

Introduction

This country has not been obtained with my lesser effort. It is a garden of all jats. Be it known to all. This is a true Hindustan with four varna and thirty six jats.

Prihtvinarayan Shah

We have our own country, a Hindu kingdom (*hindu rajya*) . . . it is a holy land. . . in this Kali Age, this is the only country where Hindus rule.

Jung Bahadur Rana

Nepal is an independent, indivisible and sovereign monarchical Hindu state.

King Mahendra in Constitution of Nepal, 1962

The country, the nation, is represented by the people, not the soil. The nation is not the accumulation of rivers big and small. It is the people. If the people disappear due to some magic, there will be no Nepal here. A nation is not some geographical entity, it is place which is loved and liked by the people.

B.P. Koirala

I have reached the conclusion that even if I have to leave my position in government to struggle for the peace process, democracy, civilian supremacy and national sovereignty I should not hesitate to do so. . . In order to resolve this difficult situation, and to move towards a direction of creating a positive environment to save democracy, nationalism and the peace process, I announce that I resign from the council of ministers that I have been leading. . . I once again express my commitment to the ongoing peace process, democracy and the protection of nationalism.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” in his resignation speech on May 4, 2009

Nationalism has become a thriving discourse in the Nepali academic and political communities. It originated much earlier in history but the social movement of 1990 was the turning point that gave rise to the proliferation of discourses on nationalism. Elaborating this claim Prartyaoush Onta draws parallelism between awakening of Nepali nationalism and the world trend where “national culture, nationalism, and ethnicity have been three of the major concerns of social analysts (“Career . . . 65). Evidently, this discourse has taken greater momentum in the post-2006 political set up in Nepal. David Gellner’s *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2008), Lokraj Baral’s *Nepal New Frontiers of Restructuring of State* (2008) and Subho Basu and Ali Riaz’s *Paradise Lost?*(2010) are but only few critical overviews on the theme relating to Nepali state, Nepali nation and nationalism. This wave of discourse on nationalism is likely to ascend higher in the context when the country is set to institutionalizing ethnicity, regionalism and language issues in the constitution. How has nationalism taken root in Nepal? What has it meant to be for the Nepali rulers and how have they made it a tool for consolidating power? What has its nature been? How did this shape pedagogy of the Panchayat education? My study will attempt exploration of answers to these questions.

In this dissertation, I aim to explore the issue of Nepali nationalism through the historical analysis critically exploring its development from Prihtvi Narayan Shah to Bhimsen Thapa to Junga Bahadur Rana and then onto king Mahendra. I do so because Panchayat system takes a recourse to history in defining and creating its own version of nationalism reusing, recreating, galvanizing and also misrepresenting and omitting some aspects of history while retaining and promoting less threatening contents and facts from it. In a way Panchayat nationalism relies on repetition and narrativization of history. For “nationalism has been studied in its relation with race,

language, religion, politics, economics, education and psychology” (Wirth 723-724) my study will also touch on language, religion, politics and education (of the Panchayat era) to discuss nationalism in this study. I aim to show that Nepali nationalism from Prithvinarayan Shah’s unification drive to, by and large, the present day, is continuing to create the discourse of delusion by evoking ‘hate thy neighbor love thy nation’ attitude. In the process, the discourse takes resort in evoking Hinduism, Nepali language and, during the Panchayat era, in institutionalizing the education policy, thus rendering the very idea of nationalism to be another form of state policies and state myths. I suggest that during the Panchayat regime in a drive to consolidate power, the state agencies projected grand narratives of nationalism. I will be basically focused on study of nationalism as reflected in some school textbooks which served as the vehicles of Panchayat education.

Part one of this dissertation examines nation and nationalism from some theoretical perspectives. In the brief analysis, Ernest Renan, Benedict Anderson, William Pfaff and other critics will be referred to. In part two, I examine the historical development of Nepali nationalism. I begin with the Prithvinarayan Shah’s nationalism in relation to foreignness and Hinduism. I then briefly discuss how this mode of discourse was received and altered during the Rana era and how it changed its course with the beginning of Panchayat system. I will touch on the doings of King Prithvi Naryan, Bhimsen Thapa, and Jung Bahadur Rana because these three figures have a large bearing on the kind of Nepali nationalism of the Panchayat era and, also, today. Their take on Nepali nationalism has had lasting effect in the history of Nepal. And Panchayat nationalism, largely, owes to nationalism framed by these characters. In doing so, I will make references to theorists and various writers including Renan and Anderson. Part three discusses King Mahendra and Panchayat nationalism and

will stretch its legacy, altered and revised, up to the republic era's political nationalism. In part four, I will bring in analysis from the course books, primarily English, Nepali and Social Studies and Panchayat and Civil Life from lower and secondary levels. In the passing, critique will touch on educational policy as envisaged in New Education System Plan of 1971 and production of Panchayat literature. The key focus will primarily lie on the issue of representation of nationalism through the school text books. I will sum up, in conclusion, by making a short revisiting of the arguments developed in the earlier sections.

Part One

Theorizing Nation and Nationalism

Theoretical debates on nation and nationalism are raging high in the contemporary world though some have declared the ideas extinct. The fact remains that the contemporary world is undergoing political realignments in which nation and nationalism are playing an alarmingly vital part. Nation and nationalism form part of a highly charged field of intricately intertwined historical developments which include colonialism, imperialism, and conquest. Furthermore, nation and nationalism are enmeshed in bewildering contradictions. These concepts are at once cohesive and divisive: cohesive in the sense that they bring together peoples of one land-unit to live in bond of solidarity; divisive since they thrive by sustaining difference from and antagonism against the other: “Nationalism is progressive as well as regressive. It is primordial and yet modern: primordial in that it is expressive of the innate human need for collective existence, and modern as it is indeed linked with the passing away of the old order—be it religious or dynastic”(Vijasree x).

Though Benedict Anderson, Political Scientist and Cornell University Professor Emeritus of International Studies, himself a prominent critic of nationalism concedes that “Nation, nationality, nationalism—all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze”(3), this deceptively difficult term to define has triggered an explosion of theories. The concept of nationality, nation and nationalism to which Anderson also calls “the cultural artifacts” (4) has its origin towards the end of eighteenth century. Anderson holds that prior to eighteenth century two cultural systems namely “*religious community* and *the dynastic realm*” (12) preceded it, or the parts of modern day nation.

In *Wrath of Nations*, William Pfaff offers a neat genesis of what is known as nation today. He holds that nationalism is usually thought a primordial historical phenomenon, the emotional binding by which political communities originally emerged, and through which the ethnic community finds its historical expression and maturity. It also is usually taken to be an essential but passing stage in the march of history, necessary in producing the modern nation, but also to be left behind as more rational and progressive forms of political society take the place of the more backward. For Pfaff this is not true. He says “Nationalism is a phenomenon of the European nineteenth century. It is a political consequence of the literary-intellectual movement called Romanticism, a Central European reaction to the universalizing, and therefore disorienting, ideals of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment”(14). Pfaff believes that in the past “there were local loyalties to place and clan or tribe, obligations to lord or landlord, dynastic or territorial wars, but primary loyalties were to religion, God or god-king, possibly to emperor, to a civilization as such”(17). There was no nation. To be Chinese was to belong to a civilization which was presumed to be universal. To be Mesopotamian or Roman was to belong to an inclusive empire of undetermined borders. To be a European in the Middle Ages was, for the vast majority, to be a Christian. The nation-state itself is modern. The number of nations with a more or less coherent history of independent existence before modern times is fairly small: England, Japan, France, Denmark, Sweden Russia, Poland and Spain. Outside Europe, there have been no nations other than those, among them the United States, which were established as Europe’s outposts. Japan is the serious exception to that generalization. India was a Hindu civilization dominated—after the Moghuls came—by Islamic elite, and, after that, by a British one. France and England are

supposed to be the original nation-states and their history as nations dates from the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453).

Tracing this history, Pfaff gives his definition of nationalism: "Nationalism is a profound, if often malign, expression of human identities, a negative force, but also a positive one. It is an expression of love as well as of hate. It is a fundamental element in modern political life and international relations. It demands to be better understood" (13).

Benedict Anderson says the development of the printing press and the standardization of languages, and the emergence of written vernacular literatures which followed, made possible "imagined communities" much grander than the actual ones which existed before, and for this reason the modern nation developed, and with it national consciousness, and eventually nationalism. The bourgeois intelligentsia brought into being by the print revolution "invited the masses into history." He claims that the rise of nationalism has coincided with the decline of religion as a social force, but this seems misleading in its implication, since the decline of popular religious belief in Europe occurred during the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, while nationalism first gained force in the early nineteenth century, and remains particularly powerful in the regions of western and Southern Europe the least touched by disbelief and secular ideas. Ernest Gellner draws a sort of parallel with Anderson's two antecedents in theoretical models that he calls "Anglo literate society" and "Advanced industrial society" (105). For him the journey of nationalism began in Anglo literate society and has arrived in advanced industrial society, where, he contends, nationalism takes modern shape.

The nineteenth-century French scholar Ernest Renan argued that it is "will" which makes a nation. A nation is "a daily plebiscite," "a moral consciousness." It is

community with the common memory—a people which has suffered together. In a famous phrase in his 1882 lecture “What IS a Nation?” he said that the “essence of a nation is that its people have much in common and have forgotten much.” He continued: “Every French citizen ought to have forgotten Saint Bartholomew’s Day [the mass murder of Protestants on that day in 1572] and the thirteenth-century massacres of the Midi [of Albigensian heretics, by the Inquisition].” That is to say, for the French nation to thrive, its citizens must deliberately put behind them events which have divided them. Ernest Renan defines nation as a “soul, a spiritual principle.” For him two things constitute nation, one being the common possession of “a rich legacy of memories; the other is present day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form” (19).

The most practical definition of a nation probably is that of the most eminent of cotemporary students of nationalism, the late Hugh Seton-Watson, and it resembles with Renan. Seton-Watson wrote that after a lifetime of study he was:

driven to the conclusion that no ‘scientific definition’ of a nation can be devised, yet the phenomenon has existed and exists. All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one. It is not necessary that the whole of the population should so feel, or so behave, and it is not possible to lay down dogmatically a minimum proportion of population which must be so affected. When a significant group holds this belief, it possesses ‘national consciousness.’ (qtd in Pfaff 58)

For the postcolonial and nonwestern critics the version of nationalism discussed above is only modular and universalistic parochialism. Partha Chatterjee does not only attack Andersonian definition but finds “the reason why people in the third world” (214) do not fit in that modular nationalism. For him to succumb to modular notion is naivety. “If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain modular forms made available to them by Europe and Americas what do they have left to imagine?”(216), Chatterjee questions. For him the modular form does not work because “the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the ‘modular’ forms of the national society propagated by the modern West” (126).

Homi K. Bhabha somehow follows the same line of arguments. Bhabha’s nation-narration argument further advances the role of imagination and narration in the conceptualization of nation. Breaking the autocracy of grand narratives of nation, Bhabha argues that representation of nation can occur only through “double writing” or “dissemination.” The question, Bhabha adds is “not simply the ‘selfhood’ of nation as opposed to the otherness of other nations. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its people” (148).

Even a cursory look at the critics and their theoretical standings cited above leads us to another dead-end in search for one modular and fit-for-all sort of definition of nation and nationalism. There is no forceful conclusion of the discussion other than the fact that it is hard to define the criteria of a nation and nationalism. For the first thing, there is no overarching definition. And secondly, the theoretical modal originated in one historical time and space fails to take into account the complexities of nation elsewhere. Only solution to theories, it seems, is continuous critique of the

idea that will keep the discourse vibrant and living. Yet one thing can be fairly established about idea of nationalism: it is a recent phenomenon. Though nation and nationalism existed in one form or the other from the middle age itself, it is only a two century old academic exercise. However, there are some fundamentals on which nationalism of all eras and all nations depend. They are people's sentiment, identity and self-esteem. It is one of the necessary evils of a modern nation. Religion, identity, spirituality, and nationhood go together with nationalism, all serving as a supplement to making and growth of other.

Nation and Nationalism in Nepali Context

Nepali nationalism is a complex phenomenon, complex not because it has complex origin complex because it is born out of the situations that, generally, stand as barrier to its birth. Nepal was kept completely insulated from the foreign influence during the Rana rule of one hundred and four years. And this sealed the nation from industrialization which prevented the rise of the middle class. Rise of the middleclass and market economy are considered, by Sashi Prabha Mishra, as two essential conditions of nation building. It is this lack that makes the Nepali nationalism unique in south Asia. Mishra makes a compelling observation about the nature of Nepali nationalism:

The rise of Nepalese nationalism defies the general pattern of nationalistic upsurge all over Asia. The feeling of nationalism in other Asian countries emerged as part of their struggle against the colonial powers. The multi-religious and multiethnic societies in these countries attained a degree of territorial and administrative unity as a result of colonial rule and started a search for their identity and freedom with the help of an ideology inspired by western social-political thought.

Actually nationalistic upsurge in Asia was part of the Asian renaissance ushered in by a western educated middle class, which also was a creation of colonialism, industrialization and capitalistic economy. Though weak, the middleclass helped the development of nationalistic feelings. The course of historical developments in Nepal has been altogether different mainly because this country never underwent colonial experience. The result was that Nepalese were never required to fight for independence against a foreign power. (26)

Examining Mishra's analysis, what becomes clear is that birth of Nepali nationalism does not follow the principle of necessity. As the two primary conditions, namely birth of middleclass coupled with education development and industrialization, are conspicuously absent until the twentieth century what gave rise to the birth of Nepali nationalism is an eluding question. The Rana rulers were infamously intolerant of allowing Nepali people to be exposed to foreign influence. Despite this, "western liberal ideas reached this section of the Nepalese society during the first half of this century" (27). Mishra accounts the democratic upsurge of the late 1940s to be propellant to beginning the wave of national consciousness. "The repressive politics of the Rana and the impact of Indian nationalist movement" generated " democratic upsurge" which "in course of time also gave rise to national consciousness"(27). Her analysis can be understood to mean that Nepali nationalism is a modern phenomenon. Other important feature of her argument is that the nature of Nepali nationalism is such that it is hard to define and describe. To tread on this 'hard-to-define' territory of Nepali nationalism I rely on the prescription of Benedict Anderson who is of the opinion:

To understand [nationality, nation-ness and nationalism] properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.(4)

Nationalism, thus can be properly understood, explained or evaluated only by relating it to a historical context.

In the context of Nepal, Nepali nationalism generally begins with Prithvi Narayan Shah who ruled the kingdom of Gurkha during the mid-eighteenth century. Nationalism emerges along with his success in annexing to Gorkha all the member states of the league of twenty-four kingdoms and the tribal peoples of the southern flank of the Himalayas from Sikkim in the east to Kangra in the west. The root of Nepali nation state has its genesis in unification movement led by him. Prihtvi Narayan sowed the seed of nationalism through his much known *dibyopadesh* (divine counsels). His popularly quoted “*mera sana dukhale arjyako muluk hoina* (this country I have achieved through much hard work, it is a garden of four varnas thirty six jats) is not devoid of the kind of national imagination that he had envisaged. Prithvinarayan’s description of Nepal as a nation of four caste and thirty six nationalities are sometimes debated as mere rhetoric. Ethnic nationalities have hardly ever reached in the helm of power in the Nepali history. Manjushree Thapa has made a persuasive observation:

In reality,. . . just three groups ruled the country. The Chhetri caste, including the Shahs Thakuri sub-caste and the Ranas, controlled the palace, the court and the military. . . everyone in power were the Chettris, Bahuns and Newars. . . more than 90 percent of the country’s population found no representation at all. (52-53)

Prithvinarayan's *dibyopadesh*, the counsels, otherwise defined as the life blood rhetoric of Nepali nationalism, however, in the recent times have been interpreted by scholars as document of antimulticulturalism and politics of exclusion. Actually, Varna refers to four scripturally sanctified status groups of Hinduism; namely the Brahmans (priests), Kshatriya (rulers and warriors) vaishyas (traders or herdsmen) and shudras (servants). Firstly, this varna division sticks to the classical Hindu hierarchical structure in which the Brahmans and Kshetris are granted privileged positions while vaishyas and shudras are relegated to serve the ruling classes. Though, the garden of four castes and thirty six sub castes is conventionally understood as "endorsing a policy of ethnic harmony and coexistence"(Gellner 23) the much talked about goal of the king to make Nepal a common garden of four castes and thirty six tribes was not practiced by his successors. In another divine counsel—what is interesting in *dibyopadesh* is the very name, *dibya* means divine *upadesh* means sermons or homilies, by extension anything that comes through the king is divine for he himself is divine. Prithvinarayan suggests keeping friendship with the emperor beyond the southern seas basically for mercantile and business purpose; "export the goods of the country to the foreign land and bring the money home, if people are rich the palace will be strong" (Panta 44). David Gellner recognizes this doublespeak of the king as the example of his anti-Indian nationalism:

. . . his main concern was to keep Indians out so that (in line with his mercantilist assumptions) wealth would not go out of the country. To this end he wanted to prevent his kingdom from becoming a garden of 'every sort of people': only then would it remain a true (*asal*) Hindustan of the four varnas and thirty-six jats. The 'Father of the Nation' was therefore very far from being a multiculturalist celebrating

cultural diversity for its own sake as he is so often depicted. Nor was he really a nationalist in the modern sense as his indifference to the question of language shows. (24)

Evidently, Prithvinarayn had created a myth, so it has been proved by the scholars of the modern times, that Gorkha kingdom was a true Hindustan and thus distinguished it from the then Company Raj. This invocation of Hinduism, which continues until the panchayat rule, is really interesting in terms of Prithvinarayan because it is debatable whether he himself was a Hindu. He is, the contention goes, Muslim, a Magar but Hindu. Rishikesh Shah is of the opinion that the Shahs of the Gorkha kingdom “came of the same stock as of the Khan family or their branches. . . the original family of khans split into subbranches that later called themselves Shahs and Shahis” (Shah *Modern Nepal* 23). Dor Bahadur Bista goes to the extent of saying that “Prithvi Narayan’s ancestors actually stem from the local Tibeto-Burman speaking Magars” and “[his] supposed Rajput ancestry was merely a strategy of intra-ethnic dominance”(qtd. in Burghrat 263).

It is indeed curious question whether Prithvinarayan was a Muslim or a Magar. Shah elaborates in detail:

Some of the chronicles trace the ancestry of the ruling house of Gorkha to Bhupati Ranaji Rao of Chitor. According to the sources, his son Fateh Singh refused to give his daughter in marriage to a Muslim chief and invited his wrath. Fateh lost his life and kingdom in a fierce battle with the invading army. His two brothers, Udayambar and Manmath, continued to offer assistance to the Muslim usurper from Udaipur and Ujjain respectively. It was Manmath’s son, Bhupal Ranaji, who entered

the central Himalayan region and reached Ridi, near Palpa, in A.D. 1495.

Bhupal's son, Jain Khan, lived and died at Lasargha, but Surya Khan, Jain Khan's son, proceeded to Bhirkot and settled in a village called Khilung on the bank of the river Andhi-Khola. One of the two sons of Surya Khan, Khancha, the elder son, acquired control of Bhirkot, Garahun, Satahun and Dhor and became the king of that area. The younger son, Micha Khan, established his rule in Nuwakot and one of his descendants, named Kulmandan, adopted the title of Shah. Some of the later descendants of Micha Khan eventually seized control of Kaski and began to rule from here. While they were ruling in Kaski, Lamjung adopted as its king a prince of the family named Yasobrahma. Dravya Shah, who acquired the kingdom of Gorkha, was Yasobrahma's second son. (23-24)

Prithvinarayan is the ninth generation descendant of Dravya Shah. These observations are not only enough to question the Hindu legacy of the King but also serve as an evidence to counter his version of Hindu nationalism. His version of nationalism therefore does not stem from his religious lineage and faith but the deep rooted political desire to rule and expand the territory. Prithvinarayan conceived of state in terms of what Burghart calls "possession or muluk." He validated it with "ritual authority within the realm (*desa*)" (229). His realm was an "auspices icon of the universe centered on the temple of the king's tutelary deity and demarcated on the perimeter by temples" (231). This realm which has its clear base on Hidutva or Hinduism had to be kept pure at any cost. Those who went against this purity principle also "defiled the realm and . . . everyone who lived therein"(231-232). The

rules were strictly imposed on the subjects. For example, “Newar travelers, before being readmitted to Nepal from Mughal territory had to ‘undergo purification by bathing for forty days in cow’s urine, drinking it, and eating cow dung occasionally’” (232). His political impulse, his own non Hindu orientation and his commitment to keep Hinduism contradicts with each other and renders the attempt false.

Nationalism as perceived by Prithvinarayan can be studied in the light of Benedict Anderson’s theory of nation as “imagined communities.” Anderson has plausibly contented that nationalism originated from two large cultural systems namely “religious community” and “dynastic realm”(12). For Anderson, these two systems were the forms of nationalism which preceded 18th century European nationalism. The religious community “were imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script” (13). Dynastic realm operates in parallel with religious community. In Dynastic realm “kingship organizes everything around a high centre. Its legitimacy derives from divinity, not from polations, who, after all, are subjects not citizens” (19). Prithvinarayanian Hindu nationalism is fusion of both of the Andersonian doctrines. The dynasty is semi-divine, the king is the centre of the country. Nepali nation then was imagined in terms of Sanskrit scripture and Hindu hierarchical model. At the top of the hierarchy was king, a Hindu lord, then there were Brahmins who interpreted scriptures in the interests of the rulers. Brahminical codes of conducts were strictly reinforced. The royal priests would be appointed Brahminical judges known as *dharmadhikar*. This tradition continued in Nepali history until the end of monarchy in 2008. Like any other monarch, Prithvinarayan offered himself as the power centre and derived his legitimacy from divinity, claiming the title of Hindu lord and then relegating the people to the mere status of subjects.

Riaz and Basu see Prithvinarayanian nation-state in different light. Drawing on the arguments of Charles Tilly they espouse that:

State formation involves four stages: state-making by war making (that is to neutralize rivals outside the territory): state making by elimination (that is to eliminate potential challengers within the territory); providing protection to the supporters (that is, to create an environment for continued existence of the structure): and finally, extraction of resources (that is to subject the population and territory to continuous taxation for the maintenance and/or expansion of the territory. (6)

Prithvinarayan's national expansion bears all the hallmark of these processes including their violent nature. The genesis of the Nepali state lies in the Prithvinarayan's war making. He conquered sixty local kingdoms through a series of wars that took more than a quarter of a century by his military prowess and diplomatic skill. After victory his soldiers cut off the noses of the local inhabitants and subjugated them completely. He also expelled foreigners from the valley. Once Kathmandu was won over, he garnered support from there and attacked on Patan and Lalitpur and subsequently subjugated all subjects to pay tax to this regime.

Louis Wirth categorizes the types of nationalism into four: hegemony nationalism, particularistic nationalism, marginal nationalism and nationalism of minorities. He identifies "movement of national unification" as hegemony nationalism. The decisive factors in this sort of nationalism are "the economic, political, and military advantage to be derived from consolidating smaller principalities into larger and more dynamic units" (725). Prithvinarayan's nationalism fits into this category. Wirth also warns that "the internal weakness of such nationalism which is often without regard to cultural and political homogeneity and

compatibility” is its propensity to disintegration. The argument of our time that dividing the nation into federal units will herald the fragmentation of Nepal holds currency if seen in this light. For Nepal’s unification follows the principle of hegemony nationalism, the fears making the round among people that it could disintegrate once federal model is adopted cannot just be brushed off as imagination.

Thus established Nepali nation-state, nationality and nationalism go down in the history for long unabated, unquestioned and undeconstructed. But his principles begin to bear few cracks as long as his second successor holds the rein.

Prithvinarayan’s strong anti-firangi stand for the independence and purity of the country starts to suffer a setback as soon as Ranabahadur Shah follows succession. First begins the impingement of language. In Nepali history English Education comes along with the infringement from the Britishers in India during the fluid political situation in the country following the courtly intrigues during the reigns of King Rana Bahadur Shah. The courtiers had supposedly been bribed by the Britishers so that they could take advantage of the situation. This gave rise to the necessity of educating people in English. Bhojraj Sharma writes: “Damodar Pandey and Rana Bahadur Shah felt need for interpreters. So to fulfill this need, some people sent their children to India for English education” (47). Its wave began to flow toward Nepal with the growing impact of English education in India under the Macaulay program. The effects had reached the valley of Kathmandu which was set to culminate into a threat to nationalism.

Bhimsen Thapa and Nepali Nation

Bhimsen Thapa is deeply rooted name in the consciousness of Nepali people and he has been hailed as the bastion of Nepali nationalism. The reasons are many. He is the longest ruling *mukhtiyar* (prime minister) of Nepal besides Jung Bahadur. He ruled between 1812 and 1837. During his premiership Nepal had expanded its territory. It had annexed Kumaon and Garhwal and had expanded as far as the Satlaj River. He rises to power when Nepal is undergoing a fluid political situation following the whims and tantrums of the then king Rana Bahadur Shah. It was out of Rana Bahadur's insanity that Bhimsen rose to absolute power. He ruled for three decades and during his rule he scarcely knew opposition though his end was such a tragic one that no Greek tragedy could ever surpass. During his tenure "Bhimsen was Nepal and Nepal was Bhimsen" (Landon 82). And it is upon the "foundation that Bhimsen laid that both Jung Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher built up the prosperity and sovereignty of Nepal" (82). Bhimsen on his part was always opposed to British India government. Landon furthers "he looked upon the company as his foe rather than his friend. He was determined to see how far he could remove his neighbor's land marks to the south without encountering serious opposition" (83). His resistance against the British could not prove indefatigable but was not weaker either.

Bhimsen Thapa, for example, is known to have said to his advisors on the eve of the Anglo Nepal war; "How. . .will the English be able to penetrate into the hills? . . .[We] will expel them. . . Our hills and fastness are impregnable. I, therefore, recommend hostility. We can make peace afterwards on such terms as may suit our convenience" (Chaudhary 165). In *Basanti*, Diamond Shumsher adds to Bhimsen's aversion to British; "Bhimsen wanted to drive away the Britishers from Asia. He and Britishers always remained as foes to each other" (47). But there are other discourses

to the contrary of this claim. He rose to power in Nepali politics after the fall of his predecessor Damodar Pandey who was unseated from mukhtiyari following his supposed hobnob with the Britishers in the south. But Bhimsen rose to “power when he supported the British cause” (Acharya *Bhimsen* 18). As much as he is hailed for his anti-British stand he is also criticized for raising his position in the support of the very foes he hated. He is said to have declared war in 1814 out of his arrogance. He had no war skills. When he was in the absolute power he concentrated his attention in consolidating power to serve his and his family’s interest. Around 1810s, he was not much concerned about the state power. Baburam Acharya is of the opinion “he was a skilled player of contrivance and conspiracy but lacked diplomatic craftiness” (*Aba Yasto* 54). He went for war despite the advice from his courtiers that the controversial Terai lands, which were the bone of contention between the Company government and Nepal government and on which the British raj had laid its claim, had to be left for the British so as to avoid war. But Thapa’s disregard to advice made the war inevitable.

It is during Bhimsen Thapa’s premiership that Anglo-Nepal war is fought and it is during the same period that Nepal suffers the trauma of defeat in which it loses much of its territory. Much of the miseries that Nepal is facing from the issues of nationalism to the issue of economic insufficiency stems from this traumatic loss of war. In fact, the root of revulsion against the southern neighbor India, about which I made mention in the introduction part, lies in the very defeat and the treaty that followed. Pre-1816 Nepal was an empire. It had annexed Kumaon and Garhwal and had expanded as far as the Satlaj river. But the defeat of Nepal in 1814-16 war amputated Nepal’s territory to the present size. Article three of the treaty states:

The Rajah of Nepal hereby cedes to the Honorable East India Company in perpetuity all the under mentioned territories viz—

First—the whole of the low lands between the Rivers kali and Rapti.

Secondly—The whole of the low lands (with the exception of Bootwal Khass) lyign between the Rapti and Gunduck.

Thirdly—The whole of the low lands between the Gunduck and Coosah, in which the authority of the British Government has been introduced or is in actual course of introduction.

Fourthly—All the low lands between the rivers Mitchee and the Teestah.

Fifthly—All the territories within the hills eastward of the River Mechi. . . The aforesaid territory shall be evacuated by the Goorkha troops within forty days from this date. (from Stiller 23)

With this loss Nepali psyche was badly hurt. For the first time in history Nepalis had to learn that there was some force far superior and powerful than them and to which they had to submit. Henceforth, they could only respond with anger, frustration, and hatred. It made them diffident. Ludwig F Stiller calls the Sugauli treaty “a beginning rather than an end to Nepal’s time of troubles” (“Preface” III). In *The Silent Cry*, Stiller even suggests that had Nepal not lost that war Nepal would be free from the historical burdens of Kot Massacre and Rana Regime. The treaty halted the economic development of Nepal. Following the treaty the permanent residency of British in Nepal was officially established and Nepal turned into a semi-British Protectorate. Stiller offers a moving description of the British resident coming into the court of Nepal after the treaty:

Shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon of 17 April 1816, Gajraj Misra and Chandra Shekar Upadhaya led Lieutenant J. P. Boileau through the streets of Kathmandu toward the palace. Gorkhali troops lined the streets and came to attention as they passed. Boileau, if he noticed the curiosity and uncertainty his presence aroused, showed little sign of it. With unhesitating steps he followed his guides into the palace, up several flights of rough stairs, and then into a long narrow audience chamber. . . for the first time Boileau hesitated as his eyes adjusted to the brilliance of the room. The realization came upon him with a rush. He was here. His journey was over. And there, at the end of the other room. . . marked the throne and provided a splendid setting for His Majesty Girbana Yuddha Bikram Shah, the king of Nepal. As the lieutenant advanced across the room, the young king arose and stepped down from the dais to meet him. . . . When these formalities were finished, the lieutenant presented to the king a letter from the governor general of the East India Company to the Maharaja of Nepal appointing Lieutenant Boileau acting resident at the court of Nepal. A few words of congratulations and polite enquiries after the health of the king, and it was done. Nepal had officially received a British resident. (86-87)

The defeat and the subsequent establishment of permanent British resident in Kathmandu seriously affected the consciousness of Nepali people which in turn has left a serious impact in the Nepali psyche with regard to nationalism and its perception. This aspect of psychic disturbance can be explained in the light of trauma theory. Trauma is a key to understanding Nepali nationalism and Nepal India

relationship. Trauma, by nature, leaves an emotional shock, often having a lasting psychic effect on the trauma victims. The trauma of defeat in Nepal has taken the form of cultural trauma which occurs, according to a pioneer cultural trauma theorist, Jeffery C Alexander, “when members of collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1). Trauma is unhealable and undeletable from the community's psyche. It takes root in memory which passes from one generation to other. It is this trauma that is still playing roles in affecting Nepal and India relations. We do not regard Indians as our friends because we know that they, once the subjects of the rulers whom our forefathers had conquered, own the territory that once belonged to us. And on part of India, while it has its own trauma of colonial rule and 1947 partition to attend to, it still gloats over the fact that its former masters, the Britishers, had once defeated Gorkhali Empire. It imagines its former master's victory as its own and is apparently rationalizing its colonial past by attempting, by all means, to maintain the legacy of its former masters over this tiny state. Neither India nor Nepal has freed themselves from this historical memory.¹

With the fall of Bhimsen Thapa, after 1816, when permanent residency was allowed in Kathmandu, concept of Nepali nation as a pure Hindustan starts to lose its former validity. By 1816, Kathmandu started to populate the “firangi” and the realm had been officially defiled for the first time after Prthvinarayan had evicted the “defilers.” Nepali nationalism then became a hybrid form of Nepali ideals and borrowed British principles. Bhimsen Thapa himself from this point on slowly starts becoming English-friendly. He does not object to sending the little general Mathabar

¹ I have attempted an explanation of Nepali Nationalism vis-à-vis India from trauma perspective in an article “Why we dislike India?” *Republica* November 9, 2010.

Singh Thapa to London. Nor does he refrain from taking counsels from the resident in Lainchaur about the state of affairs at home. When his own position started to go shaky and unsecured “general Bhimsen Thapa would tell on King Rajendra Bikram Shah to B.H. Hudson” (Acharya “General Bhimsen. . . 49). Bhimsen’s latter day fascination toward the British is also seen in the military reforms that he took up. He chose the military ranks according to the British model and had trained the military in the English language. He began training the military equipping them with the weaponry and uniforms in the English fashion. His photograph shows him in the European hat, shoes and coat. Then on Bhimsen took the title of ‘general’ and even followed the English pattern of life. Mark Liechty observes “Clearly Bhimsen and the Nepali nobility was embarking on a new stage of consumption based more and more on European standards and expectation. It was a transformation that, not coincidentally, paralleled the emergence of the British as the regions’ paramount power” (37). Diamond Shumsher makes a composite portrait of Bhimsen’s love for the British ways of life and his wish to develop Nepal in the similar fashion in *Grihaprabesh*. Bhimsen has been put into incarceration in his own palace, Bagh Durbar. He begins to regret the decisions that he made during his hey day. He starts assessing the political, social and economic development of the British. While in this confinement he once has a dream in which he sees:

Blacktopped streets of London sleek and clean, where garbage would not be dumped. Every community had school, somewhere university too. Every citizen educated, experts of science, education and philosophy. Industries, banks, eateries, restaurants etc skyscrapers looking up which would cause the cap on head to fall. . . men would be wearing suit, pants, tie. Women in blouse, skirt, watch in the wrists. No

beggars, no ailing people, no uneducated people. No form of discrimination no untouchability. (62-63)

He has vision of having been accompanied by the then resident Brian Hudson who answers every curiosity of Bhimsen. Bhimsen listens to accounts of Hudson with so much of interests and dreams of Nepal as prosperous as Britain. But then this becomes his last dream. Had it not been for his later day fascination and tragic failure in Anglo-Nepal war, Bhimsen Thapa's anti British nationalism would be almost absolute. But at the end of Bhimsen era, Nepali nationalism starts to be dictated and influenced by the British power.

Junga Bahadur Rana and his Strategic Nationalism

Junga Bahadur Rana was as opposed to *firangis*² as his two predecessors, Bhimsen Thapa and Prithvi Narayan Shah had been. Some scholars in Nepal argue that Jung, who has influenced much of Nepal's political history or around whom Nepali history revolves, through his years of dictatorial rule was a nationalist. At times he is considered to be more nationalist than any of his successors from the Rana Udep to Madhav Kumar Nepal. On May 2, 2009, when Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" the then prime minister of the country was under mounting pressure not to sack the then Chief of the Army General Rukmangad Katuwal one of the Nepal's vernacular daily *Nagarik* had taken an appealing article entitled "Pushpa Kamal Timi Junga Bahadur Bana" (Pushpa Kamal, you become Jung Bahadur). The special article began with the conversation between Brian Hudson the then British resident in Kathmandu and Jung Bahadur Rana which I am reproducing below:

² *firangi* is the term that was used mainly by Hindus in India to refer to white Europeans during the colonial times. The word has negative connotation. It has Persian origin, meaning European and ultimately from the Arabic, meaning Frank. King Prithvi Narayan is known to have used this word to refer to Britishers in neighboring colonial India. He would do anything to maintain the purity of the kingdom of Gurkha as a 'true Hindustan.' One way of doing so was to impose restriction on movement of *firangis* in Nepal. More in Richard Burghart (2008:250) "The Formation of the Concept of Nation State in Nepal" from *The Conditions of Listening* Delhi: Oxford: 226-260.

Brian Hudson: You didn't let us know, being a good friend of Britain, about your attack over Tibet. China may fall heavy upon you.

Jung Bahadur Rana : Now it's up to God. I have waged war. You must have won several wars by now. Wasn't I your friend then? Did you ever let me know? (*Nagarik 4*)

Through this epistolary exchange between Hudson and Jung over the issue of Nepal-Tibet war, the writer Surendra Paudel was suggesting Dahal that he should be as bold as Jung in deciding for the nation. The article maintained that he should not be influenced by foreign forces. It contends that history has portrayed Jung Bahadur as a devotee of Britain. He is projected as an ally of imperialism and expansionism but he was not. Citing Historian Ramesh Dhungel, Paudel furthers: Actually Jung Bahadur was never a devotee of Britishers as has been portrayed by history. His history should be rewritten. There are only two statesmen in Nepali history Bhimsen Thapa and Janga Bahadur who had taken a clear and matured foreign policy”(*Nagarik 5*).

As a matter of fact, Jung Bahadur's nationalism is largely gauged in the anti British stands that he took and his love for the traditional Hindu doctrine. Like King Prithvi Narayan with whom Jung's great-grandfather had fought in expanding the Gorkhali empire, Jung looks greatly concerned about keeping the Hindu land unsullied by the external influences especially the British:

We have our own country, a Hindu kingdom [*hindu rajya*], where the law prescribes that cows shall not be slaughtered; nor women and Brahmans be sentenced to capital punishment. It is holy land where the Himalayas, the Basuki Kshetra, the Arya Tirtha, the refulgent Shri-Pashupati-Linge and Shri Guheshwari Pitha are located. In this Kali Age, this is the only country where Hindus rule. (qtd. in Burghart 271)

This notion of Hindutva encoded in *Muliki Ain* of Nepal forms the prescription of Nepali behaviors for hundreds of years after his death. It is this love for religion that forms the tenet of his national principles. So while in Britain, where he went before the promulgation of the *Ain*, “he always ate alone as per the Hindu custom, away from polluting non-Hindus” (Thapa 66). More interestingly, in an attempt to keep their caste pure and unsullied, Jung along with this party created a scene in London and attracted the attention of the British public and press. Rishikesh Shah writes:

Personal habits of the Nepalis, particularly their practice of bathing in the open with a loin cloth tied with a string round their waist attracted public notice and comments in the newspapers. So, too, did the Nepalis’ refusal to eat cooked food of any kind at the functions they were invited to or eat at the same table with any Europeans. After joining the others at the table for a few minutes before dinner was served, the Nepali guests would then withdraw to a separate room to partake all by themselves. . . in the party. (239-40)

Jung’s purpose of visit had been, primarily, to “see and bring back intelligence respecting the greatness and prosperity of Britain and its capital, the perfection to which social conditions have been raised and the extent to which Art and Science have been made available to the comforts of life” (Whelpton 98). Prior to his return to Nepal, Jang Bahadur had taken the precaution of making a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram where he underwent a religious ceremony of purification. Jung’s love for religion and nation are duly portrayed by Diamond Shamsar in his tragedy *Basanti*. In the novel, one Dambare has returned to Nepal from Bombay and tells Jung of the miracles that he saw during his stay in Bombay. Then Jung is only a young boy working in the Nepali court as minor military personnel. Dambare praises Bombay in

his conversation with Jung for its facilities like hospitals, transportation and schools. Jung is not lured by his description. Instead he says “you have been bewitched by foreign charms. . . but for me we have medicine as good as any elixir here, this country is dearer than heaven (27 *my translation*). Dambare tells him that the need of Nepal is to follow the suit of development of Britain. To this recommendation Jung is more fiercely apathetic than earlier. He reasons:

Our country is the state (*rajya*) of Pashupatinath and stands on religion. This is not a place to imitate western countries. Nepal prides in being Nepal-like not Britain-like. Whatever our sages obtained through Yoga, the British are trying to achieve through science. We could have reached the moon through yoga. We could have become immortal. (28)

All this would be more than enough to establish Jung as an ardent Hindu who would do anything to keep the Britishers away from this holy land. But his Hinduism was made tool, his antifirgani sentiment was provoked to sustain power or to design some conspiracy. He was a dear man in the resident. As a nephew to Mathabar Singh Thapa he would get invitation from the residents of Lainchaur quite often. He would amuse resident’s wife and daughters with his tales of bravery of jumping the Trishuli River, catching elephant, killing of tiger and so on. When it came to pleasing the British establishment in the south and in Lainchaur Jung would not leave any stone unturned. He would offer military assistance to the Company Government even if it was not a desired assistance from the latter. In *Life of Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur Rana of Nepal* Pudma Jung Bahadur Rana writes:

In May 1848 Jung Bahadur was informed by the British Resident at Kathmandu that there was likelihood of a second war between the English and the Sikhs, and he volunteered the

services of six regiments of Nepalese troops, under his own personal command, to assist the English in the coming war. The British government expressed their satisfaction at the kind offer, but declined it with proper acknowledgements on the ground of their being in no need of help at that time (99)

Jung makes similar offer in October of the same year. This excess of obsequiousness does not only make mockery of himself but also leads to make the then resident of Dr Oldfield doubt the sincerity of Jung. He was attached to the British power both as a time serving flatterer and a hungry hanger on. Dr Oldfield's analysis of the motives with which Jung approached Britishers time and again makes a revelation of how Jung with his obsequiousness was defaming the national pride:

In making this offer it is impossible to suppose that the Minister was influenced by any sincere or active desire to see the British power increased in the north-west. He probably thought it a good opportunity to bring his name personally before the British Government under favourable circumstances and that, in making an offer, which he must have known would be refused, he should get the credit with the British Government of at least friendly intentions, and naturally hoped that in this way he might win the support of the British Government, and by being looked upon as their friend, he might strengthen his own position in the Nepalese Darbar. It is probable also that, although the mission to England was not then talked of publicly, it was privately in contemplation at that time, and that Jung thought that the offer of his and his army's services would ensure his receiving a cordial and

flattering welcome on his arrival in England. (qtd in Pudma Rana 100-101)

Perhaps pleased with the repeated pleas from Jung, the British authority finally issued an invitation to him to visit Britain which marks the fall of his own principle which he formulated while at home. While in London he is rumored to have slept with a prostitute. “Jungey paid a hundred and fifty thousand pounds to sleep with London’s well-known prostitute, Laura Bell” (Upadhyay 190). Diamond Shumsher’s works, which are considered to be authentic literary rendition of Rana history, capture the ripple effects caused by Jung’s visit and also the long term effect of his religion loaded nationalistic philosophy. His visit to England is interpreted by the courtiers in the Kathmandu court as a sacrilege. He is often said to have become casteless since his return from Britain:

Old rumors about Jung Bahadur and Queen Victoria were used to discredit him, rumours which were based upon the misconstrued perceptions of the entourage that had accompanied him to England. Mainly unlettered and unschooled in the procedures of English protocol, they had suspected Jung Bahadur of having a clandestine affair with Queen Victoria. . . . When the British Queen honored [Jung Bahadur] by conferring upon him the title of Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, his opponents in Kathmandu not only spread slander against [him] but against the Queen Empress also by giving the title a different twist. They translated it as night instead of Knight, Grand- a memorable occasion, cross- as ‘copulation’ and Bath for ‘bathroom’—or, in other words, they tried to imply that Jung Bahadur had earned his title in the Queen’s bedroom (9)

In another instance, under the mounting pressure from his brothers and nephews to appoint Jagat Jung Shri Teen Maharaj, Jung decides, apparently to quieten those voices, that whoever may succeed him (Jung) salary and benefits would go to Jagat and his descendants. To this the whole of Kathmandu rises to celebration and also invited is the British resident, to please whom was the sole purpose of Jung. So he hands the resident the binoculars to see how happy his people were. But the action has a boomerang effect. The resident sees ignorance, hunger and exploitation. “[people] were apathetic. Hungry and ill clad though they were, they still shouted praises for Jung Bahadur. He continued to watch. . . one day, the exquisitely beautiful temples and buildings would collapse under the weights of the excreta and offal that were being piled upon them” (140). Likewise, great commotion follows as to whether to allow the British residency doctor to treat ailing prince Trailokya. Jagat is against having a firangi doctor touch the prince. “It would be sacrilege to let the British Doctor touch his Highness” (163). But when Trailokya reaches a critical condition a British surgeon, Major Whitewell, comes to aid but since there is neither medicine nor surgical instruments he can do nothing. Shumsher renders this into a moving description. “Here they had abounding riches, whisky from Scotland, coaches from France, and horses from Australia but not necessities such as medicine or surgical instruments” (167). The same doggedness kills Dhir Shumsher whose throat was infected due to his swallowing of meat bone which stuck in his throat. But then this form of untouchability is supplemented with extreme deference to British authority in Kathmandu. When the new resident gets appointed he is welcomed with full of fanfare and celebration. British and Nepali flags are held up together as if they were two nations in one and are juxtaposed:

A new British Resident, Colonel Berkeley, was to present his credentials to the King and the government had put on a gala affair. . . . a red carpet had been rolled out to the main gate. . . From the British Residence in Lainchaur to Hanumandhoka, British and Nepalese flags fluttered in the morning breeze. (186)

This tendency of love as well as hate strategies on the part of the Nepali rulers has become a subject of a full-fledged study. In an influential essay “Selective Exclusions” Mark Liechty describes the phenomenon, common to Prithvi Naraya, Bhimsen Thapa, and Jung Bahadur and his successors, as the principle of selective exclusion. By this he refers to the tendency of the rulers to prohibit British culture, values and religion and even people themselves to penetrate and grow in Nepal. Principle of exclusion was also forced on the people of Terai region. “Until 1951, even the people from the Terai region of Nepal needed a permit from their own government to visit Kathmandu” which in result caused in Terai people “ a problem of identification in psychological terms” (Shah *Nepali Politics* 3). But the principles do not hold when it came to adopting their fashion, the goods, lifestyles and language. In relation to nation and nationalism, it can be said that the rulers were lured by every thing foreign but kept themselves from adopting every allurements for the fear that they would be construed as less nationalist or antinationalist.

Often in Nepal, some appreciation is accredited to the Rana regime for keeping national integrity intact during their rule. They are also hailed for stopping the wave of colonialism that had arrived the next door. But all this is a shallow consolation if following observation of Rishikesh Shah is to be taken into account:

The most important reason why Nepal was not brought under British rule [during the Rana rule] was that after the mid-nineteenth century

the British got everything they wanted from Nepal without having to exert themselves further. The Rana rulers of Nepal were convinced that Nepal could not withstand the British in a trial of strength and hence made themselves, as rulers of an independent country, so useful to Britain that there never arose any real need for the British to bring Nepal under direct rule. (*Nepali Politics* 114)

Examining “selective exclusions” against this reality, the principle of keeping Britishers at bay proves to be mere rhetoric. Nothing more. Nepali nationalism is guided by such principles full of incompatibility, paradox and contradiction until 1950.

Part Two

Mahendra Era Nepali Nationalism/ Panchayat Nationalism

In Nepali history, Panchayat rule marks an end of the nascent parliamentary democratic polity and begins a new age of Panchayat democracy which has been critically questioned by the intellectuals and scholars of the modern times. Panchayat has been defined as a new version of Rana autocracy at times. But at the heart of the Panchayat polity was embedded concept of nationalism. King Mahendra's direct rule between 1961 and 1972 redefines, reshapes and reconstructs Nepali nationalism which for years after him becomes rooted into the Nepali soil and psyche. It virtually becomes established as a true version of nationalism. Perhaps this is the reason why it took thirty years to uproot that system that had redefined Nepali nationalism. The key actor of Panchayat nationalism was king Mahendra. So the study of Panchayat nationalism can be fruitful only by studying Mahendra era politics.

Unlike his predecessors, Prithvinarayan Shah, Bhimsen Thapa and Jung Bahadur Rana who had vocally advocated nationalism, he institutionalized his version of nationalism through constitution, language, religion, dress and education system and dissemination of Panchayat literature like *sawais*. He gave official color to it. King Mahendra founded his rule on the concept of nationalism. When in 1960 he dissolved the elected house of parliament and announced the imposition of Panchayat rule, Nepali nationalism began to take new meaning. His December 15, 1960 royal proclamation did not only begin the era of Panchayat nationalism but also reverted the nation to "restoration of the kind of monarchical rule that had prevailed before 1846" (Shah 6 *Nepali Politics*). The king, however, was clever enough to use considerable skill to justify his dissolution of parliament. He said:

Contrary to the popular hope and belief that the representatives elected in accordance with the democratic procedure would dispel the atmosphere of misunderstanding prevailing between the government and the people and make an all-out effort to promote the progress and wellbeing of the nation, the elected government . . . wielded authority in a manner designed to fulfill the individual and party interests.

Whereas, ours is the ultimate responsibility for protecting national unity, nationality and sovereignty, maintaining law and order and safeguarding the country from deterioration, no matter whatever be the cause thereof. (Grover 762-763)

He attacked the parliamentary system itself, which he characterized as a clumsy western imposition incompatible with Nepal's traditions, history, and objective conditions. What was required [for him] was a new "Nepali" political system that conformed to the spirit of Nepal's traditions and culture—"Nepalism" (Joshi and Rose 395). Evidently he attempted to create a cultural myth about Panchayat. He put forward a vigorous plea that his democratic Panchayat system with its roots in the soil of the country was better suited to the socio-psychological climate of Nepal than the parliamentary democracy. In a ceremony held in Kathmandu on April 13, 1962 King Mahendra eulogized:

We have confidently moved toward Panchayat democracy by beginning the New Year [Nepali calendar] with the initiation of the Panchayat system. This Nepali plant . . . is suited to the climate of our country. There is no Nepali who does not know what a pancha and a panchayat is. The development of culture and civilization in our country. . . has taken place under the panchayat system. Parliamentary

democracy has proved unsuitable because it lacks the Nepali qualities which are found in the panchayat system. The nationalistic feelings associated with the awakening are not as possible under any other system as they are under the panchayat system. (qtd in Joshi and Rose 397)

With the invocation of Nepalism, Nepaliness and Nationalistic feelings Mahendra sets the scene for his rule. What is interesting to note in this speech is king's blatant aversion for foreignness. For him, parliamentary democracy, which was an imported idea, was an open encroachment in the Nepali soil. This aversion for foreignness is an echo of the anti-British nationalism that Bhimsen Thapa and Prithvinarayn Shah had vocally advocated, and to a large extent, established. However, the "Nepali plant" was not absolutely uninfluenced by western ideas. At the heart of the panchayat nationalism is a concept of nation building which was rendered in Nepali vernacular as *desa banaune*. Richard Burghart sees Panchayat version of nation-making as a borrowed form of North American academic discourse of nation-making:

The concept of nation-making as found in North American academic discourse, quickly passed into Nepalese political discourse being reworded by the apologists of Panchayat democracy as *desa banaune*. Indeed, the concept of nation building is so central to the 1962 constitution and to its apologists that one suspects the framers of the constitution to have already been familiar with it. ("The Political Culture." 2-3)

To consolidate the system he synchronized it with the Hindu ethno-religious order constructed by the regime. According to the tradition five village elders well-versed in the Vedas (sacred texts of Hinduism) and Hindu religious texts used to advise and

govern villages in traditional Nepal. The king capitalized on this fact and associated it with spirituality and religiosity. Traditionally, in Hinduism panch (five) from which pancha and Panchayat are derived is deemed sacred number. So there are words like *panchamrit*, *panchakanya*, *panchapallav*, *panchmukhe shivaji*, *pancharatna*, *panchajanya*, *shree panch*, *panchayat* etc.³ With this association Panchayat got sacred status. Panchayat ideologies were promoted by organizing essay competitions in themes of Panchayat and the crown. In 2019 VS, for example, a competition was held on the occasion of “her highness queen’s (Ratna Rajya Laxmi Devi) thirty fifth birthday and as many as 1200 students from high school had paid their devotion to the queen. The students had been deigned refreshment from her majesty” (*Nepalma Panchayati Byabastha*). The essays of such competition make an unparalleled reverence for the king and his system. Bachaspati Sharma Devkota one of the contestants of the competition of Bikash Bhawan High School, Chhetrapati writes “Panchayat will grant equality to all people. From the great sayings (*mahan udgar*) of the king it can be learnt that this system is the only system that can establish ramrajya (utopia). I have the impression that in ten years from now, *ramrajya* will be replaced by *mahendra rajya*” (22).

Not less appealing than this is sawai. Panchayat sawais were songs distributed to each village Panchayat and each village Panchayat member was supposed to disseminate it to the people through recital. *Suna Suna Pancha ho ma kehi bhanchhu, panchayat byabasthako sawai kahanchhu* (listen all panchas, I am going to narrate the glory of panchayat system) the sawai would begin. Abhi Subedi’s version of Panchayat utopia is best rendered in sawai.

³ Panchamrit refers to nectar made of milk, ghee, honey, curd and sugar. Panchakanya stands for five young girls who have not had any menstruation but it comes from the five great ladies of the scriptures Tara, Kunti, Mandodari, Ahilya, Draupadi. Some of these ladies have reputation of having polyandrous relation. Panchapallav is five leaves, Panchamukhi shivaji is Lord Shiva with five heads, rare and special. In short panch elements, which are so hailed as pure, also contain a lot of impurity.

Bahujanko dukha sukha bahujanko ruchi

Panchhayara janatalai jhan ulto lucchhi

Duijanako jhilimili prajatantra hoina

Esto khalko prajatantra aba chahidaina. (2)

Adhikar badphada garikana aja

rajale khada gare panchayati raja

Manishako sristi hunchha pancha tatwa mili

Panchayati rajle garchha deshko jhilimili (5)

Gaule dai gaunma chalau nirmanako mela

Hatbhari thela parne bhayo aba bela

Esto bela esai gaye pachhutaunau parla

Timro chhora durban bani bideshma marla. (6)⁴

These songs contain the message of the Panchayat system. In fact, it is a representative message of king Mahendra. The first stanza sets the scene for introducing Panchayat. Democracy was made to mean the means of the handfuls. And then in the second, light is thrown on Mahendra's utopic Panchayat. The third stanza is important. It speaks of a clear aversion for sending the youths to foreign countries for work. There he may die being just a gatekeeper, it warns. This warning against working in the foreign makes a constituent of Back to Village National Campaign⁵.

⁴ I am translating these three stanzas: stanza 1; prosperity and wishes of the majority/ were brushed aside and people were looted/ democracy is not the fun of two men/ that sort of democracy is no more needed. Stanza two; dividing the rights today/ king founded the Panchayat raj/ man is created out of five elements/ Panchayat will illuminate the country. Stanza three; oh village folks begin the wave of construction here/ now is the time you let your palms for hard work/ you will have to regret if you let go this time/ your son will die being a durban (gatekeeper) in foreign country.

⁵ Back to the Village National campaign was an ambitious national project of king Mahendra which he had launched through a message to the Rastriya Panchayat, Nepal's Legislature in 1967. Rishikesh Shah has drawn analogy between the motto of this campaign and American President John f

Most important of all, he institutionalized his system through the constitution of the country. In a way, 1962 constitution itself is the document of Panchayat nationalism. In 1962 constitution he basically invokes Hinduism, sacridization of monarchy and Nepali language. The new constitution vested sovereignty in royal dynasty and powers of state were also enjoyed by the king. The new constitution quickly became identified with the institution of Panchayat democracy. His aim was to constitute political relations so that they were in harmony with traditional order.

Toward that end, he invented symbols and myths, imposed Nepali as the national language and attached religiosity to everything that was Panchayat and Panchayati. He declared Nepal a Hindu state in 1962 and baptized the nation as Hindu legalizing it through the constitution. The constitution declared Nepal as an “independent, indivisible and sovereign monarchial Hindu state” (Grover “Appendix” VIII 765). The nation had to be Hindu if the kingship, as a Hindu kingship, was to have legitimacy. Though the 1961 government statistics showed 88 percent of the population to be Hindu declaring the nation a Hindu state went in utter disregard of the remaining 12 percent population belonging to other religious communities. Hinduization thus rings unnatural and incompatible. A.W. Macdonald and Anne Vargati Stahl are right when they say “Nepal was Hinduized by displaying and informing, by looking and listening, rather than by the dissemination and reception of written messages” (6). This “in a roundabout way [was] a [return] to the caste system being upheld by the state, not as a caste but as tradition” (5). Another tool with which Mahendra enforced unity among people was language. The constitution held that “the national language of Nepal is the Nepali in the Devnagari script” (Grover Appendix

Kennedy’s famous lines; “ And so my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country” (Nepali Politics 81). The campaign had ten items as the main planks but first and foremost was “to strengthen and develop the feeling of nationalism and national unity”(81).

VIII 766). With respect to language, the percentage of Nepali language speakers was much below the percentage of Hindu population. According to the 1961 census Nepali was lingua franca for majority of the population. Yet Nepali was enforced in the education system. Burghart makes a compelling analysis:

According to the 1962 Education Act, the medium of instruction in all state schools was to be Nepali, and in 1965 Hindi and Newari news broadcasts were terminated on Radio Nepal. The elimination of Hindi was sealed in the 1971 census when the census commissioners listed the Terai regional languages as Tharu, Awadhi, Bhojpuri and Maithili. . . By such statistical and rhetorical means Nepali became the sole language with official status and the people were made one. (*Political Culture* 4-5)

Mention must also be made of dress. Panchayat polity made daura suruwal a national uniform and on government officials this uniform was strictly imposed. The king also appeared attired in this outfit on national occasions. Cow was declared national animal and thus was attached to religious value. Cow figures prominently in the Hindu world view. In fact it is a common symbol of Hinduism. In Nepal cow got included among the national symbols alongside the crown, scepter, flag, royal standard, and so on. And Panchayat regime was as passionate in protecting cow as its former regimes. For example, in Vishwa Hindu Parishad conference held in Kathmandu (25-28 March 1988) one of the Panchayat prime ministers Nagendra Prasad Rijal declared that “all are Hindus who regard the syllable *om* as holy, who accept the holiness of the cow”(Michaels 80). The regime enforced general ban on cow slaughter. Outlawing the cow slaughter or giving sacred status to cow, however, is not something new Panchayat regime had adopted. The policy was first adopted

by king Rana Bahadur Shah after his return from Banarus in 1805. He proclaimed that:

From today killing of cows is prohibited. Inform (everybody) that, if somebody does (cow slaughter), capital punishment will take place and his property will be confiscated. From now on the killer of a cow should be killed by the *ambali* (district officer) (qtd in Michaels 86).

The royal decree was later institutionalized in *Muluki Ain* (the legal code) by Jung Bahadur whose primary objective was “mainly to protect the life and holiness for the sake of the king’s Hindu orthodoxy and for the sake of a common state ideology (as insisted upon by the rulers)” (91).

Most of king Mahendra’s Panchayat ideology is reliant on the sources from the past. Declaring nation a Hindu state, legalizing Hinduization, monarch as the incarnation of god all echo Rana era and post-1846 Shah practices. Thus reviving the old institutions and values forms one of the cores of the king Mahendra’s nationalistic project. He attempted to revive the traditional institutions of old Shah and Rana despotism. Some of such institutions are *pajani* (annual renewal of service), *daudaha* (commission for a tour of inspection) and *salam* or *darshan bhet* (individual or group audience with the ruler). These were in practice only in the mogul administration of India. For almost every move that Panchayat democracy initiated a parallel can be sought in the past regime. The back to past rhetoric of the Panchayat era had a definite purpose. The regime was in a mission to create a dream land or what Abhi Subedi has aptly described as “Panchayat Utopia”(83). The utopia had to be associated with nationalistic feelings, awakenings, and the rejection of the western style democratic pattern of government which in return would make people long for the past and take everything from the past as the golden moment. Subedi elaborates:

Panchayat evoked the nostalgia of the past; the very name Panchayat would make people feel nostalgic for the past, for a golden period. But it would be hard to locate specifically what times in the Nepali history were golden. Judging from the choice of language and the evocation of the partyless system it was quite obvious that Panchayat utopia sought to induce the nostalgia of complacency and self-sufficiency of the Rana period (83)

The regime wanted to impress on the people that ‘King is in the throne everything is right with the country.’ The whole project was attempt of institutionalizing king’s personal rule within the Panchayat rule. The king’s personal ambition, tendency and attitudes were at the heart of the system. King Mahendra, who grew up in the palace under the strict surveillance of the Rana and who therefore should have been a defender of the democratic institutions, had developed hostile feelings against the democratic experimentation from the very beginning. His hostilities are traceable largely in his personal traits than in reason. For example he had married despite his father’s displeasure and tacit objection. His second marriage to Ratna Rajya Laxmi was disapproved by king Tribhuvan because she was a sister of his deceased wife. And from the very beginning of democratic innovation in 1950, Mahendra’s cynicism was apparent. In July, 1951, for example, he had issued a public statement in which he announced:

Administration of democratic nature has been established in Nepal, but real democracy can be realized only when the people shed their narrow outlook and do not contribute to rumor-mongering and unrest, but try to arouse feelings of nationalism and national progress. I have seen that some people interpret democracy as the spread of unrest and useless

rumors. . . such rumors cause me not just sadness, but great pain and hatred. (Devkota 97)

In this declaration there is not only impatience of the crown prince to run the nation in his own style but also a deep regret for the loss of nationalist feelings which for him has been exacerbated by the import of the western-model democracy. It also is an indication that he will be satisfied with this system when he succeeds the throne. On February 18, 195, he declared that he was much more critical of democracy. The declaration deserves to be cited in full length:

Today instead of our golden dreams we have in our country innumerable organizations, in none of which can we see a selfless leader. Every government department was organized along new lines. But why does bribery alone succeed in it? As prices rise higher, why do foreign fashion entrench themselves stronger? Why are the simple and the honest people dying? And why are the reckless prospering? Similarly, new schools and colleges were established, but they are conducted without books. Freedom of speech was established but there is no place where we can hear the expression of a pure heart. Rather it has turned into an instrument of name-calling among brothers. Freedom of the press was granted, and, even under a king like ours, anarchic materials inimical to the good and the gentle were published, abetting the activities of the unscrupulous. . . Therefore it is my hope that this one-year-old infant “democracy” which, by mistake or design, is on its death-bed, can be salvaged by our united efforts. (qtd in Joshi and Rose 180)

King Mahendra's message is clear in the above declaration. For him, democratic innovations have backfired. Leaders have become corrupt, self-centered, and betrayers of the nation. Everything that was granted to democracy was misused and misappropriated and therefore a decisive action was necessary like that of taking over the power.

A quick assessment of nationalism from Prithvinarayan to King Mahendra era shows that principle of negativity has worked as a fundamental ideal of Nepali nationalism. It is based on the principle of what should not be rather than what should be. For Prithvinarayan, it had to be different and untouched from the British influence. So was it for Bhimsen Thapa who, however, could not keep his stand till the end of his life. For Junga Bahadur and his Rana successors, nationalism was more about selective exclusion. But for King Mahendra, it is return to Nepaliness, Nepali soil, and Nepali ideals. But in all these versions, nationalism is individual guided rather than principle-guided. It is governed more by personal interests of the rulers than by the state policies and to fabricate the personal ambition rulers, often summoned to their aid religion, education, foreignness, history of bravery etc. Even more interesting is the fact that this version of nationalism continues, in one form or other, throughout and during the 1990s and even to the Republic era politics of Nepal.

Post-1990 Nepali Nationalism: Partial Reenactment of the Trend Past

Nepali nationalism in the political sphere of the post-1990 era reenacts, in a bit altered way, retains the element of hate they neighbor of the past. Anti-India sentiment seems to be the core element of nationalism of this era. After the political movement of 1990 that succeeded to put an end to three decades of Panchayat regime the way Nepali nationalism was perceived began to change. To cite from Pratyoush Onta, the very “meanings of Nepali identity have been under passionate scrutiny in the public domain and the foundational historical narrative of a brave Nepali nation and Panchayat’s national Pantheon of brave heroes are both being reformulated” (“Politics of Bravery.. 43). Nepali political discourse of the post-1990 era has featured nationalism, more prominently by the left leaning political parties, in one form or the other sometimes turning it into a fiery jingoism. But these manifestations echo the past versions, if not in exact form but in altered and modified ways. I wish to instantiate from few events from post-1990 political developments.

While nationalism is supposed to unite people, issue of nationalism in Nepal once divided the first largest communist party of Nepal, in 1998/99. After the Mahakali treaty of 1997, which is also known as the treaty against Nepal’s benefits, Nepal Communist Party (UML), the then largest communist party in Nepal split up citing the issue of nationalism. Bam Dev Gautam formed a new party in his chairmanship namely Nepal Communist Party (ML) and demanded from the party establishment that the treaty should be abrogated. He made American imperialism, India’s South Asian Hegemony, and Antinational Mahakali treaty the slogans of the new party which he chaired. Also it launched a nationalism drive in 1999 leading the marches of students and other party cadres to the Indian borders toward Kalapani which was thwarted by the Indian authorities. One year later, in December 2000,

Kathmandu saw one of the hideous deaths of four persons including two school going children over the issue of an Indian star's, Hritik Roshan's, supposedly anti-Nepal remark in an interview with a television channel. In reaction, people in Kathmandu came out to the street protests for about a week. Life was paralyzed, streets were deserted and shops and restaurants were closed. Many Indian businessmen were attacked and also attacked were Nepalis of Terai and Indian origin. The protest that was initially directed against the movie star took a nasty turn and gave way to the growth of "sentimental nationality" (Acharya 4). As a result, Ministry of Information and Communications had to issue orders and directives to all cinema halls in the country telling them not to show any movie with Hritik Roshan as the star, unless he publicly apologized. Political leaders gave credence of nationalism to this event. In an interview with the BBC Nepali Service journalist Rabindra Mishra, in January 2001, Bam Dev Gautam, the then general secretary of Communist party of Nepal (ML) called Hritik's remarks "damaging and insulting comments which [had] taken the shape of nationalist wave." He also accused the government of trying to impede "the expression of the nationalistic feelings of the people by firing at the protestors" claiming that the Nepali people should have been allowed to pour their sentiments against the insults. Are such outbursts the characteristics of nationalism? The question calls for separate discussion. But these events confirm that Nepali people feel it seriously when their nationalistic impulses are hurt.

Nepali nationalism often remained the regular agenda of radical communists. In Nepal, communist parties are known, sometimes notoriously, for sloganeering nationalism. In the process, they interpret nationalism in their favor and make it their armor and agenda, often for the political interest. Nepal Communist Party (UML) raised this issue vigorously but gave up after it reached the government in 1998.

Likewise, Unified Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) has made nationalism the part of their political rhetoric in the post republic era politics of 2009/10. During the rule in the party's leadership from September 2008 to May 4, 2009, Maoist leaders constantly referred to Nepali nationalism, its fate, the danger for Nepal's national sovereignty because of foreign powers, and duty of the Nepalis to protect it. Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" the first elected Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic Nepal announced his resignation on May 4, 2009 after taking to office for nine months citing the issue of nationalism. In his resignation speech addressed to the nation he said "various national and international regressive and status quo are hatching a conspiracy against the fledging republic, national independence, and rapid socioeconomic transformation and development as aspired by the masses" (*The Kathmandu Post* 7).

He elaborated in his speech why his government could not meet public expectations and blamed the non-cooperation intentions of the ruling alliance and the opposition party and projected them as obstacles to his mission to "protect national sovereignty." He announced to leave his position in government to struggle for "civilian supremacy and expressed his commitment to "the protection of nationalism" (7). Prachanda's self proclaimed campaign of protecting nationalism did not end here. In January 2010, he and his party launched a political show of marching to the Indian border and making speeches about foreign intervention, Indian expansionism, and defending Nepali nationalism. Dahal, along with his other influential leaders like Dr Baburam Bhattarai and party cadres marched toward the disputed boundaries of Kapilbastu, Kanchanpur and Susta of Nabalparasi enquiring about the undecided territory. The march was reminder of something like declaration of war. The cadres waved national flags and the spectacle looked eerie. Prior to this, however, Prachanda

had announced from New Baneshwor of Kathmandu that he would hold talks with Delhi. Even as he launched a scathing attack on India's naked interference in Nepal, the chairman Dahal vowed to speak only to New Delhi to resolve the political deadlock at home. Although he let an uncharacteristic public outburst against India finally he had indicated the possibility of talk with India. Rhetoric of Nepali nationalism at the political fronts thus puts the very discourse sometimes at ambivalence.

There is some apparent cynicism in this type of nationalism. Daulat Jha identifies that: "We have made it our habit to bring up nationalism whenever any political problems beset us. Nationalism as it is interpreted and exploited today, is a curse, not a cure" (4). Prachanda's war for nationalism has not found final landing as of May 19, 2010 when I am writing the first draft of this dissertation. It is interesting to note that most of the communist leaders, whose nationalism is anti-Indian, as if guided by the proverb 'hate thy neighbor,' are the products of Panchayat education. It is in this context that I consider the mention of their nationalistic campaigns meaningful here.

However, Prachanda's love for nationalism or anyone's passion for that sort of nationalism should be viewed as more than mere political rhetoric. Whether floated by communist leaders like Prachanda or Bam Dev Gautam or sparked by such an event as Hritik Roshan's scam one strikingly important feature of all the nationalism is anxieties of the external threats, influence, encroachment, most usually from India and Nepali people's dislike for India. Nepali nationalism has been defined in terms of external threats, especially southern threats (British Raj until 1947) and India after 1947.

As we have seen, this feature of defining nationalism in opposition to everything foreign or everything Indian has its genesis in Prithvinarayan era. During the Panchayat regime it was officially espoused which found its manifestation and representation in political discourse and which got institutionalized through the national education of the time. The school text books of the time served as a reliable agent to disseminate this version and delude the young minds that were the primary recipients of that education. With the historical background outlined above and the foregone conclusion I am studying Panchayat education in the following chapter.

Part Three

Nationalism in Panchayat School Education

Relation of nationalism with education or education with nationalism is more intricately and complicatedly interconnected than they may appear to be on the surface. In fact, nationalism of any country is shaped and reshaped by the education system of that country and they go together in parallel. "Education system, history and nationalism form a triumvirate. Education policy of a state relies on and sometimes manipulates historical facts to imbibe . . . nationalism in its people"(Paudyal "Disappearing 7). Understating of nationalism of any country therefore requires understanding of that country's education and how education manipulates history. Also effect of education alters and changes the way people perceive nationalism. An empirical research has shown that " people with higher education are less prejudiced toward ethnic out-group than are those with lower education. . . and that people with higher education are less prone to in group favoritism than are people with lower education. . . in short ethnocentrism is more commonly found among lower-educated strata"(Coenders and Scheepers 313-314). In this light, study of education policy becomes necessary for study of nationalism.

Panchayat Education preponderantly asserts itself in the declaration and actualization of Nepal Education System Plan (NESP) or National Education Plan (NEP) of 1971. This plan has been characterized as a historic overhauling of Nepali education system. The plan relies, for its sources, on the recommendation of the earlier education measures and professes to make a sweeping change in the mode of curriculum while omitting much of English and retaining other subjects in it. This part of my dissertation will primarily focus on the representation of nationalism in the Panchayat era school textbooks mainly of the post-1971 period. But before beginning

the analysis I consider it necessary to make a short review of the pre-1971 education situations too. This recourse to the past is meant for establishing a preface to my argument that the project of creating false consciousness, with some ambivalence, in name of education had begun as early as the onset of democracy in 1950.

Nepal does not have a long history of education. Opening up of Durbar School in 1853/54 by the Rana veteran Jung Bahadur Rana officially marks the beginning of formal education in this country. But in those days education was meant exclusively for royalties. What Mark Liechty famously calls “selective exclusion” has its application in Rana education. While teachers were British and language foreign the students were mostly royalties. The curriculum history of the Rana era school education is bit of dicey and begs for a separate observation.⁶ But it goes without saying that this education was absolutely inaccessible to the common masses. About the subject of schools during the Rana era in Nepal Daniel Wright writes:

The subject of schools and colleges in Nepal may be treated as briefly as that of snakes in Ireland. There are none. Sir Jang Bahadur and some of the wealthier class have tutors, either European or Bengali Baboos to teach their children English: but there is no public provision for education of any sort. . . the lower classes are simply without education. (31)

Wright’s examination speaks of the lack of proper system to educate the Ranas and exclusionary character of education. However, as late as 1930, students in Durbar

⁶ My attempt to recover the textbooks prescribed for the first few generations of Durbar School students paid me with frustration. I wanted to write a paper on “first English school textbooks” prescribed to the first generations of Nepali who got to study at home. The journey this assignment necessitated was tough. I navigated a few libraries in the capital: Kaiser Library, Library of Curriculum Development Center, Bhaktapur and the library of Durbar High School, the first English school of the country. The librarians there were first amazed by my undertaking. “Nobody comes here to look for such things” they said. But they cooperated when I explained why I needed them. Some even rummaged the entire bookshelf. But no school textbooks even from the 1950s and 60s could be traced let alone from 1850s and 60s. (I have recounted this experience in “Orphaned by History” *Republica* June 27, 2009 p. 5.)

High school are said to have been taught British and Indian history. Pratyoush Onta writes “students at Durbar school were required to study the history of India and Britain but courses on the history and geography of Nepal were not taught there” (Onta “Ambivalence. . .” 216). In the earlier days, Durbar School had its affiliation with Calcutta University (CU) and its curriculum is supposed to have been similar to that of CU. About the existing curriculum of 1950, Report of Nepal Education Planning Commission wrote; “the curriculum of the English schools, the dominant pattern at present, is patterned after that of English schools in India, which in turn is patterned after the schools of England” (Pandey 43). Naturally then “the syllabus would be in English language and medium of instruction in school was also English. Students also had to take exam in English medium” (Sharma 47). Trichandra College, founded in 1918, was an extended form of the English school education that the Ranas had fashioned under the British influence. Examining the pre-1950 education scene of Nepal, Dor Bahadur Bista notes:

On the whole, there was no real educational policy and the functions of educational administration were dispersed and uncoordinated. The educational system produced recruits for the government, typically for communication with foreign powers. Most professional in Nepal, at that time, whether doctors, engineers or architects, were not the products of the Nepali educational system but were graduates of Indian schools. (121)

According to a study, “before the political revolution of 1950, Nepal had no significant national system of education” (Reed and Reed 125). Nepalese Educational practices were copied from the Indian educational system, which was modeled on colonial British education—all three lacking high quality by modern standards and at

best a bookish, language oriented type of education designed to produce clerical workers rather than scholars, technicians, professional people and decision makers.⁷

What follows from the observations of Bista and Reed and Reed is that Nepali education during, and until much later after the Rana Era, was a copy of the copy or twice removed from colonial education which was aimed, in Nepal, to produce talking beings without skills and vocation, a perfect mimic men. Therefore, the report of Nepal Education Planning Commission (1956) denounced the colonial pattern of education in its recommendation. The recommendation categorically advocated the end of this system in its report.

The English schools have been described as a third hand version of a system never designed for Nepal. The successful graduates are likely to find clerical employment with the government by virtue of their ability to read and write Nepali and English, but much of the curriculum has no vocational value. For those who drop out before completing high school, little of practical value has been gained except the ability to read and write. (Pandey 44)

Only after 1950's democratic movement, Nepali language started to become medium of instruction in school. Now, Nepal partially systemizes its education project.

Whatever the criticisms, the influence of pre-1950 curriculum continued to hold in the Nepali education system until the NEP of 1971 was executed in different phases. One of the good things about the pre-1971 curriculum was that it contained materials that were aimed at modernization despite the regime's will. Take, for example, case of English curriculum. English was taught two subjects and contents were of mixed

⁷ When we talk about colonial British education, we ought also to remember Macaulay project which aimed to produce people Indian at heart but British at thought, the mimic men. Reed and Reed agree that this education system had denied scholarship to its pursuants. Nepali education, then, was no better than the mimic men project of Macaulay.

nature some were really enlightening. From 2012 v.s. (1956) to 2020 v.s. (1963), for SLC students these books are said to have been taught: *Pioneers of Progress*, *Modern High School Prose Selection*, *A Wonder Book*, *Progressive English Composition*, *Letters from a Father to a Daughter*, *Hidden Treasures of English Grammar and Composition*, *English Poetry Selections* and *SLC Poetry Selections*.⁸ Of them contents of *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* and *SLC Prose Selections* deserve some critique.

Firstly, the regime had carefully chosen the contents less threatening to learner's reasoning. *A Wonder Book*, as the name itself suggests, is a collection of fairytale like stories. *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* is a simplified history of evolution, the earth, the man, race, language, civilization etc. Compilation of letters written to Indira Gandhi by Indian Freedom fighter Jawaharlal Nehru, the book does not, in any way, resemble the Panchayat aspiration. The contents are enlightening and are of the nature of appealing to the rational sense of the readers. The book oriented students to the beginning of everything and taught them historiography. The contents led students to be more inquisitive about the past, history, knowledge and science. It was like a rationalizing mission. In preface to third edition, Indira Gandhi wrote "[the letters] were not merely letters to be read and put away. They brought a fresh outlook and aroused a feeling of concern for people and interest in the world around"(X).

SLC Prose Selections contained essays that dealt with varieties of subject matters. Booker D Washington's "The Struggle for Education" told a story of black slave that had struggled to acquire education and Hans Anderson's "The Emperor's New Clothes" made a mockery of an arrogant king at the hands of the two scoundrels

⁸ This curriculum is considered to be of much better standard and up to the mark compared to curriculum of the later Panchayat era. I therefore want to call it to have had modernist impulse and enlightening fiber. It is strange that the regime, from 2019 to 2028, acted oblivious of the philosophizing and rationalizing contents of this curriculum.

that had pretended to weave an invisible cloth and conned the king. Despite the fact that the book was “dedicated by Gracious permission to His royal Highness Crown Prince Beerendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev,” the NEP put it out of the curriculum.

The Panchayat regime seems to have recognized that this sort of curriculum had not been serving the interest of the regime in its entirety. So National Education Plan 1971 put an end to all those subjects taught before 1971. NEP professed to replace the old education system which the regime interpreted as having been loaded with theory and lacking in practice. The basic purpose of this education was to be functional and practical:

The plan is primarily aimed at counteracting the elitist bias of the inherited system by linking it more effectively to productive enterprises and egalitarian principles. It, in brief, is committed to tackle irrelevant and disorganized varieties of education that still exist in the country. The plan calls for unifying education into one productive system that saves the country’s needs and aspirations. The concept of education as an end to white collar jobs is being replaced by a new concept that regards education as an investment in human resources for the development of the country. (NEP Report)

The plan’s attack is on the education practices existent before. Education, it said, had to make an end to the production of men power that are capable of white collar jobs, the output of theoretical education. The plan set the main objective of primary education as basic literacy. At the lower secondary level, students were allowed to expand their intellectual horizons somewhat but were also expected to develop “ a sense of respect for labor” (Hayes 679). Education was not thought of as an end in itself but as an instrument to make the individual a more productive member of

society. At the secondary level, vocational subjects became an integrated part of curriculum. The avowed mission here was to produce skilled man power required by private and public development projects. Deeply embedded in this mission was Panchayat nationalism which was enforced through the imposition of Nepali language for which recommendation had been made by NEPC in 1956. The NEPC report had clarified that:

The study of a non-Nepali local tongue would mitigate against the effective development of Nepal, for the study would make greater use of it than Nepali—at home and in the community—and thus Nepali would remain a “foreign” language. If the younger generation is taught to use Nepali as the basic language then other languages will gradually disappear, and greater national strength and unity will result. (Pandey et al. 97)

The overemphasis in Nepali echoes king Mahendra’s attack, of 1960, on parliamentary system which he had defined as clumsy western imposition incompatible with Nepal’s tradition and history. The “new Nepali” political system that went in line with the spirit of Nepal’s tradition and culture – “Nepalism” (Joshi and Rose 395) was required. The NEP conforms to this version of Nepalism and wholeheartedly embraces and reconfirms Nepali as the medium of instruction in the primary and secondary schools. Textbooks were very important vehicles for the Panchayat regime and NEP recognized it as “the most important item of educational material” as it was the only such thing used throughout the country” (HMG). Through the textbooks the regime was seeking to unify the whole nation as one and through the textbooks the regime spread the messages across the country even where the radio would not have access. It is this very fundamental that necessitates the analysis of

textbooks of that era. For my analyses, however, I'll select English, Nepali, *Samajik Sikshya* (Social education) and *Hamro Panchayat ra Nagarik Jiban* (Our Panchayat and Civil Life) textbooks prescribed by NEP.

The first attack of NEP was English education.⁹ English education of pre-1971 era had consisted, despite the regime's will, of materials that were bit of an enlightening tendency. The contents were obviously less threatening but the regime felt threat even from this and reshaped the pattern of English education in school. Now English loses its former status and takes a different turn. The basic objective of this plan was to consolidate Panchayat values and define Nepali nationalism. Hence, English, as any other subject had to contribute to that undertaking.

The New Education System Plan (NESP) states its objective as to “produce citizen, who, with full faith in the country and the crown, will conduct themselves in accordance with the Panchayat system.”¹⁰ To this end, the plan deleted English permanently from primary to secondary school curriculum and, instead, prescribed “one of the UN Languages” as a compulsory subject. Though none other UN languages except for English was ever taught in school curriculum labeling English as one of the UN languages begs some explanation.

In terms of defining English, Panchayat held it as the language of pollution which found its expression in the famous Nepali adage *gaikhane bhasa* (language of the cow eaters). Renaming English as one of the UN languages is perhaps done to tone down the “cow eating” effect. It, then, means that the legacy of English as we have it today is an accident a mere happenstance. Dr Kamal Prakash Malla writes “it is largely a matter of historical accident that we have been teaching English rather

⁹ English textbooks are not sole vehicles, at times they do not appear to be so at all, of Panchayat nationalism. I have attempted a brief examination here to look into how foreignness, in the language of foreigners, was managed and how that undertaking contributed to making of nationalism, implicitly, in those textbooks.

¹⁰ Ministry of Education (MOE): The National Education System Plan for 1971-76. Kathmandu: MOE

than French, Spanish, Russian or Chinese” (Malla 91). The need of English education during the 70s was felt merely to have come for communication purpose, communicating the ideas of science and technology the world over to Nepal. Malla furthers “In Nepal, had Nepali been adequate for transmission of science and technology and for international communication, there would have been no functional need for learning English. Learning English would have been merely a cultural need, as learning Sanskrit or Latin for that matter” (Malla 94).

English curriculum of post-1971 era was not meant to educate the students. That responsibility was assigned on the Nepali language textbooks. The contents in the syllabus were basically grammar items in compulsory paper and in optional English, the poems and stories were of noneducating tendencies. Before going into this aspect let's look into the purpose of English education as envisaged in 1971 secondary education curriculum:

Advancement in science and technology, industrial development, international trade as well as tremendous progress made in different branches of human knowledge has worked wonderfully to bring nations into close contact and independence. This has undoubtedly made the urgent need of international communication unquestionable. Communication between human beings can take place only through language. So we have to have such a language which may conveniently be used as the best and most effective means of communication with the world outside. At the moment English serves this purpose. . . . By

means of English, we in Nepal can understand and be understood by the people almost all over the world.¹¹

Under this project the curriculum taught grade 8 students, tense, adjectives, nouns, adverbs, speech and phonetic which in grade 9 shifted in modal auxiliaries, causative verbs, stress, conditional, speech and in grade 10 conditionals and passive voice.¹²

The objective envisaged in the curriculum is grand but it is less likely to be achieved by teaching these grammar items. Therefore, the curriculum and objective hardly ever match. There was optional English provision. The content in the syllabus is more of fairy tale type. The objective of optional English was to “get the students acquainted with English literature, which would include various aspects of English literature.”¹³

The syllabus in high school optional English deserves a brief comment at this point regarding the lack of connection between the content and stated goals of the curriculum. Grade 8 students, for example, learnt the poems like “My Heart’s in the Highlands” by Robert Burns, “My Heart Leaps up When I Behold” by William Wordsworth, “You are Old Father William” by Lewis Carroll, “The Rivals” by James Stephens, and “The Brain is Wider than the Sky” by Emily Bronte. Stories include “Selfish Giant” by Oscar Wilde, and “The Goat and the Stars” and an extract from *Alice in the Wonderland*, “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” “Emperor’s New Clothes,” “Letter from Keats to his Sister” and so on. Grade Nine had “The Sick Rose” by William Blake, “Ah, Freedom is a noble Thing” by John Barbour among others. In prose, there were “An extract from David Copperfield,” “The Great Wall of China,” “Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi” and in drama “King Oedipus” (scene with

¹¹ See Secondary Education Curriculum: For General, Vocational and Sanskrit Secondary Schools. His Majesty of Government, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Centre. Second edition. 2030 V.S. p. 61

¹² I have been trying to recover the English books prescribed in high school under this project. So far I have failed. I have only been able to name the syllabus.

¹³ Ibid. p. 513

shepherd and messenger). Grade 10 had “All the World’s a Stage” by Shakespeare, “In Time of the Breaking of Nations” by Thomas Hardy, “A Poison Tree” by William Blake, “Character of a Happy Life” by Henry Worton, “Stopping by Woods in the Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost, and “Death” by John Donne. In prose, there were extracts from Robinson Crusoe, “A Sermon on Sharing,” “The Baths of Ancient Rome,” “Ceasure in Britain,” “Autobiography of Blake,” “Letter from Sir Walter Scott to his son Walter.” And in drama, there was “The Proposal” by Anton Chekhov.¹⁴

Firstly, how teaching about nouns, adverbs and adjectives, which primarily consisted of definition of terms and their kinds helped in enabling the students into communication is a debatable question. Those of the high school students from the 70s who remember their English lessons say:

All that we needed to do was to memorize grammar. You had to be able to say mice is plural of mouse or that *rice is eaten by Ram* is passive voice of *Ram eats rice*. And adverbs and their types and adjectives you know. And then we would easily pass the exam. Yes, true that after passing SLC we would not be able to speak a single grammatically correct sentence confidently. That was always there.¹⁵

Analyzing the contents under compulsory English paper, which was not compulsory for it could be any other language like Spanish and French as we have seen,¹⁶ we could say at least one thing about it. It was only meant for formality. It really didn’t

¹⁴ The purpose of listing the titles of these poems, stories and plays is to analyze the content in them. The original textbooks could not be recovered from any library I visited. All this however is taken from Secondary education curriculum Ibid

¹⁵ From my interview with three SLC graduates of 1975 from Shree Sharada Higher Secondary School, Bahrabise, Sindhupalchowk.

¹⁶ The label Compulsory English sounds like a misnomer. As we have seen it became compulsory without really being compulsory it was as good/bad as optional English with regard to teaching the intended goals. It is only communication politics that sets compulsory paper apart from Optional English. As for noneducating motive both share the similarities.

teach communication even if intended to do so in its objective. This communication politics can be more revealing if we see it in relation to the making of the national history through school textbooks during the Panchayat era. During the reign of Panchayat system (1962-1990) the Nepali language, Hinduism, and monarchy constituted the triumvirate of official Nepali national culture (Onta “Ambivalence 214). One of the objectives of Panchayat era educational plans was to create and disseminate *bir* national history through the school text books.

As for the contents that I listed under the section of optional English, most of them were designed so as to inculcate in its learners a dream, a world of fantasy and some sort of utopia. Take for example the case of “My Heart’s in the Highlands.” The speaker of the poem is full of nostalgia for the village that he has left behind and he longs to return to it no matter what:

My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
 My heart’s in the Highlands, a-chasing deer;
 A-chasing the wild deer, and following the roe
 My heart’s in the Highlands wherever I go.¹⁷

In the same book there is another poem by W. B. Yeats whose theme of which is powerlessness of human being in front of God. “Four Ages of Man” runs like this:

He with body waged a fight
 But body won it walks upright
 There he struggled with the heart
 Innocence and peace deport.
 Then he struggled with the mind,
 His proud heart he left behind.

¹⁷ From Optional English for Grade 8. His Majesty’s Government Ministry of Education, Janak Education Material Centre. 2033V.S. p. 15.

Now his wars on God begin,

At Stroke of midnight God shall win.¹⁸

These poems nursed the sense of nostalgia and love for nature and god which in turn would mean loyalty toward crown for the king would be given to be understood as incarnation of lord Vishnu. “Selfish Giant” orients the students to the world of fairy tales of wizards and monster. In 2038 V.S. curriculum was amended and reformed for all levels. The changed curriculum, while retaining most of the lessons from 2028 curriculum, added some more of materials of the same kind. Unlike in the past, this time there was one book in optional English for both grades 9 and 10. And students were given to read ancient fairy tales like “Cupid and Psyche” and “The Golden Touch” the story of King Midas, “The Most Important of all Human Qualities is a Sense of Humor” by L.S. Alexander, “Three Questions” by Leo Tolstoy. And very interestingly, there was an essay titled “King Mahendra Brings his Country to Light” by Tibor Sekeji in this anthology. The essay is about one of the journeys that the king made between December 1955 and December 1959 to the jungles of the south west, eastern mountains and western uplands. The essay basically speaks of the difficulty faced by the king and his crew in walking up and down the high slope and steep mountainous paths. While admiring kings’ fortitude, greatness and indefatigableness and the kindness he is the symbol of, explicitly embedded in the essay is the worship for the crown:

The visitors again passed villages and hamlets on the way and were greeted everywhere with smiling faces. Women scattered flowers over the king and many flung themselves to the earth to take the dust from under his feet and mark their foreheads with it. The dust from the feet

¹⁸ Ibid. p.3

of the incarnation of Vishnu would sanctify them for the whole of their future lives.

An old woman ran up, out of breath. What was the matter? Nothing, except that she wanted to see the king. She had in fact passed the caravan and seen, “that young man in a brown soldier’s uniform” but could not imagine that this was king Mahendra himself. When she heard this she ran four miles to see him. Asked if she had any special wish she replied “for this life all my wishes are fulfilled!”¹⁹

These two paragraphs are meant to generate sense of respect in its readers towards the king. The readers are expected to nurture fairy tale vision of the king where he comes as a liberator and his mere touch is enough to release men from all sorts of miseries and privations.

In compulsory English paper, which until 2038 VS curriculum amendment, was referred to as one of the UN languages, instead of only grammar items some stories, anecdotes and other short paragraphs had been included.²⁰ But they were again of the same nature dealing with basic trivialities like food, animal stories of the titles like “Food,” “The Clever Goat,” “Nepal and her Neighbors,” “The Young Man Looked Surprised.”²¹ Compulsory English of grades 9 and 10 also retained the old tendency. The stories included “The Fables of Aesop,”²² “The History of Money,” “The Prince and the Judge,” “How Bhairab Saved Ramsingh’s Life,” “The Unsolved Mystery” and so on. “The Fables of Aesop” was again of the same fairy tale theme. It

¹⁹ Optional English for grades 9-10. Eds. Niranjan Bajracharya and Arun Kiran Pradhan. His Majesty’s Government, Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Center Bhaktapur. First edition. 1983. P. 87.

²⁰ Because the school textbooks prescribed according to 1971 plan could not be recovered, I cannot tell for sure whether they (1971 textbooks) included only grammar items or something more.

²¹ From English Reader for Grade Eight. Janak Education Materials Centre Ltd. Tenth edition, 2037. The revised edition of 2038 removed The Young Boy Looked surprised and added Education for Girls.

²² I still remember the time when I was in high school reading "Fable's of Aesop" in grade nine. My English teacher narrated Aesop's fate with such an exaggerated details and in such an emotional way that most of us had been really moved by it and we had literally cried.

tells a story of Aesop, a story teller, who rose to fame because of his storytelling skills but who finally is killed in Delphi being accused of stealing a gold cup from a temple. Inside this, is also a story of a young farm girls going to sell the milk in the market and weaving plans as to what she will do afterwards but then trips in stone and all plans break and shatter.²³ And very amazingly, in these English textbooks of grade 8, 9, and 10 the first page would contain the quotation of King Birendra or Mahendra and then the forewords would be written both in Nepali script. On the back of cover page national song would be written which was made mandatory of recitation until the anti Panchayat movement succeeded in 1990. The song would say:

Hatne haina dati ladne nepali ko bani hunchha

Kahile najhukne sir ubheko swabhimani nepali hunchha

Biswako kunakapchama khoja nepaliko mutuma khoja

*Tyahan singo nepal hunchha tyahan raja rani hunchha....*²⁴

Nepali retreats not but fights bravely

Lives with honor and self respect never yielding

Search all corners of the world and search heart of every Nepali

The whole Nepal and her king and queen will there be found.²⁵

²³ Taken from English Reader for Grade 9-10 part I. Janak Education Materials Centre Ltd. Ninth edition, 2046.

²⁴ This meant this last line had to be recited twice. Retained from English Reader for Grade 9-10 part II. Janak Education Materials Centre Ltd. Ninth edition, 2046.

²⁵ This song on the cover page of every textbook of grade nine and ten is important for two reasons, one for the celebration of Nepali bravery and two for conveying the message as to what the whole book is about: bravery and worship of the crown. Sometimes the cover tells how empty the inside is.

nationalism, and worship for the crown in the psyche of the students. Hardly any of the lessons I brought under examination above would generate critical sense of understanding in the students. Understanding about the other world and their political system. Most of these lessons taught the students morality and virtues which made them docile and obedient so that there came no threats to the regime from them. It would indeed be right thing to inculcate in learners morality had it been in today's context. But then in the 60s and 70s, education, in larger sense, was school education. Student unions would be formed in the schools secretly and there was also a possibility of an outbreak of protest against the regime. Above all the new Education System Plan which recommended these syllabuses in school pedagogy was one of the components of Panchayat utopia. Abhi Subedi points out "Panchayat utopia was recognized through. . . national language, dress, New Education System Plan and many other things" (95).

Project of nationalism, which is somehow like Subedi's utopia, is best expressed, disseminated and detained in the series of the Nepali language textbooks especially in *Mahendramala* series. Nepali had been christened Mahendramala after the Panchayat veteran king Mahendra way back in the 1960s. Recognizing Nepali as the national language and the language of instruction advantageously contributed to Panchayat project. The Mahendramala series were more about history than Nepali language and literature. Almost every book of the series narrated history of the past in prose or in verse. Mahendramala of grade five contained a poem entitled "Nalapani" which recounts the battle of Nalapani in a moving note. The lyric praises the bravery of Balbhadra Kunwar and extols him as the icon of Nepali nationhood. *Dherai barsa aghiko katha nalapaniko / sanu sanu Nepala phula jasto komala / desa dau laune bairi garthyo bichara....* The lyric said. During the 1970s and 80s this song would be

in every state-run school student's tongue. It says; Nepal a small and as delicate a country as a flower was being invaded by the enemies. In Nalapani, Balabhadra Kunwar fought without resting a moment. The khukuris shone like stars, Nepalis roared and shook Nalapani like the thunderstorm. They slaughtered the enemies like one cuts radishes and the khukuris spun (*my translation* Adhikari 35). The song deifies Balbhadra as a divine warrior that was assigned to liberate the nation.

The narrative recounted in the Nalapani lyric, as in most other textbooks, is collection of historical facts common to most Nepalis. The purpose of the narrative is twofold. One is to take the readers back to history and other is to fabricate the defeat of Nepalis in Anglo-Nepal war (1814-16). The territorial ambitions of an expanding Gorkhali state in the foothills of the Himalayas had begun to clash with the colonial company state in the plains of India by the early 19th century. In the context of competing claims over land in the central Terai, the two sides went to war in late 1814. The company army with little prior experience in fighting wars in the hills, fared disastrously in the early phases of the war. It was in the first of the early campaigns that a unit of Company troops, led by General Gillespie, met a few hundred Nepali soldiers led by Balbhadra Kunwar in a fort in a place called Nalapani near the city of Dehradun. The battle that was involved in the British takeover of this fort was, by all account, fierce. Gillespie and several of his subordinates were killed in the initial attack. The second assault was launched week later after reinforcements had arrived and even then Balbhadra and his soldiers are said to have fought admirably. When the situation inside the fort became unbearable due to lack of water and other supplies, and due to the continuous bombardment by the British, Balbhadra and his subordinates escaped to another location in the war territory. When the British army

entered the fort, it is said, it found dead and dying Nepali soldiers and women and children who also had participated in the fighting.

This detail of historical facts is summarized in the Nalapani lyric with an explicit deification of Balbhadra making it an attempt to lessen the trauma of defeat that Nepalis faced in the same war. This kind of the deification of the warriors and kings permeates the textbooks of all classes and all times beginning from the 60s to 1990s when the Panchayat regime succumbed to its end. The hero is not always Balbhadra though. *Mahendramala* of grade VII has Bahadur Shah as its hero. “Sachchai Bahadur thiye Bahadur Shah” (Bahadur Shah was really brave) wrote “Bahadur Shah was really brave. His bravery could protect and promote Nepal.” And then there is mourning “though such a patriotic disciple of the crown is no more among us. . . we respect and remember him for his love for the nation”(21). The same volume also contains a biographical essay on Amar Singh Thapa titled “Amar Senapati” (immortal warrior). The theme of bravery is no less intense in this. “History of Nepal is history of bravery” the essay proclaims and “brave Amar Singh is a star of the same history” (47). Besides the defeat of the Anglo Nepal war of 1814-16 is recounted in such a way that the fact that Nepal had ever lost the war sounds like a shocking happening. The defeat is shown not to be the weakness of the Nepali bravery but of the trickery of the British soldiers.

Another figure to find space in the textbooks was Prithvinarayan Shah. In fact he features in the Nepali language texts from grade four through 10. One particular poem mythicises his bravery and sacred wish to unify the then divided nation. The poem titled “Prithviko Sapana” (Prithvi’s Dream) has it that one Goddess Manakamana of Gorkha appeared to Prithvi in his vision and announced he would succeed in whatever undertaking he may brave. Then Prithvi rises to the wisdom that

he should not choose to worship foreign power so he raises sword against the foreign power. A stanza runs like this:

Ko pujna saktachha yahan parachakri pau
Ko parnasakchha mutuma paratantra ghau
Tasmat uthauchhu khuda saba bhai jodchhu
Eutai mahamulukako rachana ma garchhu.

Who can worship here foreign foot?
 Who can tolerate the wound of dependence?
 So I lift the sword to unite all brothers
 And will create one nation. (*Mahendramala Grade VI 110*)

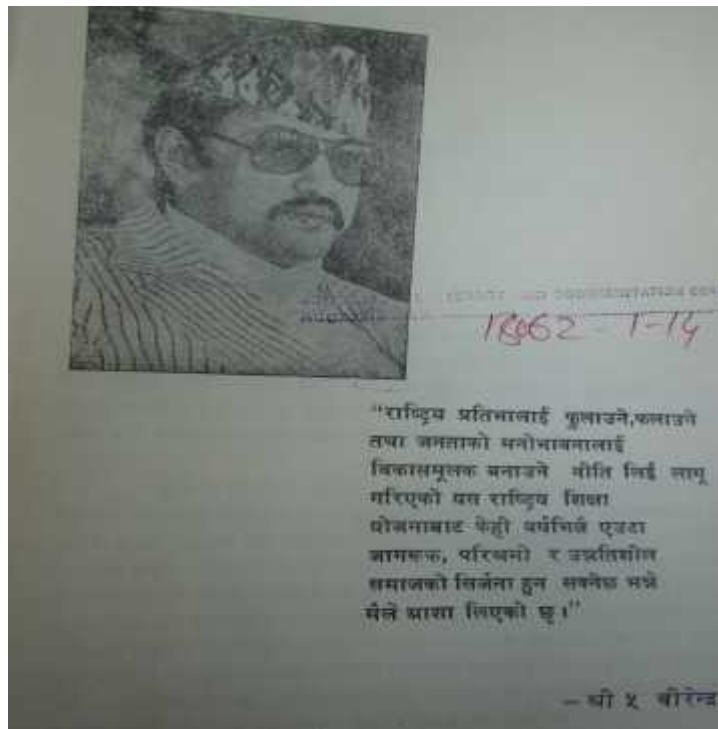
Evidently, Panchayat education wanted its students to remember history and the past, mostly manipulated and colored one. In discourse of nationalism what of the past should be remembered and what forgotten forms a crucial element. Ernest Renan is so opposed to remembering that he goes to the extent of saying “forgetting historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle] of nationality”(11). But forgetting entails memory. Maja Zehfuss is of the opinion “forgetting is not simply the opposite of remembering. Remembering is structurally dependent on forgetting, is always already marked by forgetting” (228). Therefore the issue is “not whether to forget or to remember, but rather how to remember and how to handle the representation of the remembered past”(220). The answer for Zehfuss is retaining and managing memories in crabwise approach which is “[oblique] and sideways” (223) and in which different attitudes towards the past are represented and tensions explored.

History evoked in the Panchayat textbooks, *Mahendramala* and others miserably fail to be crabwise in treatment. Rather it tends to go myopic and

lackadaisical. Treatment of the past is more similar to that of the mission of an emergent nation state which “constructs its own national identity, which requires the active forgetting and misremembering. . . and the rediscovery or inventing of one’s past” (Kohl 228). In this the past is “invented or rediscovered through the selective use of inherited symbols and myths” (225). Historian Pratyoush Onta has described the entire tendency of the past worship as “the nationalization of the past” which “created a sensibility of a shared history” (“Ambivalence. . .” 215).

For Onta this has created the foundation of a discourse with which he characterizes the whole of Nepali history “Rastriya Itihas (National history)” which in turn found its full-fledged manifestation in appreciation of bravery in history. About role of history in fostering nationalism, Roberts Philips makes a reasonable analysis on how ‘official history’ taught in school influence children in the community. He argues that powerful images of history taught in schools have profound implications in which children are influenced. Philips says that “ the reaction of children to these images is open to debate, but it is likely that they either directly or indirectly contribute to . . . ‘banal’ nationalism, that is a view of nationhood which is often nostalgic and sometimes xenophobic and cultivated through popular images. . . or traditional historical images and heroes”(46). In invocation of national heroes like Amarsingh and Prithvinarayan, Panchayat education was inculcating in the children banal nationalism among others.

The other feature of the Panchayat textbooks was the worship of the crown. Every textbook carried a smiling portrait of king Mahendra or Beerendra on its cover page or the page just inside the soft cover, a smiling deity.



Each textbook irrespective of the subject, science or history or geography or mathematics, contained an appealing message of late king Mahendra. It justified and rationalized the objective of the New Education Plan 1971 which was one major document of Panchayat system. The living standard of the people of the developed countries has risen to the very high level because of the knowledge of science and technology. So in our country too, the argument went, it has become extremely necessary to disseminate and develop theoretical and practical as well as vocational education. The message said that the objective of education was “ to provide education to the children useful to life, to make them self dependent and, disciplined and act according to the ideals of partyless Panchayat and to keep the sovereignty of the county intact.” Prakthana, the foreword, which preceded the table of contents of each book, intensified the core message of NEP objective. NEP aims to “produce citizen that protects the crown and his own liberty in favor with Panchayat system and

to evoke love for national unity and crown by arousing in them faith for nation and nationality.”

Besides, the textbooks bear at least one eulogy of king Mahendra. The lesson of Mahendramala grade VII for example titled “Nepalko Janapriya Raja” (Nepal’s popular king) praises the king for being “ the first king to travel to the villages and districts” studying “people’s sufferings and hardships by visiting their doorsteps”(2). More intense than this is an essay entitled “Nepalko Rajtantratmak Sanskriti” (Monarchical culture of Nepal) which is an open veneration of the crown and upholds the king to the status of absolute godhood. “Nepal is a country of king” the essay begins “today’s Nepal is the product of His majesty king Prithvinarayan Shah. Hence monarchy is a culture of Nepal”(Mahendramala grade IX 1). It further says that Nepalese have been living in the lap of the king for thousands of years and that they regard him as their own father. Divinity is thus ascribed to him:

Nepalis regard king as god. King is considered as an avatar of lord Vishnu . . . sacred thread wearing caste people offer prayer before every meal as *bhupataye swaha* allotting some portion of meal to the king and then only recite *bhuwanapataye swaha* evoking God. This is not a practice of today. This has gone for thousand of years. So this is called Nepali culture. (1)

What is clearly perceivable in the above eulogy on king is the fact that Panchayat texts were also attempting to acculturate people with the myth of monarchy.

Everything that is associated with the crown and the institution of monarchy is by rule a cultural norm. Nobody, therefore, was entitled to question one’s own culture.

Crown is the logocentric symbol of both the state and nation. All of state policy and education principles revolve around him. Crown-cult is the defining norm of all of

monarchical eras but in the Panchayat era, the cult gains an unprecedented height. Prayag Raj Sharma, a Nepali scholar, finds the quintessence of traditional version of Nepali nationalism in the institution of monarchy. He states: “. . . Remove monarchy and there is no state, and minus the state, there is no nationalism” (482). The respect for monarchy to such a degree is not always the proper drive to instill nationalism in people. Rather it is an attempt to be led to pre-nation state. William Pfaff’s observation is relevant here; “In the past there were local loyalties to place and clan or tribe, obligations to lord or landlord, dynastic or territorial wars, but primary royalties were to religion, God or god-king, possibly to emperor. . . There was no nation” (17). Indeed, the Panchayat polity assumed a clear hierarchy. At the base was an individual, then came family, then Panchayat and then district panchayat and finally the king himself. Primary loyalty of a citizen ought to rest on king. Nation and nationality, if they ever mattered, mattered because of the king’s existence.

Besides evoking to the readers’ reverence for the crown, Nepali language, Nepali history, and Nepali nationalism, another tool to foster nationalism was a tool to arouse anti-British sentiment in the readers. To that end, Panchayat texts accumulated materials from bir history in which bravery was extolled but the foreigner and foreignness was demonized. This purpose was sought to be accomplished by appropriating or misappropriating the historical facts and also by explicitly demonizing the British. The defeat of 1814-16 Anglo Nepal war, for example, is rationalized in Grade VII Mahendramala in such a way that the defeat does not seem to be weakness on the Nepali part at all:

British were fully prepared while Nepal was not yet prepared. Yet the battle grew intensively. The Nepali soldiers at the forts destroyed (*dhwasta pare*) the British soldiers. . .but at the end British floated the

proposal of treaty and the Anglo-Nepal war ended with war neither concluding in victory nor defeat. (47)

The justification of defeat of Nepali bravery in the above instance is less assertive than in the lyric titled “Nepali Itihasko Sunaulo Pana” (The Golden Page of Nepali History) which comes in the Mahendramala of grade VIII. I both transliterate and translate a part of the lyric here.

*Upakram: Himal yo sadhaibhari swatantra bachna chahane
Phirangi ta ghari ghari Nepal hakna khojne
Bhayo Bhidanta besari bipakshi ailagda
Britain tharkaman bho Nepali Jailagda*

*Upasanshar: Khubai ladera gorkha bahaduri prasiddha bho
Kubhab satruko gayo, die liera sandhibho*

Beginning: The Himal of ours always sought independence
But firangis (the Britishers) now and then wanted to
rein over Nepal
Fiery battle followed when opponents fell heavy
When Nepali retaliated Britain shook in fear

End/Coda: Gorkhas earned bravery by fighting heavy
Enmity vanished, treaty followed in principle of
reciprocity. (124)

Apart from rationalizing the defeat of Anglo Nepal war in the coda “treaty followed in principle of reciprocity” contrary to the fact that Nepal had only to lose during the war than anything to gain the lyric is an open demonization of the British. It calls them firangi the term that has its origin in the Prithvinarayan’s discourse, and the glossary that follows the verse explains the meaning of the word to be *duluwa dhunuwa*

(vagabond, gypsy, wanderer). Interestingly and shocking to the British readers is when the lyric shows Britishers to have been shaken with fear by the Nepali's retaliation. Aversion for foreignness, or Englishness to be more precise, functioned at the heart of the Panchayat regime which left its bearing in education policy too. The real history of Anglo-Nepal war is fraught with faulty Nepali diplomacy and incompetence on the part of Nepali rulers in Kathmandu durbar. The war comes in response to the border dispute with the British India of twenty villages which "the Nepali Government had been willing to hand over to the British control"(Shah *Modern Nepal* 116). The prospect of war sparked after the death of a British Indian police officer while Nepali forces were retaking Butwal and Syuraj on May 29, 1814. Following the incident the Marquess of Hastings "wrote a letter to the king of Nepal. . . asking him to punish the officers responsible for "the outrage and bloodshed"(117). The war could have been avoided if the king of Nepal had drawn the attention of the governor general to the murder of a Nepali Government official Laxman Giri but the king sent a letter "firm in its demand for restitution of the twenty two villages which had earlier been handed over to the company's custody" (117). Such arrogance fuelled in by the immaturity of the courtiers in the durbar made the war inevitable. The war resulted into the colossal loss on the part of Nepal. The British had invaded as near as Makawanpur fort and had captured the town. Kathmandu was no longer safe. Fearing the prospect of complete invasion, Kathmandu had no other option but to surrender.

This historical reality remains largely unearthed in Panchayat curriculum. What takes place is exaggerated version of Nepali bravery. In textbooks foreigners are relegated to the position of Other. Othering, a recurrent theme in the post-colonial discourse, is also a defining tool of nationalism. In the context of Nepal, Nepali self is

posited in contrast with the foreign Other. It somehow serves the function of what Partha Chatterjee observes:

Nationalism. . . seeks to represent itself in the image of Enlightenment and fails to do so. For enlightenment itself, to assert its sovereignty as the universal ideal, needs its Other; it could ever actualize itself in the real world as the truly universal, it would in fact destroy itself. (qtd in Bhaba 293)

Enlightenment had established itself at the cost of being different from what was then called savagery, uncivilized and barbaric. European masters conceived of themselves superior to all those that they had colonized. For them the Other consisted of Indians and Africans. In Nepali nationalism discourse Other is posited in forms of Indians and Europeans.

Aversion for foreignness or Englishness to be more precise, that functioned at the heart of the Panchayat regime has left its bearing in education policy too. This is clearly suggested in calling English “one of the UN languages.” Nepali is not Nepali but Mahendramala. While it could be a part of Nepalization such a phenomenon inherits some features of imperialism. Nepal’s past had inherited titles from the imperial centers of the world. “Prithvi Narayan sought the title of *bahadursamser* from the Mugals and from the time of Junga Bahadur Rana the title of *chautariya* was reworded as *praim minister*” (Burghart “Political Culture” 6). Panchayat regime sought and derived its authority from its own past and reverted to sanskritization. Burghart makes an interesting observation:

With Panchayat democracy the *praim minister* became *pradhan mantri*. Every one talks about the Tourist office but the sign over the door reads *paryatan vibhag*. Mahendra, meanwhile removed

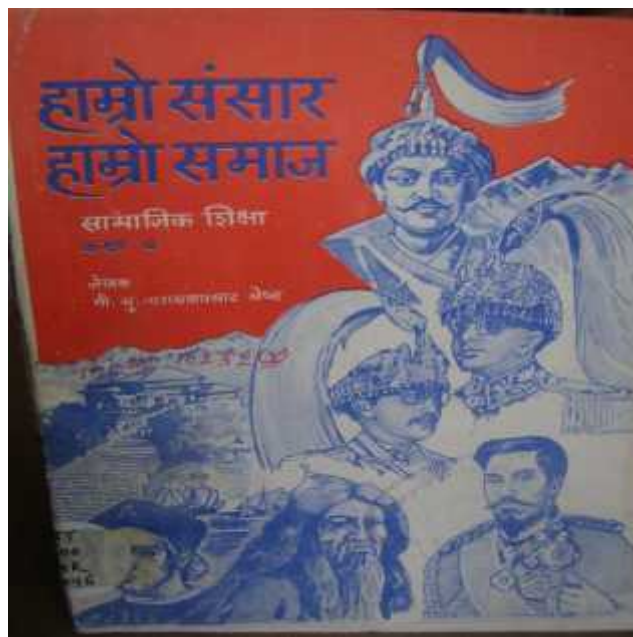
bahadursam ser from his list of titles, so that it contained nothing that would suggest alien legitimization of his rule. (6)

As Burghart rightly argues the revival of medieval institutions were at the heart of Panchayat polity. It attempted to “revive in a surreptitious manner the traditional institutions of old Shah and Rana despotism, such as Pajani(annual renewal of service), Daudaha (commission for tour inspection) and Salam or Darshan-Bhet(individual or group audience with the ruler), parallels for which can be found only in the medieval Mogul administration of India”(Shah *Nepali Politics* 71).

Those of the textbook lessons not related to nation, nationalism, history and bravery are about values and morality. They include lessons on etiquette, thrift, morality, and discipline. A short essay “Sitaji”, for example, is the eulogy of chastity of Sita. The essay dwells on how she waited until lord Rama was exiled and reached her kingdom wandering and how she weightlifted the bow and won Rama’s heart through her dexterity in archery. Yet another lesson titled “Ek saya panch” (one hundred five), recounts the miseries of Pandavas at the hands of Kauravas. It then shows how essential it was for them to be united at the time of danger. The moral of the story: Brothers however inimical with each other must be united in the face of the greater enemy. “Satyako Bijaya,” retells the story of Kaurava brothers’ highhandedness and injustices on Pandavas. But the Pandavas win at the end and thus truth and righteousness triumphs in the long run. These contents, like others of that era, were meant to make readers nostalgic.

As much effective as Mahendramala series in matters relating to disseminating nationalism was *Samajik Sikshya* (social education or studies) which was prescribed from grade four through seven and which was literally a course in history. Samajik in grade IV oriented the young minds to the brave deeds of Amar Singh Thapa, Bhakti

Thapa, Balbhadra Kunwar and Bhimsen Thapa besides having an elegiac essay on four fighters of democracy who were killed by the Rana regime: Shukraraj Shastri, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Gangalal Shrestha and Dashrath Chand Thakur. These short biographical essays with tragic notes were grouped under the rubric “Hamro Rastriya Parampara,” our national tradition. Grade V series extends this pattern. The samajik sikshya has its climatic version in grade VII.



The text book chronicles the biographical history of Shah Kings beginning from Prithvi Narayan and ending in King Beerendra but no any chapter may be as vocal in terms of projection of nationalism as “Shree Panch Mahendra ra Rastriyata” (king Mahendra and Nationalism) which establishes king Mahendra and nationalism to stand in metonymic relation. This essay has an appealing beginning:

The age of king Mahendra in Nepal was an age of search for nationalism. Nepali nationalism then had to encounter numerous challenges and in king Mahendra’s leadership Nepali nationalism had risen up with vigor and enthusiasm. Unless a country is free the citizen

of that country won't be free. And without nationalism, democracy cannot grow. King Mahendra was wisely aware of this fact. (70)

The passage artfully blends democracy, freedom and nationalism. Democracy is secondary to nationalism and until nationalism takes a firmer root in the country, democracy should wait or remain suspended. An attempt to keep the children insulated from the western influence or foreignness was realized in giving lessons on dress code. In a letter to a sister, a brother duly cautions his younger sister about the evils of fashion. "Feshan ko kharabi" (evils of fashion) is an exhortation from a brother to a sister not to adopt western culture of fashion. The letter has a sincere advice for her: "Sister, fashion never does any good. It is better to spend on nutritious food than on glossy dress" (*Mahendramala Grade VIII 73*).

The most important of all the Panchayat school texts was *Hamro Panchayat ra Nagarik Jeevan* (Our Panchayat and Civil Life) of grade VIII. Perhaps no analysis of the Panchayat era school education may be complete without referring to this compulsory paper. The paper was a defining characteristic of Panchayat education. This subject is introduced after the referendum of 1980 which, arguably, decided to retain the reformed Panchayat system. The book has different way of inculcating Panchayat ideology. Most of the book is about family, society, organization, citizen and citizenship than Panchayat system. Panchayat system forms only one lesson of the book which is carefully placed at the end.

First few lessons are included in titles like *Byakti ra Parivar* (An Individual and Family) which orients the learners to the family values, kinds of family, need of the family and then ideals for each member of the family:

In every family each member desires devotion to parents like that of Srawankumar, sacrifice like that of Bhishmapitamaha, dutifulness like

that of lord Rama, brotherhood like that of Laxman, harmony and fraternity like that of Pandava, and fidelity like that of Sita and Sabitri²⁶. To strive to meet these desires is a prime objective of a family. (5)

The mention of religious figures like lord Rama and Pandavas is important here. The passage, implicitly, evokes need for social order and extols utopia. In a family, father, mother, and grandparents are key figures to teach the children “love, affection, tolerance, dutifulness, frugality, simplicity, politeness, and love for the country and the king”(7). So one must rely on his/her family. What should a family teach?

“Ramayana, Mahabharata, ideals of Gita, obedience of Rama, and righteousness of Yudhisthira”(8). Family, thus is given a role to orient children to religious teachings.

The end target of this is to produce citizens docile, submissive, unquestioning, and abiding by the law of the land. This is more important than industrialization.

“Stressing on industrialization alone does not contribute to growth in production” the text warns “equitable distribution is important” (10). Industrialization is thus tacitly discouraged.

Lesson on Samaj (Society) reinforces the theme of unity in diversity and upholds this as if it were a multicultural society. Panchayat claims that it is a multicultural society but in terms of language and faith in political system Nepalese are not multicultural. Here is an observation:

Whatever the differences among Nepalis living within the boundaries of Nepal, we retain unity, intimacy, and fellow feeling. Our past,

²⁶ In Hindu mythical stories, Srawankumar is a dutiful son to his parents, who dies at the hands of hunter when he is out to fetch water to serve his parents who are old and invalid. Bhismapitamaha, an iconic man in Mahabharata takes a vow not to die until he can see the victory of justice over injustice, typified in the epic by Pandavas and Kauravas respectively. Laxman is a faithful servant to his elder brother Rama in Ramayana and Sita and Sabitri symbolize chastity and loyalty to their spouses despite all odds in their lives.

present and future are guided by the single sentiment, goal, and fate under one flag and shelter. We have faith, affection, devotion for one motherland and only one king. Our national language is Nepali and this is the only language we use to communicate with each other. . .this is the characteristic of our society. (19)

Also it presents a list of dos and don'ts for its citizens. The biggest prohibition on the part of the citizen is to commit treason and loyalty to foreignness and foreign ideas. One should not forget one's own nation and be "influenced by foreign policy, principle, and to follow them, to let the border land to the hands of foreigners, to nod to foreign signals. . . are treacherous deeds. To stand against this is duty of a good citizen. The supreme virtue of a good citizen is patriotism, love for the crown and society" (35). Aversion for foreignness is lenient in the above instance but aversion there is anyway. To be faithful to one's own nation and crown, the message is, one has to be inimical to foreign policy, principle and foreignness altogether.

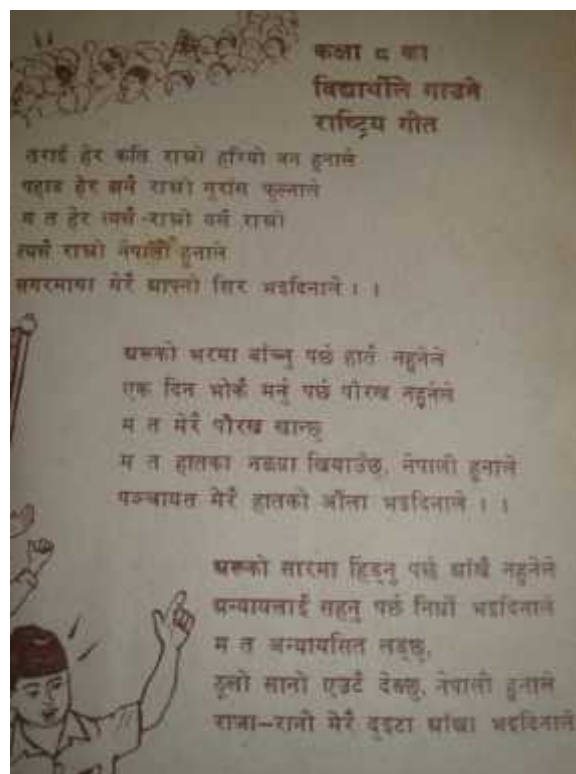
There's orientation to concept of civilization too. But Greek civilization, that of Athens and Sparta, is stressed more than anything besides the kind of democracy they practiced. In "Panchayati Byabastha" (Panchayat system), the system characteristically antithetical to democracy, a good deal of justification is given for Panchayat democracy. The world has practiced different models of democracy. But of them "democracy of Athens during the reign of Pericles deserves some significance. His democracy has been lauded by poets, singers, historian, artists"(55). Pericles had given an efficient leadership to Athens. A short reflection on the reign of Pericles is required here. Pericles was probably the best known Athenian statesman that ever was, he was the son of the army commander Xanthippus who had defeated the Persians in the battle of Mycale in 479 BC. Pericles' rule as a statesman in Athens is

called the Golden Age of Pericles, and he was an eager supporter of democracy. He wanted all citizens of Athens to take an active part in politics, and he was the first to pay servants to the state. Members of the council were chosen by all Athenians, and Pericles restored and built many temples and structures, such as the Parthenon on the Acropolis, employing the poorest citizens. He had the aristocratic leader Cimon ostracized, thus becoming the foremost leader of Athens for 15 years. Under Pericles, Athens became the most splendid of Greek city-states, both politically and culturally.

By exemplifying Pericles' statesmanship, the lesson insinuates that Nepal lacks such a leader. Here efficient leadership can be actualized only by king. One of the fundamental principles of Panchayat system, supreme leadership of his majesty, also the title essay, states, "The foundation of kingdom of Nepal was attained through an endless effort of the king" (53). National unity was initiated by Prithvinarayan and consolidated by the succeeding kings. Most important of all, "our political culture has been monarchical since the ancient age" (53).

Justification stresses that there is nothing wrong in Pericles style of democracy but such a democracy in Nepal cannot be practiced. Therefore kings are the necessary options for land like Nepal because it has so remained throughout the history. Another important aspect in reference to Greece, Pericles and ancient age is a reliance on the past. Most justification relies for their validity in the past. And as "nationalism requires the elaboration of a real or invented remote past"(Kohl 223), the recourse to the past like this is an understandable feature here.

Cover page of Hamro Panchayat, as all other text books of the era, bears an attractive portrait of the crown. And the book cover has a class song which was compulsory to be sung by the students before they took seats after being dispersed from the morning assembly. Such songs are revealing.



Aruko bharna bahchnuparchha hatai nahunele

Ek din bhokai marnuparchha paurakh nahunele

Mata merai paurakh khanchhu

Ma ta hatka nangra khiyauchhu nepali hunale

Panchayat merai hatko aula bhaidinale

Aruko sarma hidnuparchha akhai nahunele

Anyayalai sahanu parchha nirdho bhaidinale

Ma ta anyayasita ladchhu

Thulo sano eutai dekhchuu nepali hunale

raja rani merai duita ankha bhaidinale

Rhetoric is impressive. A citizen can do without his hands but not Panchayat and one becomes empowered to fight injustice because king and queen are one's eyes. And this eye is more important than the physical eye. Besides, body parts are rendered into cultural and political entities like monarchy and Panchayat. For example, eyes and hands become integral part of monarchy and Panchayat system. Then the culture is finally submitted to nature. Thus, the implication is, just as nature is real and pious so is man and so are the king and the queen. Kings and queens are portrayed to be more real than the real things.

Almost all the school textbooks of the Panchayat era have one thing in common. Irrespective of the subjects, of course excepting maths, science and economics, each language text books contains worship of the crown, nostalgic return to the past, and above all, history. In this regard, Panchayat text books are uniform. They seem to be focused on one theme. It is this similarity that is the most important feature of Panchayat textbooks. Nationalism is embedded in all textbooks, in different degrees and different intensity. Nationalism is shared feature of all textbooks.

To understand Panchayat version of nationalism it is equally important to consider BP Koirala's nationalism which is not only stark opposite of Mahendra version in some cases but also revolutionary and modern. Discussion of Koirala's

nationalism will show what aspect was deliberately darkened during the Panchayat era. While for the Panchayat regime it was Hinduism, national culture and monarchy that served as tools to making of nationalism, for Koirala, none of these ever mattered. What mattered for him was not even geography and soil it was people. In conversation with a Panchayat Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, Koirala says “The country, the nation, is represented by the people, not the soil. . .The nation is not the acculturation of rivers big and small. It is the people. If the people disappear due to some magic, there will be no Nepal here. A nation is not some geographical entity, it is a place which is loved and liked by people” (*Atmabritantra* 289). *Atmabritanta* projects Koirala as a leader that held completely a different notion than that of the Ranas and Shahs. As a revolutionary he was anathema to Panchayat. He “emerged as the plebeian’s hero during the fifties for which reason his personality posed a challenge to the court heroes” (Subedi, “B.P’s Orality..” 1). Yet he has a very good rapport with King Mahendra: “The relationship between B.P. Koirala and King Mahendra was [sic] very personal and was [sic] based on very good understanding. B.P had helped the Crown Prince when he was thinking of renouncing his right to the throne for the sake of his love..”(Subedi 2). Koirala and Mahendra stand together on issue of India’s interference in Nepali state affairs. Koirala never liked the roles the Indian ambassadors played in Kathmandu. He says “The Indian ambassadors considered himself as bigger than the King here” (qtd in Subedi 2). Subedi furthers “He openly clashed with the Indian envoys especially with CPN Sinha and later with Bhagawan Sahaya. B.P was especially irritated by the diplomatic highhandedness of the Indian diplomats”(2). Koirala shares much with King Mahendra. Let us consider this conversation between king and Koirala. King tells him “No one doubts your nationalist credentials, nor that you are a democrat. But you do not look out for my

interests.” Koirala replies “There is also no doubt that Your Majesty is a nationalist, and that you are against democracy” (Koirala 178). The only difference is that of democracy and monarchy not nationalism.

The various shades that nationalism finds in its representation can be discoursed in the light of some theoretical recommendations. For most part, Panchayat nationalism has thrived, as we may see in the analysis above, on the principle of one language, one religion and one culture and one race (Nepali). These form the basic foundations of nation and nationalism in the history of almost all nations. But modern theorists of nation do not view these conditions as supplements of nation. At times they can be deterrent. Ernest Renan, for one, virtually denies to take race, language, religious affinities, and geography as the necessary conditions to the creation of a spiritual principle he calls nation. “Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates a kind of moral conscience which we call nation”(Renan 20). In Panchayat discourse of nationalism, the conspicuous features are the same language, religion, race, and geography. The conscience of Nepali nationalism was attempted in language and religion policy which had boomerang effects. Nationalism also stands for “an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity of a human population some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or political nation” (Smith 38). What was Panchayat nationalism for? Autonomy ? No. Unity and identity? No. Nepal during the Panchayat era was free from any external threats. And it was a united and autonomous sovereign nation already. But projecting itself like the nation formerly colonized echoes the nationalistic movement of the countries that had recently attained independence from

the colonial rules. Indian nationalist movement, for example, found a surge after the country became independent in 1947. They had to reassert their geography, rewrite their history, and define their nation. In case of Nepal, because it never had been colonized and it was always a free country, nationalism goes as nothing but rhetoric and discourse. In what is called as ethno symbolic approach of nation, Eric Hobsbawm perceives nation as a set of “invented traditions . . . and suitably tailored history” (qtd in Smith 39) but this sort of perception is said to give rise to the conflicts but it “emphasizes the important role of memories, values, myths and symbols. Nationalism very often involves the pursuit of symbolic goals- education in a vernacular language among others”(39). Nationalism as projected in the Panchayat education is based on elements of memories, myths and education in vernacular language.

Drawing from the above discussion what follows is that Panchayat nationalism was merely a cover for the cult of monarchy. To communicate to the people the supremacy of kingship, the regime summoned to its aid history, religion, race and nationalism. In matters relating to foreignness, identity and nationalism the regime acted as if it had been recently independent from colonial rule. And in this enterprise, school text books served as reliable and powerful vehicles to transport the discourse across the country.

Part Four

Conclusion

Even if nationalism is a debate thriving worldwide especially in the realm of academia and universities, what nationalism is or should be has not been agreed upon universally. It remains an elusive and tricky question for the very pioneers of nation and nationalism. It is, therefore, not unbecoming of Benedict Anderson to comment that nation, nationality and nationalism “have proved notoriously difficult to define” (3). But the wave of discourse has spread throughout the globe and it is an issue to ponder. Renowned critics like Ernest Renan, Anderson, William Pfaff, Homi Bhaba and Partha Chatterjee do not come together on the issue of what nationalism is. But all of them consider issues of history, faith, religion, identity, language, land etc as makers of or base of nationalism. Also evident from their theoretical discussions is the point that nationalism can be both positive power and negative force. It is up to the agencies how to use or manipulate it. Manipulation of this idea also depends on the lay of the land its economic prosperity and relation with the neighbors. Whatever the case, the ever relevant aspects like language, religion, history, past, education, which contribute to making or breaking of nationalism also are the lifeblood of nation. These features license any scholar to critique nationalism of any era.

Nature of Nepali nationalism is rather strange in that it both subscribes to and flaunts principles that shape up nationalism elsewhere. As Nepali nationalism thrives on conditions that do not usually favor the birth of this consciousness, it becomes the subject for critique from the very time when it came into being. Down through Rana era to Panchayat era, the complicatedness of the issue goes even deeper. Though what have been considered as truly nationalistic eras come much earlier in history and national unification campaign takes place during the Prithvinarayan’s era and Anglo-

Nepal war of 1814-16, Nepali nationalism finds its full-fledged proliferation in academia and politics only during the Panchayat polity. Prior to this event, it had remained in the dark corner of never to be explored history. Panchayat era nationalism is therefore a key to understanding the nature of this course from historical and political perspectives.

Nationalism during the Panchayat era functioned and fructified on two main grounds: Aversion for foreignness (including India) and love for national culture, Nepali language and institution of monarchy. But the avowed goal of nationalism was accomplished through various institutions of which education was one and perhaps the one and only part. Of all the subjects in national curriculum of the era, nothing disseminated the nationalism like Mahendramala series from grade four through ten. Mahendramala, though principally a book of language and literature, was history and moral science conglomerates. The series contained more history, biography of kings, than lesson on Nepali grammar, language and literature. The few literature lessons than came would be literature on historical subjects. Social studies and Panchayat and Civil Life were the active supplements in the project. While social studies solidified notion of Nepali history and nostalgia for it, Panchayat and civil Life supported the purpose in a roundabout way. Intended for inoculating Panchayat ideals in students, it was not direct and covert imposition, but implicit and covert. But all these subjects coalesced on the theme of history, past, Nepalization, Hinduization and cult for monarchy. English education was as much a part of the mission as other subjects, but English textbooks, as far as possible, did not give knowledge-based lessons. English education at best worked by not educating. It was yet a key ally not in dissemination of nationalism but in managing the foreignness. It was also a veil to reasoning and critical thinking in the contents that it professed to teach.

In most ways, however, Nepali nationalism as projected through and disseminated by school agency, faithfully shares the stand of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Bhimsen Thapa, and Junga Bahadur. In relation to aversion for foreignness and love for Hindu ideals, most of Panchayat version resemble with pre-1950 nationalism advocated by the Ranas. The distinguishable difference in the two versions is that in the former hate thy neighbor attitude was strategically managed while in the latter it was let loose by various seen and unseen channels.

Prithvi Narayan had invoked Hinduism in defining Nepal as a nation. He was the first to sow the seed of Nepali nation state as it has come down to us today. Contested as faulty and debated as hegemony nationalism though, Prithvi Narayan's version lays the foundation for later development of Nepali nationalism. Bhimsen Thapa built on what had been left by his predecessor but his predecessor's version began to crack soon. Thapa's resistance was short lived. After the treaty of Sugauli signed in 1816, Nepal's anti-British national philosophy suffered a major setback. With the rise of Jung Bahadur in 1846, the anti-British nationalism was both maintained and compromised by the regime. While at home, anti-British and Hindu ideals thrived and provided legitimacy to the regime the same regime also sacrificed those very ideals when it came to appeasing the foreigners in the south.

This history if Nepali nationalism is manipulated and exploited by the Panchayat regime to serve the regime's interest. After 1950's revolution, Nepal had been free from the Rana tyranny. But with the onset of Panchayat polity in 1960, the regime proliferated discourses and projected Nepal as if it had been independent from the colonial rules only recently. Assertion of Nepali identity is so vociferously advocated in the textbooks as if Nepalis were to reclaim their lost identity. Deification of warriors, demonization of the foreign soldiers and glorifying and revisiting the past

all serve the same purpose. In this project Panchayat education was largely guided by king Mahendra orchestrated Panchayat raj.

The brief period of active Panchayat polity (1960-1980) and its education and policy have had lasting effect in the type of nationalism that we have had today.

Despite the fact that Panchayat regime is gone for twenty years, reverberations of that nationalism echo in Nepali politics even today. The domain of development and effect of Nepali nationalism and its relation with the educational system is a vast territory to be researched and discoursed. This research is only an attempt to excavate one shred of Nepali nationalism among many. It is only a segment of the shreds of nationalism.

Considering the history and its development Nepali nationalism has largely been delusionary discourse that stood on the strength of demonizing and vilifying the external sources to assert one's identity. In its core lies 'hate thy neighbor, love thy nation' attitude, cult of Hinduism and monarchy, institutionalization of language, education, and dress code. All this contributed to making of grand narrative that later became popularized as Panchayat nationalism and which is a point of departure in the discourse of Nepali nationalism.

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