; his own views on the prospects of trade with the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions were none too optimistic. He held that it was politically premature and embarrassing to press Jang Bahadur to facilitate the Indo-Tibetan trade through Nepal before an agreement on this trade had been entered into between the British government and the Tibetans. The prospects of this trade seemed to him rather bleak and unprofitable. The prejudices of the people, the difficulty of transport, the exclusiveness of the Tibetan government and the jealousy of Nepalese merchants were all uncongenial factors to reckon with. As the people in these regions were of "very modest tastes", Girdlestone held, there was no favourable prospect of a profitable trade in European goods among them. The British merchants could compete neither with the Nepalese monopolists backed by their government nor with other merchants of Nepal, who could manage with lesser personal expenses, and who could engage transport at very cheap rates. The North-Western Provinces Report for 1878-79 bore out that

(47) Resident to Government, 9 June 1875, E.P-A., February 1875, 24-37A.
"with the exception of cotton and salt, there is scarcely anything at present exported by us to meet the primitive wants of the Nepalese which could not probably be produced in their territory, and to encourage this production appears the fixed policy of the Nepalese government." (48)

Above all, Jang Bahadur disfavoured free trade between India and Tibet, for it was certain to affect the monopolistic position which Nepal had enjoyed so long in this trade. He declined to waive the intermediate transit on British Indian goods exported to Tibet through the Nepalese territory.

The Government strongly disapproved of the Resident's despondent views on this matter. Further efforts were made

(48) N.W. Provinces Report for 1878-79, para 37. In 1878-9, the imports from Nepal to the N.W. Provinces and Oudh were valued at Rs. 4379631, and exports to Nepal from N.W. Provinces and Oudh were Rs. 2033427. Report of the Frontier Trade of the N.W. Province and Oudh during the year ending in 31 March 1880.

In 1878-79 Nepal's exports to Bengal was valued at Rs. 9,800,471, and her imports from Bengal Rs. 6,161,621. Report on the External Trade of Bengal with Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan for the year 1880-81 (Calcutta, 1881). See also Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1878-9, 265. In 1881, India's trade with Nepal was valued at Rs. 2,675,833. See Chapter Two.

Dr. D. Wright, the Residency Surgeon (1863-76) agreed with Girdlestone that there was little scope for European enterprises in Nepal and Tibet. D. Wright, History of Nepal (London, 1877) 63.

(49) Only a few Kashmiri merchants directly traded with Tibet and Central Asia from India. Generally the Indian merchants exported their wares to Nepal, and the Nepalese merchants carried them to Lhasa where the Nepal Government had a vakil and a Trade Agency.

(50) The Foreign Secretary charged Girdlestone with (contd. on next page)
to coax Jang Bahadur, but to no purpose. Eventually the Government had to abandon all hopes of Jang Bahadur's cooperation; they concentrated their attention on Darjeeling and Sikkim routes.

**Jang Bahadur's bid for the throne**

These commercial issues brought out in sharp relief the attitude of Jang Bahadur towards the British government in India. Political issues of far graver import served to underline that attitude. These political issues stemmed mainly from the inordinate ambitions of Jang Bahadur and the British reactions to them. They were revelatory as much of his character as of the British policy towards him. They clearly established how far Jang Bahadur could count on the British support, and how far the latter would extend it to him. These political issues provided the tests to the apparently cordial relations between Jang Bahadur and the British government; more than anything else, they shaped Jang Bahadur's policy of restricted intercourse.

Having "fallen a prey to the not uncommon vice of our Indian politicials, viz., that of becoming rather an apologist for the native court than the representative of the British interests." F.P-A., February 1875, 24-37A (K.W.).

Having consolidated his power, Jang Bahadur made a strong but subtle bid for the de jure sovereignty of the state. Stripped of all power and influence, and being under complete control and constant dread of his minister, the King suffered a position, high but hollow. The masterful tutelage of the de facto ruler of Nepal had turned the King into his mute protege, a puppet, a mere name. Political marriages with the royal family enhanced the social status of the Ranas and cemented their power. Jang Bahadur even effected a change in the order of succession to the throne by wringing from the King a decree that should the King’s two sons die without any issue, his daughters who, significantly enough, were married to Jang Bahadur’s own sons.

(52) "... the King is a mere puppet in Jang Bahadur’s hands, and that he has not even the shadow of power.... With the politics and management of the country he appears to have no concern, nor do I believe that he is even spoken to regarding it." Resident to Government, 27 May 1857, S.C.; 25 September 1857, 471; Same to same, 7 August 1856, N.E.; Vol. 9; F.P-A., August 1863, 73.

(53) The Kings were Sisodia Rajputs of Chittore, while the Ranas were Khas, a cross-breed of the high caste Brahmins who migrated from India to Nepal in the 14th and 15th centuries, and the local women of Western Nepal. Jang Bahadur obtained from the King in 1848 a Lal Mohar, recognising the Ranas as the Rajputs. Surendra Vikram to Jang Bahadur, 1905 Vaisakh Sud 13, Rei 2, Baburam Collections. Jang Bahadur got three of his daughters married to the Heir-Apparent; the second son of the King was married to another daughter and a niece of Jang Bahadur; Jang Bahadur’s eldest son was married to the King’s daughter, another son was married to another princess. Wright, n. 48, 68; B. Acharya, "Ranashehi Ra Sharayantra," (Nepali), Sharda, Varee 21, Anka 5 (Chaitra, 2013 V.S.) 1-8. Never before had the Royal house of Nepal entered into matrimonial relations with its subjects. F.P-A., August 1864, 19.
should ascend the throne. Dusgusted, the King often thought of abdication and sometimes of committing suicide, in preference to 'the splendid misery of royalty and a prison'.

The British government were not unaware of Jang Bahadur's ambitions and his schemes against the powerless King. The Resident was never allowed to meet the King except on two occasions, when either Jang Bahadur or his confidants were invariably present. It was clear to them that the Minister's great desire was to enthrone either his eldest son, married to the King's eldest daughter, or the minor Heir-Apparent, married to his Jang's daughter. Yet so long as there was no attempt at forcible deposition of the King the British did not intervene.

Jang Bahadur was emboldened; he tightened the screw on the hapless King. He suddenly resigned his office on 1 August 1856, ostensibly tired of its burdens. The vigilant

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(55) E.P-A., November 1864, 53; May 1865, 131.

(56) The Court of Directors had instructed in 1850 that the Residents should by direct intercourse with the sovereigns of states, establish personal influence over them. But the peculiar position of the Resident in Nepal made this instruction wholly impossible to be carried out. E.C., 20 December 1850, 230.

Resident, Lt. Colonel Ramsay, took it at first as no more than an instance of his "personal caprice". His brother, Dham Bahadur, was then duly recognised by the British government as the Minister. The step-down was only nominal; it was calculated to serve an ulterior political purpose. It was just winding stronger coils on the puppet King, and a camouflage to dupe the British. The administration continued to be carried on in Jang Bahadur's name, and both the King and the new Minister, Ramsay reported, "appear to be mere cyphers, and compared with Jang Bahadur are held in no consideration whatever."

A week after, the Resident was informed that Jang Bahadur had been made absolute sovereign of Kaski and Lamjung, two principalities in western Nepal, with the title of Maharaja. Alongside, he was vested with wide advisory powers on foreign affairs, criminal justice and the army, together with the authority to coerce the King and the Minister if they did not abide by his advice. He held no responsibility for the action of either, but the whole measure was so designed as to make his advice, in effect, obligatory and irrevocable. His status was designedly anomalous; he had the supreme power without any of its responsibility. The measure gave him superiority

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(58) Resident to Government, 1 August 1856, S.C., 29 August 1856, 51.
over both the King and the Minister; he could now exercise a short of joint sovereignty over the whole kingdom, and absolute sovereignty over a portion thereof, an imperium in imperio. The whole affair was so got up as to lend it a legal veneer, so as to suggest that the measure emanated from the King's own authority, backed by the unanimous approval of the nobles. The legal veneer was intended to delude the British government who, Jang Bahadur knew, strongly dis-favoured changes of rulers by violence.

But Resident Ramsay could not be tricked. He clearly saw that Jang Bahadur had "helped himself" to his present exalted position, and that the powerless King had been coerced to submit to the fiat of the virtual ruler of Nepal. It was plain that Jang Bahadur was trying to step in between the King and the Minister (his brother) "not as the go-between but as possessing a kind of joint authority with the one over the other." It was an "impossible position", the Resident held, - a position without any responsibility, yet having a

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(59) Same to same, 6 August 1856, Ibid., 55. For a full account of Jang Bahadur's powers see P.J.B. Rana, Life of Maharaja Jang Bahadur Rana (Allahabad, 1909) 193-4.

(60) S.C., 29 August 1856, 56. "In the Bazars", Ramsay reported, "the saying is that the King is Bakree ka Moafik (as good as a lamb) and that Jang Bahadur gave him his choice, either to confer upon him the title of Maharaja and a small separate kingdom or take up his talwar, and prevent his / Jang's/ assuming the sovereignty of the whole country." Ramsay to Edmonstone, Foreign Secretary, 7 August 1856, N.R., Vol. 12.
direct and divided authority over every sphere of state activity, and capable of upsetting the proceedings of an ostensible government. No official transaction could naturally be conducted with such a double government without serious complications. Hence, in spite of Jang Bahadur's repeated insistence that he should be treated in his newly acquired political capacity and exalted status, the British government studiously refused to transact any official intercourse with him so long as he maintained his anomalous position. They regarded him as no more than a subject of Nepal, in spite of his being the *de facto* sovereign of Nepal.

He was positively warned that "the British government would never recognise two Maharajas or a divided power in Nepal." He was given a distinct understanding that his recently-assumed title of 'Maharaja' meant, for the British government, just a personal appellation, and his sovereignty over Kaski and Lumjung only an internal arrangement of the Nepal government. This strong attitude of the British was the only restraint on Jang Bahadur; for it was certain that "if we *the British* give the slightest countenance ... he will instantly drive his sovereign from the throne." The recent anomalous position was a political contrivance, an artifice

Government that,

"It is quite clear that Jang Bahadur now considers himself one of the two Maharajas of Nepal, and I think he will gradually put aside the hereditary ruler, and step into his place, perhaps only as a Regent during the minority of the Maharaja's two infant sons, on the death of whom without issue ... his own sons are to succeed to the masnad, to the prejudice of the Maharaja's brothers and their issue, the lineal heirs." (62)

To this the Government replied,

"You may declare if you so like not to acknowledge any sovereign power in Nepal but one, that of Maharaja, to whom you are accredited, and then in following this rule, you can be influenced by restrictions imposed by the Raja himself. Maharaja being sovereign can govern as he likes but all that the Indian government wishes is that he shall not divest himself of responsibility of foreign powers." (63)

Jang Bahadur was sorely disappointed and developed a deep grudge against Ramsay, the Resident.

A fresh attempt - this time more subtle - was made by him at the same object during the 'Mutiny'. In June 1857 he contemplated a meeting with Lord Canning in Calcutta, ostensibly with a view to consulting him on some administrative problems but really to persuade the Governor-General to

(62) Ramsay to Edmonstone, 7 August 1856, Ibid.

"Some Gurkhas were heard to say, 'There cannot be two talwars in one scabbard - if a second talwar is pushed into a scabbard, it would split; neither can be two Maharajas in one country - one or the other of the Maharajas must give way' - such is the general feeling here just now." Same to same, 11 August 1856, N.R., Vol. 12.

(63) S.C., 29 August 1856, 63.
countenance his bid for the throne. He was hesitant to resume the Ministership, for that was a backward step for him. He could not ascend the throne either in the face of the Resident's avowed disapproval. He sought, hence, to settle the matter with the Governor-General himself over the head of the Resident. In this he failed. Lord Canning was aware of his exertions and many artifices to commit the British government to his lofty schemes. He was aware, too, that Jang Bahadur was biding time to "snatch at the Crown" at a favourable time, and that the 'mutiny' had given him a position of commanding advantage, whence he could bargain his deal. Yet Lord Canning adhered to the policy of opposing any authority taking the place of the King and any arrangement calculated to establish a dual sovereignty in that state. He discouraged Jang Bahadur's schemes to bypass the Resident, and disavowed any inclination on his part to interfere in the internal affairs of Nepal.

(64) S.C., 27 November 1857, 414. Jang Bahadur had resigned the Ministership on 1 August 1856 and resumed it in 1857 after his brother Bam Bahadur died in May 1857. For nearly a year he held no official position, although he wielded as before and after, an absolute sway over the state.

(65) Governor-General to Secret Committee, 10 June 1858, 24.

(66) Governor-General's Minute, 18 August 1856, S.C., 29 August 1856, 56. This was the stand taken by Lord Ellenborough in 1844, when King Surendra Vikram (then Heir-Apparent) sought to depose his father Rajendra Vikram, the then King. Government to Resident, 28 December 1844, enclosed in a Letter from same to same, 11 August 1856, N.R., Vol. 12.
It remained the guiding policy of the British thereafter. The *de facto* sovereignty of Jang Bahadur posed no threat to them; yet it was desirable that he could not clinch *de jure* sovereignty as well. There was no harm in the maintenance of the *roi-fainéant* on the throne. Jang Bahadur's efforts to do away with this phantom authority thus foundered on the British policy of buttressing it. Howsoever imperfect it may be, the British policy acted as a check on the all-powerful Minister; in this regard, at least, the British got in their hands a political string to control their masterful ally. From time to time, the Resident warned Jang Bahadur against dealing too roughly with the King; in the latter's person, though not in power, the British had interest; this they let Jang Bahadur realise. Thus, one of the main objects of his cordiality with the British remained unrealised. For this none was so much responsible as Resident Ramsay.

**Jang Bahadur versus Ramsay**

George Ramsay, a cousin of Lord Dalhousie, had the

(67) "He *Jang Bahadur* knows the power of the British government and the same time-serving feelings ... will also make him seek to obtain our recognition of the steps he may successively take to attain his wishes." *Ibid.*

(68) In 1864, Ramsey warned Jang Bahadur that although he was the Minister of Nepal he was also a subject of the King, in whose sovereign authority he should not unnecessarily interfere. Resident to Government, 1 November 1864, F.P-A., November 1864, 53. There was "an air of probability" that Jang Bahadur would depose the King in favour of the Heir-Apparent married to Jang Bahadur's daughter. *Ibid.*
latter's masterful personality and keen sense of duty. An experienced political officer, shrewd and firm, he was the fittest person to deal with an imperious, unscrupulous autocrat like Jang Bahadur. His was a task of peculiar delicacy and difficulty, for it carried an abiding risk of rupture with the omnipotent Minister. The more successfully he foiled the latter's ambitious schemes, both political and economic, the bitterer became their relations. Within five years of Ramsay's Residentship Jang Bahadur was convinced that his projects, particularly those aimed at the throne, would remain unrealised, so long as the obnoxious Resident continued to stay at Kathmandu. Hence, one of his first tasks during his meeting with Lord Canning at Allahabad in March 1858 was to press on him to remove Ramsay, a persona non grata, from Nepal. It seems - although the Governor-General denied it later - Jang Bahadur returned to Nepal with some kind of assurance from Lord Canning that Ramsay would be replaced by another person. Ramsay was summoned from Kathmandu to defend

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(69) Ramsay was Resident of Nepal from 1852 to 1866. Captain Byers and Lt. Colonel Lawrence acted for him for some time in 1858 and 1865 respectively.

(70) Jang Bahadur preferred elaborate charges against Ramsay such as kicking a Nepalese servant, entering a Hindu shrine, etc. The charges were refuted by Ramsay, and they turned out to be flimsy and baseless. S.C., 30 July 1858, 120-1.

(71) Government to Acting Resident (Byers), 5 July 1858, S.C., 30 July 1858, 130; The Friend of India, 2 September 1858, 20 October 1858.

(contd. on next page)
himself against the accusations of Jang Bahadur. Lord Canning recalled him from Kathmandu in April 1858, feeling "that the relations of the two governments are not likely to be carried on harmoniously for any length of time," if Ramsay (72) stayed on at Kathmandu.

In a spirited defence of his own position, Ramsay gave Lord Canning a thorough survey of the character of Jang Bahadur, his past conduct and present policy, his despotic sway, and his many artifices to commit the Resident to his ambitious designs. As to Jang Bahadur's character he wrote:

"Jang Bahadur is a very imperious arbitrary man - childish even in many respects. He is utterly unscrupulous, unprincipled, and will leave no stone unturned to ruin any Resident whom he cannot manage, whom he cannot dupe into playing his own game for him, and who will not succumb to his whims and caprices, and countenance him in the disloyal objects of his ambition." (73)

Hodgson averred that "Lord Canning positively did concede that point [Removal of Ramsay] to the Jang in the interview at Allahabad, or else there was great fear of enraging Jang Bahadur, who held this concession as a greater reward to his services in the Revolt than even the grant of western Tarai." Hodgson claimed that he learnt it from "two independent sources." Hodgson to Prinsep, 16 September 1858, H.M.B.L., Vol. 9, 103.

(72) S.C., 25 February 1859, 26; Ibid., 15-25.

Pinpointing the difficulty of his position Ramsey continued,

"As a general rule the Resident at a foreign court is obnoxious to the native Court in direct proportion to his knowledge of the country, of its history and politics, and above all, of the characters and views of the leading men of the State. The very qualifications that best fit him to watch over the interests of his own government, and to keep the Durbar in check, are precisely those that render him most unacceptable to the Minister of the Court to which he is accredited." (74)

Absolute despot as he was, there was hardly any check on Jang Bahadur other than the British Resident. Ramsey pleaded that not only his own prestige was at stake, but the issue involved the future course of British policy in Nepal. He held that his removal would be an impolitic concession to Jang Bahadur. He would construe it as weakness of the British government and its fear to estrange him. It would whet his pretensions, leading him to think that he held the British Residents under his thumb, and that he could remove them whenever they were disagreeable to him personally. The Residents would lose all effectiveness as the sentinels of British interests in Nepal; none of them would dare check Jang Bahadur's soaring ambitions, for fear of his displeasure and for the risk of recall by the Government. It would give him complete ascendancy over them, and would set the dangerous precedent that the tenure of the Residents depended upon the whims of the Ministers of Nepal. Its

(74) Ramsey to Government, 24 July 1858, Ibid., 15. (75) Ibid.
immediate effect would be the assumption of the delibe-
sovereignty by Jang Bahadur, and the total eclipse of the
King. Ramsay warned that " ... step by step he [Jang] is
gaining his ends, and we are in reality playing into his
hands." 

" ... as the dropping of water will in time wear
away a stone", Jang Bahadur sought to attain his
object gradually, "by duplicity, cunning and
intrigue, and to entrap the Resident into a recog-
nition of his supreme authority by ceaseless
scheming, by pertinacity and by petulance." (76)

Jang Bahadur was obdurate; he would rather risk the
displeasure of the British government than receive Ramsay
back. It had become a prestige issue for him now. Lord
Canning's persuasions made no mark on him; he resented them
as virtual retraction of what he regarded as the promise of
the Governor-General himself to him. He even warned that
should Ramsay be forced on him the Nepalese people would take
it as an unmistakable act of hostility on the part of the
British government. Lord Canning was in a quandary. Ramsay's

(76) Ramsey to Edmonstone, 24 July 1858, Ibid. (K.W.).

(77) He compared himself to a sickman, suffering from
a disease (which disease was Lt. Colonel Ramsey's position
here as Resident) and that he had gone to the plains to get
rid of his sickness, from whence he returned cured as he
supposed, whereas he now finds himself only where he was six
months ago." Acting Resident to Government, 26 June 1858,
S.C., 30 July 1858, 127, 128-9.

(78) S.C., 30 July 1858, 127.
arguments were as strong as the vehemence of Jang Bahadur's opposition to his return to Nepal. It was feared that further pressure would goad Jang Bahadur to alignment with the rebels on the border. There were, besides, strong suspicions of a secret understanding between him and Raja Golab Singh of Kashmir,

"... a rupture with Nepal just now would certainly be accompanied by a movement in Kashmir, and that would create excitement perhaps more in the Punjab, to say nothing of the effect of such an outbreak in the whole of these districts [districts of N.W. Provinces]," reported Ramsay. (79)

After much futile negotiations with Jang Bahadur, Lord Canning decided to send Ramsay back to Nepal, temporarily, till his substitute could take over charge from him. It was manifestly a face saving device. Canning gave Jang Bahadur "the most emphatic assurances" that the British government had no acquisitive designs in Nepal. Jang Bahadur entreated that he regarded Ramsay's removal as "a small boon" for his services in the 'Mutiny'. Lord Canning knew that Jang Bahadur would bluster and strike blow in the air but not dare risk any mischief. He firmly told him that he was wholly opposed to "sacrifice of justice and compromise the honour of the British government in the person of its

representative," and that he would hold the State of Nepal responsible for any dishonour or personal injury done to the Resident. Jang Bahadur quailed before this stern admonition. Ramsay returned to Nepal in February 1859. Very soon, to the relief of all, Jang Bahadur withdrew his charges against him, and the matter closed there; but a rankling soreness smouldered in the Minister's mind. It led him to hold on more firmly to the policy of isolating the Resident.

**Isolation of the Resident**

The Minister and his trusted confidants alone had intercourse with the Resident. The latter was subjected to the same surveillance and espionage, the same social insulation and restriction in movements as in Bhim Sen's days. Every movement of his own and that of his staff was watched and reported to the Minister. No communication was possible with any body except with the sanction of the latter, and the sanction was never granted. In 1858 Resident Ramsay complained,

(80) Secy, 30 July 1858, 130-1.

(81) Jang Bahadur said to the Acting Resident that "he looked up to the Governor General as to the father, and as an obedient son he bows in submission to His Lordship's directions." Acting Resident to Government, 22 July 1858, Secy, 27 August 1858, 92, 93-5; P.C., 30 December 1858, 603-5.
"Not only are strangers jealously excluded from all participation in Nepalese affairs, but neither the Resident nor the members of his suite can stir out without attendants, who spy upon and report all their movements to the Minister. They cannot speak to a Nepalese official without his permission, except in the most casual manner, nor can they move farther than they did years ago, long before Jang Bahadur was Minister, who is even more narrow-minded in this respect than were his predecessors." (82)

In 1864, the same state continued, as "we [the British Resident and his staff] cannot go one yard farther from the Residency in any direction than we then [in 1832] did."

During the Residentship of Colonel Lawrence (1867-72) Jang Bahadur had, however, agreed to allow the Resident to make periodical tours in the Tarai and the border areas.

The Resident in 1877, the closing year of Jang Bahadur's rule, could go only to the Tarai, the forest of Chitwan, within the lower range of hills, south of the Kathmandu valley. The road from Segowlee to Kathmandu was open to him, as also the valley of Kathmandu with the hills immediately skirting it. But the interior of Nepal, particularly the regions west and east of Kathmandu was "kept sacred from our [British] devouring footsteps." The Trisul Ganga river was regarded as the 'Rubicon' of Nepal, and all efforts of the Residents to approach it were studiously opposed.

In 1877, "the British Resident was guarded like a prisoner or watched like a pick-pocket."

"Thus in a word, the Resident of 1877 was as much a prisoner under surveillance as was Captain Knox in 1803 and Lieutenant Boileau in 1816 ... no former Minister of Nepal State has shown himself more impracticable upon this point than the late Sir Jang Bahadur." (83)

Immediately after Jang Bahadur's death in 1877, the British Resident Mr. Henvey made vigorous efforts to improve the position of the Resident. After a wearisome course of persuasion, remonstrance and covert threat, he admitted his failure. The British government had to resign themselves (84) to the existing state of affairs.

The various political and economic issues discussed above left a trail of bitterness in Jang Bahadur's mind; peaceful in his relations with the British, he could not be warm towards them mainly on these scores. He laboured under a grievance that the Government of India were not so friendly


(84) F.P-S., December 1877, 104-33. The Resident's influence was most effective when the Durbar was split into contending factions as in 1837-46; it was least effective when the Durbar was firmly controlled by one strong men as Bhim Sen and Jang Bahadur. F.G., 17 April 1853, 220. Internal dissensions in Nepal could be easily exploited by an intriguing Resident as Hodgson.
to him as he was towards them; rather, they were cold to him - who had, as he prided, saved them from fatal peril during the 'Mutiny'. There was little hope of their advancing his personal ambitions. So convinced, he contemplated going to England hoping to persuade the Home Government to his cherished designs.

Contemplated Visit to England

In 1862 Jung Bahadur desired to pay a second visit to England. The ostensible reason was the education of his sons and nephews in England and France. Underneath lurked a deeper political motive. He wished to meet Queen Victoria as the ambassador of the King of Nepal, and to keep his own sons, particularly the eldest of them (who was married to the King's daughter, and whom he desired to enthrone), under her personal wardship. Such a personal relationship with the Queen herself and her principal officers would certainly raise the prestige of his family to an unprecedented height and immensely strengthen its position in Nepal. Her wardship would, he hoped, not remain confined to the education of his sons in England, but culminate into political guardianship - the Royal House of England being ever ready to extend its protective care to the ruling Rana oligarchy in Nepal. The relationship begun at personal level would eventually be

(85) F.P-A, May 1862, 23.
dynastic. Jang Bahadur further hoped that he would approach the Queen personally for the G.C.S.I., an honour which he coveted. He regarded the retrocession of the Tarai as an inadequate recognition of his services in the 'Mutiny', and he repeatedly complained that the British government had invested the Holkar, Maharaja Daleep Singh and other Indian potentates with far greater honour for far lesser services.

There was the additional motive of entering into an agreement with the Home Government that so long as Nepal kept good faith with the Indian government,

"no Governor-General would be permitted to interfere with, to quarrel with, or to harm this Nepal Government, and that there shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the two governments." (87)

He wished to meet the Pasha of Egypt, the Emperors of France and Austria and the Czar of Russia, not under the auspices of, or with the introduction of the Governments of England or India, but as the Premier and the accredited representative of an independent State. He was eager to raise the international status of Nepal. Even the moderate restrictions of the Treaty of Segowlee were galling as limitations on the independence of his state. They made him feel that in spite of her acknowledgedly complete internal...
independence, Nepal was virtually on par with other Indian States. He prided in being reckoned as a subject of the Queen of England, but bitterly resented being dictated, even in strict accordance with the said Treaty, by her representative in India. He marvelled at the prospect of Nepal being ruled as a completely independent state by his family, tied to the Royal House of England by bonds of mutual obligation, cordiality and interest and thriving under its protective wings and fostering care. He abhorred Nepal being just an appanage of British India.

The Government of India were opposed to Jang Bahadur's trip; his motives seemed objectionable, his proposals "indelicate" and "ill-judged." They warned him that his schemes to establish political relations with the foreign powers were prejudicial to the interests of his own state, "without any prospect of countervailing advantage." It was certain that his political objects would never be entertained by the Home Government; the result would be unpleasant to him

(88) "See", said Jung enthusiastically, 'here is the Queen of England, and she has not got a more loyal subject than I am". L. Oliphant, Journey to Kathmandu (London, 1852) 143. Throughout his rule he observed Queen Victoria's birthday as a state ceremony. P.J.B. Rana, n. 5, 165; Oldfield, n. 54, 338.

(89) Government to Resident, 5 May 1862, F.P-A, May 1862, 24. The Resident disfavoured, especially, his wish to meet the Czar of Russia. The Nepalese held that Russia's military strength was far greater than Britain's. F.P-A, May 1862, 23.
and embarrassing to the Indian Government. He was asked to give up the idea of educating his sons under the Queen's direct wardship, for it was "neither customary nor necessary" for her to undertake such responsibility. There was the additional risk of the Nepalese princes losing caste in England, "where caste is unknown." Above all,

"the presence and influence of the Maharaja [Jang Bahadur] is of such importance to the Government of Nepal, and his absence might prove so great a detriment to the welfare of his country that the Governor-General is of opinion that the departure of Jang Bahadur for Europe might prove a misfortune that should be deprecated in the interests of his own country." (90)

So discouraged, Jang Bahadur abandoned the project.

In October 1865 he revived the idea, with no ostensible political object, as the Acting Resident, Richard Lawrence, attested. This time the Government of India consented to the proposal, though with unfeigned reluctance. For the second time Jang Bahadur had to cancel the trip. In 1874,


(91) F.P-A, June 1862, 46.

(92) The proposal was well-timed. Ramsay had gone on furlough. Col. Richard Lawrence, Acting Resident, held high opinion of Jang Bahadur as the best "native ruler", who was "neither cruel nor tyrannical." F.P-A, November 1865, 92; October 1865, 79.

(93) The Government held that in the "interests of Nepal", Jang Bahadur should not leave his country for so long a time as contemplated by him. F.P-A, November 1865, 93-4; India Despatch to Secretary of State, 22 November 1865, 164.
Jang Bahadur, for the third time, expressed the same desire. Resident Girdiestone strongly recommended his proposal, for unattached with any deep-laid political motive, the journey was, like the one in 1850-51, likely to leave salutary impressions on him. It would give the younger Ranas "a wider sphere of observation", and chasen their presumptions about the military strength of Nepal. The Government acquiesced Jang Bahadur went as far as Bombay where an accidental injury compelled him to cancel the trip and to return to Kathmandu. Thus ended unrealised his desire for a second trip to England. He died three years after, in February 1877.

Intrigues against Jang Bahadur

Plots and intrigues against him were frequent in the first two decades of Jang Bahadur's rule. They were lively political issues for the British Government. Sometimes they were suggestive of the deep-laid hostility of his suppressed opponents, sometimes they were trumped up by Jang Bahadur himself, with a view to making scapegoats of the persons he...

(94) F.P-B, October 1874, 85-105; F.P-A, January 1875, 284-7; F.P-B, March 1875, 137-64. He met Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy, in Calcutta, and assured him that the friends and enemies of the British were those of his too. He offered to keep his and the King's family as hostages to the British, to prove his trust and confidence in them. F.P-A, October 1874, 118.

feared as his likely rivals and crushing them on the pretence of sedition.

Attempts were sometimes made to implicate some British officers in the subversive projects of the Nepalese emigrés in India, as also to hint that if the British government did not take sterner action against the conspirators, he \([\text{Jang Bahadur}]\) would not restrain the Nepalese from harming the Resident. The general policy of the British government in regard to these plots was that while positively opposed to such seditious activities of the Nepalese emigrés in India, they were disinclined to be "the instrument of inflicting vengeance on such refugees when guilty of no offence."

**Policy of friendly isolation**

The policy of Jang Bahadur towards the British government in India was one of restricted intercourse and friendly isolation. It was a policy based on two factors; his knowledge of the British diplomacy in India, and his

\[\text{(96)}\] Thus in 1862 and 1864, Prince Upendra Vikram, the King's uterine brother, and Prince Ranendra Vikram, his step-brother, then residing with his mother, the exiled Queen of Nepal at Benaras, were accused of such plots. On investigation the British Government found the charges, especially against the latter, as baseless and malicious. \(\text{F.P.-A. November 1862, 17-22, 168.}\) In 1859 the latter Prince had also been similarly charged. \(\text{F.G.}, 25\) November 1859, 145-8; 7 October 1859, 194-202.

\[\text{(97)}\] \(\text{F.P.-A. November 1862, 172-22, 168.}\)

\[\text{(98)}\] Government to Resident, 30 July 1864, \(\text{F.P.-A. August 1864, 27-8.}\)
experience of British activities in Nepal. During the first few years of his rule he evinced great cordiality to the British; his power then was uncertain, his life full of peril, his regime unconsolidated. The British government's policy in these years convinced him that as long as he remained peaceful to them, they would not interfere in the internal politics of Nepal. The years 1846-54 were years of mutual understanding and cordiality, as also of consolidation of his powers. This was a period when he experimented with the friendship of the British government.

This happy state suffered a strain in 1854-56 when his ambitious political and economic schemes were foiled by the consistent and effective opposition of the British government to them. He was very sore, and this soreness influenced his subsequent attitude towards the British government.

The 'Mutiny' offered a signal opportunity to dissolve this cloud of mistrust and bitterness, and restore the earlier cordiality in the relations. Yet, although the British had always looked on the event as the most potent manifestation of Nepal's friendship to them, and the greatest service of Jang Bahadur, the latter returned from India a sadder, if wiser, man. He failed to commit the British to his bid for the throne. Besides, circumstances like the recall of Ramsay, the expedition against the rebel refugees in Nepal, the

(99) See Chapter Seven.
mysterious disappearance of Nana Sahib, the various economic issues, particularly those relating to the Indian merchants and the Indo-Nepalese trade - all these convinced him of being ill-served by his disobliging allies. He realised the limit to which he could depend upon the British, and the extent to which they would render cooperation to him. Friendliness was not enough; he wanted its manifestation by either their countenance of his political schemes or by their neutrality in his bid for the throne. For this he was even prepared to waive the restrictions on the movement of the Residents. He failed to persuade the British, and took the failure to heart.

Jang Bahadur's attitude towards the British after the 'Mutiny' changed towards greater reserve; the effusive good-will of earlier years (1846-54) gave way to restrained friendliness. There was, however, no open estrangement, no breach of relations; for his interests obliged him to keep up a fair face with the British.

The British, he realised, were too powerful to be either ignored or alienated. He was convinced of their overwhelming military strength and great economic resources;

(100) Jang Bahadur firmly told Ramsay that no relaxation would be made in the restrictions on Resident's movement "unless I [Resident] consented to give him an official declaration on the part of my government that he and his heirs should be guaranteed as the perpetual ministers of the country." Ramsay to Edmonstone, 25 October 1859, S.C., 25 February 1859, 17.
he saw that the safety of his country and his régime could best be secured by a policy of friendliness with the British kept within proper bounds. Great Britain was to him "a great friend whom one meets outside; yet for various reasons never invites to one's house."

The pro-British policy was risky, too, beyond a point. He shared the national prejudices in this regard, or at least gave an impression that he did so; for such an admission on his part was a shield against likely desire of the British to establish political influence in his state. He knew that the British valued his friendly policy much, and that they would refrain from pressing him too closely in this regard. He was aware of the Resident's role in the decade preceding his assumption of power; he naturally feared that if the Resident was not restrained and kept under surveillance, he might be the focus of intrigues of hostile elements. He looked on the British government as a powerful neighbour with encroaching proclivity and acquisitive design; he distrusted the Resident as an arm of British imperialism in Nepal.

He studiously opposed the efforts of the British

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(101) I.A. Shah, Nepal, the Home of the gods (London, 1936) 58.
government to undertake scientific surveys in Nepal, for he feared that these apparently innocuous quests invariably paved the way for their ulterior political designs. His apprehension was not wholly unfounded. Easier communication with British India was discouraged, for the hills were regarded as the forts of Nepal,

"and a good road over them would be ... a source of as great concern as a breach in his walls to a besieged general." (104)

(102) In 1855 Messrs Schlagantweit proposed to survey the Himalayan Range in Nepal. In 1868 and 1874, the Great Trigonometrical survey of India made repeated efforts in this direction, but to no effect. Beaton, Offg. Foreign Secretary to Ramaay, 9 March 1855, N.R., Vol. 9; F.P-A, January 1874, 1 (K.W.). In 1856 Schalgantweit was, however, permitted to take a few observations in Nepal. At this time Bam Behadur was Minister. Wright, n. 48, 38; Brief Memorandum of the Political Relations between Her Majesty's Indian Government and the State of Nepal, continued from 30 April 1854 to 31 October 1861, Narratives of the Political Relations of the Government of India with Native States (Calcutta, 1892) 213. In 1848 Dr. Hooker, the famous naturalist was permitted to undertake Zoological and Botanical survey of Eastern Nepal. J.D. Hooker, Himalayan Journals (London, 1854) XV, 124.

(103) The Supreme Councillors noted on 21 August 1867 that these exploratory ventures "might be made to subserv the political as well as geographical and scientific interests of the Government of India" and that each explorer should get remuneration for his political intelligence. F.P-A, March 1868, 64 (K.W.).

(104) F.P-A, December 1881, 33; October 1879, 49-54. His brothers, Manodeep Singh who succeeded him as the Prime Minister of Nepal, and Dheer Shamsher, were, the Resident noted, more 'bigotted' in this regard than Jang Behadur had ever been. F.P-A, February 1882, 294 (K.W.); O. Cavenagh, Reminiscences of an Indian Official (London, 1882) 175.
A closer commercial relation was, to him, the precursor of political troubles, a pretext for British intervention, a prelude to economic and eventually political subjection of his country. He believed in the well-known adage: "With Bible comes the banner, and with merchant comes the musket." In short, the appurtenances of British civilisation were, to him, but means of political enervation for Nepal.

Hence, in spite of his peaceful and friendly relations with the British, Jang Bahadur held on firmly to the policy of isolation of his state and of exclusion of foreigners from it. Cherished since generations with unflaing tenacity, amidst all the vicissitudes of political life, it had remained the guiding maxim of Nepalese statesmen, a political axiom, a national tenet. The exclusion of foreigners and the self-insulating policy were two sides of the same coin, complementary and correlative, both essential for the preservation of national integrity and independence. Jang Bahadur clearly came out with this thus:

"You say that we are independent; the British government tells us that it has no desire to interfere with us or to meddle with our internal affairs; nor even to advise us respecting them. We attribute that independence solely to our own peculiar policy (You can call it selfish if you like, but we cannot alter it to please you) we know you are a stronger power; you are like a lion, we are like a cat; the cat will scratch if it is driven to a corner, but the lion would soon kill the cat. You can force us to change our policy; you can take our country, if it pleases you to do so. But we will make no changes in that policy, to the strict observance
of which, we believe, that we preserved our independence as a nation to the present time, unless you compel us to do so." (105)

English education, ideas and culture were, to him, but pores over a country through which the political influence of the British percolated. He found the Indian States being brought closer into the network of British political and economic domination in proportion as they were modernised and enlightened by their increasing contact with the British government. No amount of progress in these states could erase from his mind the just impression that they were but vassals of the British, called protected allies by courtesy.

Besides, his pro-British policy had all along been frowned upon by his own people, including his brothers; and during the last decade of his rule, he was disposed to depend largely upon the latter. The British Resident held that he was generally a "liberally-minded man".

(105) Resident to Government, 6 July 1864, F.P.-A, August 1864, 51. The policy was carried "to an ultra-Japanese extent, having vague apprehensions that every concession it makes to us whether it be political, commercial or social is leading it one step nearer to hostile collision with us and perhaps to annexation."

(106) When Oudh was annexed by the British in 1856, Jang Bahadur told Ramsay,

"What fools the Kings of Oude have always been. If they had acted as we have done, and had refused to mix themselves up with you in any way, you would not have had any excuse for taking their country .... All the other native States have either fallen entirely under your rule, or you interfere with their management; that would soon happen here."

Resident to Government, 6 July 1864, F.P.-A, August 1864, 51. He often cited the case of Sikkim to prove the evil effects of greater contacts with the British in India.
"an autocrat though he is in many respects, he has a very obstructive party to contend with in regard to everything that concerns European enterprise in Nepal, and for the sake of his own family, he fears to do anything which will compromise his or their position now or their reputation afterwards." (107)

To him, at least, the policy of restricted intercourse and friendly isolation was a purely defensive measure against the boisterious impact of a mighty empire.

Curiously enough, his cardinal maxim was to confine this limited intercourse with the British to purely personal and family level and never allow it to ramify beyond. Himself being the state itself, he sought to cement the peaceful relations between Nepal and British India through his own self. A firm believer in the necessity of British goodwill for his family, he sought to bequeath its beneficial results to his own successors. Not haughty aloofness but respectful deference for a mighty power was his policy towards the British. His policy, he could claim, did not compromise national independence of Nepal; on the contrary, in convincing the British of his peaceful disposition, it paved the way for the security of Nepal. He was careful to avoid an issue with the British; a bellicose attitude towards them was risky. Nepal was a weaker power; this Jang Bahadur knew.

(107) F.P-A, January 1874, 1 (K.W.).
Above all, his policy succeeded in impressing on the British that so long as he and his family ruled over Nepal, there was no danger of active hostility. In spite of his lack of warmth, the British were convinced that Jang Bahadur's position obliged him to keep up a show of friendliness towards them. It was not merely a policy with him but a necessity for him and his successors.

Results of his British connection

Yet three decades of peaceful relations with the British government in India were not without results. Its best evidence is found in his social and other reforms. Glimmerings of his enlightenment were seen in the days immediately after his England tour.

Satee and slavery were two established institutions of Nepal since generations. As regards Satee, although he was unable to stop it altogether in the face of the opposition of the obscurantists, he succeeded in preventing it in his own family. In 1857 and 1863, he prevented the widows of Bam Bahadur and Krishna Bahadur, his two brothers, from performing this cruel rite. The British government always encouraged his steps against this practice.

(108) See Chapter Seven, pages 292-4.

(109) S.C., 25 September 1857, 470; F.P.-A, September 1863, 179; see Chapter Seven; Wright, n. 48, 31.
In May 1876 he succeeded, with the open support of the Resident, in saving his daughter's life from the funeral pyre, to which the priests goaded her. The Viceroy personally conveyed to him his "most cordial congratulations", assuring him that "both the Queen of England and the Prince of Wales would learn with the liveliest satisfaction" his "enlightened and energetic action." He was urged to abolish the system altogether - an act which was "sure to honour his administration with the approbation of the whole civilised world." He was asked also to make adequate (110) provisions for the rescued widows. We have it on the authority of Dr. Oldfield, a Residency Surgeon at Kathmandu, that during Jang Bahadur's lifetime there was considerable diminution in the number of Satis; they were seen "but very rarely". Unable to wipe out this social abuse, he succeeded (111) greatly in discouraging its practice.

Regarding slavery also, another old and recognised (112) institution in Nepal, Jang Bahadur took some measures. Every well-to-do family in Nepal had slaves, both male and female. A regular traffic of slaves had continued since long from

(111) Oldfield, n. 54, 251-2.
(112) J. Peggs, India's Cries to British Humanity (London, 1832) 301-2, 317, 325, 351; D.K. Banaji, Slavery in British India (1933) 55; D. Wright, n. 48, 45.
Bihar and Oudh to the Nepal Tarai and thence to Kathmandu. The traffic swelled greatly during 1866-67, when famine held the Bihar districts in its fierce grip. Through the efforts of Jang Bahadur and the cooperation of the Resident, a large number of the newly bought slaves were liberated, and stringent orders were issued to the Tarai officers against indulging in slave trade. The British magistrates were also strongly asked to repress this evil in their areas. Jang Bahadur placed some limitation on the purchase and sale of children other than those born of slaves themselves. In 1863 he placed a limitation on the age of the would-be widow suicide, and later a law was enacted to this effect.

These social abuses could not be swept away by a big brush, mainly for fear of alienating the die-hard obscurantists. The latter wielded considerable influence in the society. Intertwined as these abuses were with deep-seated national customs and prejudices, too much reforming zeal was hazardous. A marked reaction set in soon after his death when two of his wives committed Sati.

(113) F.P-A, April 1867, 124-7; July 1867, 139; August 1867, 178-81; October 1867, 225-6; June 1867, 5-9; November 1867, 82-5; September 1867, 62-4; B.G.P.C., April 1878, 33-8.

(114) A. McLeish, The Frontier Peoples of India, a missionary Survey (London, 1931) 124. Sati was prohibited by law in 1920.

In Jang Bahadur's Ain (promulgated in January 1864) elaborate provisions were made for giving justice to the slaves. His code brought uniformity in this old established social system. The hereditary slaves were "usually kindly treated, fed, clothed and not overworked." F.P-A, April 1867, 124; B.G.P.C., April 1878, 33-8.
British policy towards Jang Bahadur

The British followed, throughout Jang Bahadur’s rule, the policy of non-interference, to the extent it was consistent with the maintenance of their own interests in Nepal. The whole course of Jang Bahadur’s rule left them with the conviction that he was peaceful and generally well-meaning, if not absolutely cordial. His strong rule was a welcome development after years of chaos; his policy of peace was a relieving contrast to that of hostility of his predecessors. Militarily Nepal posed no danger now. The Nepalese army had lost much of its former efficiency and vigour; thirty years’ quiet had a sedative effect on its restless spirit in regard to the British India. In 1864, the Resident wrote,

“At no period in the history of Nepal has there been so little doing in the shape of military organisation as now. For the past few cold seasons parades even have been almost entirely neglected and fully four-fifths of the army has been employed in civil duties in making roads etc.” (115)

Secure in power and confident of British friendship, Jang Bahadur let the army deteriorate; it was now managed by the members of his family, the Generals in their teens, Brigadiers, babes in arms, and Colonels in sucking stage of

infancy. The Resident in 1870, as also visitors to Nepal carried the impression that the Nepal army had sunk much low in physique and morals, that its discipline was lax, that it was inefficiently officered; in short it was but a ghost of those brilliant soldiers of the past whose bravery and toughness evoked both fear and admiration of their adversaries. Indeed,

"It seems extraordinary, that a man like Sir Jang Bahadur should have allowed his army to deteriorate, but the fact is that he thinks of little or nothing but his own pleasures, ease and comfort, and leaves everything to his brothers, who in their turn think little but feathering their own nests." (118)

Both Bhim Sen and Jang Bahadur believed that the army was the prop of their power; but while the former held that Nepal's chief defence rested in a powerful army, the latter found that this defence lay in the goodwill and support of the British government. The situation in 1877 was different from that in 1837; the British empire in India had become

(116) All the posts above Colonelcy were exclusively reserved for the Ranas and their close kin. Commandari Kitab Khana, Jangi Phant, Registers for 1906 (V.S.) onwards. Jang Bahadur's sons and nephews in their teens became Generals, Brigadiers and Colonels.


(118) Resident (Richard Lawrence) to Lord Napier, 5 November 1870, N.A., Vol. 15.
The British empire of India; it had become an invincible power now. Bhim Sen's policy appeared to Jang Bahadur as outdated; he felt that in a policy of restricted friendship with the British lay the security of his state and the stability of his rule.

The British grudged Jang Bahadur's policy of exclusion. It was the chief impediment to intimate intercourse, as also to the gradual spread of British influence on Nepal's politics. Its moral effect on other states, the British sensed, was worse. It was likely that those states would attribute the immunity of Nepal from the domineering influence of the British to her peculiar policy of isolation and exclusion. The British wanted Jang Bahadur to waive the restrictions on the Resident; they did not want him to open up Nepal to all and sundry. It was good that such a power, so strategically placed, should be isolated from other powers in India, and remain hermetically sealed for all but the British Residents. But the opposition of Jang Bahadur to the free movement of the Resident was so strong that the Government found it better to acquiesce in his policy than drive the matter to a crisis.

(119) "I do not find that the Government of India ever expressed any desire that Nepal should be opened to British visitors generally ... I should very much doubt the expediency of thus opening Nepal, even if it were in our power, by diplomatic pressure, to accomplish this." Note of Foreign Secretary (A. Lyall), F.P-A, October 1879, 49-54 (K.W.).
The British were also conscious that Jang Bahadur had a personal stake in being peaceful and friendly to them. They knew, too, that his policy of restricted intercourse and friendly isolation was another facet of his tactful diplomacy which appeased the pride of the Nepalese, and cemented his rule, without jeopardising the integrity of his state. It was clear that he was at pains to convince the British that while he himself was willing to be more intimate with them, his countrymen were obstinately opposed to it. He cleverly kept the British at a safe distance and avoided the risk of greater attachment. His relation with the British should be an artery of strength and not of enervation; it should rather sustain him than dictate; it should be a prop, and not a peril; this was his policy.

Nepal under Jang Bahadur thus ceased to be a 'bad neighbour' of British India; it was innocuous, if not intimate. Her policy was at times irritating, but not alarming. Peace and stability had, at any rate, been established in the relations after a long spell of unease and uncertainty. The cherished dream of Hodgson came, at long last, close to complete realisation.