BRIAN HODGSON AT THE KATHMANDU RESIDENCY
1825-1843

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Nepal lies to the north of India, between 80°- 80° east longitude and 26°- 30° north latitude, and is bounded by the river Mahakali in the west and by the river Mechi in the east. The northernmost part of the country, the great Himalaya region, is entirely mountainous.There are at least eighteen passes in the central Himalaya range that formed the easiest channels of communications between Nepal and Tibet. The important Tibetan trading centres, Kerong and Kuti, were situated on two of these passes. Below this region, in the central midlands, were the valleys, the main centres of habitation and extensive cultivation. The southernmost strip of territory is known as the Terai which forms the immediate zone between the Gangetic plains of India and the Siwalik range.[1]

1. For geographical location of Nepal, see Karan, P.P., Nepal: A Cultural Geography, Lexington (1960); Karan, P.P., and Jenkins, J.W., The Himalayan Kingdom: Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, Princeton (1963), pp.79-88; Mason, K., "A Note on the Nepal Himalaya, HJ (1934); Hodgson, B.H., "On Physical Geography of Himalayas, JASB. August (1849), pp.761-781; Hunter, W.W., Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.XIX; Oxford (1896); Bose, S.C., Geography of Himalaya, New Delhi (1984), pp.153-172.

According to Nepalese traditions and history, the Kirats were the earliest inhabitants of the Kingdom, now represented by the Limbus and Rais of Eastern Nepal. The Lepchas of Eastern Nepal are also said to have lived there for as long as the Limbus. The Bhajangi and Dotiyal ethnic groups of Western Nepal, who closely resemble the ethnic group of Kumaon are said to have migrated there from the plains via Kumaon. The Chepangs, a nomadic tribe living near the confluence of the Kali, Seti and Trisuli rivers are an indigenous group. In the central a valley of Nepal live the Newars.* The Western and West-Central regions are inhabited by the tribes of Mongoloid origins, Gurungs, Magars and Bhutiyas, the first-two providing the bulk of the Gorkha soldiery.The Tharus and Boksas who live in the swampy and malarious Terai strip between India and Nepal claim to have migrated from Rajasthan and have a strong Indian admixture. The Sherpas and Bhotiyas of Nepal's northern borderland are immigrants from Tibet.[2]

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* Newars are supposed to be the aboriginals of Nepal. They are the main section of the population that is engaged in trade and commerce.

2. Karan, P.P., op.cit., pp.63-67; Hodgson, B.H., "Origin and Classification of the Military Tribes of Nepal", JASB, Vol.ii (1833), pp.217-224; On the Chepang and Kusunda Tribes of Nepal"

Hinduism is now the State religion of Nepal. Buddhism which had a stronghold in the Central Valley before the twelfth century is so deeply mixed up with Hinduism that it is difficult to draw a line between the two religions.[3] The official language-Nepali (or Gorkhali or Eastern Pahari) is akin to Kumaon and thus belongs to the Hindu branch of Indo-Aryan speech; but much of the peasantry speaks one or others of the Tibeto-Burman dialects.[4]

Modern Nepal has, however, a fairly recent history dating from the later half of the eighteen century when the Gorkhas subjugated the Bagmati Valley and established themselves as rulers. Prior to this the kingdom was divided into a number of warring principalities. In the Western region from Kathmandu Valley to the Mahakali river, there were at least fortysix separate

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JASB, Vol.Xvii(1857),p.650; Sinha, A.C.,Studies in the Himalayan Communities, New Delhi(1984),pp.2-4; Bista, D.B., People of Nepal, Kathmandu, 1967.

3. For example, the Newars follow both Buddhism and Hinduism, Ram Rahul, The Himalayan Borderland, New Delhi (1970).

4. Spake, Ott.K., Learmouth, A.T.A. and Farmer, B.H., India Pakistan and Ceylon: The Regions, Part IV, New Delhi (1967 Reprint), pp.464-471.

principalities. These were traditionally divided into loose confederacies called Chaubisi in the Gandaki region and Baisi in the Karnali region. Besides them, the Kathmandu Valley was ruled by the Malla Kings. Gorkha was a small enclave in the Chaubisi, but taking advantage of existing disturbances, Prithvi Narayan Shah (1722-75) one of the greatest rulers and founder of present Nepal, gradually subdued all his neighbours and just before he died annexed Kathmandu Valley.[5] Gradually, more than three decades of Gorkha expansionism brought under central control for the first time, communities and territories with diverse political and social systems. The principalities to the West of Kathmandu with political and social structure similar to Gorkhas were rapidly absorbed. Others were left with a measure of local autonomy as chiefdoms or rajyas. Unlike the western hills, the eastern region was inhabited by tribal communities with 'ill-defined' decentralised

5. Regmi, D.R., Modern Nepal, Calcutta (1961), pp.1-42; Stiller F.Ludwig, The Rise of the House of the Gorkha, Patna (1973); Hasrat, B.J., History of Nepal, Punjab (1971), pp.134-143.

political systems. Little is known of the manner of their absorption by the Gorkhas. But apparently, they were left with a measure of autonomy considerably greater than those of the chiefdoms.[6] What the Gorkhas achieved in those years was merely the creation of the basic territorial and political framework for complex political, social, economic, administrative factors prevented the integration of the various disparate elements into one nation.[7] While this process was going on; important political developments were taking place around Kathmandu which was to have far-reaching consequences for the emerging kingdom.

The transfer of the capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu resulted not only in the creation of a new political and administrative system but also of a new elite structure. A large number of families from Gorkha established themselves in Kathmandu and became

6. Treaty of friendship seems to have been established with these tribal chiefs. Thus in Limbuana, the territory of Limbus in the eastern district bordering Sikkim, the chief or Subhah was granted status as Kathmandu's representative in his district with greater power than rajyas or centrally appointed Governor. Rose, Loe E., and Scholz, J.T.,Nepal:A Profile of Himalayan Kingdom, New Delhi(1980), p.9; Rengmi,M.C.,A Study of Nepali Economic History, New Delhi (1971), pp.1-14.
7. Terai constitutes the biggest problem to national integration.

leaders, at least in the beginning, of the Shah Darbar. Other high-caste families from other absorbed principalities soon followed and became part of the new elite and together dominated the Shah Darbar. On these families were based various political factions, rivalries between whom dominated Darbar politics till 1846.

The Maharaja was the head of the State and exercised supreme authority in civil and military administration.[8] His decisions were always final and binding. The Maharaja was regarded as an incarnation of God Vishnu of Nepal. Monarchy was absolute in theory but limited in practice but at a times he was a mere puppet in the hands of the dominant faction in his own Darbar.[9] The Maharaja was assisted by the body of Bharadars drawn mainly from the family based aristocracy.[10] This was probably intended to

For a recent study of the problems and its economic dimension, see Gaige,F.H.,Regionalism & National Unity in Nepal, California,1975.

8. Shrestha,M.K.,A Hand Book of Public Administration in Nepal, Nepal (1965), p.2.
9. Rose and Scholz,op.cit.,p.21. Basically,the political system of Gorkha was military and despotic in character and their administrative set up was based on the interaction between the groups of Thar Ghar comprised of influential persons of the various high-castes.
10. Gupta, A.R.,Politics in Nepal, New Delhi (1964),pp.6-8.These Bharadars were granted Jagirs and Birtas on hereditary basis for their rendering services to the Govt.in lieu of emoluments.

be a consultative body, but in course of time became the single most important institution in the process of decision making of the kingdom. They were the Maharaja's councillors or ministers and "together ran the administration, fought battles, manoeuvered diplomacy and concluded or broke peace and treaties in the name of the king".[11] Hamilton writing in 1816 says:

> The Bharadari or the great council of the Raja attends him in the Darbar, Rajdhani or place to transact business, and which frequently acts without his presence. It ought to consist of twelve members, but some of the place are often vacant; and, at other times, the persons who hold them have so little influence that they neglect or avoid giving their attendence. At other times, again, on business of the utmost emergency, a kind of assembly of the notables is held, in which men who have neither office nor any considerable influence in the Government are allowed to speak very freely ... nor does the court seems over to be controlled by the opinions advanced in these assemblies.[12]

It is likely that in the beginning the structure of Bharadars was heirarchical with clearly defined functions of every members.[13] But during the period under review, these are blurred and from

11. Regmi, D.R., op.cit., p.280.
12. Hamilton, Francis, An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal, Edinburg (1819), p.106.
13. Krikpatrick, An Account of Kingdom of Nepal, Reprinted New Delhi (1975). He gives the following list of the officials according to their seniority-The Chautriyas, The Kazis, The Sirdars, The Kharidars, The Kappardars, The Khazanchi, The Thaksali, The Dharamdhikar, The Bichari, The Dittha and The Subahs.

Bhim Sen Thapa onwards the Mukhtiarship was the most important office which in 1843 Mathbar Singh Thapa officially styled as Prime Minister.

The composition of the Bharadars clearly reveals its family basis. They were the royal family; the Chautriyas or the royal collectoral branch; the Thapas; the Basnists and the Pandes. But often these families or factions were sub-divided into smaller groups. For example, among the Pandes there were the Kala Pande and the Gora Pande who were always aligned on opposite sides.[14] Among the Bharadars, there was a constant struggle for power. Hence, it was seldom possible for them to form successful coalition governments. Opposition was sometimes eliminated through assassination but not unoften by expulsion. Besides, these factions, the Brahmins and the Newars generally found a place in the Darbar. The former's role as Guru or priests to the Darbar families gave them a fairly high position in administrative

14. During the period under review, the Kala Pandes were the most important, the Gora Pande being insignificant. The Pandes therefore refers only to the Kala Pande.

decisions and they later monopolised the state legal system. The Newars were accomodated in the Darbar for their economic and administrative skills, acquired since the time of the Mallas, which were vital for the economic stability of the kingdom.

The emergence of a new aristocracy and the hereditary monarchical system brought new complications and tensions in Nepali political life. Perhaps, the most unfortunate was the division within the royal family. The queen, as a result of the practice of having more than two wife, the sons and the other members of the royal family tended to work at cross-purposes making manipulation of the royal family by some faction or the other both possible and rewarding. The system was further complicated by the fact that a minor was on the throne from 1777 to 1847.[15] "The process of the Government during the period", it has been rightly remarked", "were actually controlled by the Regent and or Mukhtiar (minister) and the alliance of politi cal

15. Shrestha, M.K., op.cit., pp.2-3.

factions provided them with a support".[16] The period also witnessed administrative malpractice and nepotism among the Bharadars. These Bharadars were so divided among themselves and the Maharaja being a minor, the country was at a time on the verge of anarchy. Towards the end of eighteen century, intense struggle between the various factions characterised the central politics in Kathmandu, the scene being dominated alternatively by the Pandes and Thapas.

In 1799, the internal political crisis forced Maharaja Rana Bahadur Shah to abdicate his throne in favour of his minor son Girwan Juddha Vikram. Damodar Pande, the leader of the Pande faction assumed the responsibilities of the administration with the help of Regent Junior Maharani. But soon the political setting of Nepal took a dramatic turn. In February 1803, Maharani Rajrajeshwari Devi, who had accompanied Ranabahadur Shah to exile in Benaras returned to Nepal and assumed charge as Regent. She appointed Damodar Pande as Mukhtiar. In the following year, Rana Bahadur Shah returned.But Damodar Pande who attempted to prevent the Maharaj found the army against him. He was removed and executed.[17]

16. Rose and Schols, op.cit., p.22.
17. Oldfield, H.A., op.cit., pp.180-185.

Despite the elimination of Damodar Pande and his principal supporters in 1804, the situation to the Darbar remained explosive. Factional rivalries were so intense that it was a year before Rana Bahadur could finally manoeuver his appointment as Regent. His efforts to use complete authority against his enemies, however, culminated in his own assassination in 1806. It was out of this chaos, that Bhim Sen Thapa emerged to quickly and effectively removed the opposition faction* and appointed the third queen Tripura Sundari Devi as Regent. Immediately after assumption of power, all important posts in the civil and military administration were filled up by the Thapa families. Favoured by the minority of Girwan Juddha Vikram (1799-1816) and Rajendra Vikram Shah (1816-1847), Bhim Sen was able to establish full control over the administration of the kingdom.[18]

The East India Company was however aware of the commercial importance of the Himalaya regions even before they had fully

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* It is said that seventyseven persons were either murdered or executed in the aftermath of the assassination and the Thapas emerged as the dominant influence in the Darbar for thirty years.

18. Hunter, W.W., Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson, London (1896), pp. 132-137; Tyagi, Sushila, Indo-Nepalese Relations (1858-1914).

consolidated their position in Bengal. After the grant of the Dewani (1765) the company's officials came into contact with the Newars, and from them learnt of a flourishing trade between Bengal and Tibet through Nepal.[19] When Gorkha expansionism under Prithvi Narayan Shah towards the Kathmandu Valley in 1767 threatened the closure of this trade, the British at once responded to a call for help from Jaya Prakash Malla, the Raja of Kathmandu and sent a military force under Captain Kinloch. Gorkha conquest of the Valley was, however, completed before Kinloch reached Kathmandu. The Company realising the folly of antagonising the Gorkhas adopted a counciliatory attitude. The Court of Directors too developed an interest in the region and enquired on 11 February 1768, "Whether trade can be opened with Nepaul, and whether cloth or other European commodities may find their way from thence to Tibet, Lhasa and Western parts of China".[20] In June 1770, James Logan was

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Delhi(1974), pp.46-49; Hasrat, op.cit., p.xiv; Sinha,S.N.,"A Study of Internal History of Nepal, 1767-1847" JHR Bihar University, Vol.ii(1960), No.2.

19.Lamb, Alistair, Britain and Chinese Central Asia-Road to Lhasa, 1767-1905, London (1960); Rose, Leo E., Nepal:Strategy For Survival, Oxford (1973), pp.33-34.

20.Lamb, Alistair, op.cit., pp.37-45; Chauduri, K.C., Anglo-Nepalese Relations, Calcutta (1960), pp.38-60.

accordingly deputed to Kathmandu to induce Prithvi Narayan Shah to revive the old trade relations between Bengal and Nepal.[21] At the same time, the Mackwanpur Terai seized by Kinloch was returned. Yet, it was not till 1792 when British efforts in this direction bore fruits.[22]

On 1 March 1792, the British were able to conclude a Commercial Treaty with Nepal.[23] Bitter disputes over debased coins

21. Majumdar K., Anglo-Hepalese Relations in the Nineteenth Century, Calcutta (1973), p.2; Pemble, John, Invasiom of Nepal, Oxford (1971). After 1770, the Company turned towards alternatives route to Tibet. Bogle and Manning were sent to Bhutan and Lhasa to explore trade routes through Chumbi Valley and Bhutanese duars. For details, see Markhom, or, Narratives of the Mission of Gengle Bogle to Tibet and of the Thomas Manning to Lhasa, London (1879).

22. Prior to 1792, the commercial intercourse between the two Governments was practically in low ebb. Taking advantages of Nepal's necessity for permission to send goods to the plains. The Government of India empowered Jonathan Duncan, Resident of Benaras to negotiate a commercial treaty with Nepal. He was further directed to effect a limitation of the duties levied in Nepal on British goods. On 12 September 1791, Duncan forwarded to the Government a copy of draft treaty, suggesting the appointment of a temporary Resident at Kathmandu with the consent of Nepal until "the treaty shall at least have had time to take some degree of root on both side". Duncan felt that unless a British representative was allowed to remain for some time in Kathmandu to attend to the execution of the Treaty, its chief advantages might remain unrealised. For details see Narain V.A., Jonathan Duncan and Varanasi, Calcutta (1927), pp.136-143.

23. Aitchison, C.U., A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Vol.II, Calcutta (1906), pp.103-105. For details, see Appendix-A.

sparked of a border war between Tibet and Nepal. Tibet sought British help. But the company refused to comply as it did not wish to be involved militarily in the difficult Himalayan terrain. Further, such action was bound to adversely effect the trade with China. China, at first remained neutral, but when Nepal annexed certain frontier districts on southern Tibet and plundered monestries there, they asked Nepal to withdraw and compensate the monastress for their losses. On Nepal's refusal a Chinese force not only drove the Nepalese out of Tibet but chased them up to Nawakot. Nepal now sought the Company's help. Instead of military assistance against the Chinese the British offered to mediate between the Nepalese and the Chinese and to this end sent Colonel Krikpatrick to Nepal in September 1792. However, before the arrival of the Colonel, the war had ended and the Gorkhas were forced to accept a humiliating treaty.

Between 1792-1800 Anglo-Nepal relations were merely of a formal nature. In 1795, a mission under one Quadir Ali was sent

to Nepal to induce the Darbar to observe the commercial treaty. On 26 October 1801, taking the advantage of the presence of Rana Bahadur Shah in Benaras, a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance was concluded.[24] The Treaty provided for the establishment of a British Resident in Kathmandu and a Nepalese agent in Calcutta. Captain Knox who was appointed as the first Resident at the Court of Kathmandu was instructed to forge a close connection between the British and Nepal. He was also cautioned against actions which might adversely effect the British commercial position in China. But the position of the Resident turned out to be an unhappy one. He found, for example, restriction in his movements to the Central Valley of Nepal. Eventually, Captain Knox had to leave Kathmandu in March 1803. On 24 January,1804, Lord Wellesley formally abrogated the Treaty but expressed a wish to maintain friendly relations with Nepal.[25]

The policy of the Company under Sir George Barlow

24. Aitchison, op.cit.,Vol.II,op.cit.,pp.105-108: See Appendix-B.
25. Chauduri, K.C.,op.cit.,p.134; Rose,Leo E., op.cit.,p.79; Campbell Sketches, 1803 and 1804.

(1805-06) and Sir John Shone (1806-13) was essentially pacific with little or no interest in the Himalayan regions. This enabled Bhim Sen Thapa to embark on extensive military campaigns, a part of Sikkim, Kumaon, Garhwal and a number of principalities in Western Himalaya, and Terai were annexed. This brought him into conflict with the Company over certain parts of Purnea, Sarun, Gorakhpur and Bareilly districts.[26] It has been said of Bhim Sen Thapa that his aim was to take all territories to the north of the Ganges making that river the boundary between Nepal and the British. The war that followed resulted in the defect and dismemberment of the Kingdom.

By the Treaty of Sagauli signed on 1 March 1816, British gains were not inconsiderable.[27] The expulsion of the Gorkha to the west of Jamuna, and the restoration of the chief made an important barrier against Ranjit Singh. It further reduced the chances of direct combination of the Sikhs and the Gorkhas. The possession of Kumaon, Dehradun, Nahan, Malwa and the passage of the

26. Landon, op.cit., pp.74-76: Rose, Leo E. op.cit.,pp.79-95.

27. Aitchison op.cit., pp.204-208; See Appendix-C; Also see, The Military History of Nepal Vol.2, New Delhi (1983 Reprinted).

river Ganges gave the British an unbroken chain of communications from the river Kali to Sutlej. Strategically, it gave the British " the most valuable and important position of the North-West Frontier line". It further offered a complete barrier against any extension of the Gorkha in the Western direction, a bulwork to the whole country in its rear. Through Kumaon the easiest road to Tibet was secured. This opened for the British Indian traders all prospects for developing trade with the countries beyond the Himalaya. As per trade with China an over land route was now available. With Sikkim as a protectorate of the Company on the east and with British territories on the south and south-west, and Tibetan to the North, Nepalese territories came to be greatly circumscribed.[28]

Article 8 of the Treaty of Sagauli stipulated:

> In order to secure and improve the relations and peace hereby established between the two States, it is now agreed that accredited "Minister"* from each resides at each other.

Sir Edward Gardner[29] joined as Resident in early 1816 with definite

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28. Ibid.
The Treaty does not mention Resident but 'Minister'.

29. Hunter, op.cit., Born in 1784; Registrar and Assistant to the Magistrate of Afghan in 1805, Assistant to Resident of Delhi, 1808; Commissioner and Governor General's Agent in Kumaon 1814: Resident in Nepal 1816-1829.

instructions to ensure that Nepal was conciliated and she acquisced in her losses. Peaceful relations with Nepal, with a view to the security of the British frontier was the primary object of policy. Trade for the moment had taken a backseat. When Nepal pressed for return of the Terai, Gardner recommended the retrocession. During the negotiation, prior to the signing of the Treaty he was told by a leading Bharadar:

> Never will we consent to give up to you the Terai; take the Terai, and you leave us without the means of subsistence, for the hills. Without it, are worth nothing. The Terai is of no use to you, because your people cannot live in it, or keep it, and in wresting it from your hands, we will devastate your provinces down to the Ganges.[30]

The 4th Article of the Treaty, which bound the Company to pay two lakh rupees as annual compensation to the Nepalese Chiefs for the loss of the Terai revenue, was annulled and a part of Terai was returned.[31] This was followed by the demarcation of Nepal's southern frontier with British India.

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30. Campbell's Sketches, 1815.

31. See Appendix - D.

Six months after Gardner's arrival the young Maharaja Girwan Juddha Vikram Shah died, on 20 November 1816, in his eighteen years leaving behind two year old prince Rajendra.[32] The Regency therefore continued and Mukhtiar Bhim Sen Thapa maintained supreme power. Bhim Sen Thapa's policy was to ensure that the Residency was isolated and the Resident had no occasion to involve himself in the internal affairs of the kingdom. The Bharadars and all sections of people were made to understand that the Treaty forbade contact with the Resident. They were also warned that intercourse with the Resident would spell disaster for Nepal. In fact, a guard was posted on the road to the Residency so that none could enter its precints. Bhim Sen's attitude towards the Residency and Gardner's policy is summed up by Campbell:

> He treated the British Residency with reserve and distrust; yet our representative did not attempt to cultivate the intimacy or gain the good will of the oppressed and discontented, but keeping in mind the fatal consequences of foreign interference, he stood aloof from all party spirit, and lent but a deaf ear to the overtures for favour and countenance of those who carried provinces of greater civility...[33]

32. Hasrat, op.cit., p.222.

33. Campbell's Sketches, 1816, Likewise the Resident and his staff were not allowed to excercise about the country at will and often residency baggages were subjected to scrutinity. This policy was also extended to the traders from British India and obstructions were placed in the way of free commercial intercourse.

It was to this scene that Brian Houghton Hodgson[34] arrived as Assistant to Sir Edward Gardner in 1820. Son of a Banker, he was born on 1 February 1800 at Prestburg, Cheshire, and was educated at Macciesfield Richmond and Haileybury. He came to India in 1818 and after passing through the College of Fort William, Calcutta, he was appointed as Assistant to George William Traill, Commissioner of Kumaon. During his two years in Kumaon, Hodgson travelled extensively throughout the province visiting every village and hamlet and getting to know the lands and its people. It was under Traill's influence that he developed his interest in Himalaya studies. The training he received during this formative period proved invaluable to him during his days in Kathmandu and later. His first appointment in Kathmandu was only for two-years after which he came to Calcutta as Deputy Secretary in the Persian Department. Shortly afterwards ill health drove him back to Kathmandu, as Postmaster in 1824 as no other vacancy was available.[35]

34. Buckland, C.E., Dictionary of National Biography, London, p.203; Hodgson, B.H., Essays on Languages Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, An Introduction by Philip Denwood, New Delhi (1972), pp.i-ii.

35. Ibid.

In the following when the post of Assistant Resident felt vacant, Hodgson was appointed to the billet.

Hodgson from the start devoted much of his time studying the flora and fauna of Nepal and inhabitants of the adjacent areas. From 1824 onwards he began to collecting a large number of Sanskrit and Newari manuscripts, Tibetan blockprints and Vernacular tracts with a view to discovering the main feature of Buddhism.[36] But his first serious research work on which he spent a great deal of time was the military system of Nepal.

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36. Ibid. Also see Hunter, op.cit., pp.337-356. The collections totalled over four hundred works including most of the fundamental Mahayana texts and Tibetan books. Latern, he presented these to the Asiatic Society, Indian Office Library, Bodlein Library and Sociate Asiatique de Paris.

EPILOGUE

It has been said of Brian Hodgson that he gradually arrogated to himself the same rights as the residents that the Company had stationed in those princely states in India which had accepted its paramountcy.[1] Whatever may be the charge against Hodgson for interfering in the domestic affairs of an independent kingdom it would be far from the truth to say that he aimed at this from the very beginning with a view to acquiring a dominating influence in the Darbar.[2] From 1825 to 1833, when he became permanent Resident, Hodgson's primary concern was the development of trade and commerce. His proposals for the recruitment of the surplus Gorkha soldiery of Nepal into the Bengal army was essentially to create a favourable environment for the furtherance of his objective. Besides he had a genuine admiration for the Gorkha soldiers. His assertion of his position as Resident, unlike Sir Edward Gardner, who acquiesced in his isolation was to ensure

1. Ct.Rahul,Ram, Himalaya as a Frontier, New Delhi (1973),p.65.
2. Hunter, op.cit., pp.226-227.

the safety and security of British traders and merchants. He understood that confidence in the British power to protect the traders against the Darbar's exactions was essential if trade was to develop. It is not surprising, therefore, that proposals regarding trade should dominate the first two years of his Residentship in Kathmandu. In this respect, Hodgson's ideas were in keeping with the policy laid down as long ago as in Warren Hastings' time. But in advocating the economic penetration of Nepal as a means of binding the kingdom to that of the Company, Hodgson went a step further than the mere search for markets.

In his early years, Hodgson's relations with the Mukhtiar Bhim Sen Thapa, if not very close, was not hostile either. In fact, Hodgson admired Bhim Sen's capacity and talents as an administrator. He genuinely regretted Bhim Sen's tragic end and said of him after his death:

> The great and able statesman who for more than thirty years had ruled this kingdom with more than regal sway... the uniform success of nearly all his remarkable than the energy and sagicity which so much promoted that success. He was indeed a man born to exercise domain over his fellows alike by the means

> of command and persuation. Nor I am aware of any native statesman of recent times, except Ranjit Singh, who is, all things considered, worthy to be compared with the late General Bhim Sen Thapa.[3]

He was quite certain that Bhim Sen's exit would have a destablising effect upon Nepal. This was one of the reasons why he was apprehensive of the constantly growing military resources of Nepal which without a strong hand to control it could easily get out of hand.[4] However, his attitude towards the Mukhtiar underwent a change when he realised Bhim Sen's antagonism towards the British and to himself was deep seated. It also became clear that so long as Bhim Sen remained in power, British interests in the Himalayan region could not be secured. The question of the implementation of the Commercial Treaty of 1792 and the negotiations for a new one had been a case in point. In this circumstance, the question of direct access to the Maharaja became of great importance. What was in the

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3. Campbell's Sketches; Also see a recent account on Bhim Sen which says,"He was appreciated, teared and admired. Bhim Sen had determination, conviction, courage, administrative ability and ambition. He was ruthless to his internal enemies; he was hungry for power and he knew that his only alternative was utter ruin". Tucker, Sir Francis, Gorkhas, London (1957), pp.101-103.
4. Ibid. Hodgson further explained that, "it may safely be asserted that if the present unnatural system be left status quo till his death or retirement, a crisis will occur which whether it issues in Civil War or an aggression on us, cannot fail most injuriously effect our interests".

beginning a subject of form and protocol was to Hodgson soon a matter of practical necessity. In the Maharaja, who himself chafed under Bhim Sen's control, Hodgson found a person sympathetic and considerate to his cause. His reports at this time therefore give a very favourable picture of the youthful Rajendra. The authorities in Fort William did not share Hodgson's views and discouraged any attempt to bypass the Mukhtiar.

Yet, despite all this, from 1835 till the downfall of Bhim Sen Thapa in 1837, Hodgson kept aloof from Darbar's politics. The fall of the Thapas from the power led Hodgson to hope that he would be able to establish direct relations with the Maharaja. He was soon disillusioned when he found the Pandes, who had replaced the Thapas, even more hostile to the British. The only way to prevent the new ministry from exercising the same control over the Residency and its relations with the Maharaja was, in Hodgson's opinion, to issue a reprimand to the Darbar backed by a military display. The other alternative of backing the friendly and moderate section to control the Darbar would be to unite all

against the British. But Lord Auckland, with the Afghan problem in his hands, could ill efford to take a serious view of the Darbar's attitude. Even when reports of the Darbar's intrigues with Indian States, he was restraining the arduor of his Resident.

Hodgson's attitude towards Darbar politics changed by the middle of 1839 when he perceived that the Pandes had become extremely unpopular and that the opposition had been showing signs of turning to the British. He saw for the first time the advantages of supporting the latter. Lord Auckland, inspite of his colleagues in the Council, was still not prepared for any involvement in the domestic affairs of the kingdom. Besides, he was not quite sure if Nepal would risk a costly adventure with the British in view of her internal problems. But Hodgson's closeness with the pre-British faction, as the moderate came to be so identified, as his enstrangement with the Pandes widened. What he was interested in was an effective counterbalance to the Pandes, even to the extent of using Mathbar Singh Thapa.

It was only after the Afghan problem had been resolved that Lord Auckland took a firm stand against Nepal. Although he was satisfied with Hodgson's settlement of November 1839, he was not convinced of Rajendra's pacific intentions and forced the Maharaja into dismissing Ranjung Pande. When Hodgson informed him that the change was more nominal than real, Lord Auckland authorised him to pressurise the Maharaja into removing all anti-British Bharadars. By early 1842, when Lord Ellenborough arrived in India, there was a change in the alignments in Darbar politics. Maharaja Rajendra, owing probably to domestic compulsions, had joined the Heir Apparent in the campaign against the British-supported Bharadars. Hodgson in trying to uphold the ministry was not only caught in Darbar rivalries but also found himself against the sovereign. Lord Ellenborough's position was quite clear: Rajendra was the Maharaja of an independent state; secondly, it was a wrong policy to support a ministry unable to stand on its own, and that too in defiance of the legitimate ruler. It should also be remembered that throughout his short tenure, Lord Ellenborough was engaged first

against Sind and then against Gwalior, and could not afford to have complication with Nepal even if he chose to support his Resident. Yet, it cannot be denied that in dismissing Hodgson, Lord Ellenborough acted more on impulse rather than in reason.[5]

Sir William Hunter, in defence of Hodgson, says that he followed a policy which had been directed by the Governor General and that charge against the Resident's involvement in Darbar politics is therefore wrong and unfounded,[6] An examination of the relevant records however suggests that Lord Auckland's policy was basically one of non-intervention. The authority which he granted to Hodgson, reluctantly rather than readily, to exert pressure upon Rajendra

5. Landon, in his Nepal Vol.I, thus writes, "...in a fit of childish irritation Lord Ellenborough dismissed Hodgson on 21st June of that year. The weakness of the man passes belief. Scarcely a fortnight later the Governor General was writing a friendly private letter to the man whom he had thus publicly insulted, practically apologizing for having to remove while a change of policy was carried out. Twenty days later this vacillating officer wrote again to say that after all Hodgson had better stay as Resident. It only need to be added that Lord Ellenborough, whatever his unwisdom in other things, was cautious enough never to place on the files of the Indian Government his despatch of 21st June recalling Hodgson from his work", pp. 102-104.

6. Denwood, Philips, An Introduction to Hodgson's Essays, op. cit., p.iii.

was limited both in scope as well as in time. For example, when Hodgson sought permission to extend physical protection to the ministry against the Heir Apparent, the Governor General was not prepared to go that extent. His strongly worded Kharita, which he addressed to Rajendra instead, clearly showed that it was the Maharaja and not his Mukhtiar or the Bharadars that Lord Auckland would call to account when necessary. Further Lord Auckland's policy was largely shaped by Hodgson's assessment of the situation. It is therefore, difficult to fully absolve Hodgson of the charge of interference. But it is doubtful if Hodgson wanted anything more than a temporary counterpoise to the influence of an aggressive and dominant section in the Darbar at a time of great difficulty for the Company elsewhere.[7]

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7. Brian Hodgson's attitude towards Nepal makes a sharp contrast so that of Henry Burney, Resident in Ava. Like, Hodgson, he too had faced a hostile Darbar. But unlike Hodgson, Burney meekly withdrew the Residency in 1837. Like Hodgson, he faced a hostile Darbar. Lord Auckland disapproved of Burney's withdrawal of the Residency from Ava and it is not unlikely that the lesson learnt in Burma made the Governor General to adopt a strong attitude towards Nepal. Cf.Hall, D.G.E., Henry- Burney: A Political Biography, London (1974), Ch.17, pp.290-308. Also see, Desai,W.S., The History of the British Residency in Burma 1826-1840, Fennham (1972) Reprint.

There is no evidence that Hodgson at any stage desired the removal of the Maharaja or proposed taking over the direct administration of the Kingdom. His concept of his position as Resident at an independent Court did not change. Unlike the Residents in Indian States, Hodgson functions were limited.[8] The implications of the system following Lord Wellesley is thus described by Sir Cyril Philips:

> It was a suspended threat of British control over internal administration personified in the presence at the Indian princes capital of the British political residents, who was the direct representative on the spot of the Governor General... bolstered policy and force, and in practice remote from the control of Calcutta, the British residents had long since grown into petty potentates often pursuing their own pivate and sometimes corrupts ends.[9]

Hodgson hardly saw himself in this light.

" "Without Hodgson", according to a recent estimate of his achievements, "the British would have found themselves in a serious war with Nepal and its allies when things were going badly in Afghanistan".[10] Nepal given her limited resources and

8. The Resident in Indian States had considerable initiative and independence action. The Resident in Delhi; for example, could call in the army, if circumstances warranted. See Pannikar, K.N., British Diplomacy in Northern India, New Delhi (1968), p.183, n.6.

9. Philips, C.H., The Correspondences of Lord William Bentinck, Oxford (1984), p.

10. Denwood, P., An Introduction to Hodgson's Essays etc., op. cit., p.iii.

political instability could not have launched an invasion of sufficient strength to endanger the Company in India. Bhim Sen Thapa, and Jang Bahadur Rana later, had a realistic view of the situation in India, and it is unlikely that the Mukhtiars in between or even both Rajendra and Surendra were unaware of the strength and resources of the British. If Hodgson appeals for assistance for his "friends" in the Darbar is any evidence he could hardly have averted a war if Nepal really chose to wage one. Significantly, it was Nepal's perception of the danger from the south, with the history of British conquest of India before then, that was of greater consequence.[11] Fear of the loss of further territories, if not her independence, conditioned the Darbar's attitude to the Government of India and its representative in Kathmandu. That this did not happen during Hodgson's time made him, in the end at least, aggreable to the Maharaja and to the Darbar. No wonder that Rajendra called him the "Saviour of Nepal". Yet, the brief involvement was not

11. Rose, Leo E., op.cit., In his "Nepal: Strategy for Survival", he elaborately explained Nepal's foreign policy over the years.

without impact on Nepal; the lesson of the danger of allowing the British to interfere in its domestic affairs was never forgotten.

During the period under review British influence did not significantly increased nor did the Resident's position improve vis-a-vis the Darbar. Matters practically reverted to the days of Sir Edward Gardner: in fact in the later years, the dominance of Jang Bahadur Rana rather overshadowed the Resident. Trade with Nepal and through her with Central Asia did not develop to the extent Hodgson had anticipated. Recruitment of Gorkhas into the Indian army began in earnest only after 1858 - but it must be recognised that Hodgson was the first advocate the policy which even to-day links the British and Indian Governments with Nepal.* On the whole and in the light of these, it is therefore, not unreasonable to assume that Hodgson's real contribution lies not in diplomacy or in practical politics, but in his

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* In border settlements, particularly in the definition and demarcation of Nepal's southern frontier, Hodgson definitely contributed to frontier stability.

scholarship;[12] by his own researches, particularly in his retirement, and by his collections of a wealth of manuscripts and source materials, Hodgson may be rightly regarded as having laid the foundations for modern Himalaya studies.

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12. Towards Hodgson's overall contributions, Joseph Hooker remarks: "His high position as a man of time requires no mention here. But the difficulties he overcome and sacrifices he made in attaining that position are known to few. He entered the wilds of Nepal, when very young and in different wealth and finding time to spare cast about for the best method of employing it ... By unceasing exertions and a princely liberty Mr.Hodgson has unveiled the mysterious of Buddhist religion. Chronicled the affinities, languages, customs and faith of the Himalayan tribes and complete a natural history of animals and birds of the region. Mr.Hodgson's name stands pre-eminent. A seat of Legion of Honour proves the estimation in which his Buddhist studies are held in the continent of Europe". Hooker, Sir Joseph Dalton; "On Notes of a Naturalist" HJ Edinburgh (1891) Reprinted, p.xi: Also see, Landon, op.cit., pp.273-278.