CONCLUSIONS

The history of Indo-Nepalese relations during 1837-77 is the story of the gradual easement of a longstanding tension between the governments of India and Nepal through understanding and adjustment. It is an account of how their deep-seated distrust, fear and active hostility tended to thaw, if gradually. It is an account of how these two powers realised that their mutual interests made it obligatory to compose their sharp differences and to live as amicable neighbours. The result was that a feeling of irreconcilable enmity gave way to the desire of coexisting in peace, if not in absolute amity. True, Nepal during this period had not yet become an absolutely reliable and friendly ally of the British; there were still some snags, some flies in the ointment; clouds of misunderstanding did flit in the political firmament. But if all was not well in the state of Denmark, all was not rotten either, to borrow Shakespeare's words. The long spell of strain was over; Nepal had become a safe neighbour of British India. Perfect normalcy had not yet been established in their relations, but it could, at any rate, be hoped that it would be established in due course. The trend, at least, had been towards improvement of relations and not deterioration. This in itself was no insignificant development.
The relations at this time were governed by three main factors: the geographical contiguity of British India and Nepal, the British policy in Nepal, and Nepal's reaction to it. These relations were for long anything but cordial. This is due mainly to the fact that the interests of the Nepalese and the British in India often cut across each other, and their policies to promote these interests were, consequently, conflicting. It is this conflict of interests and the discordance of policies which had a decisive bearing on the course of Indo-Nepalese relations during the period under review. British economic and political interests were in conflict with the Nepalese policy of expansion by armed invasions or nibbling encroachments. Thus, while the British were concerned that the Nepalese policy would jeopardise British India's trade in the Himalayas and beyond, the Nepalese looked with mingled jealousy and fear the rapid expansion of the British power in India to the foothills of the Himalayas. The martial propensities of the Nepalese kept the northern border of British territory in a state of perpetual alarm and unease. Similarly, the stronger became the British hold on the regions contiguous to the Nepalese territory the more the Nepalese became concerned over the shrinkage of their scope for conquests and annexations. As restraining the martial Nepalese was the keynote of British policy, it was natural that the Nepalese would fight this policy tooth and nail.
In consequence, a feeling of deep-seated distrust and fear bedevilled their relations.

Economic considerations had the weightiest bearing on the British policy in Nepal in its earliest phase. A gateway to Tibet and Chinese Central Asia, Nepal was an entrepot of much-prized trade with the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions, and a vital link in the British commercial projects in this area. This commercial interest impelled the East India Company to forestall by arms the conquest of the Nepal valley by the Gurkhas. Subsequently, the same consideration led it to conciliate the Gurkha rulers of Nepal and establish amicable relations with them by treaties and engagements. The policy of conciliation, however, failed to restrain the Gurkhas. On the contrary, it emboldened them to tone-up their martial activities; the result was that the British were soon convinced that the security of their territory close to Nepal - it was also the richest and the most vulnerable part of the Company's dominion - would continue to be threatened unless the Nepalese were dealt with arms. Restraining Nepal was a compelling necessity. A war was thus inevitable. It lay in the logic of events.

The Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16) was, besides others, one of determination and delimitation of the frontiers of two expanding states. It set a limit to Nepal's territorial
ambitions; it bridled her; it paved the way for the tranquillity of India's northern border. In providing for definite political relations between the two states, the Treaty of Segowlee (March 1816) served as the keystone of Indo-Nepalese relations in subsequent years. The British found a political opening in a country which dreaded permanent intercourse with them.

The experience of the war was bitter for the Nepalese, but its lessons were salutary. They realised the superiority of British arms; they were convinced of the grave risk of clashing with that power singlehanded. Hence, instead of nibbling encroachments into and provocative aggressions on the British territory, attempts to rally the Indian states against the British by secret intrigues became for a time a marked feature of the Nepalese diplomacy. This desire to establish and keep up contacts with the Indian powers was motivated by the fond hope that once an internal crisis took place in India, Nepal would break lose the fetters of the Treaty of Segowlee. The allurement of plundering the opulent British dominions was balanced by the fear of British arms. Thus awe and fear of the British had a somewhat restraining effect on the Nepalese restlessness; their martial spirit was not crushed nor curbed, but they were held in leash, for while at least. It was a great moral gain for the British.
With the Treaty of Segowlee in 1816 a phase in Indo-Nepalese relations ended. There began another. Peace and stability were established in the relations, but there was no immediate growth of amity or concord. On the contrary, the distrust and fear of the Nepalese were accentuated by the constant fear that the connexion with the British would be a permanent channel of the latter's political and economic influence in Nepal, and a prelude to their dominance. The problem of the British, henceforth, was to retain the much-valued relations with Nepal as a means of restraining her; the problem of Nepal was to keep off from a closer contact with the British. The British sought to soothe the soreness of Nepal's defeat by scrupulous non-interference in her internal affairs and by conciliatory cordiality; the Nepalese response to it was cold, haughty aloofness. Confinement of the connections with the British to closely-guarded and rigidly restricted limits, became the cardinal maxim of Nepal's policy; non-intercourse with the British and their total exclusion became her national tenet. The British Resident was distrusted and despised as an arm of British imperialism; his stay was dreaded as a perpetual menace to the political integrity of the state. He was, hence, treated as a pariah, with no social connection and no freedom of movement. All the overtures of the British for closer relations were curtly declined for fear that they were political snares, spread out to enfeebl Nepal.
The extreme distrust of the British led the Nepalese statesmen to foster the martial spirit of the people, and to keep it in a high key. It was as much a measure of self-defence against the British as of striking them at an opportune moment. Militarism was the linch-pin of Nepal's internal policy as haughty aloofness and sullen hostility were that of her policy towards the British.

The latter dreaded the martial propensities of the Nepalese, for there was always the risk of their being demonstrated in the form of encroachments on the bordering British territory. So long as the martial spirit reigned supreme at Kathmandu genuine friendly relations could not grow between the governments of Nepal and British India, for this spirit had exclusive reference to the latter. Nothing was dearer to the Nepalese heart than a condign revenge on the British; besides the latter's opulent territory was a constant allurement, which kept the Nepalese army in a state of eager expectancy. In short, while the British were suspicious of Nepal's motives, the Nepalese were apprehensive of British imperialistic designs in Nepal. Hence, it fitted as much into the British policy to subdue or chasten the martial ardour of the Nepalese, as it did in the Nepalese policy to prevent their unwelcome relations from becoming too close or too cordial.

Yet, in spite of their full knowledge of Nepal's evil intentions, the British persevered in the policy of conciliating their sulky enemy, hoping that their forbearance would
remove Nepal's fear and create an atmosphere of confidence and cordiality. Soft-pedaling Nepal was at once politic and prudent. Indo-Nepalese relations were peaceful and stable for a decade and a half after the war of 1814-16, due greatly to Bhim Sen Thapa's able administration. It convinced the British that it was better to let the Nepalese alone.

A change in British policy was discernible in 1833, and this change had a far-reaching effect on the relations between the two governments. Resident B.H. Hodgson exposed the evils of the policy of non-interference and established how vitally they affected British interests in Nepal and India. The security of British India, Hodgson contended, made it an immediate necessity that Nepal's military spirit should either be crushed with arms or be lulled by the sedative drug of British influence. Nepal was a thorn on the side of British India; it should either be uprooted or its edge had to be rounded. If she were not an active enemy of immediate peril, she was a potential menace. He urged that political and economic means should be taken to enfeeble Nepal. With this started the policy of active interest in Nepal's internal affairs; this led to interference and eventually to drastic intervention, with a view to making the spirit of Nepal's administration conducive to British interests. To subdue Nepal by arms was risky; hence,
recourse was taken to political means. Establishment of British influence in the Court through the Resident seemed the best way open. But so long as Bhim Sen Thapa ruled Nepal, it was not feasible; he could neither be persuaded nor pressed to change the evil policy of his administration. The fall of Bhim Sen appeared thus to Hodgson as a pressing necessity, and the policy of active interference in the internal politics of Nepal a political expedient. The Resident took full advantage of the wrangles for power among the nobles and deftly played his part in the fall of the great Minister.

With the fall of Bhim Sen a turning point in the Indo-Nepalese relations was reached. The way lay open for British influence being brought fully to bear upon Nepalese politics, as also to establish it securely. But the way was not all clear, nor was it wholly safe. Having once meddled in the party squabbles, the Resident had to keep up his game, particularly when the jingo spirit in the Court was likely to spark off a disastrous war between the two states. During 1837-43, when the British were passing through an unprecedented crisis, drastic intervention, backed by the show of force, alone staved off such a war. It was the only means to rein the pent-up martial ardour of the Nepalese at a most critical time. A war with Nepal was difficult; it was risky, impolitic, and unprofitable. Nor
could the British maintain the erstwhile policy of armed
watchfulness; it was a costly policy. Hence, the British
sought to strengthen their influence in the Durbar through
the Resident; the latter helped creating a friendly party,
who set up a ministry agreeable to British interests. Thus,
the policy of active interest in the Nepalese politics
sprang into full maturity in the form of active intervention.
What was earlier meant to be a means of improving British
relations with Nepal, became, under stress of circumstances,
a plank of survival of those relations in their most critical
phase.

The tumultuous years of 1837-43 left a wholesome
lesson for both the Nepalese and the British. The former
experienced the bane of British interference in their internal
affairs, and the latter realised the danger of Nepalese
intrigues and active hostility. British policy during these
years confirmed the Nepalese fear that they were bent upon
establishing their political preponderance in Nepal by
intrigues with parties scrambling for power. They felt what
a powerful political force the Resident could be. It was
evident to them that the Resident could be used as a plank of
support of one interest, and as a lever to overthrow another.
They also realised that much of the troubles suffered by
Nepal during these years originated in the provocative policy
of the 'war-party'. The attitude of Nepal convinced the
British of how much determined she was to exploit their
(British) woes as her opportunities. There was a causal
connection between a crisis in British India and a ferment
in Nepal, and troubles with Nepal were likely to land the
British into difficulties with China and the states on the
northern frontier of India. The British government felt
that interference in Nepal's internal affairs accentuated
rather than removed political confusion, that it was intensely
disliked by the Nepalese, and that it was a prolific source
of discord and uneasiness in the relations between the two
governments. It was clear to them that the policy of
active intervention could at best serve as a political
expediency to weather a crisis; it would not be a safe
policy in normal circumstances. The wisest course of
winning the Nepalese confidence was to let them alone; an
atmosphere of trust and goodwill could not be created if
overt efforts were made to set a British tune to the
Nepalese politics. Realising this, the British withdrew
from what they felt was an "impossible position"; policy of
non-interference and conciliatory cordiality was hereafter
followed.

This change in the British policy by Lord Ellenborough
has been criticized as an impolitic and rash course, and
his recall of Hodgson as a drastic, indefensible, unwarranted
step taken in the spirit of deep-seated prejudice and in a
fit of impulse. It is evident that Hodgson’s policy was in marked contrast to that of his predecessors; he was not only the executor of the British government’s policy in Nepal but its architect. Doubtless, his deft diplomacy, courage and intimate knowledge of Nepalese affairs alone averted an Anglo-Nepalese war at a most critical time. But it is to be borne in mind that much of the political upheaval following Bhim Sen’s fall (in which he too had a hand) was created by his meddlesome policy. His intrigues with various parties in the Court, his shift of alliances, determined efforts to gain ascendancy in the Durbar, subtle ways of overthrowing one regime and setting up another, made political confusion worse confounded. It was, in fact, a vicious circle; the fall of Bhim Sen engendered bitter scrambles for power among the ambitious nobles; the latter ingratiated themselves with the Resident for his support; the Resident lent his weight in favour of some party, hoping to use it as a channel of his influence in the Durbar; the Resident’s involvement accentuated the deep-seated anti-British feelings; these feelings stirred up warlike spirits; invasion of British territory was seriously apprehended; the Resident found that active intervention was the only means to curb the hostile feelings in the Durbar; he helped

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in the growth of a pro-British party - only to give a handle to the 'war-party', and to churn more anti-British venom. It is clear, that the internal situation in Nepal, and the lust for power among the nobles themselves, greatly facilitated the Resident to assume a preponderant role in the Durbar. Yet it must be admitted that Hodgson's proceedings in Nepal were influenced by an inordinate suspicion of the Nepalese policy. In spite of his great attachment to Nepal he could never shed from his mind the idea that Nepal was a sword of Damocles overhanging British India, and that she could never be cordially disposed towards the British. His over-done suspicion, as Lord Auckland himself admitted, made him rather too much active in implementing his scheme of enervating Nepal by political and commercial means. And if such activity was justified in times of serious crises, it was precipitous and provoking in times of peace. To him, the policy of intervention was not merely a pis aller, but a nucleus of British influence in Nepal, a plinth on which he contemplated to raise the edifice of British preponderance. His vision was wide, his schemes bold, his efforts great, his services invaluable. Yet his policy carried within it seeds of danger; it could not be implemented without a serious conflict with Nepal, as he himself admitted. His relentless zeal for promoting the interests of his own government outweighed his consideration of the risk his schemes involved. All things considered,
Hodgson's peculiar genius fitted him more in a period of emergency than in normal times. He was one of those men who shone more in crisis than in times of quiet.

Had Hodgson been retained at Kathmandu, or had his policy been actively pursued, the whole current of Indo-Nepalese relations would have been otherwise. May be, Nepal would have been rendered thoroughly innocuous for offence, being, politically, an appanage of British India. But it is also open to conjecture if the Nepalese would have resigned themselves to the Resident's palpably preponderant position in their internal affairs, much less if it were openly asserted.

It was likely that British influence so created would have prevented the many ups and downs in Nepal's internal politics, and have checked much flow of blood, the characteristic feature of Nepal's internal history in the years following Hodgson's recall. At the same time it should not be overlooked that this influence would have certainly been resisted by some parties in the Court; they would have created perpetual troubles and discord between the two governments. Thus, active and openly-asserted British influence would have acted either as a solvent or an ignition; it would have served either as a cementing or a corrosive force. Looked from this angle, the policy of withdrawal and conciliatory cordiality adopted by Lord
Ellenborough and followed by his successors was a return from an uncertain and perilous course to a familiar end, hence, a safe track. In fact, during the period under review, the years 1833-43 were the only ones when the British actively intervened in the internal politics of Nepal, with a view to making it conducive to their interests. The policy of non-interference came as a welcome relief to the Nepalese after a long spell of apprehension; it helped in the growth of mutual confidence. The Nepalese statesmen realised the danger of sniping at the British and provoking the wrath of the Resident. The Resident was kept posted with all the happenings in the Court by the Ministers. On many occasions his counsel was solicited, though not always acted upon. Sometimes the parties contending for power sought his support. The position of the Resident was raised far higher than that of an intriguer. He was no longer an arbiter in the political struggle, nor a mediator in political disputes; he was a watchful sentinel of British interests in Nepal. He ceased to interfere in internal politics, but his very existence as the representative of a mighty power appeared to the Nepalese as a factor to reckon with. The prestige of the British Resident in Nepal was greater immediately after the tumultuous decade (1833-43) than before or during it.

But reversion to the policy of non-interference did not immediately restore internal stability. Wrangles for
power went on unabated, powers rose and fell in tragic sequence; many lives were lost, much blood was shed. In 1846 there emerged out of this chaotic state, Jang Bahadur Kunwar (later Rana), the most effective cementing factor in the relations of the governments of Nepal and India during the period under review. The year 1846 is a great landmark in the history of British relations with Nepal. It saw the restoration of domestic order and stability after years of tumult and chaos; and internal order in Nepal was the prerequisite to stable relations between the two governments. It saw the end of an epoch in Indo-Nepalese relations, and the beginning of another. The era of active enmity ended, and that of good faith, understanding and cooperation began.

Not the flower of the old nobility alone who died in the Kot. With them died an old idea. The obsession that the Nepalese and the British were irreconcilable enemies died; the idea that these two people could exist as amicable neighbours took its birth on the gory midnight of 14 September 1846. The idea of wreaking vengeance on who were hitherto distrusted as national enemies yielded place to that of experimenting with their goodwill. The policy of active hostility was abjured in favour of restricted friendliness and cautious deference to the British. Distrust of the British was not wholly gone, but the spirit of haughty aloofness gave way to that of friendly isolation. The policy
of non-intercourse was still adhered to but it was no longer a grave concern for the British.

Jang Bahadur's policy of understanding and friendliness tended to normalise the relations between the two governments. His journey to England in 1850-51 and the military assistance during the Revolt of 1857 brought the governments of Nepal and India nearer as never before. Absolute cordiality could not, however, be established due mainly to the British opposition to Jang Bahadur's inordinate ambitions. He was shrewd enough to keep off from too close an intimacy with the British, for fear that it would lead to their economic and political ascendancy. To this fear should be attributed his adoption of the policy of friendly isolation and restricted intercourse. Perhaps the fear was over-done, particularly when the British had clearly appreciated his goodwill and good faith. But the fear was not unnatural. The fate of the Indian states convinced him that close relations with the British often became their pretext for interference; they facilitated political dominance of the British. In fact, the policy of Nepal was a product of her close observation of the proceedings of the British in India. Judged from this angle, the Nepalese policy of insulation and non-intercourse was a measure of self-defence adopted by a weaker power against a stronger neighbour, whom it distrusted and feared, but whom it did not dare openly estrange.
If Jang Bahadur's pacific policy towards the British paved the way for greater British influence in the decades following his death, it should not be overlooked that such influence could not have been averted for long. The British in India had become an extremely powerful neighbour; amicable relations with them was a pressing necessity. It was not possible to keep Nepal hermetically sealed from what was regarded as the perilous contact with the British. British ascendancy in the Indian sub-continent had become an established fact; any effort to overlook, ignore or estrange it would have been neither practicable for Nepal nor politic. Hence, while freely maligning Jang Bahadur's "pro-British policy" as anti-national, it has to be borne in mind that this policy was a product of his realisation of this irresistible development in India. Apart from the fact that it served his family interest, it was a politic adjustment with a compelling phenomenon. If his "pro-British policy" strengthened his rule, it also allayed the distrust of the British towards Nepal, and paved the way for friendliness and goodwill between the two governments. Doubtless, Jang Bahadur always kept the British at a distance, and the relations between the later Ranas and the British were far more intimate than they were ever in his own lifetime.

But still, there was a snag. The cloud thawed in the relations between the governments of Nepal and British India.
but the Nepalese and the Indians in general did not come closer thereby. On the contrary, Nepal became a closed country to the Indians. It is true that intercourse between the Indians and the Nepalese had been much less than what it should normally have been between two neighbouring peoples with a common cultural heritage. But while during the pre-British days this lack of very intimate intercourse was due to natural factors like geographical barriers, and psychological insularity of the Nepalese people, during the British rule in India, it was accentuated by a settled policy of the governments of Nepal and India. Non-intercourse and isolation were carried to extremes; what was the highlanders' natural feelings towards the people of the plains became in course of Gurkha rule in Nepal and British rule in India, a national tenet of the Nepalese. Not the Europeans alone, but the Indians, as they were British subjects, too, were regarded as aliens; an Indian in Nepal felt being in a foreign land as never before.

The British government too disfavoured intercourse between Nepal and the protected Indian states, as also between peoples of India and Nepal. It was better that such an intriguing power as Nepal should be kept off from the main trend of Indian political life. Isolation and non-intercourse were hence as much measures of self-defence on the part of Nepal, as a matter of policy on that of the British.
The policy of isolation and non-intercourse had been for Nepal both a boon and a bane. While Nepal prided herself of having preserved her independence, she did not receive modern ideas and institutions through greater contact with the British. The Ranas, as all other Nepalese, had the innate fear that appurtenances of modernism were but means of political enervation. Between independence and modernism through closer relations with the British, the Nepalese always prized the former. A modern Nepal, under British guidance would, it was feared, be just an appendage of British India.

But this was not all. Beneath this lofty patriotic ideals, there lurked the fear that modern ideas and institutions and the resultant enlightenment of the people would corrode the autocratic rule the Ranas had set up. Isolation and non-intercourse with British India thus served the family interest of the Ranas. British political ascendancy was as much prejudicial to the national interests of Nepal as to the personal interests of the Ranas; and the two interests were synonymous in the Rancancy. The Ranas confined the connexion with the British solely to their own selves. They exploited it as a means of cementing their hegemony as much as a defence against their enemies.

It is not so much the British who actively supported the Rana rule so that the Ranas made it seem so. Doubtless, the British realised that a strong friendly government in
Nepal served their frontier policy well. Besides, the services of the Gurkhas in the British army were highly valued. But contemporary records do not suggest that the Rana regime had been purposely set up and actively feathered by the British government in India.

Nevertheless, British association with the Ranas assumed in course of time a sinister look in the eyes of the anti-Rana section in Nepal. It was clear to the progressive section of the people that although Nepal did not form administratively a part of British India, for all practical purposes, she was well within the broad framework of British Imperial interests in Asia; she was politically subordinate to the British government and economically dependent on them. Nepalese soldiers served in the British army, the Nepalese economy became increasingly bound up with the Indian; the rulers of Nepal (Rana) had close friendship with those of India. The British political officers in Nepal were treated with great respect; their opinions and suggestions were accepted as friendly advice. It could hardly be overlooked by the Nepali nationalists that advice of a superior power often assumed the character of prescription of a particular course of action, if not over-dictation. In short, it was clear to anti-Rana section that British influence worked

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in Nepal through the Rana government, and that the Ranas were but stooges of the British - both being firmly wedded to the principle of keeping Nepal in a state of absolute backwardness. It appeared to them as though it were a conspiracy of the Ranas and their protectors, the British, against the people of Nepal. Close association with the Ranas thus earned for the British the opprobrium of having propped up a thoroughly unpopular regime. Soon after the British left India in 1947, the régime crumbled leaving a bitter memory of misrule, oppression and abject poverty in the land. The sighs of despair, so long suppressed, found full-throated utterance in the form of a cry to wipe out the last vestiges of the autocratic régime; it was a clarion call to the people of Nepal. The smothered embers of discontent lit up; in its blaze was burnt the despotic rule; its glow became a beacon light for the people of Nepal - the light of hope, of activity to build a new, progressive nation. Modern Nepal was born on the ashes of a century-old, outdated oligarchy.