Chapter One
INTRODUCTORY

INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS, 1767-1816

It is natural that countries with such geographical
proximity and cultural affinity as India and Nepal should have
a long history of relations. The relations, maintained through
the ages, have been recorded in the annals and legends of both
the countries. A new chapter in the Indo-Nepalese relations
was unfolded in the second half of the eighteenth century - a
phenomenon ascribable to two factors, independent of one another
in origin but, curiously enough, coeval. One of these factors
was the gradual and steady emergence of the British power in

(1) For the early history of Nepal and her relations with
India see S. Levi, Le Nepal; Etude Historique D'un Royaume
Hindon (3 vols., Paris, 1905-08 - Type Written English Transla-
tion: 2 vols., I.C.W.A. Library, New Delhi); D.R. Regmi, Ancient
Nepal (Calcutta, 1960); L. Petech, Medieval History of Nepal
(Bomb.; 1953); W.B. Wright, ed., History of Nepal (Cambridge, 1877;
2nd Indian Edition, 1958) 45-97; H.A. Oldfield, Sketches from
Nepal (London, 1880) I, 256-65; R.C. Majumdar and A. Fussalkar.,
eds., The History and Culture of the Indian People: The Delhi
Sultanate (Bombay, 1950) 409-15; Ibid.; The Age of Imperial Kanauj
(Bombay, 1955) 58-60; P. Landon, Nepal (London, 1928) I, 1-59;
R.G. Baskar, History of North-East India (Calcutta, 1934) 239-302;
K.P. Jayaswal, "Chronology and History of Nepal, 600 B.C. -
B. Sharma, Nepalko Aitihasik Ruprekha (Nepali, Banaras, 2008 V.S.);
53-196.
India, the other, the conquest of Nepal by the martial Gurkhas.

Nepal in the 18th Century

Nepal in the eighteenth century was not a unified political entity but a congeries of states steeped in unceasing recriminations, strifes and struggles. In the valley of Kathmandu there were three independent princedoms, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, each jealous of the other, and each corroded with internal dissensions. To the west of the valley lay forty-six chieftaincies grouped under two loose confederacies, called Baisi (twenty-two states) and Chaubisi (twenty-four states). To the east of the valley, there were tribal domains of the Kirats and the Limbus, two aboriginal races of Nepal. The internecine squabbles, jealousy and bickerings in all these states made the situation congenial for an ambitious adventurer to conquer and weld these disintegrated elements

(2) Geographically Nepal is divided into three regions, the Juxta-Indien, the Central and the Juxta-Himalayan. The first consists of the Tarai or open low lands up to the base of the lower hills; the second region includes the valley of Kathmandu and extends from the lower range of hills in the south to the vast ridges immediately below the Himalaya; and the third consists entirely of mountains extending northwards to the snowy sierras of the Himalayas. Originally 'Nepal' stood for the valley of Kathmandu alone, but since its occupation by the Gurkhas the whole country is so called. Sketch of the Country of Nepal, M.H., Vol.3, K476, India Office Library, London (In Microfilms, I.C.W.A. Library, New Delhi); Oldfield, n. 1, 1-62; F. Buchanon-Hamilton, An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal and of the Territories annexed to Dominion by the House of Gorkha (Edinburgh, 1819) 61-2.
into a political fabric, homogeneous, strong and viable.

Eighteenth Century Nepal produced such an adventurer in the person of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the ruler of Gorkha.

About fifty miles west of Kathmandu, in the valley of the Sapta Gandaki (seven mountain streams), nestles a township, called Gorkha, rugged and hilly, the home of the hardy martial race, the Gurkhas. The ancestry and early history of the Gurkhas are veiled by the pall of obscurity and confusion. In the 12th-14th centuries, the tide of Muslim invasion drove a number of Rajput princes to the mountain fastnesses of Nepal. A branch of the Rajputs of Udaipur entered Gorkha, subjected its inhabitants to their authority, and with their help, set up a strong kingdom. In 1559, Dravya Shah, the son of the Raja of Lamjung, one of the Chaubisi states in the west of Kathmandu, conquered Gorkha. The present royal family of Nepal traces its lineal descent from Dravya Shah.

In 1742, Prithvi Narayan Shah, a stripling of twelve years, became the King of Gorkha, with his heart set upon conquest, particularly, of the valley of Kathmandu.

(3) For details see D.R. Regmi, Modern Nepal (Calcutta, 1961) 1-42; Nepali Vamsavali (Genealogical chronicles), M.H., vol.18, K481; Hemraj Vamsavali (Nepali, Rashtriya Pustakalaya, Kathmandu, 1947 V.S.)

(4) For a sketchy and somewhat confused account of the early history of the Gurkhas see Hamilton, n. 2, 9-60; Levi, n. 1, I, 320-56; Regmi, n. 3, 13-26; Wright, n. 1, 167-73; Oldfield, n. 1, 277-9; M.H., vol.18, K481.
The ruler of Kathmandu, Jai Prakash Malla, had, by successive acts of intemperance and folly, alienated his influential nobles, impelling them to spin plots against him. In Patan and Bhatgaon the rivalry between the royalty and nobility had plunged the states into the vortices of anarchy and chaos. At such a time Prithvi Narayan struck at the kingdom of Kathmandu.

Policy of the East India Company

Besieged by the invading Gurkhas, Jai Prakash Malla appealed to the Company for succour. The Company responded favourably. It at first sought to resolve the crisis peacefully by persuading Prithvi Narayan to desist from molesting Jai Prakash Malla, and to accept its mediation. The Gurkha King having taken no heed of this, it was felt that "the honour and interest of the Company require we should treat him as a declared enemy."


(6) Select Committee Proceedings, Vol. 12, 199-200.
Economic and political considerations weighed with the Company to take such a decision. Since long there existed intimate commercial relations between the Indo-Gangetic plain and the states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. These states served as entrepots in the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions. The fostering care of the Malla Kings of Kathmandu had provided great impetus to the lucrative trade between India and Nepal. Tibetan gold ingots, gold dust, rice and other grains, ghee, oil seeds, spices, hides, copper and timber formed the principal items of import from Nepal. Textiles, cotton and silk yarn, grains, sugar, salt, fish, dried fruits and spices were the staple exports from India to Nepal.

The trade of Bengal with the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan areas had been adversely affected by the aggressive exploits of the Gurkhas. It was feared that this trade would

(7) Before the Gurkha conquest, the valley of Kathmandu was ruled by the Malla Kings. Jai Prakash was the last Malla King of Kathmandu. For the history of the Malla Kings see B. Sharma, n. 1, 128-96.

cease altogether, causing thereby immense injury to the economic life of the Company's territories abutting on Nepal. The external commerce of Bengal was then in a declining stage; besides, the Company was anxious to find markets for textile and other European goods in Nepal, Tibet and Western China. Bengal was then faced with a severe scarcity of specie, and the supply of Tibetan gold through Nepal was of vital importance for the Company's investment in China. Besides, Gurkha incursions into Bettiah in Bihar had kept the place in a state of perpetual disquiet and alarm. "A counter-offensive against the Gurkhas" was deemed the most fitting reply to Prithvi Narayan's threats that he would forcibly take possession of the disputed territories on Bihar border, if the British did not acquiesce in his stronger claim to them.

The Kinloch Expedition (1767)

Accordingly, an armed expedition, under Captain Kinloch, was despatched by the Company against the Gurkhas in October 1767. Unfortunately, the knowledge of the country


(10) Chatterjee, n. 9, 24.
was inadequate, supply of provisions insufficient, and the
time unsuited for such an expedition. The soldiers were utterly
demoralised when disease took a heavy toll of their life in
the marshy swamps of the Tarai forests. In consequence, mass
desertion followed. The cup of misery was full when
torrential rain swept away the hastily improvised bridges,
rendering the swollen rivers absolutely impassable. Thus
famine and hunger, disease and desertion, death and despair
compelled Captain Kinloch to abandon the enterprise and
retrace his steps; the high hopes of the Select Committee were
shattered. Yet the fatuous expedition was not wholly barren
of results. It acquainted the British with the roads and
passes leading into Nepal, as also with the physical difficulties of military operations there. As for the Gurkhas, the
armed intervention of the Company sowed in their mind that
extreme distrust of the English which ripened later into the
settled policy of jealous exclusion of the foreigners and non-
intercourse with the British government in India. The greatest
injury was done to Indo-Nepalese commerce.

About two years after this ill-fated enterprise, the
Company sent a mission to Nepal under one James Logan, with a
view to persuading Prithvi Narayan to revive the customary

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(11) S.C.P., Vol.XIII, 432-4; XIV, 80-5; XV, 6-14, 122-34; Markham, n. 8, CXXVI; Forrest, n. 8, 77; S. Cammann, Trade
Through the Himalayas (Princeton, 1961) 107-8; Richard
Barwell's Letter to his Father," Bengal Past and Present
(Calcutta) X:19, 29.
mercantile relations between India and Nepal. The mission achieved no result; the Gurkha King refused to cooperate with the Company in its commercial schemes in the Himalayan region.

Policy of Conciliation

The steady consolidation of Gurkha power in Nepal drove home to the mind of the British that their own commercial interest necessitated not only recognition of this new power but conciliating it. Policy of armed intervention in favour of the dispossessed Malla Kings was, hence, abjured and that of befriending the Gurkha ruler adopted instead by the Company. The ever-increasing disputes with the Gurkhas over lands bordering on Bihar posed a trying problem for the British; the suppression of the Sannyasi menace in Bengal also necessitated effective cooperation of the Nepal government. Conciliatory letters

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(12) Logan's Memorandum on Trans-Himalayan Trade of Bengal and Gurkha Conquest of Nepal, quoted in Chatterjee, n. 9, 40 et seq.

(13) Chaudhuri, n. 9, 37; Regmi, n. 3, 151-3.

(14) Calendar of Persian Correspondence, VII (Calcutta, 1940) 1414, 300, 1282; S.C. Sarkar, "Some Notes on the intercourse of Bengal with the Northern Countries in the Second half of the 18th Century," P.I.H.R.C., 13 (December, 1930) 99 et seq.

(15) A band of armed Nagas used to come in a body through the Nepalese Tarai; they ravaged the Company's territories every year as far as Dinajpur in Bengal. India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous, Vol. 648, 206, quoted in Chaudhuri, n. 9, 53; J.M. Ghosh, Sannyasi and the Fakir raids in Bengal (Calcutta, 1930); K.K. Datta, History of the Bengal Subah (Calcutta, 1936) I, 266 f.n.
and complimentary presents were, hence, sent to Prithvi Narayan as friendly gestures. The hill fortresses of Bara, Parsa, Routehat and Bidgi, which were seized by the British during Kinloch expedition, were returned to Prithvi Narayan, who was recognised formally as the King of Nepal.

The policy of conciliation earned some dividend to the Company. Politically, Indo-Nepalese relations registered a marked improvement during the Governor-Generalship of Warren Hastings. During his rule an agreement was entered into with the Nepal government providing for mutual cooperation of the two governments for the suppression of the predatory Sarais. Some long-standing border disputes were also resolved through the instrumentality of Deenanath Upadhya, the Nepalese (17) sent to Calcutta for that purpose. When, in 1775, Chait Singh, the Raja of Banaras, raised an insurrection against the English, Prithvi Narayan sent an army to Mekwanpur to help the Company. But as the insurrection was ably put down by the

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(16) For the conciliatory policy of the British see Volume of Persian Letters Issued, 13 November 1769, 106-7, quoted in Chatterjee, n. 9, 53. The petty chiefs of the hills and the Nepalese Tarai tried hard to enlist the British help for overthrowing the Gurkha power. The Company was now opposed to back them with arms. Sarkar, n. 9; Chandhuri, n. 9, 51; C.P.C., VIII, 1308, 1381.


(18) Ibid., 40, et seq.
latter, the need for Gurkha help did not arise.

But the attempts of Hastings to improve the state of trade between India and Nepal by direct correspondence with the Gurkha King or through the good offices of the Teshoo Lama of Tibet proved wholly infructuous. Far from lending the sought-for cooperation, Prithvi Narayan endeavoured to induce the Tibetan and the Bhutanese governments to snap all mercantile relations with the Company.

Expansion of Nepal

Prithvi Narayan launched the Nepalese upon a career of war and conquest, with the result that soon after his death in 1775, his successors effected great extension of the kingdom and great addition to its strength and resources. This aggressive militarism involved her into wars with her neighbours and estrangement with the British in India. In 1787 the Gurkhas swept over parts of Sikkim and soon after invaded Tibet. Both these states having relations with China, Nepalese aggressions brought in their wake the intervention of that power.

(19) I.O.R.H.M., Vol. 648, 213-20, cited by Chaudhuri, n. 9, 54-6. Prithvi Narayan seems to have reciprocated the friendly and peaceful policy of the Company; for he realised that peaceful relations with the latter were needed to consolidate his newly established power in the teeth of opposition of many dispossessed chiefs who sought to employ the Company's arms against him.

(20) Hastings was greatly interested in the Trans-Himalayan Trade. He sent Bogle and Turner to Tibet and Foxcroft to Nepal on commercial projects. Markham, n. 9; S. Turner, An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet (London, 1800); C.I.G., VI (Delhi, 1933) 949.
Since the overthrow of the Malla Kings by Prithvi Narayan in 1769 the relations between Nepal and Tibet were strained on various scores, political and economic. The expansionist policy of the martial Gurkhas released great uneasiness and concern in Tibet which had so long maintained peaceful commercial and cultural relations with the overthrown Malla Kings of Nepal. The Tibetans also disfavoured the Gurkha interference in the long-standing mercantile relations between Tibet and India. The brewing tension was aggravated by the currency dispute between the two states. The rich Tibetan monasteries stirred the avarice of the Gurkhas; they quenched it by a sudden invasion of Tibet in 1788. Badly beaten, and alarmed by the large scale spoliation and plunder, the Tibetans invoked the succour of China. On the later's mediation, a treaty was concluded in 1789, only to be broken by the Gurkhas a year later, when the Tibetans discontinued the payment of an annual tribute, stipulated by the recent treaty. This time the Gurkhas carried fire and sword as far as Digarche, ransacking the monasteries on the way. The warning by China to desist from war being unheeded by the Nepalese, a large Chinese force appeared on the scene and drove the Gurkhas to the threshold of Kathmandu. Both the

(21) Markham, n. 8, 197-8, 205.

contestants being exhausted after many pitched battles, they agreed to a peace, by which Nepal undertook to despatch a quinquennial tributary mission to Peking as a token of her submission to the Celestial Emperor.

During the course of the war, both Tibet and Nepal had begged the aid of the Company. In March 1792 Nepal had entered into a commercial treaty with the Company, presumably, hoping to count on British aid in the war with the Sino-Tibetans. Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, refused to lend armed aid to either for fear of giving umbrage to China and causing thereby injury to the Company’s trade in Canton.


(24) Dr. Campbell's (Assistant Resident) Report on Political Transactions with Nepal, P.C., 18 September 1337, 69-71; Oldfield, n. 1, 281-2; C.U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, XIV (Calcutta, 1929) 45, 56-7; V. A. Narain, Jonathan Duncan and Varanasi (Calcutta, 1959); C.P.C., IX, 1562, 699; Ibid., X, 361, 570. The Treaty provided for a uniform duty of 2½ p.c. advalorem to be levied reciprocally on goods from either country.

Still the situation was such that he could hope to exploit the political difficulties of Nepal for improving the Company's commercial interests there. Lord Cornwallis sent a mission to Kathmandu under Captain Kirkpatrick, ostensibly to help terminate the Sino-Nepalese war by mediation and friendly advice to the contestants, but primarily to induce the Gurkha government to give effect to the newly-executed Commercial treaty.

Kirkpatrick's Mission (1793)

By the time Kirkpatrick reached Kathmandu (March 1793), peace with China had already been concluded by the Gurkhas. By now, the exigency which had obliged the Nepalese to conclude the Commercial treaty of 1792 and acquiesce in the British Government's preferred mediation, had passed off. (26) The treaty itself was a "Counsel of despair," a political expediency to weather a crisis; and as soon as that crisis had passed off with the conclusion of peace with China and, without the British aid, the treaty ceased to have any value for the Nepalese. Consequently, the latter showed no disposition to give effect either to the said treaty or to appreciate Kirkpatrick's attempts to improve the mercantile relations between the two countries. No wonder then, notwithstanding the cordial reception at the Court and its

(26) Chaudhuri, n. 9, 72.
well-meaning professions, Kirkpatrick was soon convinced that his mission could achieve nothing. So convinced, he returned to Calcutta.

The failure of British diplomacy

The policy of the British government in the Tibeto-Nepalese war failed them on every score.

The role of Cornwallis in Gurkha war had lost him the respect of both victors and vanquished. Neither side appreciated his having avoided openly taking sides and then having offered to mediate when the war was already over. (28)

The Nepalese regarded the British with whom they had contracted a treaty, as disobliging allies who had let them down in the time of need. Their distrust and ill-feeling towards the English deepened as a consequence. A suspicion also lurked among the Chinese and the Tibetans that the British had covertly helped the Nepalese. This suspicion had adverse effects on Macartney's Commercial mission to China. The Nepal-Tibet war and the resultant Himalayan crisis led to

(27) Kirkpatrick, n. 8; Campbell's Report, n. 24, C.P.C., X, 898, 1051, 1175, 788, 884, 1180-1, 1422, 1461, 1578-9; W. Ross, Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis (London, 1859) II, 203-5; Regmi, n. 3, 231-43.


the strengthening of China's hold over Tibet and the virtual cessation of India's trade with the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions. Yet the mission of Kirkpatrick was not wholly barren of results. It led to considerable knowledge about Nepal, its topography, geography, politics, economy, society and culture.

Abdul Kadir's Mission (1795)

In 1795 another Commercial mission was sent to Nepal by Sir John Shore, Lord Cornwallis' successor. The mission was led by one Maulana Abdul Kadir Khan, an Indian merchant who had been deputed to Kathmandu on three earlier occasions. The mission was made to appear unofficial; it was expected to achieve better results in Commercial and political matters. Unfortunately, however, this mission had no better luck than Kirkpatrick's, chiefly because of the unsettled politics in the Court and the stubborn opposition of a section of Nepalese nobles to closer intercourse with the British. Like his predecessor, the Maulana has left a valuable account of Nepal, dealing particularly with the means of improving the trade.

(30) Ibid., 24-34; Markham, n. 8, LXXVIII-X; Campbell's Report, n. 24.

(31) Kirkpatrick, n. 8.
relations between India and Nepal.

Court Politics at Kathmandu and the Treaty of 1801

At this time the political situation in the Court was unsettled, and the administration, consequently, chaotic. After the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1775, his son, Pratap Singh Shah, ruled for about three years, and thereafter his infant son, Ran Bahadur Shah, ascended the throne, with his uncle, Bahadur Shah, acting as the Regent. Bahadur Shah was soon overthrown from power by the queen of the late King; he escaped to Bettiah. After the death of the queen Bahadur Shah returned and held the regency till 1794 when he was deposed and a year later executed by his nephew, King Ran Bahadur, now no longer a minor. Ran Bahadur soon gave in to dissipation, profligacy and great cruelty, rousing by these a storm of indignation in the Court. The crowning folly of his career was the seduction of a Brahmin girl, and making her the queen, in wanton violation of the existing social canon. The son of this favourite consort, Girvan Juddha

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Vikram Shah, was seated on the throne, while Ran Bahadur abdicated to take up the life of a recluse. The sudden death of this queen drove Ran Bahadur to a paroxysm of rage and violence. Temples were shattered by cannon shots, sacred idols crushed with clubs and the sacrosanct Brahmin priests humiliated and tortured in sundry ways for their inability to save his dear queen’s life by incantations and prayers. The indignation of the exasperated nobles was so great that Ran Bahadur was obliged to leave Nepal for Banaras in May 1800; his infant son Girvan Juddha Vikram ruled at Kathmandu.

It was a curious political development. Here, right inside the Company’s territory, was the ex-King of a country, with whom the English had in vain sought to establish closer relations - a person, aggrieved and smarting under humiliation, with a rankling ambition to be back in power. Little wonder, the Company tried to exploit him as a political weapon to fulfil its cherished commercial objects in Nepal. It was willing to mediate between the Nepal Durbar and the exiled

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(34) For the life of Ran Bahadur see Levi, n. 1, II, 315-21; Landon, n. 1, 70-5; Campbell’s Report, n. 24; C. Nepali, Bhim Sen Thapa Ra Tatkalin Nepal (Nepali, Kathmandu, 2013 v.s.) 1-23. The British writers contend that the exasperated nobles forced Ran Bahadur to abdicate in favour of his infant son and leave for Banaras. But Regmi proves by Nepalese documents that Ran Bahadur's abdication was voluntary, and that it took place eight months before the death of his beloved consort in November 1799. Ran Bahadur had abdicated to please the Queen, n. 3, 271.
King with a view to restoring him to power under British (35) guarantee. So restored, the King would, out of gratitude, give commercial concessions to the Company. The British were, however, reluctant to lend any armed assistance to Ran Bahadur (36) in spite of the latter's repeated solicitations. The party in power at Kathmandu was gravely apprehensive of a coalition between Ran Bahadur and the British and the latter's armed (37) intervention on behalf of the exiled King. To avert such a contingency, the said party was eager to give those very concessions which the British hoped to achieve by backing the King. The Company found itself in a bargaining position and sought to make the most of it by playing on the fear of the Nepal Durbar. Negotiations were started for a commercial agreement with Nepal, favourable to the Company, and after much wrangling by both sides, the British elicited the (38) Durbar's acquiescence to a treaty in October 1801. The Treaty provided, among other things, for the establishment of a British Resident at Kathmandu and a Nepalese Vakil in Calcutta.

(35) S.C., 26 June 1800, 85-6.
(36) Ibid.
Curiously enough, the treaty was wholly of a political nature; it did not have any clause relating to commerce. The Nepalese Durbar or rather the party in power, hoped that the Company would keep Ran Bahadur interned in British territory, preventing him from escaping to Nepal and overthrowing the regime which made the Treaty. For Ran Bahadur's maintenance an understanding was reached with the British.

The reactions of Ran Bahadur could easily be imagined. Earlier he had tried to effect his reinstatement to power with the help of the British. But the latter's refusal to lend him any armed assistance provided a cold douche to his hopes. His suspicion that the English were exploiting him as a political lever to extract their own ulterior objects from the troubled Nepalese Court was confirmed by the Treaty of 1801. His faith in the English flagged; he tried to effect his escape to Nepal, only to find his attempts foiled and more rigorous surveillance being imposed on his person.

Capt. Knox's Residentship (1802-3)

Captain Knox was sent in 1802 as the first British Resident to Kathmandu. He was instructed to cultivate friendly relations with such influential members of the Court as Damodar Pande, the Minister, and Chautaria Bam Shah, a close relative of the King, with the ultimate object of

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(39) Aitchison, n. 24, 57-61.

(40) SC, 21 August 1800, 2; Campbell's Report, n. 24; Chaudhuri, n. 9, 106-18.
establishing a "controlling influence" in the Court through (41) their agencies. Such an influence was deemed essential as much for the promotion of the Company's commercial interests as for the suppression of border crimes and amicable adjustment of unceasing boundary disputes; above all, there was the pressing necessity of safeguarding the British districts on the Nepal border against the encroachments of the Nepalese. Knox's primary object was to induce the Nepal Durbar to give (42) "complete effect" to the Commercial Treaty of 1792.

The unsettled political state, coupled with the extreme jealousy and suspicion of a section of the nobles towards the British, made Captain Knox's task extremely difficult. He avoided giving the impression of interfering in the internal politics of the Court, hoping to win gradually the confidence (44) of the Nepalese in the rectitude of the British policy. In the Durbar party squabbles were rife; chaos and disorder supervened as a natural consequence. The ruling party had earned unpopularity for its slackness and inefficiency. Its

(41) S.C., 30 June 1802, 11.


(43) Ibid. Captain Knox suggested paying pensions or jageers to the high officers of the Nepalese government in order to "convert the rulers of Nepal into British dependents." S.C., 30 June 1802, 11, quoted in Chaudhuri, n. 9, 121.

treaty with the Company was bitterly criticised as prejudicial to Nepal's national interest and political integrity. Damodar Pande, the Minister, fell shortly from power. Influential courtiers tried in every possible way to foil Knox's attempts to cajole the ruling party to implement the Treaty. From Banaras, Ran Bahadur wrote secret letters to the anti-British section in the Durbar, inciting it against the Company, who had played on their apprehensions and had extorted a favourable treaty as a prelude to their devious designs in Nepal. In fact, the whole circumstances in which the treaty of 1801 was made, Captain Knox appointed, and the political stress in which the Nepalese Durbar suffered his admission into Nepal—all these rendered the mission of Captain Knox foredoomed to failure.

Shortly hereafter, Queen Raj Rajeswari Devi, who had so long stayed with Ran Bahadur at Banaras arrived in Nepal, either being vexed with the profligate life of Ran Bahadur at Banaras or at his instance to snatch power from the ruling party. Overthrowing the latter, she assumed the regency,

(45) Letters of Ran Bahadur to various persons in the Court of Kathmandu, C. Nepali, n. 34, 7-8; Itihas Prakash Mandal, Pub., Itihas Prakash (Kathmandu) Anka 1, Varsa 18 (2012 V.S.) 21

(46) The Treaty had "certainly been the offspring of fear." Campbell's Report, n. 24

(47) Ibid.

during which the prospect of Capt. Knox's success became dimmer. Captain Knox laboured under deep suspicion, open derision and obloquy, vainly seeking to persuade the Durbar to give effect to its engagements with the British. Disgusted with the prevarications of the Durbar, he withdrew from Kathmandu in March 1803, convinced of the failure of his mission. But the preoccupation with the French, the Marhattas and other Indian powers, together with the dread of Chinese intervention on behalf of Nepal and the impairment of the Company's Canton trade - all these restrained Lord Wellesley from strongly intervening in Nepal affairs for the sake of upholding the hard-earned engagements with the Nepalese.

Thus none of the objects for which Capt. Knox was sent to Nepal and the Treaty of 1801 made, could be fulfilled. The treaty was formally rescinded in January 1804; Ran Bahadur was freed from surveillance and allowed to return to Nepal. With the formal revocation of the Treaty of 1801 the relations between Nepal and the Company relapsed to the same negative state as they were before the first treaty with Nepal in 1792. Returning to Nepal, Ran Bahadur assumed the regency in name

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(49) SCG., 2 May 1805, 350; Campbell's Report, n. 24; R.M. Martin, The Despatches of the Marquess Wellesley (London, 1837) IV, 16.

(50) Campbell's Report, n. 24; Chaudhuri, n. 9, 118-41.
but royalty in fact. He executed Damodar Pande, holding him responsible for all the misfortunes he had suffered so long. Thereafter, he elevated to Ministership, Bhim Sen Thapa, a young, ambitious, spirited, able man, who played not an inconsiderable part in effecting his come-back to power. Soon after, Ran Bahadur was killed by his own brother, Sher Bahadur, in a domestic brawl. His wife, Lalit Tripura Sundari Devi, assumed the regency, while Bhim Sen Thapa continued as the Minister.

From now onwards, the authority of the Prime Minister in Nepal transcends that of the King until the royal personality ceased to be felt altogether in the country's affairs and the bearer of the empty title is a state prisoner, generation after generation in his white palace at Kathmandu. (53)

Nepal's policy of aggressive militarism

It is singular to note that amidst all these tumultuous scenes in the political life of Nepal, when factions multiplied, animosities raged, blood frequently shed, the Nepalese maintained a uniform record of extending their kingdom by arms and conquests. The first decade of the 19th century witnessed

(51) Campbell's Report, n. 24; C. Nepali holds that Ran Bahadur acted as the Mukhtivar (Minister) till his death in 1806. His son, King Girvan Juddha Vikram was then a minor, n. 54, 11-5.

(52) For the life of Bhim Sen see ibid.; Hemraj Vamsavali.

(53) F. Tuker, Gorkha, the Story of the Gurkhas of Nepal (London, 1957) 70.
Nepal's territorial limits stretched from the river Tista in the east to the river Sutlej in the west.

The expansion of their state by aggressive militarism was certain to affect Indo-Nepalese relations. Hemmed in the north by Tibet, owing allegiance to China, and in the east by Sikkim, a dependency of Tibet, the only outlet for Nepal's martial zeal could be the west and the south. She exploited the weaknesses of the hill states to her west and occupied some of them.


(55) A part of Sikkim had been conquered by the Gurkhas. Further aggression in this state was likely to entail intervention of Tibet and China who claimed suzerainty over it. Hisley, n. 54. See also Chapter Eleven, page

(56) Hutchison and Vogel, n. 54; Atkinson, n. 54; Report on the Protected Hill States, 1824, Punjab Government Records (Lahore, 1911) I, 260 et seq.
Flushed with success, the Gurkhas attacked Raja Sansar Chand, the Chief of Kangra. The latter invoked the British help against the invading Gurkhas. The British declined to give any armed aid, for it was likely to result in a war with Nepal. In despair, the Raja appealed to Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler, for succour. Ranjit readily responded and swept the invaders away from Kot Kangra, the besieged fort of Kangra. During this war, both the Sikhs and the Gurkhas had solicited British help against each other. The British were placed in a difficult position. The occupation of the Kangra Valley and the hill states around by the warlike Nepalese was an unwelcome development in the western border of the Company's territory. On the other hand, a league, as proposed by the Nepalese, against Ranjit Singh, was certain to estrange the Sikh Ruler. Hence, the British chose not to intervene, letting the militant Sikhs and the Gurkhas clash with each other and act as mutual checks. In any event, the powerful Sikh ruler acted as a serious obstacle to Nepal's expansion further west.

(57) Punjab District Gazetteers, VII, Part A, Kangra District (Lahore, 1926) 71-4. The Company's territory at Saharanpur was close to the Nepalese territory in Garhwal.

(58) Hutchison and Vogel, n. 54, 176-93; Wilson, n. 54; 126 et seq.; A. Farooqi, British Relations with the Cis-Sutlej States 1809-23 (Lahore, 1941) 43-4; H.L.O. Garrett and G. Chopra, eds., Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh 1810-1817 (Translated from the Papers in the Alienation Office, Poona, Punjab Government Record Office Publication, Lahore, 1939).
Nepalese encroachment on British territory: 
Genesis of the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16)

Thus baulked in the west, the martial ardour of the Nepalese found an accentuated vent in the south, where the British territory lay in tempting opulence. In fact, ever since the Gurkha occupation of the Kathmandu Valley, the British Magistrates had been alleging that the Nepalese were encroaching on the bordering British districts in a deliberate, systematic and planned manner. The frontier being ill-defined, matters often came to a head over claims and counter-claims to disputed lands on the border. Remonstrances against violations of British territory had all been ineffectual. By 1814, it was found that there was hardly any part of the extensive Indo-Nepalese frontier where encroachments by the Nepalese had not taken place. The situation had deteriorated so much that the British were convinced that armed resistance to the Gurkha policy of "creeping encroachment", was the only course left open to maintain the security of the British districts. The erstwhile policy of moderation and forbearance had been overstrained; it was misconstrued by the Nepalese as supineness and pusillanimity. In May 1814, the Gurkhas suddenly raided three police posts in Butwal in the Gorakhpur district, killing its inhabitants. This incident served as the immediate casus belli.

(59) Lord Moira to Secret Committee, 2 August 1815, Papers Relating to the Nepaul War (1824) 675-763; H.T. Prinsep, History of the Political and Military Transactions during the (contd. on next page)
Doubtless, the Anglo-Nepalese war (1814-16) owed its origin to the expensive and encroaching policy of the Nepalese. Yet, a close study of the contemporary records would suggest that commercial considerations also weighed with the Company to take that decisive action. The British coveted the Nepalese territories of Kumaon and Garhwal as important commercial centres and trade routes in the Himalayan region. Hence, the occupation of these two districts was from the first the great object of the war.

Armed Reckoning and the Treaty of Segowlee (1816)

After months of preparation for a serious armed reckoning, Lord Hastings, the Governor-General, declared war on 1st November 1814. The storm long brewing had at last burst forth.

The difficulty of the campaign was enormous. Nepal was a mountainous country, peopled by a fierce, brave and extremely warlike race, the like of which the Company's 'sepoys' had not yet encountered. The Sikhs, the Pindaris


(60) Secret Letter of Lord Moira, 2 August 1815, Papers Relating to Nepaul War, 749 et seq.; Bute, p. 59, 251.
and the Marhattas were restive and all eyes seemed to have turned on the issue of the war. No wonder, the formulation of the plan of the war was "a subject of most serious and anxious deliberation" on the part of the British, for failure "would be the first step to a speedy subversion of our power."

Political measures were taken simultaneously as aids to military ones. The dispossessed and disgruntled chieftains of Kumaon and Garhwal and the adjacent hill states were incited to desert their Gurkha rulers and actively help the British. They were tempted with the restoration of their lost authority as a reward for active help to the British against the Gurkhas. The Raja of Sikkim, and the Kirats (of Eastern Nepal) were similarly incited. So also was Ben Shah, the Gurkha Governor of Dotra in western Nepal.

The operations were launched with four British divisions, consisting of 30,000 men and 60 guns, and led by veteran British generals. The early operations were a

(61) Bute, n. 69, 298; Ibid., II, 144-5; Summary of the Administration of the Indian Government from October 1813 to January 1823 by the Marquess of Hastings (London, 1824) 10-19. Nepal had appealed to China for succour, Nepali, n. 34, 350-04, 309-14. Active intrigues were spun with the Sikhs and the Marhattas. Garett and Chopra, n. 58, 173-82, 190-94, 217. None of these powers helped Nepal.

succession of setbacks suffered by the British. General Gillespie, the hero of Vellore, was shot dead while storming the fort of Kalunga. Serious reverses befell the British army at Jyotuck. General Wood, Commanding the Gorakhpur division, fared no better at the hands of the Nepalese at Bartoli. General Marley experienced a like failure. General Ochterlony alone held his own; he salvaged the wrecked British prestige by a brilliant capture of the fort of Malaun.

The tide now turned in favour of the British. By May 1815, the British had captured the whole tract of hills from the Gogra to the Sutlej. The fall of Malaun and the occupation of Kumaon by the British in April 1815, shattered the morale of the Gurkha army and compelled them to submit to a treaty on 2 December 1815. No sooner had the hostilities ceased then the Nepalese resumed the offensive in February 1816. The British army under General Ochterlony pressed hard for Kathmandu, on the way defeating the desperate valour of the Nepalese. Utterly exhausted, the Nepalese were obliged to ratify the Treaty of Segowlee in March 1816. By the terms of

(63) Prinsep, n. 59, 175.

(64) For Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16) see Papers Relating to the Nepal War; Prinsep, n. 59, 81-113; Military Sketches of the Gorka War in India in the years 1814, 1815, 1816 (London, 1822); Fraser, n. 62, 13 et seq.; B.P. Saxena, ed., Historical Papers Relating to Kumaon, 1809-1842 (Allahabad, 1956); T.J. Smith, Narrative of a Five Years' Residence in Nepal from 1841 to 1846 (2 vols., London, 1852); S.V. Ghyenuvali, Amar Singh Thapa (Nepali, Darjeeling, 2000 V.S.); Hemraj Vamsavali, 168 et seq.

(contd. on next page)
the treaty, Nepal ceded to the British all her possessions west of the river Kali, including Kumaon and Garhwal; and all the Tarai lands to the west of the river Gandak. The hill lands east of the river Mechi and part of the Tarai between the rivers Mechi and Tista also ceded under the treaty were made over to the Raja of Sikkim, whom the British (65) undertook to protect against future Nepalese aggression. A British Resident was sent to Kathmandu and a Nepalese Vakil to Calcutta.

**Political objects of the Treaty**

The Treaty of Segowlee set the basis of those definite and permanent political relations between Nepal and British India which were expected gradually to pave the way for improved relations between them. It served as an effective bridge on the militarism of Nepal - a restraint deemed imperative for the security of the British dominion in India.

General Ochterlony was opposed to this war, which appeared to him as "the most quixotic and the most impolitic measure." Ochterlony to Metcalfe, 25 May 1814, quoted in J.W. Kaye, *Life and Correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe* (London, 1858) I, 282.


It was hoped also that this restraint would gradually wear out the martial instincts of the Nepalese and make them peaceful neighbours. In fact, "to debilitate the Gurkha State" was the declared object of the British. The Residency was expected to secure British interests in Nepal, or at least to prevent them from being jeopardised. The Residency was the symbol of the British victory and a standing admonition to the Nepalese against a hostile policy towards the British. The circumvallation of Nepal by the British territories and by those of their ally (Sikkim) and the resultant isolation and check on her martial instincts, were important political consequences of the war, having great bearing on the Indo-Nepalese relations in the subsequent decades.

(67) Ibid., 976.

"Thus while the British and Chinese empires continue in their present strength, and the hope of extending their Nepalese dominion must be extinguished, and the military spirit ... must die away for want of employment." Prinsep, n. 59, 207-8. See also Campbell's Report, n. 24.