Chapter Ten

RECRUITMENT OF THE GURKHAS IN THE INDIAN ARMY

(1) The 'little Goorkhees', those short, broad-chested, flat-faced, snub-nosed men, with their national weapon, (2) khukri, on their waist-belt, were a conspicuous element in the British Indian Army. Their hard character, love of enterprise, endurance in privation, tenacity in adversity, (3) and contempt for caste-prejudices and sloth made them one of the finest materials for war-like operations, and justly earned them world-wide reputation. The physical feature of their country, the hilly, rugged terrain, combined with their national characteristics and tradition have bred in them these admirable qualities. The history of the development of the Gurkha ranks in the Indian army is a story of the avowed recognition of their worth as soldiers, and the fulfilment of the hopes which lay behind their enlistment.

(1) The "Gurkha" is a generic name for all the Nepalese employed in the Indian army, though, strictly speaking, the name should apply to those who came from regions around Gorkha, about fifty miles west of Kathmandu. E. Vansittart, Notes on Gurkhas (Calcutta, 1890) 10.

(2) A short, heavy knife with broad, curved blade.

(3) F.F.A., March 1880, 95-110.
The Early Gurkha Battalions

The rapid expansion of the Gurkha power preceding the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16), and their exploits in the Punjab hills caused some concern to the British. Yet not till the above war could the British sufficiently gauge the great martial qualities of these highlanders. The victory in that war was almost a pyrrhic one. It was achieved amidst a run of reverses and deaths of veteran generals. Numerical superiority and the "length of purse" wore the Nepalese out and compelled them to submit to peace. The war drove home to the British that, "we have met with

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(5) A contemporary chronicler says, "It was the absolute discomfiture of three out of five well-appointed armies which had begun offensive operations in consequence of the mature deliberations of the council and after the completion of the Commander-in-Chief's arrangements. The Gurkhas were, in fact, the least prepared." Military Sketches of the Gurkha War in India in the years 1814, 1815, 1816 (London, 1822) 49. This is corroborated by Prinsep, see his History of the Political and Military Transactions in India, 1813-23 (London, 1825) I, 81-206.

(6) "Before we came to the contest, their powers of resistance are ridiculed. Their forts are said to be contemptible, and their arms are said to be useless. Yet we find on the trial, that with these useless weapons in their contemptible forts they can deal about death among their assailants and stand to their defences, notwithstanding the skill and bravery of our army." Memo of Metcalfe to Lord Moira, quoted in E. Thompson, The Making of the Indian Princes (Oxford, 1945) 191.
an enemy who shows decidedly greater bravery and greater (7)
steadiness than our troops possess", and "the Company's
soldiers, then Hindustanis, could never be brought to resist
the shock of these energetic mountaineers on their own
(8) ground."

It was during this war that the Gurkhas were for the
first time enlisted in the British Indian army. Out of the
prisoners who surrendered during the capitulation of the
Malwan fort on the Kumaon frontier four rifle regiments were
raised, called respectively, the Malwan battalion, the
Sirmur battalion, the Nussiri battalion and the Kumaon

(7) Quoted in Ibid., 192.

(8) Confidential letter of General Ochterlony to
Lord Moira, quoted in Vansittart, n. 1, 220.

"It ["the war"] made us acquainted with a
formidable power whose military strength was previously
unknown and egregiously underrated. Then for the first
time in India, recourse was had to superiority in numbers
to overpower the bravery and discipline of our enemy,
combined with the natural advantages of his defensive
positions." Quoted in Kaye, Selections from the Papers of
Lord Metcalfe (London, 1876) 186.

With a force, less than 16000 men the Nepalese
fought the British army of 46629 men of whom 4557 were
Europeans. Capt. Cavenagh, Report on Nepal (1852), P.M.
Vol. 360.

"In some instances our troops, European and
native, have been repulsed by inferior numbers with sticks
and stones. In others, our troops have been charged by the
enemy sword in hand, and driven for miles like a flock of
sheep .... In this war, dreadful to say, we have had
numbers on our side, and skill and bravery on the side of
our enemy." Quoted in Thompson, n. 6, 192.
battalion, the latter being provincial corps for civil duties in Kumaon. The first and the fourth battalions were located in the Punjab Hills, the Nussiri battalion in the Simla hills, and the Sirmur battalion at Dehra Dun. Most of these Gurkhas came with their families, and so grew the Gurkha colonies in these places.

From the very outset the Gurkhas displayed, along with their martial qualities, a spirit of unwavering fidelity to their new masters, whom they had fought so doggedly and who had humbled their pride as invincible soldiers. This served to underline their dependable nature, one of the chief reasons why the British valued them so highly; the bond once forged between them never snapped afterwards. Yet, not till 1825-26, when the British were engaged in the siege of Bharatpur, were all the Gurkhas employed in active service as part of the British Indian troops. In this campaign as in all succeeding ones they

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(9) On this point see L.W. Shakespeare, History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Gurka Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles) (1912) I, 1-5, 168-77; N.W. Woodyatt, History of the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurka Rifles (London, 1923) 321-7. The recruits were not all pure Gurkhas, but hill people of Kumaon, Garhwal and other hill states. See also L.H. Jenkins, General Frederick Young, First Commandant of Sirmur battalion (London, 1923) 40-52.

(10) The Sirmur battalion was employed in active service during the 3rd Mahratta War. Shakespeare, n. 9, 5.
amply justified their employment in the British ranks.

Prior to 1886 there was no "centralised system" of recruiting the Gurkhas. It has already been noticed that four Gurkha rifle battalions were raised during the Nepal War. In 1817, the third Mughatta war necessitated a large expansion of the army establishment. That year an infantry levy was raised at Fatehgarh, and in March 1818, it consisted of one thousand men. The 9th Gurkha Regiment had these men as its nucleus.

In 1825, Sir Edward Paget, the then Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army, proposed the augmentation of the strength of the Gurkha battalions, and forming new ones by fresh recruitment of the Gurkhas from Nepal. The Resident, Hon.ble Gardner, while agreeing on the great fighting qualities of the Gurkhas, doubted if the plan of the C.-in-C. was at all feasible and politic. For, he believed that,

(11) Ibid.; Woodyatt, n. 9.

(12) C.J. Morris, The Gurkhas (Delhi, 1933) 128.


(14) "... as a brave and hardy race, tractable and orderly (under their own officers at least) no description of Indian troops would, I conceive, be found superior to these." Quoted in Campbell's Report, n. 13.
"even on entering our service, the Gurkhas would not separate themselves entirely from their native country as they could not remove their families from Nepal and ... that however faithfully they might conduct themselves on general occasions, in the event of any future rupture with Nepal, they possessed that feeling of patriotism which would induce the greater part of them to adhere decidedly to their natural allegiance." (15)

He suggested, instead, that a body of Nepalese troops be employed occasionally as mercenaries. He hoped that the Minister, Bhim Sen Thapa, would agree to such an arrangement as it was supposed to relieve him of the burden of maintaining a vast, well-drilled army kept in a state of enforced idleness and menacing restiveness. Their employment in the British Indian army, even temporarily, could be looked upon as an insurance against a probable break-through on the (16) British territories by the Nepalese government. Hodgson, Gardner's Assistant, supported the suggestion of his superior, "so complete being its combination of instantaneous (17) preparation, economy and convenience." But the Government were opposed to employment of foreign troops as mercenaries, (18) and the suggestion of Gardner, hence, fell through.

(15) Quoted in Ibid.
(16) Ibid.
Hodgson's suggestions

The issue was revived with greater force when Hodgson assumed charge of the Residency. He strongly urged the Government to adopt as a policy the drafting of the surplus soldierly of Nepal in British ranks. The plan, he earnestly held, was not only feasible but that it should be promptly put through, as a measure of military policy, political expediency and security of the British dominion in India. Militarily, as they were far superior to the 'Sepoys', their employment in the Indian army would greatly augment its strength. On this he wrote:

"I calculate that there are at this time in Nepal no less than 30000 Dhakarehs or soldiers off the roll by rotation, belonging to the Khas, Magars and Gurung tribes (three chief military tribes in Nepal). I am not sure there exists any insuperable obstacle to our obtaining in one form or other the services of a large body of these men, and such are the energy of character, love of enterprise and freedom from the shackles of caste, that I am well assured their services, if obtained, would soon come to be most highly prized. In my humble opinion they are by far the best soldiers in India; and if they were made participators of our renown in arms, I conceive that their gallant spirit, emphatic contempt of madhesias (people of the plains) and unadulterated military habits, might be relied on for fidelity; and that our good

(19) Ibid., 107 et seq. In Nepal, both civil and military services were held by annual tenure, and all tenure of lands were attached only to actual service. A man off the roll of service was called Dhakarah, and one in employ was called Jagara. Hodgson's Memorandum, 14 February 1825, E.M., Vol. 125; H. Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal (London, 1880) 1, 175.
and regular pay and noble pension establishment would serve to counterpoise the influence of nationality, especially in the Magars and the Gurungas." (20)

The moral effect would be no less considerable. Their physical and moral qualities would serve as emulation for the 'Sepoys', consisting greatly of Brahmans and other high caste men. They would, besides, introduce a new

(20) Report of Hodgson to Government (October 1832), Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal, No. XXVII (Calcutta, 1857). Comparing the Gurkhas and the 'Sepoys', Hodgson wrote, 'These highland soldiers, who despatch their meal in half an hour and satisfy the ceremonial law by merely washing their hands and face, and taking off their turbans before cooking, laugh at the pharisaical rigour of the Sipahis who must bathe from head to foot and make puja ere they can begin to dress, their dinners they must eat nearly naked in the coldest weather, and cannot be in marching trim again in less than three hours.

In war, the former readily carry several days' provisions on their backs; the latter would deem such an act intolerably degrading. The former see in foreign service nothing but the prospect of glory and spoil; the latter can discover in it nothing but pollution and peril from unclean men and terrible wizards, goblins and evil spirits. In masses, the former have all that indomitable confidence, each in all, that grows out of national integrity and success; the latter can have no idea of this sentiment which yet maintains the union and resolution of multitudes in peril better than all other human bonds whatsoever, and once thoroughly acquired is by no means inseparable from service under the national standard.' Ibid.

(21) "It would excite in both parties a spirit of pride and emulation and to make our sepoohs ashamed of their tenacious adherence to disqualifying and trivial ceremonies which their rivals scorned such utter subjection to. It would also tend to prevent a contingency of all others the most to be feared, combination against us of our native army." Campbell's Report, S.E., 13 September 1857, 69-72. The Report was written, at the direction of Hodgson, by Dr. A. Campbell, the Assistant Resident.

(contd. on next page)
element in the "unduly homogeneous" Indian army and provide a safety-valve in times of emergency. The deep-seated scorn of the Gurkhas for the Indian 'Sepoys' and the jealousy of the latter would prevent a combination of the two, and in the disaffection in one the British could count on the support of the other.

Political considerations were weightier. The martial population of Nepal, armed to the teeth and burning with itch for wars and plunder, yet restrained with great difficulty, and hence restive, were like a heap of explosives awaiting the slightest ignition to be aflame. It was feared that the policy of the Nepalese government under Bhim Sen was to keep warm the martial zeal of the people, conserve their strength, and then release them at an opportune moment against the British in India. A state of enforced and uncertain peace was, at the slightest provocation to the Nepalese, likely to terminate abruptly in a violent collision at a time when the British were assailed with various problems. It was, hence, politically wiser to employ them in the British army before they, as

*... they Gurkhas are little tramelled by the prejudices of caste and are in many respects decidedly superior to the British Sepoy."* Report of Cavenagh, p. 8.

(22) See Chapter Two.
seemed certain to Hodgson, turned against the British in India. The security of the latter, he emphasised, made it obligatory for them to syphon off the martial tribes of Nepal as much and as soon as possible into the British army. Enrolment on a large scale would not only quench their thirst for war, but would also, as a result of greater intercourse, wear out their deep-seated distrust of the British power. They could be held, besides, as pledges for Nepal's good behaviour during any crisis befalling the British. The more these turbulent martial people were drained away, the greater was the chance of Nepal being a weak and peaceful neighbour. Individually proud, overbearing, extremely suspicious, they were, while in the ranks, "as docile and steady and peaceable a body of troops as any other in the world." In short, Hodgson averred:

"If we could draw off the surplus soldiery of Nepal into our army, we might do her an immense service, enabling her to adapt her institution to her circumstances, at the same time that we provided ourselves with the best materials in Asia for making soldiers out of."

(23) "I am satisfied that the Gurkha military mania being already at its climax as well as incapable, from the whole course of their history and habits and situation in Nepal, of gradual reduction and as it were starving to death for want of employment, we have scarcely an alternative left us, but are constrained taking it as we find it, to adopt those energies into our service which will otherwise sooner or later, in all likelihood, turned against us." Hodgson's Memorandum relative to the Gurkha army, 14 February 1825, F.H., Vol. 125.
But this suggestion failed to meet the approval of the Government. During the 'Mutiny' he took up the issue again, stating that,

"It is infinitely to be regretted that the opinions of Sir Henry Fane, Sir Charles Napier (both were Commanders-in-Chief of India) and of Sir Henry Lawrence (always rated as a high authority on military matters) as to the high expediency of recruiting largely from this source were not acted upon long ago." (24)

Sir Henry Lawrence, Hodgson's successor, suggested that service conditions should be made more alluring to the Gurkhas, reserving three-fourths of the native commissions for them. He also recommended that popular officers should be sent to Nepal to raise Gurkha recruits with the help of the Resident.

Formation of Gurkha regiments

In 1850, the whole of the 66th Bengal Native Infantry at Fort Govindgarh was disbanded for mutinous attitude over the service batta, and the Nussiri battalion was taken enmasse into the line, and was redesignated as the 66th Bengal Infantry. A new Nussiri battalion was then raised.

(24) Vansittart, n. 1, 32.

"We could easily get Sikhs and Nepalese in large numbers for our army, and we could easily establish by degrees a white colony in the Himalaya, and these two measures would together make us independent of Brahman and Khettri support." Hodgson to Eliza, 26 May 1857, H.H.B.L., Vol. 9, 90.

(25) H. Lawrence, Essays on the Indian Army and Oude (Serampore, 1869) 230.
in the same year but disbanded on general reduction of the army in 1861. The Gurkha battalions were reorganised on a permanent and regular regimental basis in 1861. The 66th Bengal Infantry (i.e., the old Nusiri battalion) now came to be known as the First Gurkha Regiment. The Sirmoor Rifle battalion was made a regular Gurkha regiment in 1850, and in 1861 it was rechristened the second Gurkha Regiment. Similarly, the Kumaon battalion was redesignated as the 3rd Gurkha Regiment. The Fourth Gurkhas were raised in 1857, and became a regular Gurkha regiment in 1861. The Fifth Gurkhas were raised in 1858; they were a part of the Irregular force that was raised from the Gurkhas in the Sikh army. Their colony was set up in 1859 at Abbotabad as a deliberate policy of thrusting this powerful Hindu element as a political wedge in this predominantly Muhammadan area. This corps consisted of a number of Kumaonis, Garhwalis and Gurkhas of western Nepal, recruited by Major Henry Ramsey, the Commissioner of Kumaon, in that year. In 1879 there

(26) In Ranjit Singh's army there was a corps of Gurkhas; it was retained by his successors also. W.G. Osborne, The Court and Camp of Ranjeet Singh (London, 1840) 107-8; Press List of Old Records in the Punjab Secretariat, III, 91.

(27) "The political and other advantages of the introduction of another element in the Muhammadan population would be greatly advanced by that measure." Historical Record of the 5th Gurkha Regiment (Lahore, 1886) 170.
were these Five Gurkha Regiments, with sixteen Gurkha officers, eighty non-commissioned officers, all Gurkhas, and eight hundred and twenty five spoys in each, thus totalling 4685 men in all. They were encamped at Dharamsala, Bakloh, Dehra Dun, Almora and Abbottabad respectively, their regimental headquarters being at Dharamsala, Delwa and Abbottabad. Besides, a large number of Nepalese served in the 42nd, 43rd and 44th Native Infantry regiments, originally the Assam Light infantry, and later composing the 8th and 10th Gurkha rifles.

The recruits were obtained from western, Central and Eastern regions of Nepal. Those from the border were procured generally at the fairs in the winter months. Recruiting was so difficult that very often four-five months elapsed before thirty/forty recruits of the required class and standard could be obtained. From Kumaon, Bettiah, Gorakhpur and Darjeelings small recruiting parties were sent from time to time, composed mostly of veteran Gurkha non-commissioned officers, sometimes with the requisite authority.

(28) F.P.A. March 1880, 95-110.

of the Durbar, but very often without it. Recruits with families were mostly prized. They were encouraged to settle in large numbers in the hills of Kumaon, Sikkim and the adjacent places so that they provided ready supply of men for the Gurkha regiments. The British services offered them not only better pay and amenities, but far greater scope for active services.

Gurkhas of several clans were recruited in the British Indian army. The Nagars, the Gurungs, the Chettris, Thakurs and the Khas were obtained from the western districts of Nepal, and the Limbus, Rais, Sunwars, Tamengs and the Lamas from Eastern regions or from the Kosi basin. The first two clans were the most valued, for their acknowledged superiority over the rest; they were the most difficult to procure. After the "Mutiny" a strong prejudice against the Brahmanical elements led the British government to disfavour the enlistment of the Khas - this clan of all being most liable to Brahmanical prejudice from which

(30) Later the system of rewarding the recruiting agents was introduced. E. Vansittart, Gurkhas (Calcutta, 1916) 153.
(31) E. Wadell, Among the Himalayas (Westminster, 1900) 303.
other clans were mostly immune. In the 3rd Gurkhas, Garhwalis and Kumaonis were enlisted but in the 1st and the 2nd Gurkhas the officers Commanding opposed such admixture.

The Government were not too keen on raising fresh Gurkha regiments, and remained contented with enrolling just as many of them as required for filling up the occasional depletion in the existing Gurkha corps and keep them in their allotted strength and in a reasonable state of efficiency. The Government did not seem to have any settled policy regarding the recruitment of Gurkhas till 1885 when an engagement in this regard was entered into with Maharaja Bir Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, the Prime Minister of Nepal.

Policy of Nepalese Government

The Nepalese government's attitude to the enlistment of the Gurkhas was one of consistent opposition camouflaged under professions of cooperation. An injunction against the Nepalese taking service under the British government was extant though not enforced with equal efficacy at all times. The prohibition was more rigorous in regard to the recruits intending to take their family with them to India. During the rule of Bhim Sen and even in the decade following his

fall in 1837 the intercourse between the governments of Nepal and British India were rigidly restricted, and the recruitment question did not figure large between them. The British government always faced great difficulty in getting from Nepal even the limited number of men required for the maintenance of the Gurkha corps in their allotted strength. In the absence of a definite engagement in this regard till 1885, and in view of the known opposition of the Nepalese government, there was no other way than to carry on the recruiting operation sub rosa. The Commanding officers on the border at Gorakhpur, Almora and Dárjeeling used to send recruiting agents secretly and always at great risk to various parts of Nepal. Experienced Gurkha Subahdars went to their homes in Nepal, charged with the duty of inducing the young Nepalis to join the British army. In spite of the strong disapproval of the Nepalese government, the British carried on these clandestine operations. Thus in the 1840's the activities of the British frontier depots at Pithoragarh, Almora and Gorakhpur in watching the hostile proceedings of the Nepalese and facilitating recruiting operations led the Durbar to enforce more strictly the injunction against such enlistment. Resident Hodgson, hence, advised that large regular depots for recruiting operations should not be opened very close to the Nepal frontier, for they made such operations conspicuous. He suggested that

(35) Morris, n. 12, 128.
recruiting parties should not be sent too openly and too frequently so as to be detected by the Nepalese. The recruitment operations were, henceforth, carried on more surreptitiously and with greater caution.

The situation was more difficult when Nepal passed under the absolute sway of a powerful, despotic ruler, Jung Bahadur Rana. His attitude in this regard was not of friendliness and cooperation, but of covert discouragement, if not open opposition. He looked upon this matter as a devious design of the British to denude his country of its fighting population and weaken it militarily. It was, therefore, not only dangerous but, in effect, suicidal to encourage or cooperate with the British. He issued stringent orders against the Nepalese leaving the country for India, without a valid passport from the Durbar; none could go beyond Noakote and the Trisulanga river without such passport. Injunctions were always rigorously enforced against the Gurkhas in the Indian army returning home to meet their families, except when they did so after taking discharge from service under the British government. The prohibitions were, however, relaxed when any Gurkha Subahdar went to Nepal strictly on duty, "either to purchase weapons..."

(36) Resident to Government, 29 March 1843, S.C., 19 April 1845, 52.

(37) Resident to Government, 29 June 1854, P.C., 11 August 1854, 11-2.
for his corps or on recruiting service, duly authorised by the British government, their employers. The Gurkhas in the British army were seriously concerned over Jeng Bahadur's stringent orders against their return home. They also found it extremely difficult to send money to their families in Nepal. Service under the British meant being permanently away from one's hearth and home. This served as an effective deterrent for many aspirants to British service, where there was better pay, pensions and other amenities. Jeng Bahadur, when pressed by the Resident to relax these prohibitive measures, pleaded that as the British government opposed his employing Europeans in the Nepalese army, they should not grudge the steps he took in his national interest. Resident Ramsay conveyed his impression thus:

"My impressions are that we must expect fewer liberal measures from General Jeng Bahadur than from any of his predecessors despite of the intentions he proclaims while he is travelling in our provinces." (40)

(39) Ibid.

(39) Ibid. After Jeng Bahadur's return from England, the British entertained the fond hope that he would extend all cooperation in this matter. But ere long the Resident discerned many "circumstances to show the change in the spirit of General Jeng Bahadur's communication with the Residency." Ibid.

(40) Ibid.
It was not that Jang Bahadur was powerless to override the national prejudices against such recruitment but that he was himself opposed to it, though not declaredly so. It was not long before it was clear that he was as much prompt in giving pledges of cooperation as wilfully negligent to redeem them.

The British government made a strong remonstrance against this restrictive policy; Jang Bahadur gave way, partially. He consented to allow the Gurkhas in Indian army to return home provided they came in civil dress and behaved as Nepalese subjects when in Nepal. They were to avoid Kathmandu, the neighbouring military cantonments and the direct route from Segowlee to Kathmandu through the Sisagarhi fort. Hereafter, the Gurkhas returning home were not molested so long as they did not violate the above injunctions. It was also arranged that the Gurkhas in India would make remittances to the Residency at Kathmandu, whence money would be disbursed to their families on prior

(41) Ibid.

(42) "For many years past no question has arisen as regards our Gurkha soldiers visiting their families in Nepal. or with reference to recruiting parties from our Gurkha regiments entering the country. The former practice, though not formally recognised, is tacitly permitted, and the latter has been forbidden by our own government." Resident to Government, 16 July 1869. E.P.A, September 1869, 92.
application. Thus political pressure alone earned the
British a "not very graceful concession".

Unable to oppose openly the recruiting operations,
Jang Bahadur sought to make them harder by requiring that
all the intending recruits, particularly those belonging to
western Nepal (whence came the Magars and the Gurungs, the
pick of the Nepalese martial tribes) should obtain passports
before leaving Nepal, and that all recruiting parties from
India should have passes from their authorities. This
requirement was intended to check the smuggling of the
Nepalese through the passes in western Nepal. The guards
at these passes were authorised to shoot at sight any person
trying to sneak in or out. The Government then asked the
Commanding Officers of the Gurkha regiments not to send their
agents to Nepal without passports. Jang Bahadur was approached
to liberalise this order in favour of the Gurkhas going to
western Nepal on leave, but to no purpose. Captain Byers,
the Acting Resident, indignantly wrote to the Government:

(43) Minute of Lord Dalhousie, 10 May 1852, P.C., 14
January 1853, 123-4.

(44) Note of the Foreign Secretary, 14 July 1854,
P.C., 14 August 1854, 11-2.

(45) P.C., 12 November 1858, 74-5.

(46) Government to Resident-in-Charge (Captain Byers),
22 September 1858, P.C., 12 November 1858, 75.
"The records of this office during the last few years show the unavailing efforts made to obtain recruits for the British service with the assistance of the Durbar, but they will not assist us, and although they say, they throw no obstacles in the way of our obtaining recruits, the rule relative to those who do enter the service not being allowed to return to Nepal, no doubt prevents great numbers from enlisting." (47)

During the 'Mutiny' the Nepalese soldiers came into close contact with the British, with the result that a happy camaraderie and mutual appreciation followed in its wake. The liberal provisions for their maintenance while in India, the genial behaviour of the British officers, the donation and compensation allowances for injuries and death, left a very favourable impression among the Nepali troops; service in the British army was felt as a coveted occupation. They were "loud in their praises of the liberality of the British government." The Resident clearly discerned "that a very different spirit now exists among them" to what was formerly felt there cannot be the smallest doubt." Jang Bahadur was opposed to the payment of pension by the British government to the families of soldiers killed or disabled.

(47) Capt. Byers to Campbell, 21 October 1858, P.C., 31 December 1858, 2530.

(48) The Nepalis were given Rs.20/- per month, besides batta; in Nepal they received a salary of Rs. 4½ per month. See Register in the Army Head Quarters, Kathmandu; also Registers in the Commandari Kitab Khana, Jang Phant.

(49) S.C., 25 November 1858, 56-60.
during their service in India, for fear that it would bring his soldiers in constant communication with the Residency and would induce them to enlist in British services for its better provisions. Evidently he did not like the Nepalese "to become conscious of the difference between the British service and his own." Nor were the British government themselves very eager to introduce the pension system, for fear of future complications with the Nepalese government; they preferred compensations to the families affected. Resident Ramsay, however, supported the pension system, for its inconveniences were most likely to be offset by "the advantages resulting from the probable change in the feelings of the Gurkhas towards our services." It was often a problem to trace the relations of Gurkha soldiers in Nepal to whom pensions or pecuniary grants could be given, when needed. Jang Bahadur was initially opposed to render any help in this regard but later yielded when the Governor-General sternly warned him that:

"it would neither be honourable on the part of the British government to relinquish the practice nor friendly on the part of the Nepal Durbar to refuse its good offices in the matter." (52)

(50) F.P-A, September 1869, 92-3 (K.W.).
(51) S.C., 25 November 1868, 56-60.
(52) F.P-A, August 1866, 156.
The Commanding Officers of the Gurkha regiments in India continued to procure recruits *sub rosa*, with the full knowledge, and sometimes with the overt encouragement of the Government, notwithstanding the existing orders against such activity. After the Revolt of 1857, recruiting operations were carried on more actively and on a wider scale in the borders of Nepal. It was now impossible to get recruits from the hilly territories in the interior parts of Nepal. As a result, while there was appreciable augmentation in the quantity, there was considerable depreciation in the quality of the recruits, for most of them were fugitive criminals and outlaws, men of very low orders belonging to classes deemed unfit for military services in Nepal. They passed themselves off as genuine Gurkhas.

(53) "The Goorkha is a valuable and useful soldier, but the difficulty of recruiting Gurkhas has always been so great as to induce the government to limit the number of Goorkha regiments in the service." Governor-General's observation, 17 September 1864, *F.P.-A.*, September 1864, 89. It was decided that "when recruits are necessary, the Government must trust to the exertions of individual Gurkhas in order to obtain them." *Ibid.* But this principle was not rigidly adhered to. In 1881 Major Ramsay, the Commissioner of Kumaon, raised a corps of Gurkhas in western Nepal by sending agents *sub rosa*.* F.P.-B., April 1882, 69-71.

(54) *F.P.-A.*, July 1866, 64-6. Magars, Gurungs, Thakurs and Kirats generally composed the Nepal army. The non-martial races, Domals, Lohars, Newars, were never enrolled; officers were Khas or Thakurs. *Cayennagh's Report*, n. 8; Hodgson's Memorandum on Nepal army, n. 17.
There were no means of verifying the descriptive rolls of these recruits for the Durbar's "covert opposition and jealousy". Most of these so-called Gurkhas were employed in police duties in the bordering districts of the North Western Provinces and Bihar, and some in regular Gurkha battalions. There were cases when they absconded with public money to the Nepalese territory; there were, besides, frequent desertion of ranks. Their surrender could neither be demanded by the British nor proffered by Jeng Bahadur; for till 1866, these crimes lay outside the scope of the Extradition Treaty of 1855. Jeng Bahadur justly complained that by enlisting such bad characters the British were hindering the enforcement of law and order in the bordering Nepalese territory, and indirectly encouraging the desperadoes. Besides, the behaviour of the recruiting agents in Nepal provided just cause for irritation on the part of the Nepalese government. These agents often made invidious comparison between the great strength of the British government and the relative weakness of the Nepalese; they openly behaved in "imprudent, swaggering and contemptuous manner" with the high officials of the Court, not excepting the Minister himself. Resident Ramsay strongly held that the recruiting in large scale of the Nepali outlaws surreptitiously

(55) F.C., 29 October 1852, 18-9.

(56) F.P-A, September 1864, 87-9.
would cause "nothing but trouble, inconvenience and
disappointment" for the British government, and would
greatly undermine the quality of the Gurkha battalions
without begetting any countervailing advantage. The
Government took heed and strictly prohibited enlistment of
the Nepali outlaws in the Police establishments of the North
Western Provinces and Bihar. It was also decided to stop
sending recruiting parties to Nepal in a clandestine manner.
The Commanding Officers were instructed to take special
care in recording the true caste, family and residence of the
recruits. The recruiting agents, old experienced Gurkha
Subahdars, were asked to behave properly while in Nepal.

The foregoing survey bears out that "the Nepal Durbar
have always played a double part as regards the enlistment
of Gurkhas in the British army." While no overt opposition
was made to these attempts, various measures were resorted to
to ensure their failure. Whenever the Durbar extended its co-
operation, the recruits procured by it were found to be of
mixed or inferior description, unfit for service and not of
martial classes too. Thus, in 1861 the Acting Minister,
General Ben Behadur, professed all cooperation for raising a
contingent of Gurkhas for the new Nassiri Battalion, but

(57) Ibid.; August 1866, 156.
(63) F.P.A., September 1869, 92-3.
"took every underhand means for thwarting the wishes of the British government and rendered the attempt to enlist Gurkhas altogether ineffectual." Out of the six hundred men sent by the Durbar to the Residency for enlistment, "only two ruggamuffins" could be induced to enter the ranks, and out of sixty men who were enlisted before not more than thirty-two indifferent recruits marched from Nepal after (59) considerable delay and vexation. This cost the British government a sum of 10,500 rupees. Again, during the Second Afghan War, shortly after the death of Jang Bahadur, the Durbar sent, at the request of the British government, five hundred men to Gorakhpur recruiting depot. Most of them were "lame and halt, the maimed and the blind." Seventy to eighty per cent of them were summarily rejected as unfit, and the rest were found far below the prescribed standard.

(59) Quoted in a Letter from Resident to Government, 29 June 1864, F.P., 11 August 1864, II.

(60) F.P.-B, April 1882, 69-71. Resident Girdlestone strongly urged the Government to raise the recruitment question as an important political issue with the Durbar, but the Government were reluctant. Ibid.

After Jang Bahadur's death in 1877 the British government made a strong effort to induce Ranoddeep Singh, his brother and successor, for a more liberal policy in this regard. The attempt ended in failure. Between 1879 and 1882, the military authorities in India suggested "coercive measures" to bring the Durbar to reason; they regretted that the existing practice of recruitment was "neither dignified nor satisfactory". The Durbar took more stringent measures. The aspirants for British service were threatened with capital punishment. Some were executed. F.P.-B, February 1879, 245-56; March 1880, 95-110; F.P.-B, April 1882, 69-71. At this time the issue of Gurkha recruitment was thoroughly examined by the Army Reorganisation Commission.
Significantly enough, while the British government waxed wrath at the non-cooperative policy of the Nepalese government in regard to recruitment of the Gurkhas, they themselves were wholly opposed to the Europeans being employed by the Durbar. But in regard to the Indians being so employed, the Government did not seem to have a settled policy till the close of Jang Bahadur’s rule. Not that they were utterly indifferent to this, but since nothing in the Treaty of Segovlee (1816) provided against such employment they acquiesced, but only so long as it was done on a negligible scale. Thus, when in 1857 the Resident received the representation of some Sikh soldiers in the Nepalese army of their being unfavourably treated by the Nepalese government, Lord Dalhousie refused to raise the issue with Jang Bahadur. He held that

"If the service were a tempting one, it would be impossible to prevent the Sikhs from seeking it, and if it continues what it has appeared to be (that is, the unfavourable treatment of them) there is no fear of their doing so." (62)

On the other hand, in 1872, Jang Bahadur was strongly urged by the British government to desist from enlisting (63) the Sikhs of the violent Kooka sect. Generally speaking,

(61) F.G., 24 June 1859, 104-6.
(63) F.J., February 1872, 33-49. Jang Bahadur not only dismissed them but took measures to turn them away from Nepal although General Babar Jang, his favourite son, requested him to allow the Kookas to set up a shrine at Kathmandu.
the Nepalese government, as a matter of national policy, did not encourage aliens in their army, although both in Bhim Sen's and Jang Bahadur's time, a few Hindusthanis and some Sikhs were employed as drill masters and artificers in the magazines.

Isolation of the Gurkhas

It is singular to note that the British were ever careful to keep the Gurkhas isolated from the rest of the Indian troops. The Gurkhas bore an innate sense of separateness from the latter, ascribable to the insularity of their own country and the temporal exclusiveness, which was a product alike of geography and national tradition as policy of their home government. The special treatment of the British meted out to these soldiers, the great favour they were always shown, their lodgement in colonies exclusively reserved for them, combined with the deliberate

(64) Resident to Government, 23 November 1871, Ibid.

During the Gurkha-Tibetan War (1855-6) a Sikh Corps of 104 soldiers was employed in the Nepal army. Commander Kitab Khan, Jangi Phant, Register dealing with Tibetan War. We find in some Registers in this office the name of one Major Hearsey as the Commander of the small cavalry unit formed during Jang Bahadur's rule.

(65) Hodgson's Memorandum, n. 17; Vansittart, n. 1, 35.

(66) The Gurkha battalions had permanent cantonments in the hills; they were not transferred like other regiments from station to station. E. Candler, The Sepoy (London, 1919) 19.
policy of never giving their command to the Indians - all these accentuated their exclusive temperament. On the other hand, no efforts were spared to bring them close to the British troops and the British officers. The best officers were attached to them. The welfare of the Gurkhas was the foremost and favourite care of the high military authorities in India. "Purposely the Indian government have allowed them to become a cult, a service apart." They were regarded always as the most dependable, the very cream, the "nulli secundus" of the Indian army. This fostered their innate sense of superiority over the rest of the Indian troops, and prevented the growth of attachment between them. They were always regarded as an effective counterpoise to the Indian troops, and as a safety valve against a mutiny by the latter. A high authority testified


(68) "Ever since we had first raised the Nassiri battalion and the Simoor and the Kumaon battalion in 1815, it had been agreed, perhaps unwisely, that Gurkha regiments in our service would never be officered by Indians. For one hundred and thirty odd years that rule has been carefully kept .... Thus the Gurkha connection, though it has been through the Indian army, has been with Britain, and always with the British rather than with India. It may be, that because of this, the men regarded themselves as belonging to a force apart from the Indian army .... In fact they came to look upon themselves as being in India rather as British troops were in India, as mercenaries to see that the Indians did not molest each other .... The British Gurkha regiments had close affiliations with British regiments and the year round telegrams of greeting sped back and forth between Gurkhas and the British .... Thus whenever progressive steps
to this thus:

"Their lack of interest in Brahmanical holiness and in anti-British intrigue and hatred is the despair of those subtle brains who fish in troubled waters and who would sow discord at any price." (69)

to Indianise the Indian army were taken by increasing the number of Indian officers in units, the Gurkha brigade was specifically excluded from the scheme and remained intact with their British officers. No written promise was ever made to the Gurkhas except perhaps by Lord Linlithgow to the Maharaja of Nepal, but the rule was well known throughout the Indian army that Indians would not be posited as officers to Gurkha battalions." Lt. General Sir F. Tuker (who was associated for many years with the Gurkha battalions), While Memory Serves (London, 1950) 651.

"Speaking generally, it may be said that the bulk of the Gurkha tribes are in no great sympathy with the races of India, and in the army would far rather associate with the European soldiers than with other European troops." MacLunn, n. 65, 195.

(69) Ibid., 199. It was politically wise to recruit the Gurkhas in large numbers:

"... the more Gurkhas we have in our service, the safer we should be." Boulgar, n. 32, 65.