

**NEPAL-BRITAIN RELATIONS  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GURKHA SOLDIERS**

**A DISSERTATION**

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the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**in  
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Submitted by**

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## LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this dissertation entitled, *Nepal-Britain Relations with Special Reference to Gurkhas*, was prepared by Mr. Ram Narayan Kandangwa under our guidance. We, hereby, recommend this dissertation for final examination by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfilment of the requirement for the DEGREE of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in POLITICAL SCIENCE.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

2IC	Second-in-Command
BESO	British Executive Service Overseas
BFBS	British Forces Broadcasting Service
CO	Commanding Officer
CT	Communist Terrorist
DFID	Department of International Development
Dr.	Doctor
ed.	editor
et. al	and others
f.n.	footnote
GAESO	Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization
GCO	Gurkha Commissioned Officer
GR	Gurkha Rifles
GRU	Gurkha Reserve Unit
ibid.	the same
MA	Master of Arts
MC	Military Cross
MM	Military Medal
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
n.d.	no date
NAAFI	Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
NBCCI	Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NC	Nepalese Currency
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NESA	Nepal Ex-Servicemen's Association
OC	Officer Commanding
p./pp.	Page Number/s
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
QE II	Queen Elizabeth II
QGO	Queen's Gurkha Officer
sic	as it is (mistaken)
TU	Tribhuvan University
TPC	Trade Promotion Centre
UBGEAN	United British Gurkhas Ex-Servicemen's Association
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VC	Victoria Cross

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Nepal is the only kingdom in the world where a Hindu monarch reigns. This tiny Himalayan kingdom is one of the ancient nations, and the birthplace of Lord Gautam Buddha, in Lumbini, provides evidently a strong proof for it. In terms of geographical location, it is sandwiched between two giant neighbouring countries, India to the south, east, and west, and China to the north. By the time of middle ages, Nepal got disintegrated into fifty-four petty independent principalities. During this period their existing relationship with each other was not close and consistent. It was rather hostile and subject to metamorphoses from friendly to antagonistic relations and vice-versa. Prithivi Narayan Shah, the son of Nara Bhupal Shah, who was bold and ambitious and also a perfect diplomat, ascended the throne of Gorkha in 1743. He was impatient, hence, no sooner had he ascended to the throne than he devised a plan for the unification of the then disintegrated independent feudal states.

Initially, Prithvi Narayan Shah attacked Nuwakot since it was strategically a much more important kingdom. While he had been intensifying his expansionist campaign, the Colonialist British-India was also thoroughly engaged in gobbling up the independent princely states of India one after another. It was then natural for British-India to look upon Shah's unification as a potential threat to them. They immediately wanted to do something against such undesirable act but the unfavourable situation forced them to wait for the next few years. On the other hand, Shah continued his war campaign and got victory over Kirtipur in the third attempt in 1767. Jaya Prakash Malla, the last king of Kantipur and other states of the Kathmandu valley were startled, and afraid, and suspected the ulterior motive of Shah only after the defeat of Kirtipur. Hence, he and his brethren allies asked

British-India for help. At such a critical juncture, the British-India decided to favour Malla King and sent an expedition under the command of Captain Kinloch. But, unfortunately, the expedition led by Captain Kinloch encountered a heavy attack from the Gorkha army at Sindhuligadhi before reaching Kathmandu. In this skirmish the British army suffered a heavy loss and Captain Kinloch had to flee away with his remaining troops. Ultimately, Shah overran the Kathmandu Valley and made it his capital. On the other hand, the British-India was making tenacious efforts to establish political and commercial ties with Nepal by realizing its strategic importance and lucrative business. The East-India Company was, however, strongly determined to do so and, therefore, employed every peaceful and diplomatic measure. But all these endeavours culminated in an utter failure since Shah, including all his successors, employed a policy of indifference to the Honourable East India Company. In the meantime, a war against Tibet broke out and this time Chinese emperor sided with Tibet. Nepal greatly feared the big army of China. In such a situation, Nepal had no option but to ask for help from the Company government. The Company government also wanted to exploit the fluid situation of Nepal. As its corollary, Nepal was reluctantly compelled to conclude a treaty of commerce with British-India in 1792. It was due to Nepal's reluctance that the treaty did not come into operation. Even after this, the Company government continued her effort. During that time the court of Nepal was gradually being entangled into various intrigues among themselves culminating into factions and sub-factions. In spite of that, once again a treaty of friendship was concluded with British-India in 1801. This treaty, too, did not come into force owing to the return of self-exiled King Ranabahadur Shah's senior Queen Raj Rajeshwori to Kathmandu and she intervened in the court politics and took the reign in her hands.

Thus, the British-India's all-peaceful and diplomatic endeavours in establishing political and commercial relationships with Nepal completely failed one after the other. Then as it had no other options, it began to think to take recourse to military action to materialize its long-coveted aims. Thenceforth, it returned to war preparations and impatiently waited for a good pretext. Hence, for the next few years, the war cloud loomed large over

the sky of Nepal while Britain was heavily engaged in Napoleonic war in Europe. When the threat of Napoleonic war came to an end, Britain shifted her attention from Europe to South Asia in general and Nepal in particular. By that time the unification campaign of Nepal was also in progress. At such a juncture, the British-India officially declared war on Nepal in the name of border dispute. The Nepalese troops fought against the British troops with unprecedented valour, loyalty and discipline. In spite of the courage and bravery displayed by the intrepid little Gurkha soldiers, the British-India defeated Nepal. This very defeat compelled Nepal to conclude the unequal and defamatory treaty of Sugauli on March 3, 1816. This treaty, of course, marked a fresh beginning in the history of Nepal and British-India relations. This is the treaty, which allowed Britain to dispatch a British resident to Kathmandu. Now they availed the opportunity to materialize their long-cherished aspirations through this political agent. It was a matter of great pride for Nepal and her people to find a ruler like Bhim Sen Thapa who, being a prudent, bold, skilful diplomat and above all, a true nationalist, never succumbed to the British against the interests of the nation and people but rather faced the challenges boldly. On the other hand, resident Hodgson, finding him an inborn enemy of the British, cherished very hostile attitude towards him and the then court politics. This power struggle between them went on for many years. But, ultimately, Bhim Sen Thapa was compelled to give way after the thirty-one years of long premiership. After his downfall, politics of conspiracy, uncertainty, and vested interests cropped up in the Nepali court. Taking advantage of the unstable politics and corroded national milieu an extremely shrewd, equally bold, highly skilful diplomat but awfully self-centred politician Jung Bahadur Rana emerged on the political horizon of Nepal. He flatly neglected the *dibyaupadesha* (divine counsel) of Prithvi Narayan Shah and fully devoted to British-India in order to strengthen his position and just to satiate his individual interests.

When the legend of Gurkha bravery disseminated from the Anglo-Nepal war, the British began to recruit Gurkha youths illegitimately as they found them indomitable, unswerving and loyal. They immediately raised

four Gurkha battalions from the war captives and deserters by promising them something highly tempting. Jung Bahadur continued the traditional attitude towards the Gurkha recruitment issue, which was right opposite of the British expectations. In fact he was much afraid of the Company government. For, if he allowed Gurkha recruitment in the British-Indian Army, he would have great shortage of able recruits for his national army. He, however, wanted to be a trusted friend of British-India to get a continuous support and recognition from them for him and his government. Thus, he played a double role. When in 1885, Bir Shamsher came to power through a bloodstained coup, he, by realizing his weak position and the real objectivity, favoured British-India and lifted the ban imposed by Jung Bahadur against recruitment. Chandra Shamsher, another staunch supporter of the British, whole-heartedly recognized the recruitment practice. According to historians, some 450,000 finest Gurkha hill infantry soldiers were mobilized in the two devastating world wars. Besides, thousands of Nepal's own army were also lent to British-India for internal security and to garrison the Indian frontiers. Among them, thousands were killed in action and other thousands were maimed, wounded and lost. Moreover, the Gurkhas under the Union Jack saw action in Malaya, Brunei, Indonesia, Iraq, Kosovo and in many other parts of the world. Thus, the Gurkhas by displaying a spirit of unswerving loyalty along with indomitable valour have immensely and incessantly contributed to the British Empire and sovereignty for the last two centuries. Hence, the relations between Nepal and Britain, especially, have pivoted round the Gurkha connections. This kind of relation was further strengthened with the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1934.

After the independence of India, Britain returned to the United Kingdom (UK) and the existing closest relationship was normalised mainly owing to the geographical location and radically changed the global political scenario. Through realizing the newly emerged facts, Nepal also shifted from isolationism to diversification with regard to her foreign policy. Nepal

hurriedly joined the United Nations (UN) and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In this manner, Nepal managed to maintain her traditional relationship with Britain. In addition to this, one of the most influential elements is the institution of monarchy, which has always played a key role between Nepal and UK. As far as the trade is concerned, Nepal has yet to enjoy a surplus with the UK although a considerable amount of trade transactions have been taking place, especially after 1965.

Unfortunately, in such friendly and cordial state of backdrop, the trade unions of retired British Gurkha soldiers have launched movements against the discriminatory behaviour of the British government towards them because thousands of Gurkha soldiers are ruthlessly demobilized without any pension and reasonable compensation as soon as her interests were served. Be it after the Second World War or the suppression of communist revolts in Malaya, each time the British terminated the Gurkhas empty handed and bare footed. This is a severe violation of the treaty of 1947, principal values of the UN's Charter as well as the violation of fundamental human rights. Hence, the Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization (GAESO), after the complete failure of its peaceful measures, has sued against the British government in the British High Court. It is due to its struggle that a ray of hope is seen on the horizon. In this regard, the government of Nepal is indifferent and has so far done nothing. It has rather turned a deaf ear, though it is a burning national political issue inextricably associated with sovereignty, national dignity and independence of the nation.

In fact, the UK is a comparatively big, powerful, well-developed western country. From this point of view, it seems to be an unequal partner with Nepal. But one cannot easily forget the contribution of the Gurkhas in the past because the present largely is the continuity of the past. Again, there is no other nation in the world with which Nepal had so deep, cordial and cooperative relationship. For Britain, hundreds of thousands of Nepali sons

have shed their sweat and blood and sacrificed their lives in the last two hundred years merely to preserve, strengthen and prolong their rule across the world. One must admit that such a huge and unprecedented contribution to Britain is beyond expression and account in real sense. Thus, if Nepal employs her diplomacy in appropriate manner according to time and situation, it may be benefited much from Britain rather than other nations of the world. Above all, it is imperative that the Nepal government is simply expected to play a key role in such a matter.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to explore Nepal-Britain relations with special reference to Gurkhas. Its specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the bilateral political and economic relations between Nepal and Britain;
2. To study and analyse the evolution of Gurkha recruitment;
3. To explore Gurkhas' contributions to Great Britain and
4. To assess and analyse the differences between the Gurkha and British soldiers.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Though quite a number of studies on this topic have been undertaken till 1960s, it has remained an almost untouched area of study in the last four decades. During this period, a number of important issues have cropped up in the field of Nepal-Britain relations, especially, with respect to Gurkhas. These issues include: What type of political and economic relations does Nepal have with the UK? Is it friendly, cordial and cooperative to Nepal or not? Is there any possibility to improve the existing relations with the UK even though it is remote as well as seems an unequal partner owing to its size, power, etc? Moreover, there exist a number of treaties related to Gurkhas but none of them address their grievances. These treaties are only full of

appreciations, exaltations and eulogies to Gurkhas such as “bravest of the brave,” “most feared soldiers in the world,” etc. But there are some vital aspects which have remained ignored, i.e. the evolution of Gurkha recruitment and the sacrifices and contributions they made for the sake of Britain. How much pain have they actually suffered during their last two hundred years’ loyal service? Despite the untainted and immense service rendered to Britain, the Gurkhas have been treated on unequal footing, i.e. discriminated? These are the issues, which need to be investigated and analysed in order to have an in-depth study of the topic. Such a study can serve as an eye opener to foreign policy makers and the documentation of facts about Gurkhas may satisfy those who are interested in knowing about the finest hill infantrymen.

#### **1.4 Literature Review**

- a. Pratyoush Raj Onta has carried out a work entitled “The Politics of Bravery: A History of Nepali Nationalism” (1996). It is a PhD dissertation done in Pennsylvania University (USA). The researcher has made use of both primary and secondary sources. Though the study is not directly related to Gurkhas, to do justice to the title, Gurkhas are a key component in this work, as it has dealt with many facets of it extensively and analytically. The writer has discussed the origin of the Gurkha recruitment institution followed by its augmentation. He has mentioned the massive involvement of Gurkhas in the two World Wars and wars in South East Asia, border duty in Hong Kong and some wars fought in subsequent years. In line with the author, Gurkhas, after the First World War as best soldiers, became well known to the wider world. But sadly, even the Gurkha VC winners have not been included in the national pantheon of the brave Nepalis as Balbhadra Kunwar, Amar Singh Thapa and Bhanu Bhakta have been incorporated.



The author has analysed how Gurkhas were recognized as a martial race by Britain. He has dealt with the heavy recruitment of Gurkhas during the World Wars I and II. He has also talked about the 8 existing Gurkha battalions during 1990s and their disproportionate retrenchment to British battalions.

Therefore, it is a work useful to the study on Gurkhas. However, it does not talk about Gurkha hardships and unfair treatment against them. Nor does it sufficiently mention the immense Gurkha contribution to Britain. Finally, as the title itself apparently suggests it is not a study of Nepal–Britain relations.

- b. The book entitled *Nepal-Britain Relations: Retrospect and Prospect* (1983) written by Dibbya Deo Bhatt is very small in size. It consists only of 36 pages. This booklet is based on secondary sources. As has been stated earlier, the treatise is small so that it deals with the historical background of Nepal-Britain relations in brief. Thereafter, the author discusses the bilateral relations that existed during the eve of Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-16) followed by the war and treaty of Sugauli. The author also deals with the role of Brian Houghton Hodgson, British resident to Nepal, under a separate heading.

Though fragmentary, this study covers most areas of bilateral relations such as the *Kot* massacre, Jung's visit to Britain, the post-1950 relations, trade, economic cooperation, monarchies of Nepal and Britain, the British saga of the Mount Everest, etc. This author, however, does not mention Gurkhas except a few times. Furthermore, it does not analyse the evolution of Gurkha recruitment institution, their immense contribution to Britain, their current status, etc. But this treatise is helpful in this researcher's study to some extent.

- c. One of the major studies on Nepal-Britain relations is "British-India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal From 1857 to 1947" (1965). This is

a voluminous doctoral dissertation studied by Asad Husain. This work is based upon both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include Nepalese, Indian as well as British archives. This is an extensive and critical study of Nepal-Britain relations. The researcher has dealt with most political issues related with Nepal-British-India relations of the mentioned period. It has also discussed and analysed in detail the sources of recruitment for Gurkha regiments, modus operandi of recruiting and recruiting during the two World Wars. However, the author does not discuss and analyse the heavy involvement of Gurkhas in various battles between right after the beginning of Gurkha recruitment and the First World War. It also does not touch the issues of Gurkha suffering and discrimination against them. Bilateral economic relations have also been left out. And, the period it has covered is just up to 1947 from 1857.

Despite some shortcomings, it is a very useful work to undertake any research or study upon Nepal and Britain.

- d. *Anglo Nepalese Relations: From the Earliest Times of the British Rule in India till the Gurkha War* (1960) is also an important book on Anglo-Nepalese relations studied by K. C. Chaudhuri. It has been regarded as the first study on Anglo-Nepalese relations. The author has used both primary and secondary sources. But he did not use primary sources available in Nepal and Britain. He has discussed the political events of the then Nepal and British-India. Most events discussed and analysed here are in relation to Kinloch expedition and the series of missions dispatched by the British-India government to Nepal with a view to improve the existing bilateral relations. Moreover, the researcher has studied the treaties concluded between Nepal and British-India. Thus, this book gives a lot of useful information on Nepal-Britain relations of the earlier days.

But the author carried out the study only up to Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-16). It is clear that it left out the main part and greater period of bilateral relations. And it is the major shortcoming of this study. It also does not examine anything about Gurkhas and Gurkha related issues as the Gurkha recruitment tradition began only during the Anglo-Gorkha war. Besides, it does not study economic relations. Hence, it might not be considered a complete study of Nepal-Britain relations.

- e. The book entitled *The Gurkhas* (1999) is written by a British author, John Parker. This book is based upon secondary sources that include mostly regimental histories of Gurkha regiments written by British army officers. In this book, the author has done justice to the title since he has dealt most issues with regard to Gurkhas. Most importantly, he has examined even the dark and contentious points of Gurkhas, i.e. discrimination and Gurkha movement. The sufferings and discrimination against Gurkhas are the points, which were so far untouched by any British authors. His attempt, in this regard to fill the vacuum could be taken as a milestone. Yet again, he missed many vital points of discrimination. By the time he was carrying out this study, several facts of discrimination were yet to be studied, researched and made public. His analyses and views have also a few shortcomings.

Furthermore, the writer has explored the ever-growing attraction of the Gurkha youths to British army service. He has examined some of the important wars fought by Gurkhas before the World War I. He has studied the massive involvement of Gurkhas in the First and Second World Wars. Similarly, this study covers the marathon participation of Gurkhas in the wars in Malaysia followed by the border duty in Hong Kong, the Falklands war, war in Kosovo, etc. Therefore, it is a very useful work on Gurkhas. Despite that, it does not cover political and economic side of Nepal-Britain relations. And it lacks discussions and analyses on sufferings and unjust treatment against Gurkha soldiers.

- f. Another important study in respect to Gurkhas is done by Purushottam Banskotta entitled *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British-Indian Army* (1994). The writer has used both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include those available in Nepal and India. He has discussed the socio-economic and political conditions of the Nepalese communities. Then he has dealt with the procedures and methods of Gurkha recruitment. He further talks about the origin and growth of recruitment and the problems faced by the British-India government in increasing the number of Gurkha regiments. The fourth chapter analyses the reasons that made Nepal and Britain close allies before Britain withdrew from India. The author has carried out his study on the tremendous growth of Gurkha recruitment and again demobilization and disbandment. And finally, he has examined the impact of Gurkha recruitment on the socio-economic and political conditions of Nepal.

This book provides a lot of information on Gurkhas. But, as most writers, it does not mention anything about inequality against Gurkhas. And the title of the book itself implies that it has left out many other aspects of Nepal-Britain relations.

- g. Surendra K. C.'s *Nepalko Kutnitik Itihas* (1989) (Diplomatic History of Nepal) is also a useful book on Anglo-Nepal relations. This work completely depends upon secondary sources. Though the title of the book does not exactly imply that it is a study of Anglo-Nepal relations, it is devoted to it. The author has mentioned and analysed all the relevant political phenomena in connection with Nepal and Britain in detail. Hence, it is informative. It is the first book on this subject in Nepali language.

However, the study is done only up to 1951. In line with the title, the author does not talk about economic and other aspects of

Nepal-Britain relations. He certainly examines the origin of Gurkha recruitment, its problems and their respective solutions in the right context. But he does not touch the unfair treatment carried out by Britain against Gurkhas.

- h. *Britain's Brigade of Gurkhas* (1994) is a treatise written by E. D. Smith and edited by Lieutenant General Sir Brian Horrocks. It has neither footnotes nor bibliography. By going through the contents, it seems that it is primarily based on regimental histories and the materials preserved by the regiments. The writer has, first of all, discussed when and how the Gurkha recruitment institution began. Thereafter, he mentions the involvement of Gurkhas in various big and small battles. All of them were fought between the start of Gurkha recruitment and before the First World War. These are the wars so far ignored by the most Nepali and Indian writers. The discussion of this writer gives a lot of information on the above-mentioned wars.

Then he has devoted a greater part of the book in discussing and analysing the First and Second World Wars. Then also, the author deals with the wars fought by Gurkhas in South East Asia and elsewhere. As a matter of fact, this is the book fully devoted to wars fought by Gurkhas right from the beginning to the time of the study of this work.

Therefore, the other significant facets of the Gurkhas and Nepal-Britain relations have not been studied. However, this is a very helpful book to know about the Gurkhas and wars fought by them.

- i. *Anglo-Nepalese Relations* (1986) is a booklet studied by Jitendra Dhoj Khand. It is based upon secondary sources. It is a fragmentary work, however, it deals with Gurkha recruitment and welfare programmes provided to the retired Gurkhas and their dependents, which other authors have not dealt. He also discusses the problem of 118 dismissed Gurkhas from the 7<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles in 1986. The work briefly mentions the economic cooperation to Nepal, and the bilateral trade. It also

summarily talks with reference to the exchange of visits of royal family members of both the countries.

However, it does not examine the unjust treatment against Gurkhas, Gurkha contributions and some other aspects of Nepal-Britain relations.

- j. *Lahureko Katha* (2002) (the Story of a Lahure) edited by Basanta Thapa et al. is a compilation of virtually extinct war stories of the ex-British Gurkha soldiers who fought during the World War II for the cause of Britain. This book is completely based on interviews of the twelve Second World War veterans and one Malaysian war veteran. Out of the 13, 4 are coveted Victoria Cross (VC) winners. In this sense, this is a treatise quite different from others. Most World War doyens have already died and only a few are still alive. Therefore, the days, to hear live World War accounts from the mouths of veterans themselves, are almost gone. From this perspective, this compilation is of historical significance. The accounts of these people are confined to army life and war memories. These doyens have recalled the fierce battles they themselves had participated in many parts of the world. The VC winners have elaborated how they displayed valour before the enemy and got awarded the Victoria Cross.

Moreover, the reminiscences include their extreme hard life during war times. Above all, these gallant soldiers say that they were deceived and discriminated by the British government. Thus, this work is quite informative regarding first-hand reliable information on Gurkhas and wars fought by them. Despite that, it lacks many things on Nepal-Britain relations as well as Gurkhas as it depends only upon interviews of 13 Gurkha soldiers.

- k. A retired British army officer, J. P. Cross has written a book on Gurkhas named *In Gurkha Company: The British Army Gurkhas, 1948 to*

*the Present* (1986). The author himself worked for about four decades with Gurkhas prior to Britain's withdrawal from India and later in the Brigade of Gurkhas. This work mostly relies on secondary sources. In this work, the writer has extensively explored the Malayan emergency, Brunei revolt and the Borneo confrontation. He has summarily studied the past and present Gurkha recruitment traditions. The Gurkhas' primary duty, that is to say to arrest Chinese illegal immigrants during their two and a half decades stay in Hong Kong, is also discussed.

This study covers only four decades of the Gurkha service in the British army. It has not talked about unfair treatment against Gurkhas, immense Gurkha contributions, nor has it dealt with other facets of Nepal-Britain relations. Nevertheless, it provides much information on the analysed topics.

1. One more important as well as analytical work in this connection is *Relics of Empire: A Cultural History of the Gurkhas 1815-1987* (1991). This is an unpublished PhD dissertation by Mary Katherine Des Chene. It depends upon both primary and secondary materials. This is one of the rarest works available on Gurkhas. The researcher has, unlike others, studied the dark side of the Gurkha recruitment institution. All authors, especially British, always talk of the wars fought by Gurkhas, and they are traditionally full of eulogy.

But this writer has, breaking the old tradition, concluded that Gurkhas were used by the Rana state as diplomatic currency. The recruitment was not, as claimed by the Ranas and the British, voluntary but rather forced. Moreover, the British used every possible strategy and inducement to get a good quality Gurkha recruit. According to the work, the Gurkhas were employed for counter-colonial struggles. Like other authors, it discusses how the British distinguished genuine Gurkhas from others. It examines the beginning of Gurkha recruitment, the World Wars and their sacrifice. Tripartite

Treaty of 1947 and the complicated process of partition of Gurkha regiments between India and Britain have also been analysed.

Nevertheless, this work has not dealt with the unjust treatment of Britain against Gurkhas. After this study, several points of great importance have surfaced as regards Nepal-Britain bilateral relations. More importantly, this is not a research on Nepal-Britain relations, and obviously there is nothing about it.

## **1.5 Operational Definition**

The term "Gurkha", in this present study, refers to the Nepali people who serve in the British army. But the term "Gorkha" implies to the former tiny kingdom which was existed until the unification of Nepal that lies to the North-West of Kathmandu, and now a district of Nepal.

## **1.6 Methodology**

This is a qualitative research focusing mainly on descriptive/explanatory approach. In this research, the tools used for data collection were in-depth interviews (unstructured), content analysis of documents or thorough review of literatures. To fulfil the first, second and third objectives, secondary sources were used to collect data. The secondary sources included books, dissertations, newspapers, bulletins, treatises, journals, etc. Unpublished documents such as research reports, press statements, working papers, memoranda, declarations and documents kept by various libraries, departments and ministries were also studied and analysed. With regard to interpretation of data/information: descriptive, analytical and comparative methods were used.

Moreover, in order to meet the fourth objective, both document analysis and interview methods have been applied. For the reason that, literature concerned with the status of the British Gurkha soldiers is rarely available. Hence, to fill the gap and to get data from the British-Gurkha



soldiers themselves in respect to their status in the British army, interview method has been adopted. To get information from non-Gurkhas as well as to know more about their problems, six diplomats, two lawyers and one historian have been interviewed.

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select the sample for interview. Altogether twenty-five persons (see appendix 3) were selected for interview. The primary aim of this interview was to collect in-depth information on the point to further substantiate the research. Furthermore, the interviewees for this research were invariably of the same age group (45-50), gender, experience and educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

Dharan and Kathmandu were selected as sampling areas (purposive sampling). The reason to choose Dharan as a sampling area is that it is popularly known as a *Lahureko shahar* (the town of the British-Gurkha soldiers) for the last six decades. And, greater part of the population of this town is constituted of *Lahure* community. Hence, it was selected as one of the sampling areas. During the last decade or so, the British-Gurkha soldiers, from both east and west of Nepal, either migrated to Kathmandu city from other towns and villages or after their retirement settled down in Kathmandu. As a result, a large number of the British-Gurkha soldiers live in this city. Therefore, Kathmandu is chosen as another sampling area.

Among the twenty-five interviewees, sixteen were British-Gurkha soldiers, who provided written interviews. Among them, three were QGO officers and thirteen belong to other ranks. Six Gurkhas of Kathmandu were interviewed, and the rest were from Dharan. In addition, six diplomats, two lawyers and one historian were orally interviewed and all of them were Kathmanduites.

## **1.7 Limitations**

This research work is primarily confined to Gurkha soldiers enlisted in the British Army and political and economic aspects of Nepal-Britain relations (1768-2004). Gurkha issues such as evolution of Gurkha recruitment and status of Gurkhas are so far almost virgin. Hence, focus has been given to these issues.

## 1.8 Organisation of the Study

This study is divided into the following 7 chapters.

The first chapter deals with the **introduction** including the details and important components of the research proposal.

The second chapter examines the **historical background** discussing and analysing the major phenomena/events that occurred during the mentioned period of bilateral relations. Historical background is the rationale to study and analyse for this research, as Britain is the oldest friendly country of Nepal. During the century long relationship, Nepal and Britain have experienced both sweet and bitter memories. Britain is the only country that began recruiting Gurkhas in her army and again Britain is the country with which Nepal established formal diplomatic relations for the first time in her history. Thus, without historical background, this study may not be complete.

The third chapter is the **political and economic relations** between Nepal and Britain from the post-Rana period to 2004.

The fourth chapter is the **evolution of Gurkha recruitment practice** in the British army.

The fifth chapter is the **contributions of Gurkha soldiers** towards Britain. The sixth chapter is the **current status of Gurkhas**.

The seventh chapter is the **summary, conclusion and the recommendations** followed by appendices and references.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Nepal-British-India Relations during the Shah Period (1768-1846)

Inter-state relations have been assuming further significance in the context of the twenty-first century. The existing political entities ranging from the highly industrialized and developed ones in the west including the US, the UK, Japan and China to the small and undeveloped ones like Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives established and consolidated friendly and cooperative ties with one another. It is due to the fact that in the rapidly changing politico-economic scenario, no nation can maintain and fulfil her modern aspirations and necessities remaining aloof and uncooperative with the rest of nations. It does not, however, mean that nations had no mutual cooperation and cordial relations with each other in the ancient times. In fact the origin of international relations can be traced back to the ancient times. It can evidently be proved by the quotation of pre-eminent Greek philosopher Aristotle, who said: "Man by nature and necessity is a social animal. A man who can live without other beings is either a God or a beast. Hence, in modern times we can safely say that no nation or country can live in isolation<sup>1</sup>." Not only in the occident but also in the orient renowned philosophers such as Manu, Shukracharya and Kautilya have largely talked about the importance of inter-state relations and placed much emphasis on it.

As far as the beginning of Nepal-Britain relations is concerned, the British East India Company had come to India as a mercantile firm ostensibly with a commercial view, i.e. to find suitable market for her extensively produced commodities from the currently held industrial revolution in Britain. Before this Company came to India, there were already similar kinds

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<sup>1</sup> Vinay Kumar Malhotra, *International Relations*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2001), p. 1.

of commercial enterprises by the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese. As these enterprises' interests clashed, they waged war against each other. After a long series of wars, the British East India Company by defeating and displacing others emerged as the most influential single power in India. During the same period, the Company was attempting to usurp the suzerainty of hitherto independent Indian states and this initiative was first launched in Bengal. "It was in the midst of these political changes that one of the most decisive battles of the world was fought and won by the English in Bengal, viz., the battle of Plassey (1757), which marked the beginning of transition of the East India Company from a mercantile firm into a political power in India<sup>2</sup>." British imperialist army soon had to fight with another joint force of renegade Mir Quasim and Nawab of Oudh. In this war also, the imperialist army defeated the combined force. "Mir Quasim managed to escape and the Nawab of Oudh surrendered to the formers' army<sup>3</sup>." After the defeat of the then powerful nation like Oudh, the Honourable British East-India Company fully succeeded in laying not only mercantile but also a strong political foundation in India. It is held that Nepal was an integrated and powerful nation until the twelfth century A.D. Unfortunately, disintegration commenced henceforth. "...the existence of Simraungadh came to an end and the division of great Khas Empire began towards the end of this century (1391). Similarly, the division of the Nepal valley also began towards the end of the fifteenth century (1481). In this way, 'Nepal' became limited only as a "Geographical Expression<sup>4</sup>." It was due to this unfortunate political

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<sup>2</sup> K. C. Chaudhuri, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations: From the Earliest Times of the British in India till the Gurkha War*, (Calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Surendra K.C., *Nepalko Kutnitik Itihas* (Diplomatic History of Nepal), (Taplejung: Sabita Prakashan, 1989), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Surendra K.C., "The Gurkha Recruitment: An Overview," An international conference on "The Plight of the Gurkhas," (Kathmandu: September 18-20, 1999), p. 25.

process that Nepal was already divided into more than fifty petty princely states by the time of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) wars.

The Gorkha chief was much attracted and made tenacious efforts to gain control over Kathmandu valley owing to its rich revenue and better economic and developed socio-cultural conditions though it was divided into three independent states. He, simultaneously, imposed economic blockade against these Malla states and proved much successful because of internecine feuds among themselves. "Had there been any power in the hills with which he might have entered into a fruitful alliance, Jaya Prakash would have surely avoided an alliance with the East India Company whose rise to political ascendancy must have been watched by him not entirely without suspicion, although the policy of Newars towards the English was not one of total exclusion<sup>5</sup>." At such a critical juncture, the Kathmandu chief had no alternative but to ask British-India for help. Hence, he dispatched some of his confidant diplomats to India to solicit British help. The then Governor of India, on the basis of an extensively analytical letter sent by Mr. Golding, the English commercial agent at Bettiah, calculating far more political and economic gains in rescuing Jaya Prakash Malla decided to render help to the latter.

Closely watching every move that was taking place between the Kathmandu chief and British-India, the Gorkha chief smelt a rat. Moreover, he realised a possible military alliance between them and dispatched a letter to Thomas Rumbold, chief of Patna, requesting for help in order to forestall the joint move. As discussed above, the British-India first of all wanted to rejuvenate the choked off trade that formerly existed with the Malla chiefs owing to economic blockade of the Gorkha chief; secondly, to establish and promote trans-Himalayan trade with Tibet and China via Nepal. British-India, in addition to this, was fully aware of the growing power of the Gorkha house

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<sup>5</sup> Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 13.

and hence thought it to be a prudent step to crush it before it had gained sufficient momentum. Strong assurance of the Kathmandu chief to bear the total expenses of the expeditionary force and enough supply of provisions on their way to Kathmandu also played a decisive role in making this decision. Having made this decision, the British-India responded to the Gorkha chief by sending a peremptory advice to accept their mediation. But Prithvi Narayan Shah sent an equivocal reply. Now, British-India dispatched an expeditionary force of 2,400 troops under the command of Captain Kinloch. They found all the villages deserted on their way to Kathmandu and considered that the Gorkhas had abandoned the villages by fearing their presence. But the veracity was different. It was a deceiving Gorkha tactic. No sooner had they set out on their journey, monsoon broke out and they found it extremely difficult to pass through the rugged terrain and malaria infested dense forest. The insufficient supply of provisions also coupled with this. In such a critical condition, the famished, debilitated and ill-fated expeditionary force came across a heavy surprise attack from the Gorkha army at Pauwagadhi, near Sindhuligadhi. As the Gorkhas were perfect in guerrilla tactics, they used the same in this skirmish, which rendered a heavy loss to Kinloch expedition. Captain Kinloch, having no alternative, ordered an immediate retreat of his physically incapacitated and considerably depleted army. In totality, the expeditionary force lost 1,600 lives. This disgraceful defeat with a petty principality, like the Gorkha, embarrassed them very much because they had considered themselves invincible. On the part of Gorkhas, the failure of the Kinloch expedition boosted their morale. The major causes of the defeat attributed to rain, no supply of provisions, lack of preparation, underestimation of Gorkha prowess, and little knowledge of the rugged terrain. It was the first aggression in Nepal by a European power. Gorkha army managed to capture some abandoned weapons, which helped them intensify the on going unification campaign with a fresh enthusiasm. According to Eden Vansittart, "Prithvi Narayan Sahi [sic] was a person of insatiable ambition, sound judgement, great courage, and unceasing activity.

He is practically the great founder of the house of Gorkha<sup>6</sup>." On 29 September

1768, Prithvi Narayan Shah invaded Kathmandu and the skirmish went on for only one to two hours. The battle concluded quickly since the Kathmanduites on the very day were immersed in Indra Jatra (a Newari culture) revelry. Jaya Prakash Malla, the last Malla king of Kathmandu fled first to Patan and thence to Bhaktapur. After this significant victory, Prithvi Narayan Shah established Kathmandu as his capital but did not suspend his expansionist campaign. "But the Nepalese territorial expansion was primarily motivated by a sense of security and safeguard of independence, while that of the British was a Colonial expansion<sup>7</sup>." As soon as Prithvi Narayan Shah ascended to the throne of Kathmandu, he maintained a policy of exclusion and expulsion. He expelled Capuchin missionaries, Kashmiri merchants, Gossains, and Faquirs. After the miscarriage of Kinloch expedition, British-India shifted their attention from Asia to America to contain the currently on going American war of independence and got entangled in it. That is why it was not in a position to reemploy any force against Nepal though it had taken the house of Gorkha as a threat to them as it was incessantly gaining power and further consolidating it. Henceforth, in order to materialize their coveted goal they began to employ diplomatic and peaceful measures rather than physical force.

As noted earlier, Prithvi Narayan Shah continued his unification campaign even after the conquest of Nepal valley. He sent Kaji Kahar Singh Basnet (minister) with a strong army to invade the principalities, which were not yet under the suzerainty of Kathmandu. This army succeeded in subduing the whole of the country lying between Vijayapur on the east, Gandaki on the west, Kerung and Kuti on the north, and Makwanpur and the Terai plains on the south. For some time, Prithvi Narayan Shah had rapid

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<sup>6</sup> Eden Vansittart, *Gurllhas*, (New Delhi: J. Jetley, 1991), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Dibya Deo Bhatt, *Nepal-Britain Relations*, (Kathmandu: CNAS, 1983), p. 1.

success but in the invasion of Tanahun he suffered a severe setback as it resisted the Gorkhas with extreme gallantry and effect.

### 2.1.1 Diplomatic Effort of British-India

On the other hand, the East India Company, by this time had become a formidable political power in the entire Indian sub-continent and was yearning to revive the disrupted traditional trade with Kathmandu and Lhasa. Furthermore, they would like to study the feasibility of commercial market for their new manufactures in the above-mentioned places and western parts of China. For this very purpose, James Logan mission bounded for Kathmandu. He considered himself a person capable of accomplishing this special task since he was a widely travelled man and possessed deep insight in matters of politics, commerce, and geography of Nepal. Initially, James Logan had an aim to reinstate the dethroned king Jaya Prakash Malla as he believed that much more benefit could be reaped through this move rather than reproach king Prithvi Narayan Shah because relationship with the latter had all the more been embittered on account of the abortive Kinloch expedition. It was due to this reason that dictating any terms which would carry their interests to Prithvi Narayan Shah was virtually impossible. According to Leo E. Rose, "James Logan was instructed to visit Kathmandu Valley and the eastern Terai area in the winter of 1769-70. He was provided with two letters strikingly different from one another, one to Jaya Prakash Malla of Kathmandu and the other to Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha, and was instructed to decide in the light of the circumstances which of these letters should be delivered<sup>8</sup>." Reference to the date of this mission's visit to Kathmandu is not reliable. It is, however, clear that the visit had taken place after the Kinloch expedition and not later than 1770. By the time of arrival of this mission to Kathmandu, Jaya Prakash Malla on the one hand had already died, and Prithvi Narayan Shah had further consolidated his power, on the

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<sup>8</sup> Leo E. Rose, *Nepal Strategy for Survival*, (Bombay: John Brown, 1971), p. 29.



other. Hence, it was a compulsion of the mission to deal with the king of Kathmandu. The Governor had apologized in the letter addressed to Prithvi Narayan Shah in helping former King Jaya Prakash Malla owing to sheer ignorance. He, furthermore, exhorted the king to open his heart while dealing with James Logan, and that the latter would respond equally frankly. The mission again failed miserably. Terrible apprehension had obsessed the mind of Prithvi Narayan Shah by the growing power of British-India ever since he learnt about it. He himself had witnessed the bad days of Indian states. Therefore, he was determined to follow a policy of isolation, especially from the British-India. Not only in his time but also in the latter years, reflection of his foreign policy was abundantly felt. In 1775, Prithvi Narayan Shah died and his son Pratap Singh Shah ascended to the throne.

Nepalese politics of this era is mainly characterized by uncertainty, conspiracy and chaos until General Bhim Sen Thapa emerged on the political horizon of Nepal as an absolute ruler. Major cause of this turbulence was the *de jure* regime of infant kings. During this period, the nation was actually ruled either by queens or by nobles as regents. Although Pratap Singh Shah continued his father's incomplete unification campaign, nothing new of importance occurred in this short span of time. He also died in 1778 and his infant son Rana Bahadur Shah ascended to the throne. After the end of American War of Independence, British-India again diverted her attention to South Asia. Nepal was placed in top priority: "British policy in Nepal had several phases of development. The first phase spanned about fifty years from 1767 to 1816. During this period the object at first was to safeguard and foster the customary trade between Bengal and Tibet through Nepal<sup>9</sup>...." British-India, in order to translate the long-standing goal into practice, had to establish and develop cordial relationship with Nepal. Despite several failures, it did not stop its attempt but rather intensified as time and situation dictated. "Four successive Governor Generals: Hastings, Cornwallis, Shore

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<sup>9</sup> Kanchanmoy Majumdar, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations in the Nineteenth Century*, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1973), p. 4.

and Wellesley, worked to maintain peaceful relations with Nepal and promote trade with the Company. Each of them sent friendly letters with a mission to the king of Nepal<sup>10</sup>." But none of these efforts could yield any meaningful result. On the other hand, there was always a tension between Nepal and Tibet regarding debased currency issued by the Malla Kings. Ultimately, Nepal resorted to force and war broke out. In this war (1788), Nepal defeated Tibet and dictated terms through the Kerung treaty, which represented Nepal's vested interests. But the Tibetans did not comply with the spirit of the treaty. It was due to this reason that Nepal waged war against Tibet again in 1791. This time, China, by learning the Nepali occupation of Sigatse, sided with Tibet with a formidable strength of the Chinese army. Under these critical circumstances, the regent, Bahadur Shah, having no alternative, asked British-India for help. The British-India took this situation as a good opportunity to intervene in Nepalese politics and thereby fulfil other long-sought-for goals, which were yet to be materialised. On the other hand, Tibet also corresponded with the authority of British-India exhorting not to provide any help to Nepal. Nepal moved one step further than Tibet and concluded an undesirable commercial treaty with British-India in 1792 to ingratiate herself with the latter. This treaty is fully devoted to commercial gains and marked the beginning of a formal relationship between Nepal and British-India, which lasted one century and a half. Now the Colonial government of India found itself in an awkward position to decide how and whom to help. As a matter of fact, the Colonial government did not want to antagonize the stronger power of China by helping weaker Nepal. At last, it decided to offer mediation between Nepal and Tibet to reap benefits from both sides. The government chose one of the trusted and cleverest envoys, Captain William Kirkpatrick, to accomplish this project smoothly.

Kirkpatrick received detailed instructions from the Governor General specifying the objectives of his mission, which were (i) to persuade the Kathmandu Darbar to pay the "strictest attention to the commercial treaty", (2) to attempt to settle all boundary disputes between the Company and Nepal, and (3) to make general observations on the

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<sup>10</sup> Asad Husain, *British-India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal from 1857 to 1947*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Minnesota University, 1965), p. 16.

government, religions and customs of the Nepalis and to enquire into the trade between Nepal and Tibet and the roads and geography of Nepal and neighbouring countries...if the situation was favourable [to] raise the question of a British residency at Kathmandu.<sup>11</sup>

K. C. Chaudhury and others have also mentioned to this effect. But, unfortunately, before the departure of this mission to Kathmandu, the trios (i.e. Nepal, Tibet and China) had signed a treaty. The treaty compelled the government of Nepal to send a quinquennial mission to China with presents to imply an allegiance to the Chinese Emperor; the Chinese Emperor would also respond in a similar manner. This initiative brought about a serious turn in Nepalese politics. Now the Nepalese courtiers thought that the necessity of British-Indian mediation was over. As noted earlier, Nepal had been, as long as possible, engaged in a policy of isolation from other powers, i.e., British-India and China. Nepalese foreign policy was partly the product of the experiences of the Nepalese politicians and diplomats and partly the product of the basic tenets of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Major essences of Prithvi Narayan Shah's foreign policy are:

The kingdom (Nepal) is like a yam [a root vegetable] between two stones. Great friendship should be maintained with the Chinese emperor. Friendship should also be maintained with the Emperor of southern seas (the British) but he is very clever. He has kept India suppressed. He is entrenching himself in the plains.... Do not engage in an offensive attack, fighting should be done on a defensive basis.... If it is found difficult to resist in the fight, then even means of persuasion, tact and deceit should be employed.<sup>12</sup>

It is a practical guidance on Nepalese foreign policy and is equally relevant even today. K. C. Chaudhury also writes to the same effect. Hence, the Nepal government, on its part, did not leave any stone unturned to deter the Captain William Kirkpatrick mission from departure to Nepal. The British-India on the other hand, apart from incessant endeavour, did not leave

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<sup>11</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, pp. 69-70.

<sup>12</sup> S. D. Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, (New Delhi: Chetana Publication, 1973), p. 2.

any stone unturned to materialize the end into practice. Ultimately, Nepal bowed to this endeavour and authorized the mission to proceed to Nepal. Since it was a forced mission to Nepal, the loquacious King Rana Bahadur Shah remained virtually silent and displayed an unfriendly disposition to Kirkpatrick. Though he was granted audience, there could not take place any deliberations on the issues of British interests. Perhaps, the most dangerous thing on the part of Nepal was to establish British residency in Kathmandu that seemed absolutely out of contemplation from the mind of Nepalese courtiers. Thus, this mission, as the previous ones, also utterly failed to render any desired consequences except an invaluable report prepared by Kirkpatrick. In preparing this report, considerable assistance was taken from Gajraj Misra and Abdul Kadir Khan. This report, containing 386 pages, as time passed became the first history of Nepal entitled *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*. This account includes extensive observations regarding politics, commerce, topography and several other aspects of Nepal. In other words, it helped pull the curtain and make hitherto unseen Nepal seen to the rest of the world.

Although the embassy of several English envoys failed to materialize their objectives, the authority of British-India did not give way; it rather continued a tenacious effort to realize them. Under the circumstances, the British-India suffered another grave setback: the dismissal of Bahadur Shah from office in 1794 as regent. "The new Governor General, Sir John Shore, commented that Bahadur Shah had some months ago resigned the Regency to the Rajah and with it his influence on which I had some dependence for promoting my wishes...." This statement indicates that Bahadur Shah was well disposed towards British-India. Several other scholars such as K. C. Chaudhuri, Asad Husain, Chitranjan Nepali have expressed similar views. But Dhundi Raj Bhandari and some other scholars have disagreed with this view and consider that it was Bahadur Shah's mere diplomacy to safeguard the sovereignty of the kingdom of Nepal by showing an outward facade to

British-India. Thereafter, anti-British faction dominated the court of Nepal. They were strongly opposed to any expansion of relations with the British. Its first negative impact fell upon the commercial treaty of 1792 that never came into effect. In spite of this bitter fact, the Governor General Sir John Shore decided to dispatch another embassy to Nepal headed by Maulvi Abdul Kadir Khan, a famous Muslim trader of that time. This time they chose this non-English guy in order to lessen the badly entrenched suspicion, fear and hesitation on the mind of the Nepalese nobles towards the English people. This envoy had, in addition, deep knowledge about Nepal and close contacts with high-up Nepalese. He was ostensibly an independent businessman rather than an agent of the British India. But in fact, he had been instructed to deal with the Nepal government on political, economic as well as other aspects of bilateral relations. Whatever effort they made to pose themselves as an independent commercial mission, the King Rana Bahadur Shah and the courtiers did not cooperate. Though the mission proved unsuccessful to translate the underlying motive, it managed to achieve some other important things as Kirkpatrick had done. In this regard K. C. Chaudhury says: "If Capt [sic] Kirkpatrick's visit was important for making Nepal known to the English that of Maulvi Abdul Qadir Khan was of great importance since it was the first practical experiment in trade with Nepal for assessing the actual value and potentialities of the Indo-Nepalese trade<sup>13</sup>." According to the assessment of Khan, exports of four to five hundred thousand rupees (Indian currency) could be carried out into Nepal. If the relations between China, Tibet and British-India would improve, the commercial transactions would increase further. He even produced a list of merchandise of which demand was high in this region. Furthermore, he suggested to the government of India that the latter should establish some industries on the frontiers of Nepal and India. His observations on Nepalese politics are also not less significant. His judgement runs thus:

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<sup>13</sup> Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 87.

The youthful extravagances of the young inexperienced Rajah led him into the clutches of the most undesirable elements of the state. Singing, merry-making and dissipation abounded in the court and the Rajah lost his sense of duty to his subjects. Surrounded by a coterie of self-seeking officials of low birth and tastes, the Rajah allowed the administration to drift along the line of inefficiency and indiscretion.<sup>14</sup>

He, moreover, sensed widespread disaffection in the country and this might have caused the reinstatement of the former regent Bahadur Shah. If this had happened, Khan would have been optimistic that the relations between the two countries would be improved. He had also mentioned quite interesting information in his report regarding the employment of three "Firinghees" as the in-charge of artillery. One of them was the French who was very skilful in casting cannons. He was recruited in Calcutta during the regency of Bahadur Shah.

### **2.1.2 King Rana Bahadur Shah and Relations with British-India**

King Rana Bahadur Shah lacked the quality of his predecessors. He was characterized by incompetence, inexperience, and dissipation and last but not least womanization. He murdered his uncle prince Bahadur Shah in 1797 considering him fully responsible for the defeat by Tibet and the unwanted treaty of 1792 concluded with the Colonial government. He further blamed him of lavishing on state fund. For this imprudent act, he relied upon the information of tale-tellers and never thought it necessary to probe into its truth. Oppositional faction led by Kaji Damodar Pande (minister) was determined to push out the king from Nepal to safeguard their authority. The king sensed threat to his own life. At this critical juncture, the king in May 1800 departed for Banaras to lead a life of mendicant with a retinue of Queen Rajrajeshori, Balabhadra Shah, Bhim Sen Thapa, Dalbhanjan Pande, Bal Narsingh Kunwar (the father of Jung Bahadur), Ekdeo Upadhya, etc. But

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

according to Dilli Raman Regmi, “Bhimsen Thapa reached Banaras long after Rana Bahadur<sup>15</sup>.”

Thus, there was a revolution in Nepalese politics as one of the British envoys, Khan, had predicted earlier. The British India was fully aware of these recent changes in Nepal, since it was closely watching and analysing each and every move of the Nepalese barons. Until now, British-India’s diplomacy was surpassed by Nepalese diplomacy that is why their extensive endeavour had proved of no avail. But the recently changed politics put them in a position to play off the vehemently opposing political factions against each other - one in Banaras led by the ex-King Rana Bahadur Shah and the other running administration then in Kathmandu headed by Damodar Pande and Sher Bahadur Shah. The underlying motive of British-India at this time was to revive the 1792 commercial treaty and the establishment of a residency at Kathmandu. No sooner had the British learnt about the departure of Rana Bahadur Shah to Banaras, they deputed Captain W. D. Knox to wait upon and offer his services as a mediator in the formers’ dispute with Nepalese barons. The Company government also provided liberal subsidies to the king. The habit of indulgence in sensual pleasure compelled Rana Bahadur Shah to borrow money from local creditors. “One of the many tactics of the British to lure the Indian princes was to arrange financial credit to which they easily succumbed on account of their luxurious habits. The British very cleverly managed to lay the trap, and once the pile of debt became too large for the debtor’s capacity to pay back, they seized his administration and territory as a measure of forcible reimbursement<sup>16</sup>.” The same *modus operandi* was employed to the king also. The three conflicting parties namely, Rana Bahadur Shah, the British-India, and the Nepalese nobles in power, however, had their own designs to take advantage over each other. Rana Bahadur Shah,

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<sup>15</sup> D. R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal, Expansion: Climax and Fall*, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1975), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

ostensibly being friendly and honest to the Company government actually wanted to reassert his authority on Nepal but was reluctant to accept their mediations unless reduced to extremity. Apart from this design, he had fondly hoped that the Nepal government would agree to reinstate him to power fearing a possible alliance between him and the Company government. The Company government was dealing with both parties to find out which one of them was more liberal to gain maximum concessions. Damodar Pande, a leading baron of that time in Nepal, at any cost wanted to stop the return of the ex-king to continue his regime uninterrupted. The ex-king attempted to deceive the English by proposing a heavy concession such as: "...the ex-Raja offered Calcutta an outrageous proposition under which, if restored to his throne through the intervention of the Company, he promised to pay the Company 37½ percent of the revenue from the hill areas and 50 percent of that from the Terai areas of Nepal<sup>17</sup>." But Rana Bhadur Shah was confident that the British would not accept this proposition. Moreover, Rana Bahadur was once "requested by the Company to permit it to build a fifty-four-room court in Kathmandu provided they rendered every help to restore him to the throne<sup>18</sup>." This request was, however, rejected on account of the prudent advice of true nationalist and self-respecting Bhim Sen Thapa. As a matter of fact, Rana Bahadur Shah had intended military intervention from the Company government to reassert his authority. In course of time, it became clear to him that Britain was not in a position to render such help since it was entangled itself in Maratha, Sikh and French problems. In due course, the Company government realized that the ex-king was an unreliable person. Henceforth, it centralized its all out endeavours in persuading the ruling barons in Nepal. On the other hand, the ex-king also realized that the Company had lost faith in him. Now, having no courses open to him, he dispatched a series of secret communications to the nobles of Nepal warning

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<sup>17</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Dhundi Raj Bhandari, *Nepal Ko Alochanatmak Itihas*, (Critical History of Nepal), (Banaras: Babu Sapra Sharma, 1971), p. 58.



them that any settlement with the Company would be detrimental to themselves. One of his warnings was as follows, “the appetite of the English is insatiable<sup>19</sup>.”

This time, despite the extensive efforts of the ex-king to prevent any settlement with the Company, his diplomacy proved unsuccessful owing to the self-seeking Nepalese nobles. Negotiations between the English and the Nepal government moved ahead through the good offices of Gajraj Misra. Ultimately, having held a protracted dialogue between Kaji Damodar Pande (minister) and the English officials, they concluded a treaty of friendship on October 26, 1801, in Patna. “...the British government, by capitalizing on a split between the King and his court, and by siding with the incumbent powers in Nepal obtained a treaty of commerce and alliance which among other things, provided for the permanent stationing of a British Resident in Kathmandu<sup>20</sup>.” It contains thirteen articles. It is mainly based on three principles, viz., arrangement of a *Jagir* for the exiled ex-king, establishment of a British residency in Kathmandu and accreditation of a Nepali envoy at Calcutta and to improve bilateral trade relations. It seems predominantly a political treaty as article 10 allowed them to accredit a resident to Nepal. Besides, article 3 compels both the governments to consider the friends and enemies of either state to be the friends and enemies of the other. And, article 6 and 8 deal with boundary dispute and extradition respectively. Provision to establish a British residency in Kathmandu was all the more important procurement of the then British-India.

“Nothing was more repugnant to the Gorkhali rulers than the establishment of a British representative in Kathmandu<sup>21</sup>.” The incumbent nobles of Kathmandu were, however, obliged to accept the arrival of Captain

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<sup>19</sup> Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, Second Edition, (Kathmandu: Mandala Publication, 2004), p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Regmi, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, p. 63.

Knox as the first British resident owing to the clause enshrined in the 1801 friendship treaty. Knox was the right person to be the first resident of Nepal since he had acquired much knowledge about Nepal by being involved with Kirkpatrick mission and working as an intermediary between Rana Bahadur Shah and the ruling nobles of Nepal. Governor General Lord Wellesley had entrusted Captain Knox with the tasks of all natures – political, commercial, military, and otherwise general. Under the political head, Knox had to study the civil government, its allies and existing relations between Nepal and China. He was to work hard to improve the subsisting relations between Nepal and British-India. Under the commercial head, it was Knox's first and foremost objective to bring the commercial treaty of 1792 into operation. He should also work hard to promote the Company's trade as well as obtain reliable information regarding Nepalese minerals, flora and fauna – botanical and agricultural products – with a view to enhance commerce. Knox, with this significant assignment, set out for Kathmandu with his retinue and reached Thankot on the evening of May 13, 1802. In the afternoon of the 18th May, Knox was received in the palace. "In customary fashion he presented the Governor General's letters and presents both to the King and Maharani. Knox spoke of long subsisting friendship between his country and Nepal, and said that Lord Wellesley earnestly desired this amicable friendship to grow to strength; Gajraj Misra reciprocated the sentiment on behalf of the government in appropriate manner<sup>22</sup>." But the circumstances in Kathmandu were unfavourable to Knox. Intrigues among all the members of nobility were more intensified than ever. All of them were fully engrossed in fulfilling their selfish motives rather than national issues. Pros and cons of the recently held treaty were gravely taking place. Opposition to this was gathering strength. After some time, Knox learnt that barons in power were disinclined to fulfil the treaty obligations. While things were not moving smoothly, the triumphant arrival of elder Queen Rajrajeshori to Kathmandu added fuel to the fire. As to the return of the queen, some scholars argue that she was dispatched by the ex-king to create a conducive environment of the latter's

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

safe return to Kathmandu. Whereas others argue that she had returned on her own accord when persecution of her husband reached beyond her tolerance. In this regard Hamilton writes: “the unprincipled chief had connected himself with one of these frail but pure beauties, (Gaudharbin) [sic], with which the holy city abounds, had stripped his wife of her jewels to bestow them on this wanton companion, and finally had turned his wife out of doors<sup>23</sup>.” Nevertheless, even after the assumption of regency of the minor king by Rajrajeshori followed by the appointment of Damodar Pande as Prime Minister, some efforts were made for reconciliation from both sides. The effort, however, could not yield any positive consequence. At last, “Captain Knox, the first British Resident, was forced to quit after a frustrating stay of one year from April 1802 to March 1803. He had ‘frosty relations’ with the Darbar, which made him virtually a prisoner. Knox also failed to give effect to the 1792 Treaty of Commerce and Friendship which Nepal had been forced to conclude in the face of Chinese danger with the British East India Company<sup>24</sup>.” Though Knox failed to give effect to the treaty obligations as enshrined in the treaty; as stated earlier he was to accomplish some tasks of various natures, he did not leave any stone unturned to realise them. He submitted a report to the British authority in connection with Nepalese politics, military organisation, geography, minerals, flora and fauna, etc. This first hand information proved quite advantageous during the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-16.

Moreover, Knox suggested his government that there was no sincere desire on the part of the Nepalese government to come to terms with the Company government and to bring into effect the enshrined provisions of the treaty. They also came to realize that the treaty was accepted by Nepal at a time when there was a great looming danger from China. As soon as the apprehension was allayed they rather remained indifferent to it.

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<sup>23</sup> Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, Second Print (New Delhi: J. Jetley, 1990), p. 253.

<sup>24</sup> Bhatt, *op. cit.*, f.n. 7, p. 3.

Consequently, the British-India reached to a conclusion to take recourse to force. Having been determined to this decision, this time the Colonial government formally abrogated the treaty of 1801. Following this event, the situation took a different turn. Exiled ex-King Rana Bahadur Shah became free from the hands of English, which paved the way for his return to Nepal. The treaty was merely an outward facade to fulfil the English imperialist design. They no longer considered it their obligation to pay Rana Bahadur Shah a pension by monthly instalments as a stipulation enshrined in the treaty. The Company government now issued one month's notice to Rana Bahadur Shah to leave Banaras. Having done some preparation, he, with the help of Bhim Sen Thapa, Dalbhanjan Pande and Ranganath, set out for Nepal without the knowledge of Kathmanduites. Later, Damodar Pande learnt the homecoming of Rana Bahadur Shah. It readily created a feeling of fear, suspicion and distrust in the mind of Damodar Pande. "In fact Damodar Pande was the most unprincipled and self-seeking baron who had sowed the seeds of dissension between Bahadur Shah and Rana Bahadur Shah, dared to move to Nuwakot with the minor King and declared it as capital, compelled Rana Bahadur Shah to be exiled to Banaras and held him captive by concluding a treaty with the Company<sup>25</sup>." By this time, Rana Bahadur Shah had understood his tactics. For this reason, Damodar Pande with his trusted associates and a loyal and strong force of army moved to Thankot with an aim to hold him captive without giving him any inkling of his real plot. But as Rana Bahadur Shah showed up at Thankot, some principal nobles and the army joined him against the regime. "Damodar Pande was arrested on the spot, and as Sher Bahadur, Bam Shah, and others of his favour readily accepted the ex-King's *coup d'etat*, he found himself in chains dying after a few days a very cruel death<sup>26</sup>." During the absence of Rana Bahadur, owing to the incompetent queens and unprincipled regents, the nation had to pass

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<sup>25</sup> Bhandari, *op. cit.*, f.n. 18, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> Regmi, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, p. 153.

through a turbulent situation and chaos than ever. It was due to this reason that the people actually hankered after a systemic regime. No sooner had he reached Nepal, there seemed an emotional upsurge and the people spontaneously shelved the bitter experience of the past. After taking power in his hands, he, first of all, banished Queen Rajrajeshori to Helambu and set forth some plans and programmes to rescue the country from the miserable condition. It is worth noting that Rana Bahadur Shah's cruel behaviour to Rajrajeshori further proves that she had come to Kathmandu on her own accord when the former's persecutions exceeded the limit. Otherwise, this kind of grave punishment would have been difficult for him to render.

Most important of all, he thought of reorganising the army for the territorial expansion of the Colonial government was vehemently taking place. To fund the newly set forth programmes, he confiscated tax-free land of Brahmans. He even called upon the French army experts, then worst enemies of the English, to train and equip the Nepalese army with modern skills and weapons. Some wars were also waged against the princely states of western Nepal under the command of Amar Singh Thapa. Royal kinsman Sher Bahadur Shah, a stepbrother of Rana Bahadur Shah, was also ordered to follow Amar Singh Thapa, for he was implicated in every plot carried out against Rana Bahadur Shah. But he was not a man who could so easily be duped and, therefore, disobeyed the order. He was brought to justice and sought to be imprisoned. The verdict surged a violent anger on his mind and struck Rana Bahadur Shah with his sword and the latter died a little later. But Bal Narsingh Kunwar also killed the assailant on the spot. In this way a turbulent era of Nepalese politics ended.

### **2.1.3 Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa and His Foreign Policy (1806-1837)**

No sooner had Bhim Sen Thapa learnt about the assassination of the regent (Rana Bahadur Shah), he, in the meantime, was having meal in an

adjacent room, hurriedly approached the scene. He there-upon, swiftly acted to gain control over others. With reference to this, Hamilton writes:

When the Raja expired, Bhimsen immediately retired to another room, commanding a view of the court, in which the guards were assembled, and, having addressed the soldiers, and received a promise of their support, he immediately surrounded the hall, in which the court was assembled, and put to death all the most active persons, and there is reason to suspect, that what he alleged was not destitute of foundations.<sup>27</sup>

Most scholars are of the view that he made a clean sweep by killing all likely stumbling blocks, who might pose a threat in the exertion of his authority. In this historic and tragic massacre, a large number of experienced and influential royal collaterals, barons, senior army officers, including elders and children, lost their lives. Bhimsen Thapa even compelled Queen Rajrajeshori, then living in Helambu, to get on the funeral pyre of her faithless husband to immolate herself by burning herself on the pyre with her faithless husband. In this manner, he made his royal road by sweeping away each and every obstruction. It was in no sense less tragic and smaller massacre than the Kot massacre perpetrated by Jung Bahadur Kunwar. It was rather inhuman and more tragic in a sense that in this massive carnage even elders and children were also not spared. By the time of Rana Bahadur's assassination, Bhimsen Thapa was holding only a post of Kaji (minister). But after the tragic incident, he occupied the post of Mukhtiyar (Prime Minister) and became all in all. He was an able, foresighted leader, self-respecting efficient administrator, and above all a true nationalist. The statement of Henry Old Field regarding Bhim Sen Thapa proves further. He says: "nothing is dearer and nearer to his heart than the independence of his country<sup>28</sup>." In contrast to this, one of his contemporary British scholars, Francis Hamilton characterizes him as vigorous, ambitious and unprincipled. But it sounds prejudiced against Bhim Sen Thapa.

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<sup>27</sup> Hamilton, *op. cit.*, f.n. 23, pp. 260-261.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

Having thus ensured himself as an absolute ruler, Bhim Sen annexed Palpa, followed by the expansion campaign in the area of Kumaon and Gadhwal. For this special mission, Bhim Sen Thapa issued an order to General Amar Singh Thapa to accomplish this task. Amar Singh Thapa conquered Gadhwal and the petty Chiefs of that area. This caused the boundary of Nepal reach the Sutlej River. During that time, Nepal was extending her territory towards the north also. Amar Singh Thapa, then, moved to the kingdom of Sansarchand and occupied some territory of the latter. After this conquest, Amar Singh Thapa devised a plan to surge on the fort of Kangara, which appeared as a major obstacle to reach the valley of Kashmir, which was the last object that Bhim Sen Thapa wanted to bring under the suzerainty of Nepal. But Sansarchand the King of Kangara appealed to Ranjit Singh, the shrewd and powerful Sikh ruler of the Khalsa Kingdom in the Punjab for help. Ranjit Singh who had a plan to build greater Punjab was also an able and ambitious ruler as Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa and hence, would like to check Gorkha expansion as soon as circumstances permitted him. In August 1807, a combined army of both the states launched an attack against Nepali troops compelling them to withdraw across Sutlej. Even then, Ranjit Singh expressed a desire of alliance with Nepal, as he was apprehensive of British-India's threat to his dominion. But this offer was ignored owing to the behest of Bhim Sen Thapa. Consequently, Nepal not only lost a powerful ally but also a possibility of expelling the imperialist element from Indian sub-continent forever. Because of this, Nepal cost the most in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16 utterly failing to obtain help from Ranjit Singh and others.

Bhim Sen Thapa's grave concern was to maintain Nepalese sovereignty intact. He was much apprehensive of British-India, since, while in Banaras, he himself had witnessed misfortune of countless native states, which were one after another brought under British dominion. "During this period, Governor General Lord Wellesley had advanced a policy called the 'System of Protectorates.' Its implicit aims were to gobble up the hitherto independent

petty states and further strengthen as well as spread British imperialism<sup>29</sup>.” Bhim Sen Thapa, as a sharp-witted, able and prudent, both politician and diplomat, was critically examining the activities of the Company government. Hence, he was quite sure that one day a showdown with the former was inevitable. For this reason, his top priority was to modernize the Nepalese army with modern arms, ammunition, and equipment.

“The worst enemy of the English and the most efficient fighters of the time, the French were attracted to come to help Nepal in this field. They revolutionized the military organization of the country. They introduced uniforms in the Nepalese army to make them look smart. Special emphasis was accorded to their up-to-date training in warfare<sup>30</sup>.” With the help of these French experts, urgently needed weapons, such as cannons, bombs and guns, were manufactured. An arrangement was made for soldiers to live in barracks. Formerly, there was no such arrangement and they used to live in rented rooms in towns. Nepal was lucky in having this time for military preparation. The Company government had pursued a non-war tactic towards Nepal as it was heavily engaged in the Napoleonic war during this time. According to Leo E. Rose, “from 1805 to 1814, British policy in India was aimed at holding those territories in its possession, preventing the emergence of any anti-British alliance comprising the Indian states, and avoiding all but the most necessary military ventures<sup>31</sup>.” In fact, the British-India had taken Nepalese territorial expansion and its growing strength as a serious threat to them and actually wanted to reduce it to a powerless hilly state so that Nepal would never pose such a threat in future. The British-India, apart from Nepal, was equally afraid of Maratha and Punjab as these states were also considered

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<sup>29</sup> Chitranjan Nepali, *General Bhim Sen Thapa ra Tatkalin Nepal*, (General Bhim Sen Thapa and Contemporary Nepal), (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1965), p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> Netra Rajya Laxmi Rana, *The Anglo-Gorkha War (1814-16)*, (Kathmandu: Netra Rajya Laxmi Rana, 1970), p. 32.

<sup>31</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 82.



powerful until then and posed a threat to the foundation and spread of the British imperialism in the Indian-sub-continent. It was all the more afraid of a possible anti-British alliance of these three powerful states. In order to forestall the anti-British alliance, the British-India was extremely cautious and employed her ever-talked policy “divide and rule.” Most scholars agree that if the above-mentioned states had formed a coalition front against British imperialism, history and economic condition of South Asia would have been quite different.

Bhim Sen Thapa was clever enough to read the mind of the English, and sensing danger, as stated earlier, intensified his diplomatic efforts to win the hearts of other states which were either already brought under the British domination or would be brought in future. “His efforts and energy were focussed on pushing out the imperialist from Asia<sup>32</sup>.” He dispatched missions to China, Tibet, Holkar, Gwalior, Bharatpur, Rampur, Lucknow, Lahore, Maharashtra and Rohilla but utterly failed. At this point, according to the divide and rule policy, the Company government concluded a treaty with Punjab in 1809. It was another severe blow to Nepal. With the conclusion of the Napoleonic war in Europe the political situation in the Indian sub-continent took a serious turn. “Napoleon had been exiled and a large, well-trained British army was available for service elsewhere. On October 4, 1813, the Earl of Moria succeeded Lord Minto as Governor General of India. Once again the Company government entered into a new policy phase<sup>33</sup>.” These events caused a change in the British attitude towards Nepal and waited only for a rational pretext to declare war on Nepal. There were several border disputes in several areas but Sheoraj and Butwal figured prominent. Moria dispatched a letter to the government of Nepal asking her to recognize the jurisdiction of the Company government in the two former places. It also issued 25-day ultimatum to vacate the area. As no reply came, the British

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<sup>32</sup> Nepali, *op. cit.*, f.n. 29, p. 89.

<sup>33</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 82.

troops moved into both districts and occupied the territory killing a Nepali official in the process. In May 1814, the British detachment withdrew because of the imminent onset of malarial season. Thereafter, the Nepali contingent of troops reasserted the sovereignty of the territory by killing its inhabitants in the process. "This incident served as the immediate *casus belli*<sup>34</sup>." Thereupon, the Company government officially declared war on Nepal on November 1, 1814.

The declaration of war upon Nepal by the British-India followed a great sensation in the Nepalese court. Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa summoned an assembly of nobles for deliberation regarding the declaration of war by the British-India. Serious deliberation took place among the nobles. In the deliberation, most of the powerful nobles like Ranganath Pandit, Dalbhanjan Pande, Ranajore Thapa, Amar Singh Thapa, etc., opposed the idea of war because of the adverse situation in Nepal. "Kaji Amarsingh Thapa (minister) even accused Bhim Sen Thapa of not having any practical knowledge about war since he was brought up in a palace<sup>35</sup>." The voice of war-opposing nobles, however, fell into the backdrop due to the pre-eminent position of Bhim Sen Thapa. The British-India mobilized more than 30,000 troops under the command of four able and experienced generals: Marley, Wood, Gillespie and Ochterlony. "To meet this vast English force under able generals, the Nepalese government was not able to assemble more than 10,000 men including fresh recruits<sup>36</sup>." Despite the smaller number of troops on the Nepalese side, fierce battles were fought in many places. In the beginning, the British led troops were hard pressed by the Gorkhali troops. They were, consequently, compelled to retreat and seek reorganisation in many battles. But the tide of war gradually turned against the Nepalese side after reorganisation and having received reinforcement, which became impossible

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<sup>34</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Nepali, *op. cit.*, f.n. 29, pp. 111-112.

<sup>36</sup> Rana, *op. cit.*, f.n. 30, p. 42.

on the Nepalese side. Both sides suffered a heavy loss. But the battle of Nalapani and Samraunpur proved the most unfortunate and severe for the British-India. In the battle of Nalapani, general Gillespie was shot dead. And in Samraunpur battle, Nepalese troops proved to be more than a match to the British troops. In this action, Captain Sibley lost his life. General Marley, who was in-charge of this division, having realised the high morale of Gorkha troops, their valour and considerable pressure, deserted the army.

Notwithstanding, the matchless bravery of Gorkha troops, Nepal was loosing momentum. There were various factors, which were responsible for the defeat of Nepal. Major factors among them were far more traditional weapons, smaller number of troops, primitive tactics and lack of provisions. Under these circumstances, General David Ochterlony, the ablest general, the shrewdest diplomat, and the greatest strategist of the time, was entrusted with the mission of fighting back against General Amarsingh Thapa. Under the command of General Ochterlony, a number of formidable attacks were launched against Gorkhali troops. Bhakti Thapa, one of the ablest Gorkhali commanders, lost his life. It was the hardest blow ever suffered by the Nepali side. Ultimately, the battle of Malau forced General Amarsingh Thapa to capitulate. By then, Amarsingh Thapa had only 250 men out of 3,000 since many killed wounded and deserted him to join the British camp. It is not inexplicable why the British got a pyrrhic victory over Nepal. "Had there been a joint effort of the Indian rulers and the Nepalese, the English could have easily been defeated. It was due to the consequences of this war that one after the other all the Indian princes had to submit to the English<sup>37</sup>." In this regard, the Indian princes could not realise that sooner or later they would have the same ill fate as Nepal. On the other hand, the tactful British policy of "divide and rule" was always there to forestall the uniting effort of other states. At long last, an unequal and humiliating treaty of political nature was concluded in Sugauli on March 4, 1816, dictated by the British-India. This

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

treaty stopped the expansionist campaign of Nepal forever and relegated it to an economically poor hilly state. Basically, the treaty of Sugauli best served the interests of the British-India, which were cherished for quite a long time. To Chitaranjan Nepali, “the border conflict between Nepal and British-India was a mere outward facade. In fact the British Colonial policy was entirely responsible for the war<sup>38</sup>.” This argument sounds quite true. Had the war not been fought, Nepal would always have posed a dangerous threat to them, and probably would have expelled them from the Indian subcontinent sooner than their regime collapsed, with the coalition of the then powerful states like Maratha, Punjab and others.

#### **2.1.4 Post-War Relations**

The Sugauli treaty marked a fresh beginning in the history of Nepal’s relations with British-India. The articles most disliked by Nepal are 6, 7 and 8. Articles 6 and 7 curtailed the free international relations and activities of Nepal and hence always raised a complicated question as to the actual diplomatic status of Nepal in the outside world. Article eight provided the British-India a right to accredit a resident in the court of Kathmandu and vice-versa. It was their top priority objective till it was realised.

No sooner had the war begun, the Gorkha bravery that emanated from the confrontations soon percolated into the officers’ echelon. Hence, General David Ochterlony, mainly on the advice of Lieutenant Frederick Young (Father of the Brigade of Gurkhas) unilaterally, decided to recruit Gurkha youths into the British-Indian Armed Forces even before the hostility had ceased. To begin with, they raised three battalions from Gurkha prisoners of war and deserters after the Malau Fort defended by General Amarsingh Thapa collapsed. (But the issue of Gurkha recruitment, its services, contribution and discrimination are dealt with in an appropriate chapter.)

The bilateral relations between Nepal and British-India could not improve satisfactorily even after the conclusion of the treaty of Sugauli. For,

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<sup>38</sup> Nepali, *op. cit.*, f.n. 29, p. 114.

all-powerful Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa was still apprehensive and suspicious of the British, and maintained a cool and distant relationship with them. He continued his effort to materialize his design of expelling the British imperialist from South Asia. In this process, he approached the Chinese Emperor and sent emissaries to Lahore, Kabul, Teheran, Lhasa and Gwalior but the latter ones did not show any interest. Bhim Sen Thapa had limited the movement of British resident within the four walls of the residency. "Because of Bhimsen Thapa, the Nepalese court was so haughty and uncourteous to the East India Company. A company of troops was placed between the residency and the city. All the citizens were prohibited to make any contact with the resident<sup>39</sup>." The resident was authorised to visit the king twice a year during the Holi and Dashain festivals but only in the presence of the Prime Minister. In addition, there were sharp differences of views in connection with trade, tax, and extradition of criminals as well as the considerably increased number of Nepalese soldiers. As far as the strengthening and reorganising of the army was concerned, a confidential letter sent by Hodgson to Governor General Lord Auckland makes it further clear:

They have neither arts nor literature, nor commerce nor rich soil to draw off their attention from arms, and they have that lusty hardihood of character and contempt of drudgery, which make war especially congenial. In the twenty years that we have been here since the war, we have seen nothing but drills and parades, heard nothing but the roar of cannon or the clink of the hammer in arsenal or magazine.<sup>40</sup>

Even then, the British-India had adopted a conciliatory policy towards Nepal. Consequently, its residents to Nepal were instructed to act accordingly. "From time to time Nepalese government did intrigue with Indian powers, but the British winked at such efforts, which were but

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<sup>39</sup> Chandra Bahadur Thapa, *Role of Brian Houghton Hodgson in the Politics of Nepal*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, TU, 1990), p. 187.

<sup>40</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson*, (London: John Murray, 1886), pp. 154-155.

manifestations of the characteristic restlessness of the Nepalese people<sup>41</sup>.” The unwillingness of the Company government in launching another war against Nepal was its compulsion. During that period, Britain’s empire-building process was in full swing not only in South Asia but also across the world. It was due to this reason that her hands were full with wars and had no leisure nor had it any spare military strength. Hence, the Company government was extremely cautious in securing cordiality and cooperation by maintaining a friendly attitude towards Nepal. It informed even its residents to Nepal through policy statement that: “the government has no motives for reducing the Nepal power and resources below the present state, when many powerful considerations suggest the expediency of avoiding a war with that people, however justly provoked<sup>42</sup>.” But when Hodgson became resident to Nepal in 1833, he both covertly and overtly pursued a policy of interference and consequently Nepalese politics took a different turn. For him, Bhimsen Thapa was an inborn foe of the Europeans; hence, he maintained an extremely hostile attitude towards him throughout his term in office. He had always remained a key role player in creating various political factions in the court of Nepal and to form government of his favour by ousting the true nationalist Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa. According to William Wilson Hunter: “The British Residency was the centre of the opposite of peaceful influences<sup>43</sup>.” Gradually, Hodgson grew powerful as he managed to extend his relationship with the powerful courtiers. King Rajendra in 1840 formed a ministry under the premiership of Royal collateral Fate Jung Shah. It is said that the king had taken prior approval of resident Hodgson to form this ministry. Later, it became unreasonably loyal to resident Hodgson. Therefore, the ministry was termed as “English Ministry.”

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<sup>41</sup> Majumdar, *op. cit.*, f.n. 9, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, p. 27.

<sup>43</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, f.n. 40, p. 139.

The regent Queen Lalit Tripura Sundari, principal power pillar of Bhim Sen Thapa, died in 1832. From this time on, Bhim Sen Thapa had lost his grip on power politics. Hodgson's personal ambition and interference policy added fuel to the fire. The Nepalese court sank in factional politics and intrigues. Bhim Sen Thapa, sensing some danger and to get rid of the turbulent situation, followed a liberal attitude towards Hodgson. He dispatched even Mathwarsingh Thapa to England with a view to rectify the situation but the latter could not proceed beyond Calcutta owing to Hodgson's interference. Resident Hodgson was firm and determined to depose Bhim Sen Thapa from power. In one of his letters, he wrote to his government in India, thus: "Nepal is a thorn in the side of the growing British Empire. He suggested that either it must be uprooted or its edge had to be rounded<sup>44</sup>." Hodgson's sole aim was to trim the sulky and threatening neighbour to a desirable one. The time was running out for Bhim Sen Thapa. Not only the Pandes were the inborn foes of Thapas, but also the Brahmans, and especially the Royal collaterals, wanted to regain their honour, privileges and posts. One most amazing story was that Bhim Sen Thapa's own brother Ranabir Thapa, one of the generals also began to conspire against his brother by joining hands with the opposing groups. During those oscillating political circumstances, suddenly the prince Debendra Bikram Shah died, and the enemies of Bhim Sen Thapa deliberately blamed him of killing the prince by poisoning. Afterwards, he was arrested, chained and imprisoned. Having sustained injury himself in his throat, he lingered in the dungeon for nine days and died so tragic a death that it surpassed even the tragedy of Greek dramas of ancient times. The enemies could not fully pacify the wrath with the tragic death of Bhim Sen Thapa. They then dismembered the corpse and threw its pieces in the streets of Kathmandu. For some days, snatching went on between jackals, dogs and vultures. But according to Professor Dhundiraj Bhandari, "the then resident Hodgson secretly took away the head of Bhim

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<sup>44</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, p. 29.

Sen Thapa and later sent it to England. It is still kept in one of the museums of London<sup>45</sup>." No scholar, national or foreign, has yet proved or disproved it. So, it has remained a mystery.

## **2.2 Emergence of Rana Regime and its Relations with British-India (1846-1951)**

An endemic chain of intrigues and political vendetta among the Nepalese barons ensued the tragic fall of nationalist and self-respecting Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa. "By the beginning of 1835 seven factions had developed at the court of Nepal, all requiring to be carefully watched by the resident, each from time to time coquetting for their support, and from time to time making appeals to the popular war like sentiment in Nepal against the presence of a foreign representative in their capital<sup>46</sup>." Each of them had their own vested interests of fulfilling and corresponding designs to do so. Terribly self-seeking Ranajang Pande appeared as the most powerful baron owing to the full support of senior Queen Samrajaya Lakshmi, a kinswoman of Pande. Ranajang Pande rose to the post of Prime Minister by the favour of the senior queen, also an ambitious lady, who by being a powerful regent, aspired to rule the nation like the late regent Lalit Tripura Sundari by forcing King Rajendra to abdicate in favour of her young son crown Prince Surendra. In order to fulfil her ambitious mission with the support of unprincipled Prime Minister Ranajang Pande, she gave a rhetorical slogan of war against the East India Company to restore back its territory, which was ceded to the British-India after the conclusion of Sugauli treaty in 1816. To them, this design apparently would create a chaotic political situation in Nepal, thereupon would be easy for them to force the king out of the throne. Besides, Ranajang Pande was impatient to carry out a vendetta against Thapas. During these critical years, the politicians were badly split between war party and peace

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<sup>45</sup> Bhandari, *op. cit.*, f.n. 18, p. 95.

<sup>46</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. f.n. 40, 143-144.



party. "The war party consisted of the king, senior queen and Pandes, whereas the peace party consisted of junior queen, Brahmins, Chautarias (Royal collaterals) and Thapas<sup>47</sup>." The war party intensified the intermittent anti-British activities, began war preparations and even dispatched emissaries to various Asian countries to solicit help on their part. The relationship with British-India, consequently, waned to the lowest ebb. A contingent of Nepalese troops moved into Ramnagar, which lies in the Champaran district and occupied 22 villages. Hodgson, then resident to Nepal, being flown into extreme rage with war party more often than not, persuaded his government to use military force against Nepal. Despite frequent persuasions and pressure from Hodgson to use force, Governor-General Lord Auckland did not wish to do so. It may be predestination to Nepal. But it was not their grace, rather a compulsion since Britain was heavily involved in the skirmishes in China, Burma, Afghanistan and central India. Hence, according to Auckland's peaceful policy, he just threatened Nepal to force the Nepalese troops out if they did not retire themselves from Ramnagar. It was due to the British-India's firm and serious threat that Nepalese troops silently withdrew from Ramnagar. Now Hodgson was instructed by the Governor General to remove the war party led by Ranajang Pande from power. Following the instruction, he determined himself to overthrow Ranajang Pande and his party and sometimes demanded even his removal publicly. It was due to Hodgson's vehement opposition against him that he hatched another conspiracy. He spread a rumour among the soldiers circle that the government on the pressure of the British-India was going to reduce their salary. As to this, it was also rumoured that there was an indirect hand of Hodgson.

Having learnt this rumour, the soldiers apparently got agitated and moved to British residency at Lainchour to destroy it. But astute Hodgson one way or the other pacified the wrath of the crowd and saved himself from

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<sup>47</sup> Thapa, *op. cit.*, f.n. 39, pp. 316-317.

further disaster. The angry soldiers even then plundered the houses of Puskar Shah, Ranganath Pandit and Karbir Pande. At this juncture of extreme fluidity, pressure from resident Hodgson was mounting to replace the war party by a pro-British party. "His pressure was sufficient to force Ranajung Pande's dismissal, after which the king presented the list of his proposed ministers to the resident for approval<sup>48</sup>." On the approval of Hodgson, a liberal pro-British noble Fatte Jang Shah was appointed at the post of Prime Minister. This move of the king improved the existing cool relations between Nepal and British-India. Shortly after the constitution of the peace ministry, Lord Auckland, being exhilarated, wrote with his own hand to Hodgson: "I congratulate you upon the honourable results of your well directed and persevering labours<sup>49</sup>." The senior queen this time gave way, and notwithstanding the deadly season, set off for Banaras but died of malaria fever on her way on October 6, 1841. The death of the senior queen made Pande family completely powerless, thereby forcing them to cease anti-British activities. But even then the on going intrigues and counter intrigues of Nepalese barons remained unabated. In January 1843, the king formally invested all powers of the state to the junior Queen Rajya Lakshmi. Because of this queen's strong back up, General Gagansingh Bhadari was felt pre-eminent in the court politics. He sometimes used to disobey even the king's orders and unscrupulously would issue orders to the Prime Minister. Therefore, the Prime Minister and senior generals Abhimansingh Ranamagar and Jung Bahadur Kunwar were offended. Things were becoming considerably explosive. The king was also aware of the affair of his consort and Gagansingh Bhadari and hence considering it a great humiliation, suggested his sons to save the honour of the royal family. Moreover, realising some imminent danger alerted his sons as well.

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<sup>48</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, pp. 34-35.

<sup>49</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, f.n. 40, p. 199.

Being extremely disgusted with the intervention of Gagansingh Bhadari, Fatte Jang Shah on 12 September called two senior generals to his private room to hold a discussion, especially on Gagansingh's pre-eminence and interference in day-to-day work. After some hours' discussion, they agreed to murder him. Purushottam Shamsher J.B. Rana in his book *Jung Bahadur Rana, The Story of his Rise and Glory* published in 1998 gives much more convincing information. It is based on an old moth-eaten original manuscript written by an unknown writer. In this manuscript, "publication of this document is prohibited" is written. In the book, Purushottam Shamsher writes, "It was also decided that Gagansingh's assassination should be carried out by Jung Bahadur himself, and that Fatte Jung Shah should not resign from the post of Prime Minister<sup>50</sup>...." Just two days after the decision for the assassination of Gagansingh, a bullet of the assassin killed him while he was performing worship. An alarming situation followed the murder of Gagansingh in the court. The queen flew into extreme wrath with the sad news. She immediately ordered the courtiers to assemble in the palace courtyard to find out the culprit and bring him to justice. As soon as they assembled in the courtyard, they started mud slinging on each other. The atmosphere there grew considerably tense; killings might have begun any time. Jung Bahadur Kunwar was non-plussed upon the report of the death of general Abhimansingh Ranamagar, Go Prasad Shah and Khadga Bikram Shah (son of Prime Minister Fatte Jung Shah). Jung Bahadur Kunwar reported it to Fatte Jung but the latter without uttering a word forced his way to approach the queen. Jung Bahadur tried to stop him but to no avail. Now he feared that Fatte Jung might falsely report the story to the queen and that might result in a complete ruin, especially to him and his family. He was quick enough to judge the situation. He signalled Ram Ale Ranamagar to shoot Fatte Jung Shah and the former shot him dead in the middle of the staircase. "After the death of the Prime Minister, Jung Bahadur developed the ambition to fill that

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<sup>50</sup> Purushottam Shamsher, J.B. Rana, *The Story of His Rise and Glory*, (Delhi: Book Faith India, 1998), p. 27.

slot<sup>51</sup>.” It indicates that the carnage followed by a deliberate murder was a coincidence rather than a design. It seems impossible for Jung Bahadur to hatch up such a complicated conspiracy since he lacked experience, not well versed in the court politics and administration and was an uneducated person. “It is believed that the king and his sons were determined that Gagansingh should die, because of his rumoured amorous affair with the junior queen, and that the Prime Minister Fatte Jung Shah helped choose an assassin<sup>52</sup>.” Jung Bahadur was the most appropriate assassin and the king might have supported him. Abhiman Singh Ranamagar also claimed Jung Bahadur was the assassin before he took his last breath. In addition, some scholars are sceptical that the then resident might have an indirect hand in the brutal court massacre. But yet there are no reliable facts available to prove his direct or indirect involvement. No one had ever imagined that the murder of a baron would cause such a dreadful incident. Broadly speaking, it was an outcome of the wrath of the junior Queen Rajya Lakshmi and King Rajendra’s incompetence and timidness. The total number of deaths differs from scholar to scholar; however, more than 55 notables were killed. Among them 13 were kinsmen of Shah Rulers. This figure implies that the court massacre was definitely a political annihilation of royal collaterals. Some of them fled the country and some others were banished. The following day of the gruesome incident “... the queen bestowed on Jung Bahadur the office of the Mukhtiyar [sic] with the title of Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, and this appointment was soon confirmed by king Rajendra<sup>53</sup>.” Purushottam Shumsher Rana also agrees with this fact and writes: “The queen agreed, appointing Jung Bahadur Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Nepal army early on the morning of September 15, 1846<sup>54</sup>....” On the contrary, some scholars claim that he was made Prime Minister only after the

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>52</sup> Joshi and Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 20, p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup> J. B. Rana, *op. cit.*, f.n. 50, p. 34.

Bhandarkhal Parva or Basnet conspiracy. In this manner, Jung Bahadur and his brothers managed to occupy the top posts of both military and civil administration of the country.

### **2.2.1 Jung Bahadur and His Foreign Policy towards British-India (1846-1877)**

In the aftermath of the historic court massacre, Jung Bahadur Kunwar emerged as an absolutely powerful political figure in the court of Nepal because most of his political contenders were killed, fled or banished. On the evening of September 15, 1846, Jung Bahadur with some of his brothers and security guards went to the British residency at Lainchour to meet the acting resident captain O. B. Oately. "During the meeting, Jung Bahadur informed Oately of his appointment as Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief of the army and told him that everything he had done, and was currently doing, was on the orders of both the king and queen<sup>55</sup>." This hurried act of Jung Bahadur makes the value he intended to put on British-India amply clear. From this time on, Nepalese politics and her foreign policy took a sharp turn. He did not follow the policy of his predecessors, rather submitted fully to the British-India and always remained yearning to strengthen and consolidate mutual relations with them. After his emergence, relations with British-India entered into a new era. The British government of India was also closely watching the development of political events in Nepal. They also realised that their untiring and constant endeavour of over half a century were going to be fulfilled. That is why, the Company government did not object to the appointment of Jung Bahadur as the Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief, nor did they raise any questions in connection with the court massacre. As a matter of fact, some scholars, like Dilli Raman Regmi, consider the emergence of Jung Bahadur as a triumph of British diplomacy. It does not, however, mean that there was no misunderstanding, misconception, mistrust and enmity left thereafter between Nepal and British-India. His sole objective was

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

to safeguard the independence of the country along with his dictatorial rule. Realistically, his each and every policy and behaviour towards British-India was ostensibly submissive whereas internally he was assertive and used to check unwanted British activities and behaviour.

Noteworthy cooperative public actions that took place during his tenure are made clear by the following statement:

By his many gestures of goodwill and friendship, including the offer of troops in both the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-46 and 1848-49, his visit to England in 1850, the Extradition Treaty of 1855, and above all, his full military support and personal 'service' to the British in quelling the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, went a long way in transforming the enemies since 1814-16 into friends and allies thereafter.<sup>56</sup>

But his offer of providing service of Nepalese troops against Sikhs was politely rejected by Lord Dalhousie, then Governor General. The rejection really disappointed him since he was impatient to demonstrate his submissive attitude towards them and to wipe out the mistrust they had in their mind. Despite his offer of service against the Sikhs, he later granted asylum with due dignity and honour to the Queen Chand Kaur, consort of the late Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh.

Shortly after the murder of her trusted confidant Gagansingh Bhadari, the queen turned to Jung Bahadur considering him instrumental in executing her design. But later, "finding that Jung Bahadur was not so subservient to her purposes as she had expected, the Maharani (queen) endeavoured to compass his death, but failing, she was exiled with her two sons from the country, and accompanied the Maharaja (king) to Banaras, who returned to Nepal the following year, only to abdicate in favour of the heir apparent, Surendra Bikram<sup>57</sup>." Jung Bahadur, on May 12, 1847, formally deposed King Rajendra by labelling him a conspirator against the state from abroad, and

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<sup>56</sup> Hemanta Rana, "Nepal-Britain Relations: An Historical Perspective", *Seminar on Nepal-Britain Relations*, (Kathmandu: CNAS, 1986), p. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Vansittart, *op. cit.*, f.n. 6, p. 40.

declared crown Prince Surendra the King of Nepal. In this way, he further strengthened and consolidated his position and became an undisputed, unchallengeable and formidable *de facto* ruler of the country.

### 2.2.1.1 Jung Bahadur's visit to England (1850)

Jung Bahadur was yearning for a visit to England to find out her actual power, development, grandeur, military strength and so on and so forth. He was extremely amazed by the invincibility of Britain. Britain had, by then, successfully suppressed the entire Indian sub-continent, Tibet and China. Even then none could challenge her. Hence, Jung Bahadur approached the Governor General through the resident in Kathmandu on behalf of the king stating that the king would like to send a complementary mission to pay respect to the queen of England. This request was immediately approved. "The British motive behind this permission was to change his opinions and attitudes and induce him to open the commercial doors to Nepal, but Jung Bahadur kept Nepal as isolated as before, because he felt that trade may be followed by guns<sup>58</sup>." Jung Bahadur set off for England via Calcutta on January 15, 1850, with a big retinue. According to Purushottam Shamsheer Rana, the retinue consisted of his "two brothers, officers, artists, doctors, cooks, guards and clerks. The total number was 40<sup>59</sup>." In Calcutta, a 19-gun salute boomed out in his honour. He was greatly impressed with the grandeur of Britain. He was met by the then British Prime Minister, Generals, Admirals and many other dignitaries. They held talks on a wide range of issues and appreciated the Nepalese Prime Minister, his country and the existing bilateral relations.

Queen Victoria, at St. James' palace, granted audience to Jung Bahadur on 19 June 1850. "The Queen expressed her pleasure in meeting the Nepalese Prime Minister in person and added that such a great Hindu Prince had never

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<sup>58</sup> J. B. Rana, *op. cit.*, f.n. 50, p. 58.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

been to England. She became happy in having a friend like Nepal and expressed her desire to maintain friendship with Nepal in future also. Her overriding concern was not to damage the existing bilateral relations<sup>60</sup>." Jung Bahadur was both surprised and impressed since he found no one, including the queen and prime minister, above the law. Even the queen would be punished, if she did not act in accordance with the laws of the land. "The British and Indian press reported the Nepali premier's visit to England in glorious detail. Jung Bahadur, according to them, was the first Asian leader ever to visit Europe<sup>61</sup>." One of the most important achievements of the visit was that it raised the status of Nepal in the eyes of the international society. The visit, in addition, left a deep imprint on Jung Bahadur, and caused him to change his traditional mindset that is sufficiently reflected in his reform acts. The penal code, which he promulgated after his return from England, is deemed as his great legacy. He abolished capital punishment but for murder and forbade mutilation as punishment. Above all, he was convinced with the grandeur and invincible power of Britain and that helped him set the foundation for his foreign policy, which he pursued throughout his life.

### **2.2.1.2 Extradition Treaty of 1855 between Nepal and British-India**

The vast extent of common frontier had become troublesome to both -- Nepal and British-India. A variant nature of criminals, who would commit crime ranging from murders, attempted murders, rapes, thefts, cattle stealing, and embezzlements to counterfeits, used to evade punishment by escaping to India and vice-versa. Therefore, they wanted such criminals to be extradited to their respective countries to bring them to justice. This was an ostensible reason. But their ulterior motive was to suppress their opponents living or who might live in each other's country. Several enemies of Jung Bahadur at that time were living in India. Similarly, antagonists to British Empire might

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<sup>60</sup> Kamal Dikshit (ed.), *Jung Bahadurko Belayat Yatra*, (Jung Bahadur's Visit to England), Kathmandu: Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, 1957, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> J. B. Rana, *op. cit.*, f.n. 50, p. 65.



come and take refuge in Nepal because the then rules in both the nations were too unpopular. Due to this reason, they concluded an extradition treaty on February 10, 1855. It has 10 articles. The signatories also agreed that the agreement should not have any retrospective effect. In fact, Jung Bahadur raised the point of extradition to the British officials on his visit to England. But the British officials implied to negotiate with the incumbent governor general of India. In 1866, some endemic crimes, which were not included in the treaty, were added as a supplement to the agreement of both parties. It was also one of the good gestures displayed by Jung Bahadur towards the British imperialist to secure its patronage, which was vital to consolidate his position within and outside Nepal.

In the Sepoy Mutiny (military) of 1857, which was first triggered off in Nasarabad Brigade, Jung Bahadur and his soldiers played a major role and rescued the beleaguered British Empire. In return for the historic contribution, Britain rewarded Nepal by restoring the territory ceded to British-India after the Anglo-Nepal war. After the suppression of the military rebellion, "Jung Bahadur then met Canning at Allahabad and requested that he might be seated on the throne of Nepal<sup>62</sup>." Another scholar believes that Jung Bahadur would have become King of Nepal if he had run the risk.

### **2.2.2 Post Jung Bahadur Nepalese Foreign Policy (1878-1950)**

Jung Bahadur's premature death in 1877 ensued the premiership of his brother Ranodip Singh. By this time, intra-familial rivalry, i.e. between Shamshers (Dhir Shamsher and his sons) and the Jungs (the sons of Jung Bahadur) had been intensified. Having assumed the office of the Prime Minister, Ranodip Singh made it clear that he would follow the policy of the late Prime Minister Jung Bahadur. This kind of policy statement really disappointed the British, for they were impatient to solve some of the issues, which had been shelved from the time of Bhim Sen Thapa. They described

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<sup>62</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 131.

him as a weak Prime Minister and in turn, wanted to take advantage of him. But it could not bear any fruit. Notwithstanding his traditional policy, he showed a grave concern when there was a rumour as to the Anglo-Russian war and even offered military assistance. He, in addition, congratulated and sent good wishes to the British on the victory of Britain over Egypt in 1882. "However, on the question of Gurkha recruitment, entry of Europeans, improvement in trade relations and relaxation of restriction on the movement of the resident, Ranodip Singh conceded very little<sup>63</sup>." On the other hand, Prime Minister Ranodip Singh and essentially a militarist commander in-chief Dhir Shamsher (anti-British) made much effort to get concessions on the import of arms and ammunition, but the British always imposed a stern check and rather employed it as a big bargaining chip. According to the British, Ranodip Singh's government even endeavoured to procure arms and ammunition through underhand means.

Bir Shamsher, the eldest son among the seventeen sons of Dhir Shamsher and the nephew of Prime Minister Ranodip Singh, was leading the Shamsher faction. He, falling seventh, in the roll of succession, was restless since it seemed practically impossible for him to assume the office of the Prime Minister. Legally, his turn would have come only after the turn of seven sons of Jung Bahadur. But at that time, he was already 33 years old. Therefore, he felt that it would not be a prudent idea to wait till his legal turn. Hence, he and his brothers jointly staged a successful *coup d'etat* against his uncle Ranodip Singh. Ranodip Singh and most of the sons of Jung Bahadur, including the legal claimant of primiership, Jagat Jang (the eldest son of Jung Bahadur), were murdered. Some of them managed to save their lives by taking refuge in the British residency and were later exiled to India. In this manner, Bir Shamsher managed to come to power. But, after assuming the office of the Prime Minister, he found himself in an awkward position. He was extremely apprehensive of his enemies who were gathering in India and

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<sup>63</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, p. 190.

soliciting British cooperation to depose him from power. Under these circumstances, he felt an exigency of recognition from British-India to strengthen his position.

Politically, the British policy's main objective was the preservation of peace in the region south of Himalayas by projecting Nepal as the outer frontier state between the British India and Tibet, the imperial outpost of China, to avoid conflicts with China and USSR. The economic interest was to make Nepal an entrepôt, gateway to Tibet and Chinese central Asia or the channel of trade with trans-Himalayan states.<sup>64</sup>

But to fulfil these major objectives, the Colonial government had to fulfil minor ones first. Hence, it was always heavily engaged in doing so. But on their part, they always tightened their fists as long as the granting of concessions to Nepal was concerned.

Bir Shamsheer's coming to power through a blood stained *coup* proved to British-India a good opportunity to exploit some exigencies out of it. Therefore, having carried out a thorough study of the current political fluidity of Nepal through the resident, the government of British-India recognised the government of Bir Shamsheer. The self-seeking British government flatly overlooked the emotional plea of Jit Jang (son of Jung Bahadur) who was, by living in India, mustering energy to overthrow the illegal government of Bir Shamsheer. His entreaty runs thus:

... that he had come to Calcutta in accordance with the advice which his father, Sir Jung Bahadur, had always given [to] his children, that in all their troubles and difficulties they should look for help to the British government, which Sir Jung Bahadur had most loyally served, and which he firmly believed would never allow his name or family to be dishonoured or forgotten.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Bishwa Pradhan, *Behaviour of Nepalese Foreign Policy*, (Kathmandu: Mrs. Durga Pradhan, 1966), p. 124.

<sup>65</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, p. 196.

The Governor General categorically refused to take any action against the incumbent government but deplored the barbarous act of Shamsher faction. Extensive concessions of mutual reciprocity especially to the British-India ensued after the official recognition of the Company government to the government of Bir Shamsher. The earlier reservations maintained by predecessors gradually began to be lifted from this time on. During this period, one of the exigencies of the Company government was to get able-bodied Gurkha recruits in desired number from the appropriate ethnic groups (Rai, Limbu, Gurung and Magar). As for this, Bir Shamsher issued a decree: "If you wish to enlist in British regiments, we give you full permission to go and join British service. There is no prohibition whatsoever<sup>66</sup>."

It was Bir Shamsher's compulsion rather than his wish. The British-India, in turn, allowed Nepal to buy some arms and ammunition. Thereafter, commander-in-chief of the British-India Lord Robertson visited Nepal in 1891 and that was followed by Bir Shamsher's visit to India in 1893. Bir Shumsher wished to visit England and approached the authorities concerned but could not succeed owing to some unforeseen problems.

After the sudden death of Bir Shamsher, his brother Dev Shamsher became the Prime Minister of Nepal. But he was relatively more progressive and liberal in comparison to his predecessors; in turn it alarmed the orthodox Rana faction. In April 1901, Viceroy Lord Curzon came to Nepal on a hunting excursion and Chandra Shamsher, who always thought of himself being more intelligent and capable of running the government than his brothers, had been detailed as the escort of the former. "Whatever these two brilliant and ambitious men discussed seems quite improbable to be found, however, they must have discussed Nepali internal politics and situation in Tibet<sup>67</sup>." The above statement indicates that both the parties must have suspected the

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<sup>66</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 143.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

bloodless *coup* mounted by Chandra Shamsheer against Dev Shamsheer which took place just after their return from the hunting excursion in less than two months. The suspicion had been further strengthened, when British-India recognised the seizure of power by Chandra Shamsheer with unusual haste.

No sooner had he come to power, he declared his sacred duty and valued privilege not only to cultivate and continue friendly relations with British-India but also to strengthen and improve them. Chandra Shamsheer, in this manner, maintained an extremely liberal policy towards the Colonial power and buried his old tactics of trying to play off India against China. "Historians have claimed that Chandra Shamsheer's period marked a climax in the history of Rana autocratic rule. This had an interesting coincidence as Lord Curzon took over as the Viceroy and Governor General of India in 1899. Though besieged by increasing activities of the Indian freedom fighters, Lord Curzon's vice-regality has also been hailed by historians and scholars as a landmark<sup>68</sup>." As a matter of fact, the British Empire in India reached its crest under Lord Curzon. "... He placed the entire resources of his country at the disposal of the British Government and the Nepalese mission to Tibet (Lhasa) was asked to extend all possible assistance to the British mission led by Colonel Younghusband<sup>69</sup>." This assistance to British-India was a gross violation of the treaty obligations signed in 1856 between Nepal and Tibet. In accordance with the treaty obligations, Nepal was to help Tibet.

His visit, to England in 1908, is considered a landmark achievement for Nepal. Neither Prime Ministers nor any dignitaries of Nepal had ever visited Great Britain except Jung Bahadur. During this visit, Chandra Shamsheer was serious to discuss some issues of overriding concern with the British government. His issues of top priority were: first, the actual status of Nepal;

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<sup>68</sup> Madan Kumar Bhattarai, *Diplomatic History of Nepal*, (Delhi: Madan Kumar Bhattarai, 1990), p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

secondly, free import of arms and ammunition into Nepal; and lastly, import of industrial, agricultural and scientific machinery. To his misfortune, the British government did not allow him to raise these issues. Notwithstanding the failure, he was not disappointed. He was still satisfied, for he could physically see the grandeur of Great Britain, its civilization, industrial development, political system, military strength, and so forth which were vastly different from those of his own. As far as the import of arms and ammunition was concerned, the Company government had pursued a very cautious policy, especially after the war of 1814-16. The underlying motive of the Company government as to arms supply into Nepal becomes amply clear from the following statement: "... It is at least not incredible that a Manipur incident might one day take place in Nepal. At Manipur we suffered terribly the guns, which we had foolishly given as a complement to the Raja. That precedent has always made me cautious and apprehensive<sup>70</sup>." They actually intended Nepal to be dependent on British-India for arms and ammunition as well as to make it impossible for her warlike people and government to launch another war against British-India. That is why the demand of Chandra Shamsher was met only in part.

The devastating World War I, which was fought during 1914-18, had been grasped by Chandra Shumsher as a golden opportunity to demonstrate his unflinching loyalty to the English. Until then, distrust prevailed despite several services had been rendered with utmost sincerity from the Nepalese side. Chandra Shamsher, therefore, spontaneously visited the then resident with an offer of help. He handed over a very important letter to him, which was to be delivered to the Viceroy of India, that read as follows: "I have come to request you to inform his Excellency the Viceroy and through him His Majesty the King Emperor that the whole military resources of Nepal are at his Majesty's disposal. We shall be proud if we can be of any service however

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<sup>70</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, pp. 280-281.

little that may be<sup>71</sup>." Shortly thereafter, the war spread in most parts of the world. Hence, the British government welcomed the Nepalese offer of help. During the First World War, more than 200,000 Gurkha youths fought alongside Britain. He even lent ten battalions of Nepali national army as well as provided financial and material help on an equally generous scale. On the contrary, the Imperial government of Germany had intrigued to incite Chandra Shamsher through letters and sometimes through radio broadcasts for siding with Indian nationalists against the hereditary enemy (English). But Chandra Shamsher, instead of accepting these suggestions, passed on all the information, which he had collected, to the Company government. Due to this immense service, the earlier reluctance of the British to make overt gestures had obviously disappeared by 1920 after recognising Nepal's "unrestricted independence rather than domestic autonomy<sup>72</sup>."

When on December 21, 1923, Nepal and British-India, especially on Chandra Shamsher's pressure, concluded a treaty, they formally recognised unequivocal independence of Nepal. It, in turn, for the first time categorically raised the status of Nepal higher than that of the Indian native states. Henceforth, the Maharajah Dhiraj (king) was called His Majesty (Shree Panch) and the Prime Minister His Highness (Shree Teen). Similarly, the residency was called legation and the resident the minister. The old title of the Darbar was replaced by the government of Nepal. One more additional achievement of this treaty was to enable Nepal to freely import arms and ammunition from and through India.

Pro-British foreign policy of Chandra Shamsher was further reinforced by the policy of another staunch supporter of Britain, Juddha Shamsher. But his period of premiership as most issues which had in the past consumed time, energy and diplomacy of both the governments had by now been solved. Therefore, this period in the history of Anglo-Nepalese relations

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>72</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 171.

remained most uneventful, friendliest and dullest until the outbreak of the Second World War. Germany's invasion on Poland on September 1, 1939, was the starting point of the devastating Second World War. Britain and France reacted swiftly by declaring war against Germany on September 3, 1939. This once again, brought Nepal and Britain together. By now, the fame of Gurkha soldiers had spread throughout the world as most indomitable, gallant, disciplined and unswerving. They have, essentially, been regarded as the bravest of the brave. In this war too, Juddha Shamsher, the Prime Minister of Nepal, followed his predecessors' footsteps and provided lavish help to Britain and her allies. Help of this time far surpassed the previous ones rendered by his elders. But this time, hundreds of thousands of Nepalese youths shed their sweat and blood for nothing. Juddha Shamsher, due to this, became very unpopular among the general public. Scholar Leo E. Rose also writes to the same effect: "Peace in 1945 brought neither political stability nor tangible rewards to Nepal, but rather a series of momentous events both within and outside the country that posed a severe challenge to the Rana regime<sup>73</sup>." During the Second World War, the wave of democracy and freedom had already started rippling throughout the entire region of South Asia, and Nepal could not remain unaffected. Initially, the anti-Rana movement launched by some conscious Nepali youth was ruthlessly suppressed. Despite the suppression, the anti-Rana movement did not weaken; rather it took a solid shape and spread all over the country. This movement still intensified when the British government demobilized Gurkha war veterans on a massive scale after the conclusion of the war. The century old Ranacracy reached its crucial point when the British transferred the sovereignty to India under recently elected Indian leaders and withdrew from India. "Since the time of Chandra Shamsher there had been a tacit agreement between the Nepali and the British authorities under which Indian subversive elements that sought refuge in Nepal were kept under surveillance and

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.



occasionally even arrested and extradited in exchange for similar British imposed restrictions on the activities of anti-Rana Nepalese in India<sup>74</sup>." The Ranas were quick to sense the gravity of the situation and determined to make major policy adjustments to meet the new demands of the time. Consequently, it extended its diplomatic relations with the US by concluding a treaty of friendship and commerce in April 1947. Thereafter, Nepal established her diplomatic relations with France in May 1949. Moreover, in February 1949, Nepal applied for membership to the United Nations and, by that time, had acquired membership in some of the UN specialized agencies like IFO, ILO and WHO. But the Nepalese aspiration for the membership of the UN was frosted owing to the sceptical view held by former Soviet Union as to sovereign independence of Nepal. In this manner, the orthodox government of the last Rana Prime Minister, Mohan Shamsheer, embarked on an open door policy. Since, he believed more in diplomatic support from abroad than democratic reforms internally to stabilize the political system and to cling to power like a limpet. At long last, the revolution of 1950, actively participated by late King Tribhuvan began to crumble the whole edifice of the century-old Rana oligarchy.

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

## CHAPTER THREE

### POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

#### 3.1 Nepal-Britain Relations during Multi-party Democratic Era (1951-1960)

Before the withdrawal of Britain from India, Nepal and Britain, having long-standing traditional and cordial ties with each other, carried out some policy adjustments. They concluded a tripartite treaty between Nepal, Britain and the dominion of India on November 9, 1947, for the continuation of the Gurkha recruitment into the British army. In accordance with the treaty, the 10 existing Gurkha regiments were divided between Britain and India: the second, the sixth, the seventh and the tenth regiments were allotted to Britain and the rest six remained in the Indian army. "Commercial and other relations were also renewed under the treaty of perpetual peace and friendship signed in Kathmandu on 30 October 1950<sup>75</sup>." When the autocratic Rana regime was fighting its last ditch battle, the British Government even after its withdrawal from India played a big, though indirect, role in the uprising of 1950-51. "Britain wanted no political change in Nepal. Their loyalty was totally on the side of the Rana regime, and at least in word they seemed to support the Ranas even during the revolution. Therefore, while the British still ruled in India political change in Nepal was impossible<sup>76</sup>." The relations between the Ranas and the British had stood the test of time, and in turn, they had become indispensable partners in each other's political entity. Hence, the British, even in the new political scenario, at least had moral obligations to fulfil in favour of the Rana regime. The Ranas utterly failed to persuade King Tribhuvan to return from the Indian Embassy. The situation

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<sup>75</sup> S. D. Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, (New Delhi: Chetana Publication, 1973), p. 19.

<sup>76</sup> Martin Hoftun *et al.*, *People, Politics and Ideology: Democracy and Social Change in Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1999), p. 22.

turned further worse when the king exiled himself to India. This incident enraged Mohan Shamsher and he summoned the council of nobles and declared Prince Gyanendra (third in the line of succession) as King of Nepal by dethroning his grandfather King Tribhuvan. Having carried out this unpopular move, they sought recognition from India, the US and the UK, for Prince Gyanendra as King of Nepal. India flatly rejected the idea of recognising Prince Gyanendra as King of Nepal. The UK and the US thought to decide on the basis of the developments of political events in Nepal. A diplomatic mission from Britain came to Nepal on December 3, 1950, to observe the situation. The British support to the Rana regime appeared to the agitators as an unholy alliance, a stakeholder in the exploitation of Nepalese people. The British were condemned for supporting the autocratic Rana regime. The mission came across a mass rally chanting slogans in favour of King Tribhuvan at the airport and the British diplomats got convinced that the situation was not in the clutches of the Rana rulers as they claimed. Beyond everything, the British Government was not in a mood to recognise Prince Gyanendra against the wishes of the government of India. Scholars Joshi and Rose write: "But after the visit of its representative, Sir Esler Dening, to Kathmandu on December 3, it too decided to follow India's leadership on the matter and to refuse recognition to prince Gyanendra<sup>77</sup>." Realising the growing opposition, the Ranas initiated a dialogue with the king in exile and political leaders under the auspices of the then Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. The Delhi settlement formally deposed the century-old Rana oligarchy and King Tribhuvan formed a cabinet accountable to him on February 18, 1951, which included members of both the Ranas and the rebels. "The Delhi compromise which created the first post-Rana government was an agreement among the four major groups that were to dominate Nepali politics throughout the 1950s -- the monarchy, the political parties, the Ranas

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<sup>77</sup> Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, Second Edition, (Kathmandu: Mandala Publication, 2004), p. 74.

and the Indian government<sup>78</sup>." Henceforth, Indian factor always remained predominant in Nepalese politics and it resulted in special relations with India till Tribhuvan was alive. Gradually, Britain came to accept the presence of India in her former place and virtually handed over her overriding concern with Nepal to the US.

In contrast to Nepal, Britain is a far developed and highly industrialised superpower. The importance of Britain to Nepal has been more significant than the importance of Nepal to Britain. Whereas, when Britain was ruling in India, their dependency might have equal to each other to maintain their political entity. Now, as it withdrew from India, the place was naturally filled up by India. In addition, the greater physical distance limited the interests of Britain in Nepal. However, Britain, at that time, had last but not the least interest in Nepal. And it was for the sake of the Gurkha recruitment. Until 1952, the Indian government did not remonstrate about recruitment of Gurkha youths for the British units in Malaya. But the Gurkha recruitment depots existing in India for the British army in Malaya closed in 1952. Therefore, "Nepal and Britain signed an agreement in July 1953 to continue the Gurkha recruitment for another five years. It also allowed setting up two recruitment depots -- Dharan in the east and Paklihawa in the west<sup>79</sup>." Even after this, the government of India did not hinder the facility of taking Gurkha recruits via Indian Territory as long as they went in civilian dress and as individuals. Successors of the Ranas, especially late King Mahendra in the changed global context, followed the policy of nonalignment outlined by King Tribhuvan, Prime Minister M. P. Koirala and Foreign Minister D. R. Regmi to best serve its interests and keep sovereign independence intact. But Nepal's adherence to these principles of Panchashila remained only vocal because of Nepal's special relations with India. This

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<sup>78</sup> Sitaram Sharma, *The Politics of Greater Nepal*, (New Delhi: S. K. Gupta, 1988), p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Renu Kumari Sen, *Nepal-Britain Sambandha: Ek Adhyayan*, (Nepal-Britain Relations: A Study), Unpublished MA Dissertation, TU, 1999, p. 90.

policy of Nepal even cooled the relationship with Britain. As Nepal continued her diversification policy, it became Britain's obligation to compete with India, China, the US and the former USSR to strengthen her relationship with Nepal.

Since then, Britain at all times remained vigilant as to the political developments in Nepal and her embassy consistently reported to the British government at home. It becomes clear from the British embassy's annual political report which stated, King Tribhuvan visited India six times in one year. Besides, from time to time, some interference, like in the past, had continued. For instance, "In an attempt to appear more representative of the country as a whole, M. P. Koirala's November 1951 government included a Rai and a Gurung, the latter being an ex-Gurkha who the British ambassador had recommended to Mohan Shamsher in May as a possible Minister<sup>80</sup>." He is Narabhadur Gurung by name that became deputy health Minister. "... The British ambassador in Kathmandu wrote in a letter to the British foreign office on December 2, 1953, as follows: "though such a weakling, the king remains important to Nepal, and also to the Indians who built him so recently and have worked for him<sup>81</sup>." The above-mentioned report of the British ambassador clarifies their heavy involvement and serious concern over Nepalese affairs. The constitution of 1959 was drafted by a commission formed by King Mahendra. It included representatives of various political parties. Sir Ivor Jennings, "the British expert on constitutional law, served as a consultant to the commission at one stage in its deliberations<sup>82</sup>." He had already lent his expertise to many new Asian democracies.

Under the constitution of 1959, parliamentary elections for the first time in Nepalese political history were held in between February and April 1959. But some political parties fought an unsuccessful legal battle against the

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<sup>80</sup> Hoftun *et al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 36.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>82</sup> Joshi and Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 285.

election results. According to one British diplomat: "... should any one party win an outright majority in the election, it will immediately be accused by all the other parties of having both bought and bribed officials<sup>83</sup>." His forecast came true. Although, King Mahendra had some reservations about B. P. Koirala, he appointed him as Prime Minister of Nepal since the latter was pre-eminent and unchallenged leader of his time.

The House of Commons of Britain felicitated the government of Nepal for successfully holding the historic parliamentary elections and establishing the parliament. The good wishes further read: it was a matter of exaltation that the Nepalese people from all walks of life, despite difficulties in organisation and communications, displayed much interest and enthusiasm in choosing their representatives. In the current world, it is a landmark achievement to establish a democratic regime guaranteeing the people's fundamental rights.<sup>84</sup>

In this manner the British government as a traditional ally remained fulfilling its moral obligations and duties to Nepal. But sometimes, minor friction used to take place owing to Nepal's adherence to non-alignment foreign policy. "Nepalese Foreign Minister Chuda Prasad Sharma while addressing the 11th session of the UN condemned the attack of the UK, France and Israel over Egypt<sup>85</sup>." It is, however, said that the Nepalese tone of such criticism to her friendly nations used to be softer. In the same case, a protest letter was handed over to the British ambassador to Nepal in its embassy in Kathmandu. Moreover, the then Nepalese Prime Minister, Tanka Prasad Acharya strongly condemned the attack and warned not to use Gurkha soldiers in that imperialist attack<sup>86</sup>." Nepal was a staunch supporter of small and undeveloped third world countries as well as played a catalytic role in the interest of such countries in maintaining and promoting world

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<sup>83</sup> Hoftun *et al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 62.

<sup>84</sup> Grishma Bahadur Devkota, *Nepalko Rajnitik Darpan*, Volume II, (Political Mirror of Nepal), Kathmandu: Arjun Bahadur Devkota, 1980, p. 221.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 560.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 564.

peace. It was Nepal's basic principle in order to safeguard her independence and to fulfil her interest. Hence, in some ways, it might be Nepal's obligation to oppose or condemn such attacks.

B. P. Koirala, president of Nepali Congress, on May 27, 1959, formed a 19 member Council of Ministers, which for the first time in the Nepalese political history included a woman as deputy minister. This was not only the first democratically elected government but also ever strongest post-Rana government which had enjoyed overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives, 74 Congress MPs out of a total of 109. It did not, as such, deem necessary as all preceding governments to use foreign policy as an instrument for strengthening its political position. Besides, B. P. Koirala's integrated personality, i.e., education, political training with Indian socialist leaders, ability of organisation, and his charisma proved fairly helpful. "But the immediate problem which the government faced was the combined and concerted attack of all the opposition parties, ranging from the communists to the extreme Rights elements like the Gurkha Parishad<sup>87</sup>." As to foreign policy, this government embraced non-alignment, for by now the world in terms of political ideology was apparently divided into power blocs. The then relations of Nepal with the immediate and giant neighbours, India and China, were slightly deteriorated. The major factors responsible in creating this awkward position were the condemnation of Nepali Congress regarding Chinese policy over Tibet, vested interest of opposition parties and the statement made by Prime Minister Nehru in Lok Sabha (lower house) any aggression against Bhutan and Nepal would be regarded as aggression against India. Notwithstanding, the traditional ties with the UK were further bolstered through various forums by strongly supporting or condemning the national, regional and international issues as well as the exchange of high-level visits. "The three-day state visit of King Mahendra and Queen Ratna on

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<sup>87</sup> Anirudha Gupta, *Politics in Nepal, 1950-60*, Second Enlarged Edition, (Delhi: Smt. Hem Lata, 1993), p. 151.

October 6-9, 1960, and two-week formal visit to the UK provided an opportunity to exchange views with the British leaders including Queen Elizabeth II, Duke of Edinburgh, Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, as well as other leaders in power and the MPs<sup>88</sup>." Earlier than this, only two Rana Prime Ministers, Jung Bahadur and Chandra Shamsheer had visited the UK. The introduction of democracy in Nepal increased intercourse between the two countries, and was followed by visits of royalties and other high dignitaries. "At the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey on 2nd June 1953, His late Royal Highness Prince Himalaya represented His late Majesty King Tribhuvan<sup>89</sup>." But as far as the visit of Nepalese monarch is concerned, His Majesty late King Mahendra's visit of 1960 was the first initiative. "There both he and Queen Elizabeth recalled the long standing friendship between the two countries and their comradeship in the *defence of peace and freedom* during the two world wars. King Mahendra expressed his desire that the British cooperation in Nepal's economic development be increased<sup>90</sup>." His Majesty late King Birendra (then crown prince) was also in the royal entourage during the above-mentioned state visit. In a speech delivered at the state banquet hosted in their Majesties' honour by Queen Elizabeth II, King Mahendra said: "we are very beholden to our Majesty for the warm tributes you have been pleased to pay to the valour of the Nepalese people. In response, we would state that we, the Nepalese, are also full of admiration for the sense of discipline and courage of the British. In the great victories of peace, too, our two countries have been working hand and glove<sup>91</sup>."

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<sup>88</sup> Ram Kumar Dahal, *Nepal's First Experiment with Parliamentary System (May 27, 1959– December 15, 1960)*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, TU, 1995, p. 202.

<sup>89</sup> Jitendra Dhoj Khand, *Nepal-Britain Relations*, Second Edition, (Kathmandu: Prava Khand, 1986), p. 73.

<sup>90</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 152

<sup>91</sup> Dibya Deo Bhatt, *Nepal-Britain Relations*, (Kathmandu: CNAS, 1983), p. 32.



The very first historic state visit of Nepalese monarch added a new dimension to the existing time-honoured Nepal-Britain relations by broadening the areas of mutual understanding and cooperation in various fields. Especially it paved the way for the economic and technical assistance for the foreign-aid dependent economy of the party-less *Panchayat* regime. "Having completed the state visit, King Mahendra stayed on for an additional two weeks, inspecting educational establishments and industrial plants throughout the United Kingdom<sup>92</sup>." Acquiring extensive knowledge of these establishments in the UK and making the relationship further cordial with the visit, late King Mahendra returned to Kathmandu on November 9, 1960. On his arrival in Kathmandu, he was filled with high emotions, for he was firm enough to stage a *coup d'etat* against the elected democratic Koirala government. The king had implied his intrigue to Deputy Prime Minister Subarna Shamsher and Rishikesh Shah, then Nepal's representative to the United Nations.

### **3.2 Nepal-Britain Relations under the *Panchayat* Regime (1960-1990)**

It is an irony that Deputy Prime Minister Subarna Shamsher did not tell B. P. Koirala, the then Prime Minister, about his conversation with the king. He, when asked, rather assured B. P. Koirala and other party leaders that the king would not take any action against democracy before the scheduled state visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Nepal. It was supposed to be his conviction. King Mahendra, as his firm brainchild, staged his royal *coup* on December 15, 1960, when the much-publicized Nepali Youth Conference was being attended by a number of distinguished foreign delegates. The then Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala and almost all the members of the Nepali Congress cabinet, except deputy Prime Minister Subarna Shumsher, found themselves behind the bars, for he had gone to Calcutta three days ago for

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<sup>92</sup> Joshi and Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 383.

personal reasons. "When king Mahendra staged his royal *coup* in 1960, he argued that Nepal was not yet matured enough for multi-party democracy. Instead, he claimed, he would introduce a new form of democracy, better suited to the needs of the people<sup>93</sup>." Moreover, he blamed the leaders and parties of being corrupt and promoting party interests than national interests. "The British Labour Party disapproved of the king's takeover and asked for the postponement of the Queen's forthcoming visit<sup>94</sup>." The executive committee of the British Labour Party released a formal statement which read as follows: "The political move of the king brought a serious setback to the democratic institutions of Asia and as such urged the British government to exert full influence for the restoration of democratic government and for the release of detained leaders<sup>95</sup>." The British government, as such, dispatched the British minister of war to Kathmandu in January 1961 in order to observe the gravity of the situation. During the former's visit, the members of the erstwhile ruling party, Nepali Congress, opposed the forthcoming queen's state visit and circulated pamphlets calling upon the queen to cancel her visit. Despite the opposition, the state visit of Queen Elizabeth II took place from 26 to 28 February 1961 as scheduled. Queen Elizabeth II is the first British reigning monarch to be in Kathmandu. Her grandfather, George V, fifty years ago, had been to Nepal Terai on a hunting excursion but he did not come to Kathmandu. It seems that the British attitude was always governed by strategic calculations, largely to ensure the unhindered supply of Gurkha recruits for the British army. For them, democratic system seemed more threatening to fulfil their aspirations than autocracy. This interest might have led them to provide support to the Ranacracy in the revolution of 1951 and now to the monarchy. The visit, which took place amidst strong oppositions and chaos, implied approval for the royal move. "During the visit, Queen Elizabeth and King Mahendra reiterated the traditional bonds of friendship

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<sup>93</sup> Hoftun *et al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 227.

<sup>94</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 152.

<sup>95</sup> Grishma Bahadur Devkota, *Nepalko Rajnitik Darpan*, Volume III, (Political Mirror of Nepal), Kathmandu: Upendra Bahadur Devkota, 1983), p. 16-17.

and understanding between the two countries and spoke of the need to further extend and strengthen these bonds<sup>96</sup>." On this grand occasion, like during King Mahendra's visit to the UK, they bestowed their respective country's highest honours upon each other. In a speech delivered at the state banquet hosted in Her Majesty's honour by King Mahendra, the latter especially tried to justify his latest political action thus:

Although on account of many and diverse errors and shortcomings, my desire to work out a strong and unalloyed form of parliamentary democracy for the betterment of my kingdom could not be a success at the moment, I am still firm in my earlier belief that your experiences in the development and working of your institutions can be and are of great value to us. At the same time it is but natural for any good and successful system to take time to strike roots.<sup>97</sup>

The British effort implies that it did not want to displease either the king or the ousted Nepali Congress. Hence, the then British ambassador Spokes visited the deposed Prime Minister B. P. Koirala in summer 1962 whilst he was in prison and tried to persuade him to accept the new political system (*Panchayat*). When the Nepali Congress leaders from exile created a threat to the king's regime, the king as a repressive measure, issued orders to the people concerned to help the government in mopping up all the suspected political figures. It was also made clear that those who didn't follow these orders would lose not only their lands and jobs but also be punished in accordance with the law. "Those (ex-servicemen) who neither control the (subversive) activities of his family members nor inform about their activities to the nearest police sentry will be deprived of their pension and also will be punished according to rule and regulations. This rule will apply also to the ex-servicemen who get pension from the government of India and Britain<sup>98</sup>."

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<sup>96</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 153.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>98</sup> Sanu Bhai Dangol, *The Palace in Nepalese Politics*, (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1999), p. 88.

The British government, however, did not utter a single word against these terrorizing orders and in favour of her loyal soldiers.

After the withdrawal of Britain from India, as a matter of fact, Gurkha is the chief element to bridge up relations between Nepal and Britain. They were stationed in South East Asia. "But the British Government on its own decided to curtail the strength of the Gurkha troops after 1962. This made the Nepalese Government worried. The British decision was a part of its plan to reorganise its overseas army and reduce defence expenditure<sup>99</sup>." The unilateral decision of the British government created an overwhelming dissatisfaction both in Nepal and Britain. British general Sir Francis Taker expressed his grave concern as to the British government's decision. He had commanded Gurkha soldiers for a long time before the British withdrawal from India. "He questioned whether they had consulted Nepal? The general further said that the British government heavily used the loyal and brave Gurkha soldiers to mop up communist insurgents in Malaysia for more than a decade. And now, no sooner had they achieved their mission, they have decided to demobilize them. It definitely hurts Nepal<sup>100</sup>." It is an irony that it is Britain's old policy. In Nepal, the issue of Gurkha reduction triggered off two different opinions. The Kathmandu based intellectuals and politicians, especially communists, were for long demanding to stop the Gurkha recruitment. In September 1960, the central committee of Nepal Communist Party adopted several resolutions to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution of 1951. And one of them was to vehemently hem the army. They considered it detrimental to Nepal's national integrity and that it may entangle Nepal in dispute with the third powers against which the Gurkha soldiers were employed. "The Nepali government has been reluctant to propose modifications in the recruitment system, both because of possible complications in relations with New Delhi and London and the disastrous

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<sup>99</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 155.

<sup>100</sup> Devkota, (Vol. III), *op. cit.*, f.n. 21, p. 76.

economic consequences in the hill areas of Nepal which provided most of the volunteers<sup>101</sup>.” The hill communities, from where they were drawn and their representative organizations, opposed the abolition of the century old Gurkha recruitment institution. According to the tripartite treaty obligations, it was illegitimate to decide without having a prior approval of Nepal. “Field Marshal Slim visited Kathmandu in March 1963 to seek Nepal’s approval for the British plan to reduce the strength of Gurkha troops. He had an audience with King Mahendra in this context<sup>102</sup>.” Though Nepal was fully aware of the far-reaching repercussions of the massive demobilisation, such as the problem of rehabilitation and reemployment that may pose a threat to internal political stability, it did not utter any voice. Having servile attitude, it fully submitted to British proposal and rather termed it proper and timely. The decision of reducing Gurkhas in the British army, however, could not be implemented owing to fresh troubles in Malaysia and the deteriorating situation in South-East Asia. At this point, the British government not only reverted to its earlier state but would like to raise the number of Gurkhas. This issue was figured during the visit of Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Tulsī Giri, to the UK in October 1963. This time also, Nepalese side without any complaint accepted the British proposal to raise the strength of Gurkha troops in the British army from 14,000 to 21,000.

And again, when the situation improved in South-East Asia, the British government brought to the fore its old decision of reducing Gurkhas in the British army. As mentioned earlier, Nepal willingly or unwillingly never had a say on Gurkha issues, however harmful they might have been on their part.

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<sup>101</sup> Leo E. Rose, *Nepal Strategy for Survival*, (Bombay: John Brown, 1971), p. 258.

<sup>102</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 155.

“Some political activists, then exiled in India, hurled a bomb at the vehicle of His Majesty late King Mahendra in January 1962 in Janakpur<sup>103</sup>.” Queen Elizabeth II, condemning the evil deed, sent a message to the king. In her message, she expressed her deep sorrow on such evil perpetration, and equal happiness, for it had failed to harm His Majesty.

The outbreak of Sino-Indian border war, in 1962, alarmed Nepal. Nepal felt unsafe especially from the north and realised that India was not in a position to provide military hardware and equipment as specified in the letters of exchange of the 1950 treaty. Hence, Nepal approached the UK and the US in the fall of 1963 to provide arms and defence related apparatus. Issue of military aid was figured during Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Tulsi Giri’s visit to London and Washington. But this issue moved slowly on part of the UK and the US because they would like to know the reaction of India prior to their responses for they were fully aware of the predominant position of India over issues of Nepal. In other words, India occupied the former position of Britain; as such the latter and the US have been following the footsteps of India as to the issues of Nepal. India, having carried out protracted negotiations with Nepal, finally nodded her head in assent. “Washington and London thereupon informed Kathmandu in February 1964 that they were prepared to provide a small quantity of military assistance on a short-term basis. The Nepali government presented to the United States and Britain a shopping list, which though modest included heavy, sophisticated weaponry<sup>104</sup>.” Furthermore, they made it clear that the military assistance to Nepal was only to supplement what was already given by India and that it was to strengthen the kingdom’s internal security capacity. “Under the programme as finally approved, however, only light arms and support equipment (medical, signal, jeeps and trucks) were included<sup>105</sup>.” The total value of this assistance cost four million dollars equally shared by the UK and

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<sup>103</sup> Devkota, (Vol. III), *op. cit.*, f.n. 21, p. 294.

<sup>104</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 27, p. 273.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

the US. "In 1965, an agreement was signed under which Nepal agreed to seek any amount of arms it required from India, and to import from Britain and America only if India was unable to meet its request<sup>106</sup>." In mid 1965, Nepal submitted another shopping list to the UK and the US amounting to approximately three million dollars. This time both the governments suggested fulfilling Nepal's requirement first from India. In 1967, after the separate visit of commander-in-chief and defence minister to India, Nepal's requirement was fairly fulfilled.

As time passed by, visits of royalties, ministers and high-ranking government officials of both Nepal and Britain turned to be an important part of mutual relations. In February 1970, Royal Highness Prince Richard, the Duke of Gloucester attended the auspicious wedding ceremony of His Majesty late King Birendra on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II. Late King Birendra, like his late father King Mahendra, had made peace zone proposal as one of the main tenets of the foreign policy of Nepal. A large number of heads of states and governments were assembled in 1975 in Kathmandu to grace the coronation of King Birendra. Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne had represented Britain. Therefore, on 25 February, 1975, in the presence of the galaxy of dignitaries from across the world, King Birendra declared:

We adhere to the policy of non-alignment because we believe that it brightens the prospects of peace. We need peace for our independence, and we need peace for development. And if today, peace is an overriding concern with us, it is only because our people genuinely desire peace in our country, in our region and everywhere in the world. It is with this earnest desire to institutionalize peace that I stand to make proposition – a proposition that my country, Nepal, be declared a zone of peace.<sup>107</sup>

British support came during the state visit of their majesties King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya to the UK in November 1980. Britain and

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<sup>106</sup> Hoftun, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 263.

<sup>107</sup> Sharma, *op. cit.*, f.n. 4, pp. 68-69.

Belgium are the first two European nations to lend their support for the peace zone proposal. Before that it was largely confined to Asia.

His Majesty late King Birendra and Her Majesty late Queen Aishwarya paid a state visit to the United Kingdom in November 1980. During the visit, her Royal Highness Princess Shanti Rajya Laxmi Devi Singh, Kumar Dipak and some other high dignitaries accompanied their Majesties. King Birendra was the second sovereign of the kingdom of Nepal to pay a state visit to the UK. It took place exactly two decades after King Mahendra visited UK in 1961. In a speech delivered at the state banquet hosted in their Majesties' honour by Queen Elizabeth II, the king observed: "... a notable moment in the history of friendship between Nepal and Great Britain, and while much has been achieved in the history of relations between our two countries, much more could still be done, given the goodwill, cooperation, understanding and mutual recognition of each other's values and traditions<sup>108</sup>." During this visit, late King Birendra especially stressed the Nepalese overriding concern towards peace not only in Nepal but also in the region, as well as in the world. As such, he, to the best of his ability, endeavoured to justify the significance and necessity of the zone of peace proposal, which he had put forth in the presence of the galaxy of world dignitaries in 1975 in Kathmandu. In this sense, the visit is considered most fruitful not only in the exchange of views on a broad range of subjects but Britain immediately lent her support in principle to the zone of peace proposal. The British sovereign said that Britain-Nepal relations were based on respect, on friendship and on understanding. We both attach cardinal importance to the right of nations, big and small, to peace, freedom, and independence<sup>109</sup>." Her Majesty referred to the age old unbroken service of Gurkhas in the British army. She further said, about five hundred thousand Gurkhas fought on the side of Britain in the last two world wars. Gurkhas have played an important role in maintaining peace. Late King Birendra reminded the liberal British cooperation provided for the development of Nepal and for that he expressed his sincere gratitude.

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<sup>108</sup> Bhatt, *op. cit.*, f.n. 17, p. 34.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.



At the invitation of HRH Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah (second brother of King Birendra), HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, paid a weeklong visit to Nepal in December 1980. He had, as his first visit, journeyed to Nepal in 1975 to represent her Britannic Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the coronation of His Majesty the late King Birendra. On December 6, Prince Gyanendra hosted a banquet in honour of Prince Charles at Sital Niwas. At the banquet, the prince, while delivering a welcome speech, said: "... it is by virtue of the steadfast cooperation and mutual help between Nepal and the United Kingdom that the two countries have inscribed their characters in letters of gold on the pages of history for the sake of justice and world peace whenever it was called for<sup>110</sup>." Either before or after the withdrawal of Britain from India, Gurkha element has always played a role of an important bridge between relations of Nepal and Britain. In a reply speech, Prince Charles said that the foundation of bilateral relations was sufficiently strengthened and hence they could move ahead with complete trust in mutual cooperation. The visit was followed by the visit of Douglas Hurd, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in November 1982. Minister Hurd assured Nepal that "Britain was committed to maintaining bilateral aid programme in Nepal despite cuts in British overseas aid since 1979<sup>111</sup>." As early as 1970s a new international climate of detente prevailed in the world. It, in turn, compelled Britain to change her traditional pattern of cooperation, i.e., for ideological interests. But as far as the bilateral relations between Nepal and Britain are concerned, there has always been a timely adjustment.

Not only to maintain the tradition of exchange of visits but considering it an effective instrument in strengthening the age old ties, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip paid a five day state visit to Nepal in February 1986 at the invitation of their Majesties King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya. "The state visit carries a special significance, marking as it does the Silver Jubilee of Her

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<sup>110</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 7 December 1980, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Bhatt, *op. cit.*, f.n. 17, p. 35.

Majesty's first state visit to this kingdom in 1961<sup>112</sup>." Her Majesty's silver jubilee visit makes the extent to which Britain values the friendship of Nepal pretty clear. Queen Elizabeth II is the only Head of State to pay state visit twice to this non-commonwealth kingdom of Nepal despite her very tight schedule both at home and abroad. "In the course of their speeches at the state banquet on Monday, His Majesty King Birendra and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom highlighted the close ties of friendship between the governments and the people of the two countries<sup>113</sup>." Despite being a traditional ally and having cordial ties, they sometimes maintain different views regarding international issues. "To take an instance, Nepal, unlike Britain and quite a few other nations, did not respond to the US call, following the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Nor did Nepal agree with the Soviet boycott of the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984<sup>114</sup>." But there has been deep understanding with each other, for Nepal as a landlocked developing country and founding member of the non-aligned movement, and Britain, a major player of world politics and a NATO member maintain their independent views under the principle of agreeing to disagree. King Birendra said further: "With the contributions made in our development efforts by Britain and many more friends, we have now been able to set up some important infrastructure. But much yet remains to be done<sup>115</sup>." The queen also assured that the British government would increase its financial assistance to Nepal from that year.

In August 1986, an unexpected and shocking news came in to all the Nepalese people. It was the mass dismissal of 111 Gurkha officers and soldiers from the 7th Gurkha Rifles serving in the British Army. Gurkhas

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<sup>112</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 17 February 1986, p. 2.

<sup>113</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 19 February 1986, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> P. Kharel, "Nepal-Britain Ties: From Thames to Bagmati," *The Rising Nepal*, 17 February 1986, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> B. R. Bajracharya *et al.*, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1993), p. 184.

were alleged of perpetrating assault upon a British officer, Major Corin Pears, a commanding officer of the support company for the 7th Gurkha Rifles, whilst having a party on the conclusion of a military exercise in Hawaii. It caused a hue and cry in the country. Several parliamentarians raised their voice in the *Rastriya Panchayat* (parliament) against the injustice and humiliating treatment accorded to Nepal in general and to Gurkhas in particular. Several newspapers condemned the action describing it as an act of ingratitude on the part of the British government. Padma Sundar Lawati, a senior politician and former minister tabled a proposal in the parliament to draw the attention of the government, it stated: "their action ran counter to the tripartite agreement between Nepal, Britain and India, he said HMG's liaison officer in Hong Kong was not even informed about what he described as their baseless and unjust action against them<sup>116</sup>." It was true that the Major was beaten and had sustained serious injury on his head. The anger and hatred was grown among the Gurkhas under his command because he frequently humiliated the Gurkhas in the presence of American officers. According to the Gurkha victims, he would always insult that the Gurkhas were downright poor, could not afford to have a square meal, would eat with hands, would not wear shoes, etc. Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya (then Foreign Minister) assured that "... it is understood that the case against the dismissal is appealable for the reinstatement of the dismissed soldiers<sup>117</sup>." It, however, never materialised. The culprit must be brought to the book but the dismissal of as many as 111 personnel at one stroke is not justifiable. Basically, it was contrary to the British tradition of justice to punish indiscriminately all the 111 men for the alleged misdeeds of a few. Yet, it did not cool the relations.

It is said that the 1986 revolution in the Philippines, the political turmoil of 1989 in China, the democratic revolutions of Eastern Europe in 1989 and particularly the Romanian popular uprising deeply struck the

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<sup>116</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 18 August 1986, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

opposing Nepalese political forces. These contemporary political events are the principle factors responsible for encouraging and ultimately galvanizing the opposing political forces and Nepalese people into action. The most dominant political force in Nepal, the Nepali Congress, had firmly been advocating ever since its formation, the British political set-up, i.e. a combination of constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy. But then again, the British government implied its support to the autocratic regime rather than popular forces. As mentioned earlier, Britain, at the government level favoured the familial Ranacracy in the revolution of 1951 and the royal move in 1960 whilst the latter had militarily murdered the nascent democracy. It seems that British attitude was always governed by strategic calculations. In other words, it was pre-occupied by the fear that the smooth supply of Gurkha recruits for the British army might be disrupted since the new political forces of each and every time would vehemently oppose the Gurkha recruitment tradition.

The need not to jeopardise recruitment arrangements was nevertheless cited by one diplomat in 1990 as the reason Britain had been unable to speak out the way some other European countries had done during the *Janaandolan*. Moreover, the wish to maintain good relations with existing friends meant that the British government remained sympathetic to the *Panchayat* government rather than to the forces opposing it.<sup>118</sup>

Some European nations overtly criticized the suppressing policy of the status-quoist regime and even threatened to freeze all financial aid unless the suppression of people's movement and violation of human rights fully ceased. Notwithstanding, the British government's stand to favour the old regime, British nationals at their level supported the democratic cause like what they had done in the previous political turmoil in Nepal. Eventually, the three-decade-old autocratic *Panchayat* regime collapsed owing to the combined internal and external pressure.

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<sup>118</sup> Hoftun, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, p. 112.

### 3.3 Nepal Britain Relations after the Restoration of Multy-Party Democracy (1990-2004)

After the restoration of multi-party democracy of Westminster model in 1990, bilateral relations between Nepal and Britain further strengthened. Consequently, the frequency of visits at all levels increased. Her Royal Highness Princess Diana paid a visit to Nepal on 2-6 March 1993. During her stay here, she visited various development projects financed by the United Kingdom. Baroness Lynda Chalker, British Minister of Overseas Development, accompanied Princess of Wales and held talks with the ministers and officials of His Majesty's Government of Nepal. "At Kalimati the Princess of Wales signed an agreement on behalf of the British Red Cross providing an assistance of £185,000 (one hundred eighty-five thousand sterling pounds) to the Nepal Red Cross Society to support the Disaster Preparedness Programme (DPP) <sup>119</sup>." Ramesh Kumar Sharma, Chairman of the Nepal Red Cross, signed the agreement on behalf of the society. As stated by the chairman, the assistance would be spent to build warehouses, and procure vehicles and relief supplies. A six member Nepalese parliamentary delegation led by the then speaker of the House of Representatives, Daman Nath Dhungana, visited the UK at the invitation of the speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Bethroyed, of the UK. After returning home, speaker Daman Nath Dhungana, when asked by a journalist, observed thus: "we had an opportunity to familiarize with the long parliamentary experiences of the UK<sup>120</sup>." The then deputy Prime Minister and minister for defence and foreign affairs, Madhav Kumar Nepal, having addressed Human Rights Commission in Geneva, visited the UK in February 1995. He was the first senior communist minister ever to visit the UK. His visit aimed to improve bilateral relations as well as persuade them to increase assistance to Nepal. He paid a courtesy call on Lynda Chalker, British Minister for Overseas

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<sup>119</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 3 March 1993, p. 8.

<sup>120</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 16 June 1993, p. 1.

Development Administration and held discussions as to the prospects of further economic cooperation between the two countries. In addition, his aim might be to wipe out all mistrust and suspicion of the British with reference to the communist government by telling them that it was by no means different from any other political parties of Nepal.

His Majesty late King Birendra visited London in May 1995 to take part in the commemoration of the 50 years of peace after the end of the World War II at the invitation of the Britannic Majesty's Government. Representatives of 57 countries, including 37 heads of state or government graced the commemoration ceremony. "His Majesty was offered the fourth rank in protocol as a token of honour from among the heads of state present at the London celebrations<sup>121</sup>." His Majesty, in reference to the visit observed: it provided us an opportunity to reaffirm Nepal's commitment to peace and to project Nepal as a country willing to contribute to the cause of peace in the world. During his stay in London, he had deliberations with Queen Elizabeth II and other leaders of the UK that would certainly help strengthen the bilateral ties, existing between Nepal and the UK. As early as 1990s, a trend towards the formation of professional organizations became common in Nepal on account of the restoration of democracy. This trend also awakened the British ex-Gurkha soldiers and they formed a representative organisation called Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization (GAESO). Under the auspices of this organisation, they organised themselves and launched a peaceful movement against the age-old discrimination meted out to Gurkhas by the British government. As the British government did not fulfil their demands, they, after years of continuous peaceful movement, chose to file a lawsuit against the British government, which is now underway, as their final resort to get a just outcome. There are some other organisations vis-à-vis British Gurkhas, who, however, do not command trust and respect of their people. Hence, they are less influential. When the Ex-Gurkhas resorted to

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<sup>121</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 16 May 1995, p. 1.

deliver speeches in aggressive tones, take out rallies along the streets, organised international conferences, staged picketing, etc; some diplomats and foreign policy experts expressed great concern that it would cool down the existing bilateral ties and pave the way to closing down the Gurkha recruitment. But it did not come true, for the ties have stood the test of time. The governments of both nations have rather taken this issue as a part from the bilateral relations. This issue is dealt with in due elaboration in chapter five.

The then Deputy Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's visit to the UK in February 1995 might be taken as a prelude to the visit of the then Prime Minister, Man Mohan Adhikari. No sooner had the first communist Prime Minister concluded the visit, in the history of Nepal, on his way back from the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen, he visited Britain in the second week of April 1995. He held talks with the British industrialists, journalists, and members of parliament. Besides, the Prime Minister also addressed a meeting at Lancaster House. After Man Mohan Adhikari's visit, next Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba paid a four-day official visit to the UK at the invitation of the then British Prime Minister, John Major. The entourage included ministers, officials of His Majesty's Government, industrialists and businessmen. "In the course of the visit, he met British leaders including the Prime Minister, secretary of state, Defence secretary, and held talks on a wide range of issues. During these talks he laid emphasis on increasing pay and pensions to the British Gurkhas<sup>122</sup>." According to GAESO, the Prime Minister did not appear assertive with regard to Gurkha issue. He merely fulfilled a formality after mounting pressure due to the GAESO movement. Prime Minister Deuba delivered a speech on trade in Nepal at a conference hosted by the confederation of British Industry and on Nepal's recent experience in democracy at the London School of Economics.

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<sup>122</sup> *Nepal-United Kingdom Relations*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal, n.d., p.

Then Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattari paid a visit to Britain in October 1999 on his way back from New York. During his stay in London, he exchanged views with the British Prime Minister on matters of mutual interest including British Gurkhas. Then foreign minister Ram Sharan Mahat visited London in October 1999 as a guest speaker at the Wilton Park conference. He also held talks with the British foreign secretary, secretary of state for international development and minister of armed forces. "On the occasion British secretary of state Clare Short expressed the view that greater liaison and coordination among the donor community and His Majesty's Government of Nepal will facilitate effective implementation of development cooperation<sup>123</sup>." Minister Mahat recalled the visit of Minister Clare Short to Nepal the previous year and expressed appreciation for her keen interest in the socio-economic development efforts, especially in poverty alleviation programmes in Nepal.

British secretary of state for foreign and commonwealth affairs, Robin Cook made a two-day official visit to Nepal at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart. Robin Cook is the first British secretary of state for foreign affairs to visit Nepal. He was granted audience by His Majesty the King and had meetings with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and foreign minister Chakra Prasad Bastola on a full working agenda. He stressed that the Gurkhas had been the central part in the traditional bilateral relations and also of the British army. He applauded the multiparty democratic system of Nepal and further added that democratic process makes Nepal a firm partner with them in development activities. "Cook reminded that Britain is the largest bilateral donor to Nepal. He said that he will be visiting a number of projects here and he would be reporting on the success of Nepal-Britain joint work<sup>124</sup>." As per him, if trade develops and prosperity grows, it would transcend the dependency of the country's development on aid. Rajendra

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<sup>123</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 8 October 1999, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 21 April 2000, p. 1.



Khetan, president of Nepal-Britain chamber of commerce and industry, expressed confidence that “the visit by the British foreign secretary will significantly contribute to importing British technology and raw materials for exporting finished products and increasing the number of British tourists to Nepal, he said and spoke of the need to form a joint economic council in the private sector to promote bilateral trade<sup>125</sup>.” At that time, there were eight industries in operation under Nepal-Britain joint venture. Right Honourable Tara Nath Ranabhat, the speaker of the House of Representatives made a six-day official visit to the United Kingdom between 24 and 29 October 1999. He led a nine member parliamentary delegation that held discussions with the members of the British group of inter-parliamentary union. They also visited parliament and Scotland. At the invitation of His Royal Highness Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah, Her Royal Highness Princess Anne paid a five-day official visit to Nepal from November 23, 2000. Their Majesties the king and queen granted audience to HRH Princess Royal on November 24. The then minister for foreign affairs, Chakra Prasad Bastola, paid a courtesy call on HRH Princess Royal. She opened the newly built British Council premises at Lainchour, next to the British embassy on 24 November, 2000. The British Council has been serving here in Nepal over the last four decades and has proved much worthwhile to many Nepalese in getting a better insight into the modern trends of educational and professional development. Apart from this, it has become a very popular institution in the teaching-learning of English language to those interested in English language and also to those who want to go abroad for higher studies.

At the friendly invitation of the then minister for finance and defence, Mahesh Acharya, secretary of state for defence of the UK, Geoffrey Hoon, made a three-day visit to the kingdom of Nepal in December 2000. At the dinner hosted by Minister Mahesh Acharya in honour of Minister Geoffrey Hoon, minister Acharya said: “... our bilateral relationship has encompassed

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

many important fields from commercial to educational and cultural links. Mr. Acharya said we would like to further consolidate these relations to our mutual satisfaction. Referring to the good bilateral linkage between the royal Nepalese army and the British Gurkhas, Mr. Acharya said that Royal Nepalese Army officers have been regularly trained in reputed British military institutions<sup>126</sup>.” He appreciated the British cooperation for developing the fields of agriculture, rural development and road building. It has benefited the large section of rural population. In his reply speech, the British defence minister referred to British Gurkhas with special emphasis that they are an integral part of the British army and have been the mainstay of bilateral ties between the two countries, which dates back to two centuries. Minister Hoon met minister Acharya at the latter’s office. In the course of the meeting, they reviewed the long-standing relations between the two kingdoms as well as discussed about the British Gurkhas and the welfare facilities provided to them in Nepal. He also paid a courtesy call on the then Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, having concluded his much-hyped meeting with US president George W. Bush, made a visit to the UK, a major partner of the US in combating against global terrorism. He arrived in London on May 12, 2002. The Prime Minister might have had premonitory dream of intensified Maoist onslaught as they audaciously looted weapons from some army outposts. In fact, the situation pushed him into making these visits. “His aim was to ask Britain for weapons, military hardware, essential materials, military training for the Nepalese army as well as financial support to combat problematic poverty owing to terrorism, create opportunities for employment and last but not least to improve the quality of education<sup>127</sup>.” He held talks with British Prime Minister Tony Blair at latter’s office at 10 Downing Street. “Prime Minister Deuba stated during his US and UK visits

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<sup>126</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 18 December 2000, p. 1.

<sup>127</sup> *Space Time Daily*, 14 May 2002, p. 1.

that Maoists have destroyed physical and developmental infrastructure to the tune of 250 million dollars. The trail of Maoist destruction ranges from airports that were the only links with remote areas of this country, to telecommunication towers and exchanges, to bridges and roads, to schools and universities, to health posts<sup>128</sup>.” He obtained pledges of support from the UK Prime Minister at which the former highly appreciated the UK solidarity and their growing help.

Prime Minister Deuba’s above mentioned UK visit might have been encouraging to the UK government in hosting an international conference in London on Nepal on 19-20 June 2002. Senior officials attended the meeting from India, China, the US, Russia, Japan, France, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Finland, Denmark, Australia, the United Nations, the IMF and the World Bank. “Member of the national planning commission Shankar Sharma led a five-member Nepalese delegation to this meeting<sup>129</sup>.” This delegation included Major General Rukmangad Katuwal (Royal Nepal Army). The meeting was a brainstorming event as to how these agencies and countries might best coordinate assistance to Nepal in addressing the prevailing issues, especially Maoist rebellion.

Although Nepal’s fight against terrorism is receiving international attention and support, the donor countries are also aware that restoration of peace and development is not possible without radical social change in the present socio-economic structure, including social and gender discrimination, landlessness, unemployment, and poverty. They are all products of bad governance and feudalism.<sup>130</sup>

Though the meeting was informal and did not bring forward any conclusions and declarations, it is said that it would help adopt a new strategy on Nepal and open up avenues towards organising other high level conferences in future. Other than this, it provided some recommendations to

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<sup>128</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 16 May 2002, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Nepal-United Kingdom Relations, *op. cit.*, f.n. 48, p. 2.

<sup>130</sup> Gauri Pradhan, “London Meeting: Civil Society Ignored”, *The Himalayan Times*, 21 June 2002, p. 6.

implement for Nepal, and countries and agencies concerned to make things conducive in order to get a way out from the existing problematic situations.

The recently growing diplomatic activities between Nepal and Britain symbolize the latter's grave concern to the problem of Nepal. Britain, being a traditional ally and friend, seems to be the most active and sincere partner of Nepal at a time when it is entangled with several severe problems. "The meeting expressed its profound concern at the Maoist insurgency in the country and reaffirmed the solidarity with the government's position and its action to protect lives and property of its citizens<sup>131</sup>." The meeting reiterated to continue the development supports of the international community. It also emphasised that His Majesty's Government of Nepal should implement reform programmes, promote good governance and control corruption. Exchanges of visits of senior army officers of the two kingdoms, Nepal and Britain, have also been from time to time taking place ever since the relations were established. British Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Sir Michel Boyce, paid a five-day official visit to Nepal in May 2002 at the invitation of the Chief of Army Staff, General Prajwalla SJB Rana. This visit took place close to the then incumbent Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's trip to the UK whilst he had requested to provide assistance in order to fight against Maoist terrorism. He met Nepalese Prime Minister and held discussions as to mutual goodwill and bilateral cooperation. In the course of meeting, they also discussed the terrorist problem that Nepal has been suffering from, its resolution as well as necessary assistance from the UK government. When he was asked about British Gurkhas, he replied thus: "... they are respected as an integral and valued part of the British army and much loved by the British public. He also highlighted the high standards and professionalism of the Gurkha soldiers<sup>132</sup>." The visit carried special significance in the sense that the government of the UK would provide immediately some military

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<sup>131</sup> Nepal United Kingdom Relations, *op. cit.*, f.n. 48, p. 9.

<sup>132</sup> *The Himalayan Times*, 24 May 2002, p. 1.

hardware and equipment. As expected earlier, the UK government provided a package of 650 million rupees to Nepal in its fight against Maoists. "The package includes supply of limited allocation of non-lethal military assistance, including two transport aircraft for the Royal Nepal Army, which will be used in logistic, medical, and humanitarian roles<sup>133</sup>."

Despite growing exchange of visits ranging from monarch to people level and its resultant cordiality between the two kingdoms, the DFID's (Department for International Development) announcement to terminate its financial and technical support to Nepal's privatisation project by the end of June 2002 came as shocking news to Nepal. The major cause for its retreat was the lack of concrete political commitment along with the inept handling of the privatisation processes, which have been, for quite a long time, annoying the British development agency. "Despite the latest announcement from the DFID, government officials are optimistic that the DFID will continue its support after a brief gap<sup>134</sup>." Some officials believed that the frustration of DFID basically came out of the slow pace of privatisation process. At the personal invitation of the chief of army staff, General Pyar Jung Thapa, the chief of the general staff of the UK, General Sir Mike Jackson, made a five-day visit to Nepal in November 2003. He met the then Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, as well as some senior army officers. He was also granted audience by His Majesty. General Jackson said: "The key to this relationship is the Brigade of Gurkhas, which continues to form an essential and integral part of our army<sup>135</sup>." During his visit to Dharan, he was welcomed by the Limbu-Chyabrung dance, a traditional dance in which a big drum is slung across the shoulders of the dancer. The general ecstatically danced the Chyabrung dance with the ex-British Gurkhas (Limbus) for ten minutes or so. The ex-British Gurkhas presented him a Nepali stick to support his old-age

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<sup>133</sup> *The Himalayan Times*, 24 July 2002, p. 1.

<sup>134</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 26 June 2002, p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> *The Himalayan Times*, 1 November 2003, p. 1.

and a pashmina (woollen shawl) for his spouse. But he did not utter a single word regarding Gurkha pension and facilities.

According to a statement issued here by the British Embassy, foreign office minister O'Brien, while welcoming the peace talks, expressed the hope that "the talks would be successful and lead to a lasting settlement based on an all inclusive process<sup>136</sup>." The peace process between the government and the Maoists had commenced on 28 April 2003. It is worthwhile to mention that the UK is the first friendly nation to hail the peace process and the only country so far to appoint a special envoy to resolve the ever-intensifying Nepalese political crisis. It becomes amply clear from the above-mentioned facts that the UK government is genuinely committed to assisting and resolving nearly a decade-old Maoist conflict that has severely disturbed peace and resulted in immense suffering of the Nepalese people. Hence, the UK government has appointed Sir Jeffrey Russel James as the United Kingdom's special representative to Nepal since February 24, 2003. According to the statement of the UK, "Sir Jeffrey's role will be to provide a strong focal point for UK policy towards Nepal and in particular to coordinate UK and international efforts in support of the recent cease-fire and the emerging peace process<sup>137</sup>." But the peace process failed and the armed conflict is still going on rather intensely. As discussed earlier, international meeting in London and a follow up in Kathmandu on Nepal have already been held on the initiative of the UK to best coordinate all forms of assistance provided for Nepal between UK, international community and agencies. "It is said that Sir Jeffrey James will help coordinate UK and international efforts to support the nascent peace process in Nepal. He will contribute to the formulation and implementation of UK policy on Nepal. He will also establish and maintain regular high level contacts with key international partners<sup>138</sup>." He visited Nepal for the first time in March, second time in June and the third time in

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<sup>136</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 29 April 2003, p. 1.

<sup>137</sup> Nepal-United Kingdom Relations, *op. cit.*, f.n. 48, p. 10.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

September 2003. Each time, Sir James held meetings with the then Prime Ministers and leaders of major political parties. He also had audience with His Majesty. He visited Nepal for the fourth time in November 2003. During this visit, he had a meeting with the heads of donor agencies and suggested to employ a policy of understanding and agreement for the lasting solution to the Maoist conflict. He reiterated the commitment of Britain to continue cooperation to combat Maoist terrorism and appreciated the role of the UN towards resolving the crisis in Nepal. But the donor agencies lodged a complaint in connection with the violation of international human rights both by the government and Maoists and even threatened to terminate their aid if the situation continued to prevail like in the past. He called on right honourable Prime Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa, honourable minister Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani and honourable minister Kamal Thapa. His Majesty the king also granted audience to Sir James. He also had talks with the leaders of major political parties. Amidst hectic diplomatic activities, their majesties King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah and Queen Komal Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah paid a private visit to the UK from August 27 to September 7, 2003, to have a medical check up at Cromwell Hospital in London.

Apart from normal political and diplomatic visits, sometimes a bit unique visit also takes place. On 8 March 2004, ex-British Gurkhas of 2nd Gurkha Rifles with much pomp and splendour celebrated ex-British Gurkhas' reunion in a euphoric atmosphere in Pokhara. But it was not confined to ex-Gurkhas, rather it reunited the ex-British officers of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles, the oldest Gurkha Regiment. Ex-Field Marshal, Sir John Chapel, reached Pokhara to meet his brave and beloved soldiers all the way from London. The elated celebration was made further live by the presence of Britain-Falklands wartime Defence Minister, Sir John Nott. About 2000 ex-Gurkhas and 121 ex-British officers/soldiers enjoyed the reunion. Bhanubhakta Gurung VC (Victoria Cross --Britain's highest decoration for bravery in war) was also present. Some of them who met there in the reunion might not have come across each other for more than fifty years.

The British special envoy to Nepal, Sir Jeffrey James, visited Nepal for the fifth time in March 2004. He called on Nepali congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala and leaders of major political parties. "... and took up the issue of cooperating with the government in the task of holding fresh elections to the House of Representatives as a means to restore the constitutional process<sup>139</sup>." But former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala insisted on his long held stance of the restoration of the House of Representatives. On the other hand, Nepali Congress (Democratic) president Sher Bahadur Deuba had seen a way out in status-quo ante-October 4, 2002, followed by an all party government led by him. Sir James also visited the election commission and confirmed with the commissioners on whether or not the conduct of elections was possible despite the current insurgency. British minister of state for trade, investment and foreign affairs at the foreign and commonwealth office, Douglas Alexander, visited Nepal in November 4: "... he expressed his concern over the stalled democratic process and appealed to all concerned to put national interest above individual or petty interests and push for a peaceful solution<sup>140</sup>." He called upon the constitutional monarchy and political parties to work together to preserve and strengthen democracy in Nepal. They were no other than the Nepalese people themselves to solve the armed conflict. He added: Britain, despite being an old friend of Nepal, could provide only limited assistance. He suggested to respect human rights. But warned the Maoists not to escape from the opportunity of peaceful political negotiations and if they would, the international community would be compelled to change their tone.

After the February 1 royal take over, Britain, as being closest and oldest friend of Nepal, has become an active state showing grave concern as to the latest political developments in Nepal. "... It recalled its ambassador to Nepal, Keith Bloomfield for consultation in the changed constitutional and political

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<sup>139</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 25 March 2004, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 11 November 2004, p. 8.



context in the kingdom, according to a statement issued by the British Embassy in the capital, Tuesday<sup>141</sup>.” In line with foreign secretary of Britain, Jack Straw, the royal move has undermined Nepal’s democratic institutions and risked further instability. He advocated for constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy in Nepal for a sustainable peace. As Britain has been coordinating international efforts, after the Maoist insurgency intensified in Nepal after November 2001, to resolve it, foreign secretary Jack Straw visited New Delhi in February 2005 to hold talks with top Indian leadership as how to best deal with new developments in Nepal. During the visit, he stated; “... the United Kingdom is actively considering a proposal from right-wing activists to suspend military aid to Nepal in the light of recent political developments<sup>142</sup>.” Over the past three years, UK has provided two military helicopters, radios, night vision goggles and two islander aircrafts among other things to Nepal. Since no sign of democratic improvement is seen on the political horizon of Nepal, the UK government on March 17, 2005, announced over 1 million pound aid cut to Nepal. As stated by the British government, the aid targeted to fight poverty and help develop Nepal might be diverted to other areas. “The United Kingdom, Friday, cancelled its aid to the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), Nepal police and prison services following the king’s dismissal of the government<sup>143</sup>.” They thought it inappropriate to continue support in the current chaotic political situation and also made it clear that UK’s assistance to Nepal would be under constant review in the light of political developments. The decision of Britain to stall military aid to Nepal was immediately followed by reactions of Nepalese diplomats, former ambassadors and foreign policy experts. Former ambassador to Burma and former Chief of the Army Staff, Sachit SJB Rana claimed that the decision of the UK to stop military assistance to Nepal would not affect the high morale of the Royal Nepalese Army to fight against terrorism. Some diplomats, apart

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<sup>141</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 16 February 2005, p. 8.

<sup>142</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 19 February 2005, p. 1.

<sup>143</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 19 February 2005, p. 1.

from this, came down heavily on some foreign envoys in not respecting at least the minimum protocol of international diplomacy. Some others maintained that the king's February 1 move was just against terrorism and not against democracy. Still others, like Brinda Shah and Surya Prasad Shrestha, former envoys to India and UK respectively maintained that the February 1 royal move was a compulsion and not an intention. The incumbent envoys, as such, to respective countries should endeavour to convince the UK and others to resume assistance to Nepal. Otherwise, such acts of friendly nations would help strengthen and spread terrorism in Nepal and beyond. Whenever political crisis occurs in Nepal, Britain always would confer with Indian government and leaders, be it 1951 revolution or 1960 royal *coup* or the people's movement of 1990. This time also, the British government initiated ping-pong diplomacy to have a common coordinated strategy vis-à-vis Nepal by conferring with Indian leaders. Regarding this process, Sir Jeffrey James, British special envoy to Nepal and Keith Bloomfield, British ambassador to Nepal, visited New Delhi on May 5, 2005, and held talks with Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran. The UK, India and the US, as having common strategy on Nepal, have been exerting pressure for an early restoration of democracy. The UK in the past, whether political process of Nepal was heading for democracy or autocracy, would indiscriminately support the establishments. The reasons for that, as foreign policy experts believe, were to ensure the unhindered supply of Gurkha recruits. It was only possible by maintaining the status-quo situation since the rebel force always strongly opposed this tradition. In addition, they would develop cordial ties with the establishments of each and every time by spending a lot of time, energy and money, too. If rebel force comes to power, they should endeavour to get a fresh start. But they never failed to seek Indian advice and follow her footsteps as far as applicable. Notwithstanding, the UK this time broke the old tradition and displayed sincere effort to put the derailed democratic process back on the rails. By all means, it seems that the UK is committed to her original stance regardless of India's possible double standards as well as in some ways smelt a rat in the US policy towards Nepal.

## 3.4 Economic Relations

### 3.4.1 Nepalese Foreign Trade: A Historical Perspective

It is said that from time immemorial, the growth of Nepalese economy is a part of commercial activity. The then formidable physical obstacles, both in the north and south, could not inhibit Nepal from carrying on intercourse with the outside world. As a matter of fact, the centrality of Nepal's location between the two large matrices of Asia – China and India – made it one of the mainland communication channels through which the South Asian nations could interact. Relations of Nepal and India were to a great extent shaped by cultural, social, and economic ties. There was an undisturbed flow of ideas and merchandise between these two countries. A number of mercantile activities used to pass through various routes. That being the case, the set up of commercial links in this region attracted a large number of traders.

The bilateral relationship between Nepal and India, according to some sources, is about more than three millennia old. "The earliest recorded evidence of Nepal-India relations is given in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* that speaks of woollen blankets of Nepal finding a ready market in Pataliputra, i.e., modern day Patna in the state of Bihar<sup>144</sup>." According to Kautilya, Nepalese woollen goods were popular in Pataliputra, the capital city of Magadha. Moreover, "the visit of Emperor Ashoka to Lumbini, the grandson of the renowned Maurya Emperor Chandra Gupta and the alliance of Kirant King Jidedasti with the Pandavas in the cataclysmic Kurukshetra war strongly prove that the relations of one form or another were there from antiquity<sup>145</sup>." Thus it is hard to be precise as to the nature of relationship by reason of unavailability of authentic documents.

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<sup>144</sup> Kunjar M. Sharma, *The Economic Theme in Nepali Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis up to the End of Anglo-Nepal War*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Denver, 1973), p. 1.

<sup>145</sup> Surendra K.C., *Nepalko Kutnitik Itihas* (Diplomatic History of Nepal), (Taplejung: Sabita Prakashan, 1989), p. 4.

Trading activities were carried through caravans in virtue of communicational difficulties and the trade routes were infested with thieves, robbers and wild beasts.

The most vital trade route from the time of the Mauryas until the seventh century was the one that originated from a point near Calcutta connecting Banaras and Patna with Mathura and Delhi and then northwest to the Punjab, Kashmir and beyond. The strategic location of Nepal directly over Bengal and Bihar made Nepal even more than Bhutan and Sikkim ... the northern gateway to the Indo-Gangetic plains.<sup>146</sup>

More than anything else, the sudden emergence of Tibet as a powerful and dominant state caused Nepal to assume a historical significance. "It was only in the seventh century A.D. that the emergence of a powerful kingdom in Tibet with its capital in Lhasa transformed Kathmandu Valley, an isolated sub-Himalayan backwater, into the intellectual and commercial entrepôt between India and central Asia<sup>147</sup>." Prior to the above-mentioned date, there was, presumably, limited trans-Himalayan trade via Kathmandu. "Exports to India consisted of swords, woollen goods, herbs, skins, brass and goods of religious and cultural value and import from India included spices, ornaments, precious stones, medicines, perfumes and luxurious goods<sup>148</sup>." Since India and Tibet did not have any direct route to run commercial transaction, they for their smooth trading intercourse, entirely had to depend on Kathmandu. Thus, Kathmandu had the sole right of entrepôt trade.

Nepal perpetually enjoyed her pre-eminent entrepôt trade position between India and Tibet and western parts of China. "Lhasa had the covetous position in the trans-Himalayan trade, owing to its richness in gold, salt, tinsel, musk, wool, cereal and the free trade policy adopted by the Tibetan government. Nepal exported bronze images of Buddhist scriptures, cotton

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<sup>146</sup> Sharma, *op. cit.*, f.n. 70, p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 27, p. 10.

<sup>148</sup> Ramesh Dahal, *Foreign Trade and Economic Development of Nepal*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, TU, 1992), p. 63.

clothes, horses and steel swords to China. In return, the country received silver and gold billions [sic], printed, coloured silk<sup>149</sup>." Other than the above mentioned commodities, Nepal used to export cereals like - rice, wheat, red and black peppers, brass, copper wires, etc. Liberal commercial policy of the Malla rulers was much responsible to boom the current trade in this region. They developed a number of new business hubs such as Sankhapur, Palanchok, Dolakha and Nuwakot and ran the considerably increased trade traffic through caravans to Kerung and Kuti. The period coinciding with the Moghul Empire in India was also the time of Kathmandu's great commercial prosperity when innovations in the economic realm were well received and long distance trade flourished. The introduction of silver and gold coinage was borrowed from the Moghuls, the construction and maintenance of the trade routes with the Tibetan help, the growth of an indigenous class of inn-keepers and the open reception of new ideas and traders including the missionaries from Europe could all be understood as part of this policy. This was because the Malla kings did not sense any threat from around the region and hence remained fully unconcerned as to defence undertaking. As a consequence, their overriding concern was to prosper trade, for which they devoted all their time, efforts and energy.

A large heterogeneous group -- nationals and aliens -- was engaged in this trade system. No single group enjoyed a virtual monopoly as regards the trade. "There were, thus, the Kashmiri Moslems, the Hindu Gosains, and the European Catholic missionaries of the Capuchin order, not to mention the Newari traders of the valley, to name some of the important trading groups<sup>150</sup>." And most of these traders had business houses in Kathmandu for convenience of operation. "The Kashmiris were keener in product development and market mechanism<sup>151</sup>." Hence, these people had set up

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>150</sup> Sharma, *op. cit.*, f.n. 4, p. 50.

<sup>151</sup> Dahal, *op. cit.*, f.n. 74, p. 65.

factories in most of the places such as Lhasa, Sailing [sic], Patna and Kathmandu. Tea and silk were the major merchandise they used to bring from China in order to satisfy the demands of Nepal and Kashmir. They, on the other hand, supplied a huge amount of otter's skin to China from Patna worth Nepali Rs. 50,000 per year. "Some merchants of Kashmir carried their manufactures by way of Laddakh to Kutti, and other towns in Thibet [sic], in order to procure the wool produced in these countries by the *shal* goat. These manufactures were partly used in Thibet, partly sent to Siling or Sining, on the western frontier of China, by way of Digarchi and Lhasa, and partly sent to Patna by way of Kathmandu<sup>152</sup>." The contemporary external trade of Nepal, both with India and Tibet, flowed at two levels. The first was the local trade carried out by the people living in the border areas on both sides merely to fulfil their subsistence. The other was more professional and organised and may be termed as national. This one flowed through specified routes and was controlled and supervised by the government. The transit trade that was conducted between Bengal and central Tibet through Kathmandu was a major constituent of the national trade.

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<sup>152</sup> Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, Second Edition, (New Delhi: J. Jetley, 1990), p. 212.

### 3.4.2 Trade with British-India

Initially, the British-East-India Company had only commercial objectives. In the passage of time, they realised the ever-growing feuds and disintegration as well as indulgence in personal gains among the petty Indian principalities. On that account, the English metamorphosed from a business company into a political entity with a view to convert India to their empire. In actual fact, the massive production, which became possible after the industrial revolution in Britain, had compelled them to urgently find some market? It was due to their deftness that they could always take political benefits in the pretext of trade and religion. Foreign trade is regarded as an engine of growth. James D. Theberge says, “underdeveloped countries are rightly much concerned with their international trade position, because for all of them international trade is vitally important as a source of supply of the technological knowledge, skill, capital, machinery, equipment, etc., which are essential for their economic development<sup>153</sup>.” Nevertheless, Nepal had but limited foreign trade by virtue of a relative backwardness of the economy as well as the political and physical isolation of the country.

“The earliest British relations with Nepal began with the ascendancy of the East-India Company in Bengal, because during the time it came in contact with Newar traders<sup>154</sup>.” Thereafter, Indo-Nepalese trade got interconnected with Indo-European trade. Nepal used to export commodities of Nepalese and Tibetan origin to India, which were further re-exported to Europe and in return, Indian and European merchandise were imported by Nepal. Similarly, the goods imported from Europe and India was further re-exported to Tibet and China. In this manner, the trade between Nepal and the UK (Europe) was

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<sup>153</sup> Nawraj Bhattarai, *Some Aspects of Nepal-UK Trade*, (Unpublished MA Dissertation, TU, 1981), p. 41.

<sup>154</sup> Durga Nanda Chaudhary, *A Study on the Nepal-UK Trade Relations*, (Unpublished MA Dissertation, TU, 1980), p. 19.

also maintained through the East-India Company. The rumour that Nepal had rich gold mines which, later on removed, naturally, drew British attention to Nepal. In connection with this belief, Kirkpatrick writes thus: "it was formerly a very prevalent idea among the people of Hindustan, from whom it would appear to have passed to the Europeans, that Nepaul [sic] contained gold mines<sup>155</sup>...." By the dawn of the eighteenth century, the Nepali rulers seemed obsessed with economic rationale and this element as of now dominated their foreign policy. The gains from international business, in many ways, could solely compensate for the comparative disadvantages of poor resources imposed by the harsh topography of the land. Though Nepal had not had any gold mines, it had copper and iron mines and the former were popular in India and hence used to fetch a handsome price. "In short, copper, the produce of Nepaul, has been known to bear so high a price as a rupee and a half the seer, at the same time that European copper was procurable in Calcutta for a rupee the seer<sup>156</sup>." Nevertheless, the lucrative trade collapsed in the wake of Gorkhali conquest of Kathmandu valley in 1768/69. The annexation of Kathmandu valley by the Gurkha Chief Prithvi Narayan Shah had a negative impact on the existing Indo-Nepalese trade.

No sooner had Prithvi Narayan Shah come to power; the subsisting overseas trade system of Nepal suffered a severe setback. "Prithvi Narayan Shah (now king of Kathmandu) suspected both groups of having encouraged the ill-fated Kinloch expedition which the British had sent to the aid of the Mallas in 1767. The Gosains were summarily expelled from Nepal, and such severe restrictions were imposed on the Kashmiri merchant houses that by 1774 only two were still functioning in Nepal<sup>157</sup>." Moreover, the Capuchin

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<sup>155</sup> W. Kirkpatrick, *Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, Fourth Reprint, (New Delhi: J. Jetley, 1996), p. 174.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>157</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, f.n. 27, pp. 24-25.



priests were also put in the same category of suspicion. For this reason, some of them were expelled from the country and others' activities were curtailed.

One of the major stumbling blocks to the resumption of trans-Himalayan trade was the perception of Nepali rulers (Prithvi Narayan Shah, 1769-1775; Pratap Singh Shah, 1775-1777; and Regent Queen Rajendra Laxmi, 1777-1785) regarding British design on Nepal. In particular, King Prithvi had witnessed the remarkable manner in which the British had begun to acquire the vast Indian Empire, first as traders, then as an ally and then as master.<sup>158</sup>

It was attributable to this very deep wariness and mistrust as regards the intention of the British. Thus he followed an isolationistic policy and intended to push them out of the Nepalese territory. He imposed a strict ban upon all kinds of alien mercantile and encouraged indigenous manufacturers in the national interest. He, then, levied exorbitant taxes on foreign transactions and sternly punished those who did not comply with the newly enacted trade rules and regulations. This is not to imply that the economic importance in Nepalese foreign policy was not reflected. The successors of King Prithvi Narayan Shah made constant efforts to revitalize the disturbed international trade. It, however, failed to gain its former pre-eminent position in trans-Himalayan trade.

British-India on her part also kept making tenacious endeavour to open up diplomatic and commercial relations with Nepal. They assigned a number of diplomats within a short span of time such as James Logan, Foxcroft and George Bogle to materialise their hidden agenda. They did not even lag behind to express their friendliest sentiments towards Nepal as an extra inducement. Despite the extensive undertakings, it failed to bear any fruit. Having made untiring attempts for several years, a golden opportunity came to them when Nepal-Tibet war resumed. The underlying reason behind this war was the bilateral Nepal-Tibet treaty, which was not looked upon with pleasure by the latter. This time, unfortunately, the Chinese emperor was

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<sup>158</sup> Sharma, *op. cit.*, f.n. 4, p. 85.

quick enough to react. "He sent an army of 70 thousand strong under a Chinese General<sup>159</sup>." This action really unnerved the Nepal government. Under the circumstances, Nepal was hard pressed to send representatives to British-India and elsewhere to garner military help to fight against the joint military strength. Hence, Nepal ingratiated herself by agreeing upon seven articles treaty of commerce on March 1, 1792. Even then, the Colonial Government did not dare to run a risk by helping Nepal and making Tibet, and especially strong China, a foe. Instead, it chose to offer mediation between Nepal, Tibet and China. However, the situation took a different turn that when the impelling circumstances were over; the treaty was affirmed to have outlived its rationale.

Nevertheless, captain Kirkpatrick forcibly made a visit to Nepal as a part of incessant attempt in opening up trade relations with Nepal. Though, he, during his stay in Nepal, did hard work, he could not succeed to translate the real proposition they had. For all that, this officer rendered an invaluable service to the Colonial Government by preparing an excellent account of Nepal based on first-hand information. One more important thing he did was: he resolved the long-standing mystery in respect of Nepalese gold. The virtual failure of captain Kirkpatrick's mission made the British-Indian authority to realise that the overture to Nepal thenceforth must be strategically new. "The suspicion and jealousy with which the Nepalese administration looked upon the English merchants became sufficiently known to the Company and they realized that a better approach towards resolving the difficulties between the two governments would be to send a native on an embassy to Nepal<sup>160</sup>." Sir John Shore, then governor general of India, on that account decided to send a non-English Maulvi Abdul Quadir Khan to Nepal; he was considered to have possessed a deep knowledge about Nepal as well as had high-up contacts. The underlying motive of the British-India was to expand her trade in Nepal and beyond the Himalayas and from

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<sup>159</sup> Chaudhary, *op. cit.*, f.n. 80, p. 67.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

that point of view the Maulvi mission proved of much greater importance because it carried out the first practical experiment on actual value and potentialities as to the Indo-Nepalese trade. "His mission did not produce any new treaty as had the previous Cornwallis mission, but it did acquire some valuable information regarding trade possibilities. Maulvi suggested to the government of India that the latter should open a factory or trading post in Nepal, but this was not done<sup>161</sup>." According to article 10 of the friendship treaty of October 26, 1801, Captain Knox was appointed as the first British resident to the kingdom of Nepal. He was given many important directives to undertake during his stay in Kathmandu as resident. Under commercial issue, apparently, having all the more significance, he was instructed to bring the complete effect of the commercial treaty of 1792 and to enhance trade interests of the Company. But the situation in Nepal was absolutely adverse. Therefore, he was compelled to return to India without any success after a few months' frustrating stay.

During the entire first decade of 1800s, the Nepal-British-India relations degenerated into the lowest ebb. "From 1804 to 1812 British relations with Nepal consisted entirely of protesting against frontier aggressions and of futile attempts to include the Gurkhas to help the suppression of frontier dacoits<sup>162</sup>." Eventually, it ended up in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16. On the whole, the entente, for the first time in the history converted Nepal into a satellite state. Even then, the efforts of the Company government perpetuated unabated despite strong opposition of Bhim Sen Thapa. Resident Hodgson, who remained excessively active in Nepalese internal politics, was unhappy with Bhim Sen Thapa since the latter did not improve the illiberal mercantile situation. Bhim Sen Thapa disagreed with the provisions of the treaty, for instance, customs duty that he levied 10 percent instead of 2.5 percent. In

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<sup>161</sup> Asad Husain, *British-India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal from 1857 to 1947*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Minnesota University, 1965), p. 17.

<sup>162</sup> Madan Kumar Bhattarai, *Diplomatic History of Nepal*, (Delhi: Madan Kumar Bhattarai, 1990), p. 51.

addition to this, he had imposed various checks on the British-Indian merchants.

### 3.4.3 Trade with British-India during Rana Period (1846-1951)

The Kot massacre of 1846 brought an eminently practical politician, Jang Bahadur Rana, to power. Following the emergence of this astute statesman in Nepalese politics, the hitherto prevailing state of affairs took a serious turn. Above all, Nepal and British-India, the former adversaries were converted into two wheels of a cart. In other words, the existence of one was in every way dependant on the existence of the other. In point of fact, Jang Bahadur proved to be the staunchest supporter of the Colonial Government. He, despite his cooperative and submissive attitude towards British-India, always maintained some checks, vis-à-vis commerce and trade with her. "With the merchant comes the musket and with the bible comes the bayonet<sup>163</sup>." He strongly used to believe this statement. Besides, what he believed was that in the name of trade the British gradually usurped sovereignty. "He did not cooperate with the British proposals for scientific surveys of Nepal. He showed no interest in the commercial schemes of the British either<sup>164</sup>." At the same time, the British resident blamed Jang Bahadur and his relatives of being fully obsessed with selfish motives and had no little worry about their country's prosperity. To be sure, the national trade of Nepal was monopolised by a finger count Sirdars (barons) and brothers and relatives of Jang Bahadur. These nobles could even take the law into their own hands. The British-India, however, did her utmost to get concessions from Nepal and Jang Bahadur at some point in the future committed to treat European businessmen in accordance with the agreement of November 6, 1839. Subsequent to this commitment, the bilateral mercantile relations returned to normalcy. Even then, a great surge in trade from British-India or from any other place was naturally impossible by virtue of the primitive trade routes. Major means of transport were carts, coolies and in some cases riverboats. In short, Jang Bahadur employed a protective trade policy with strong objection to the entry of Europeans into Nepal for trade.

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<sup>163</sup> Eden Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, (New Delhi: J. Jetley, 1991), p. 45.

<sup>164</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 9.

On the other hand, he endeavoured to avoid any friction with them on all issues.

The business could not boom as it was expected because of some obstacles. The basic obstacles were the antiquated system of communication, i.e., a few poor roads. The established bazaars on the border of Nepal and India also hampered the freedom of trade. As the British traders had to come to these trade points to sell their commodities and then return with what they could not sell. This tradition affected the business, for the goods, which were returned unsold were listed both as exports and imports. Some other principal factors which were responsible to impair the transaction were that the merchants of British-India never knew the reasonable rates of their goods for Nepalese market. The Nepalese side never appeared helpful in this regard. Lastly, the Nepalese authority always asserted an uncooperative attitude as to the modernisation of communication system, that is to say, the repair or construction of new roads by reason of fear and suspicion that British-India had designs on Nepalese independence. "There were various trade centres in the frontiers through which, trade traffic passed. The chief among them were Birgunj, Raxaul, Sitamarhi, Purniya, Madhubani, Nepalgunj, Butwal, Hanuman Nagar and Dhulabari<sup>165</sup>." The then resident Girdlestone was a strong supporter and advocate of a booming trade with Nepal, and hence approached the Prime Minister Ranodip Singh to resolve the above mentioned issues. The latter did not take up things positively and made solely small concessions, which led to some minor improvement. "The total registered trade between India and Nepal in 1877/78 was \$47,20,800 and in 1882/83 \$60,93,536<sup>166</sup>." These figures indicate the amelioration in the amount of business in the wake of the resident's suggestions as well as the reforms introduced by the Ranodip Singh government. "Local trade between Nepal and India was usually carried in head loads. Over longer distances, carts are the usual form of conveyance, but pack animals, buffaloes, ponies

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<sup>165</sup> Chaudhary, *op. cit.*, f.n. 80, p. 28.

<sup>166</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 87, pp. 177-178.

and bullocks are often seen to carry salt, grain and tobacco<sup>167</sup>." The early Rana rulers seemed virtually reluctant to build and repair the poor conditioned seasonal trade routes, for lack of money and also being suspicious and apprehensive to the Colonial Government. For this reason, the traders themselves sometimes used to repair the existing roads and renovate bridges at their own expense. "In 1880, Prime Minister Ranodip Simha [sic] ordered Chaudharis and Jimidars in all districts of the Terai region to construct and improve tracks through the labour of the local people<sup>168</sup>." Waterway was one of the most efficient alternatives to primitive trade routes. The major rivers of Nepal such as the Koshi, the Gandak and the Rapti, and their scores of feeders were used for that end. These waterways were exploited mostly for the transportation of timber from forests in the interior areas to centres near the Nepal-India border as well as for the export of rice and other bulky merchandise to many destinations in India including Patna, Mirjapur and Calcutta. Waterway, nevertheless, had a multitude of shortfalls. It was far too risky during the monsoon, whereas throughout the dry season they lacked sufficient water and hence failed to accommodate big and heavy-laden boats. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, British-India developed railway system across India and until the adjoining Nepal's border towns. Henceforth, transportation of Nepalese exports became possible by boat or ox-cart until the nearest Indian railway terminal and beyond by rails. "The opening up of the Chumbi valley route between Bengal and Tibet had an adverse impact on Nepal's trade with Tibet. To be sure, some Nepali commercial houses transformed their centres of operation from Kathmandu to Kalimpong to take advantage of the cheaper transport costs through the new route<sup>169</sup>." This event, actually, crumbled the Nepalese monopoly over the trans-Himalayan trade. Hereinafter, the importance of the route through Kathmandu steeply declined and never became able to wholly restore its former status. It was due to this, a number of Nepalese businessmen in Lhasa

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<sup>167</sup> Mahesh C. Regmi, *An Economic History of Nepal, 1846-1901*, (Varanasi: Nath Publishing House, 1988), pp. 204-205.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

plunged from 2000 to 500 in 1907 and to only 42 in 1923. The following tables provide a glimpse into the then Nepal-India trade transactions:



**Table No. 1**

**Nepal-India Trade in the Eastern and Central Sectors, 1880-1900**

*In million of NRs.*

	1880-81	1890-91	1899-1900
Exports	10.3	12.4	16.9
Imports	5.6	6.9	11.5

Source: Regmi, Mahesh C., *An Economic History of Nepal 1946-1901*, 1988, p. 210.

**Table No. 2**

**Nepal-India Trade in the Western and Far-Western Sectors, 1880-1901**

	1880-81	1890-91	1900-01
Exports	5.7	5.9	8.1
Imports	3.2	3.4	4.3

Source: Regmi, Mahesh C., *An Economic History of Nepal 1946-1901*, 1988, p. 210.

These statistics reveal that in the eastern and central regions, since 1880 to 1900, the exports and imports increased by 64 and 105.3 percent respectively. The balance, however, is in Nepal's favour, which increased from Rs. 4.7 million to Rs. 5.4 million, or 14.8 percent. The transactions during the same period in the western and far western belts are little bit different. In these parts, exports increased by 42.1 percent whereas imports escalated by 34.3 percent only. The trade balance correspondingly surged in favour of Nepal from Rs. 2.5 million in 1880-81 to Rs. 3.8 million in 1900-01. That is 52%. As a whole, the volume of registered Nepal-British-India trade as to all parts soared from Rs. 24.8 million to Rs. 40.8 million that is 64.5 percent. And the balance of trade was still in favour of Nepal, which rose from Rs. 7.2 million to Rs. 9.2 million. It is 27.7 percent.

Before the dawn of twentieth century, Nepal had enjoyed her entrepôt trade status between India, Tibet and China one way or another. But the opening up of Gyantse route after Younghusband's expedition to Lhasa and the subsequent Anglo-Tibet peace treaty of 1904 paralysed the aforesaid

status. This route helped connect a direct commercial link between the British-India and Tibet. "The Peking-Lhasa road constructed after Tibet became a part of China further detracted the traffic, shrinking further the possibility of the border trade<sup>170</sup>." The diminishing condition of Nepal was slightly enhanced and promoted by virtue of the intensified railway routes and the proximity of the Indian markets basically after the advent of twentieth century.

... during the long period of the Rana rule, considerable trade existed between Nepal and Britain which supplied variety of goods and services to Nepal's ruling elites-from ropeway and hydroelectric power plants to huge cut glass chandeliers, mirrors, the impressive looking equestrian statues which have now been relegated to the Limboo of history, and limousines, which had to be carried on the back of the porters to the capital city.<sup>171</sup>

Yet most of the commodities, that supplied from Britain to Nepal being luxurious, would solely be for consumption of the Prime Minister, his families and royalties. Only a few items would be supplied for consumption of the common people.

Chandra Shamsher was extremely anxious ever since he came to power regarding the satellite position of Nepal since the conclusion of the Sugauli treaty. For this reason, he offered a grandeur help for Britain during the First World War. As soon as the war came to an end, Chandra Shamsher compelled the British to conclude a bit glorious treaty in 1923 to replace some of the humiliating provisions incorporated in the treaty of Sugauli. Having made this arrangement, free flow of British goods was promoted. It caused a lopsided trade with her immediate neighbours, the British-India and Tibet. Enhanced mercantile naturally strengthened the British-Indian domination in Nepal.

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<sup>170</sup> Dahal, *op. cit.*, f.n. 74, p. 69.

<sup>171</sup> Bhatt, *op. cit.*, f.n. 17, p. 26.

Nepal-British-India trade and commerce was governed by the treaty of 1923 until it was replaced in July 1950 by the treaty of trade and commerce between Nepal and India. Earlier than the independence of India, Nepalese international relations were under the check of British-India. Hence, both international relations and overseas trade were limited to British-India. In accordance with the diversification policy adopted by Nepal followed by the independence of India, Nepal opened up her diplomatic and mercantile relations with other nations too. The following table gives a little idea with reference to the foreign trade during the 1950s.

**Table No. 3**  
**Nepal's Trade with Overseas Countries (1949/50-60)**

(Rs.'000 IC)

Year	Imports	Exports	Balance
1949/50	1,663	10,079	+8,416
1950/51	1,735	10,063	+8,328
1951/52	1,835	15530	+13,695
1952/53	843	7,012	+6,169
1953/54	343	401	+58
1954/55	1,632	4,263	+2,631
1955/56	962	1,203	+243
1956	3132	991	- 2,143
1957	4,605	545	- 4,060
1958	8,755	131	- 8,624
1959	12,193	213	-11,980

Source: Shrestha, B.P., An Introduction to Nepalese Economy, 1981, p. 163.

Note: 1949/50 to 1955/56 are fiscal years (April–March) and 1957 to 1959 are calendar years.

According to the above statistics, Nepalese overseas trade, as late as 1955/56, is favourable. The balance of trade in 1949/50 is more than Rs. 8 million which is huge in comparison to the balance of trade of 1955/56 which is only about Rs. 0.2 million. Thenceforth, without any break, negative or

unfavourable tendency has commenced. The amount of unfavourable trade soared year by year and in the year 1959, Nepal has suffered colossal deficit of about Rs. 12 million.

The Rana oligarchy of over one century crumbled in 1951 by the joint movement of late King Tribhuvan and Nepalese people. During that time, the economic, political and social condition of the then Nepal was extremely poor. Because the Rana rulers did not pay any attention to the welfare of the people and nation, they were rather obsessed with their own interests to the fullest. All wealth of the nation was centralized only to the Rana families. There was not yet any constitution. Indigenous industries were badly shaken. Physical infrastructure for economic, transportation and communication was absolutely non-existent. It was due to all these reasons; Nepal felt it urgent to diversify her trade throughout the world. "... Nepal had virtually no trade with countries other than India and a small amount with Tibet. The reasons behind the excessive concentration of trade with India are quite obvious. First, the close historical, geographical and cultural ties between Nepal and India from time immemorial have made it natural for Nepal to have more trade with India<sup>172</sup>." Besides, the land-locked position of Nepal is also a major cause for Nepalese foreign trade within India only. In the course of diversification process, "king Mahendra underlined Nepal's concern about the task of trade diversification at the Non-aligned Summit Conference at Cairo in 1964<sup>173</sup>." To tell the truth, Nepal employed all her energy for this purpose. The following statement of scholar S.R. Poudyal further proves this. "...throughout the 60s and 70s the basic objective of Nepal's trade policy had been to diversify trade, both in terms of goods and geographical patterns. To this effect, various measures and schemes aimed at providing incentives to the exporters to broaden their export market beyond India were

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<sup>172</sup> S. R. Poudyal, *Foreign Trade, Aid and Development in Nepal*, (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1988), p. 108.

<sup>173</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 214.

implemented<sup>174</sup>.” Some of the attractive incentives are made clear by another scholar S.D. Muni in his treatise entitled *Foreign Policy of Nepal*. He writes thus: “the most important of such incentives was the scheme of ‘Bonus Vouchers’ introduced in 1962/63. Under this scheme, the Nepali exporters were allowed to import the goods they liked, of the value equivalent to a part of their respective foreign exchange earnings through exports<sup>175</sup>.” In the course of action, Nepal concluded commercial agreement with a number of nations including the United Kingdom for the treatment of most favoured nation through exchange of notes signed at Kathmandu in 1965 on the basis of reciprocity.

Henceforth, a new trade pattern with the UK commenced. The above-mentioned policy contributed in large part to the expansion of foreign trade, which in 1966/67 rose to seven times what it was in 1962/63. “The scheme had an indirect adverse effect on Nepal-India trade relations since the Nepali traders imported ‘sensitive items’ under the scheme and re-exported them to India though their entry in India was banned or restricted<sup>176</sup>.” On the other hand, pursuit of diversification policy revitalized the disconnected trade relations with Britain, which was virtually very little as it withdrew from India. The major exportable items to the UK were dry ginger, goat’s skin, raw jute, bristle, woollen goods, carpets, readymade garments, medical herbs, handicraft, turmeric, etc. Similarly, the chief importable merchandise from the UK to Nepal were condensed and powder milk, medicine, tractor and spare parts, machinery and spare parts, telecommunication equipment, motor, car, jeep and spare parts, aircraft and spare parts, medical equipment, scientific research equipment, office equipment, radios, transistors, textiles, etc. In actual fact, Nepal-UK trade has been considerably increasing since then. The following table shows total overseas trade with the UK.

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<sup>174</sup> Poudyal, *op. cit.*, f.n. 98, p. 109.

<sup>175</sup> Muni, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 215.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

**Table No. 4**  
**Total Overseas Trade and Trade with the UK**

*(Rs. in '000)*

Year	Total overseas trade	Trade with the UK	Exports	Imports	Balance	% occupied by the UK on total overseas trade
1972/73	246878	14915	6116	8798	-2682	6.04
1973/74	358653	19495	9560	9933	-373	5.44
1974/75	725191	50863	10772	40091	-29319	7.01
1975/76	845937	55394	16897	38497	-21600	6.55
1976/77	960157	47338	21389	25949	-4560	4.93
1977/78	1712318	94578	41881	52696	-10815	5.52
1978/79	2298423	95410	31910	63500	-31591	4.15

Source: Trade Promotion Centre, Kathmandu, n.d.

The above enumeration suggests that the trade with Britain is substantially soaring. During fiscal year 1978-79, the volume of Nepal-UK trade constituted more than Rs. 95 million as against Rs. 14 million in the year 1972/73. Virtually, the same trend has taken place in total overseas trade. The total overseas trade amounted to Rs. 2.29 billion in 1978/79 as against Rs. 246 million in 1972/73. On that account, during the seven year period, the foreign trade seemed to increase by 830.99 percent. Throughout the time of seven years, the Nepal-Britain trade, on the other hand, was escalated by 539.69 percent. Though the satisfactory point in connection with Nepal-UK mercantile is the gradual surge of exports, Nepal has not yet enjoyed a surplus. The principal reason for this is, Nepal being in a state of pre-industrial age imports machinery, construction equipment, chemicals, cosmetics, spirits and other finished products whereas Nepalese exports are predominated by primary goods. "The share of UK in the overall foreign trade in 1979 was 3.9 percent. Between 1977/78 and 1978/79, there was a trade deficit of Rs. 10 million with the United Kingdom. Imports had more

than doubled between 1976/77 and 1978/79 from Rs. 25.9 to Rs. 63.5<sup>177</sup>.” Items of Nepalese exports have substantially changed as raw jute at one time constituted 88 percent of the total export but the same commodity in 1977/78 accounted to 38 percent while other items surged from 12 percent to 61.2 percent between 1971 and 1978. However, the tendency of trade deficit and the percentage occupied by the UK in total overseas trade is normal. There is no steep change. Among the European Economic Countries (EEC), Britain, so far, occupies the preponderant position in trade with Nepal.

With reference to diversification of trade, the fourth five-year plan (1970-75) of Nepal set expansion and diversification of Nepalese overseas trade as one of the major objectives. This objective was also incorporated in the fifth five-year plan (1975-80). Late King Birendra had personally given much emphasis on export trade and had said thus: “the fundamental element of my government policy will be to move along the road to self-reliance through mobilization of international resources and their effective utilization to step up production and to increase exports by diversifying the developmental activities<sup>178</sup>.” These policies along with the policy of bonus system introduced in 1962 as noted earlier contributed significantly to the expansion of Nepal’s trade with foreign countries. But in the passage of time, the bonus voucher system proved defective; for this reason, the government annulled it. Nevertheless, the government in 1978 instituted dual exchange rate system.

Under this system, two different rates for foreign exchange were fixed, viz. (a) \$1=Rs. 16, and (b) Rs. 12. The first exchange rate is applied to all receipts from exports to overseas countries and for all the imports except certain specified basic goods and all other transactions are subjected to the basic rate. License is issued automatically to

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<sup>177</sup> Bhatt, *op. cit.*, f.n. 17, p. 27.

<sup>178</sup> Bhattarai, *op. cit.*, f.n. 88, p. 59.

Nepalese exporters for all imports except those that are especially restricted or prohibited.<sup>179</sup>

As a matter of fact, Nepal had targeted to double her exports to overseas countries during the fifth five-year plan. Nepal, as a consequence, achieved tremendous success by exporting various new items to markets other than traditional ones.

It might be due to the pursuit of various conducive policies in order to promote overseas trade that the volume of Nepal-Britain trade immensely increased during the 1980s. The following statement further asserts it. “Although trade between the UK and Nepal is relatively small, there has been a steady increase over the last few years<sup>180</sup>.” Principal exports of Nepal to Britain then were textile, yarn, fabrics and ready-made clothing and imports were chemicals, manufactured goods, and machinery and transport equipment. The following table shows some other important facts in this regard:

**Table No. 5**  
**Nepal-UK Trade Figures**

	1982	1983	1984
UK Imports	3.8	6.1	5.5
UK Exports	4.6	5.0	6.4
	+0.8	-1.1	+0.9

Source: Hurrell, A.G., *The Rising Nepal*, 17 February, 1986, p. 6.

The above-mentioned figures suggest that the bilateral trade of Nepal and Britain has considerably soared between 1978 and 1984. Import and export both have been increased by 220 and 430 percent respectively. However, the percent of export surged double than the import; at the same

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>180</sup> A. G. Hurrell, “Nepal-Britain Economic Cooperation”, *The Rising Nepal*, 17 February, 1986, p. 6.



time, the trade balance is still unfavourable to Nepal. In spite of that, the trade deficit constituted in 1984 is dramatically smaller than that of 1974/79. Moreover, in 1983, it seemed to have broken the old tradition of negative trade balance and accrued an enormous amount to Nepal's favour. In the current exchange rate, it was 110 million rupees.

#### **3.4.4 Nepal-Britain Economic Relations after the Restoration of Democracy (1951-2004)**

Having collapsed the three decades old party-less *Panchayat* system in 1990; multi-party democracy was introduced in the kingdom of Nepal. The democratic set up apparently made the Nepalese politics comparatively open, liberal, accountable and transparent. In order to fast boom the trade, the new system created a conducive atmosphere. In fact, a substantial effort was made to realise the genuine aspirations of both Nepal and the UK to promote the subsisting bilateral trade. As regards this, the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry held an extensive deliberation programme on March 1, 1993, with the investment study mission of the UK South Asia Trade Investment and Advisory Committee. This Committee was on a visit to Nepal. "Welcoming the leader and members of the mission chairman of the FNCCI Mahesh Lal Pradhan referred to the historic and harmonious ties between Nepal and Great Britain and spoke of the need for British investment in promoting Nepal's exports and enhancing the scale of operations through the use of modern know-how<sup>181</sup>." In the course of five-day tour to Nepal, they interacted with a large number of Nepalese industrialists, businessmen and senior government officials and inspected various industrial sites. The mission was fully convinced with the environment conducive to foreign investment. "Leader of mission Mr. Julian Stretch told a press conference here today that changes have taken place in Nepal and the private sector has been encouraged by the remarkable changes in government policies. Some industries here are operating satisfactorily, he

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<sup>181</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 2 March 1993, p. 1.

observed<sup>182</sup>." Ultimate Nepalese objective was to swell her export trade by using modern technology. One of the major exports of Nepal to Britain is carpet. Thus, former Prime Minister late Man Mohan Adhikari suggested Nepalese industrialists to promote and strengthen their trade. "Noting the significant role being played by carpet industries in the national economy and top position it gained in the country's export trade, he said and lauded the part played by carpet industries in reducing the country's trade deficit and creating job opportunities<sup>183</sup>." The Prime Minister refuted the allegation made by European countries as to child labour in Nepalese carpet industries and rather reminded them not to forget their own extensive use of child labour during the industrial revolution.

During the subsequent years of democracy, the volume of bilateral trade has substantially surged. The export and import in the fiscal year 2000/01 were more than Rs. 980 million and 800 million as against Rs. 30 million and 60 million in the fiscal year 1978/79 respectively. "Exchange of visits by trade delegations from Nepal and Britain has added a new dimension to the commercial relations between Nepal and Britain. A delegation of South Asian Advisory Group from Britain visited Nepal on 22-27 November 1998 and took part in the programmes of Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry<sup>184</sup>." The members of British delegation embodied senior managers from companies involved in energy and business sectors. In recent times:

Major Nepalese exports to UK are goat's skin, leather goods, Nepalese paper and paper products, woollen carpets, handicrafts, ready-made garments, silverware, and jewellery. Likewise, major imports from UK are copper scrap, hard drinks, cosmetics, medicine and medical equipment, textiles, copper wire rod, machinery and parts, aircraft

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<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>183</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 8 May 1995, p. 8.

<sup>184</sup> Nepal United Kingdom Relations, *op. cit.*, f.n. 48, p. 12.

and spare parts, scientific research equipment, office equipment and stationery.<sup>185</sup>

Britain occupied the fourth position in 2000 with reference to Nepal's export. Though there seemed a steady rise in Nepal-Britain bilateral trade, the balance of trade, however, is not yet in Nepal's favour. In the year 2000, ready-made garments and pashmina shawls were the chief commodities, which contributed over 65% of Nepalese total export to Britain. Their export constituted Rs. 735 million marking an enormous boom in Nepalese export trade. The export of woollen carpet too significantly soared in 2000, which accounted for sterling pounds 252 million as against 188 million in the previous year. This year, the UK occupied fifth position in importing Nepalese carpets.

The following figures reflect exports to and imports from UK during the late 1990s.

**Table No. 6**  
**Nepal-UK Trade during the Late 1990s**

Value in '000 Rs.

Year	Export	Import	Trade Balance
1997/98	318161	1312644	-994483 (Negative)
1998/99	521820	1639540	-1117720 (Negative)
1999/00	1192438	1462521	-270083 (Negative)
2000/01	980666	8827202	-7846536 (Negative)

Source: Nepal-United Kingdom Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal, n.d.

As noted earlier, the volume of Nepal-UK trade has been radically improved but the balance of trade is still in UK's favour. The trade deficit in the fiscal year 2000/01 is about 8 billion rupees. Its main reason is, Nepal imported petroleum products of more than 7 billion rupees in that year from UK. In addition, export of some goods such as paper and paper boards, articles of paper, articles of apparel and clothing accessories knitted or

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

crocheted have decreased. Apart from petroleum products, import of some merchandise such as beverages, dyes, pigment and other colouring matter, photographic goods, plastics and articles thereof, iron and steel, copper and article thereof, aluminium, furniture of metal, wood, plastic, mattresses, pillows, etc., have increased.

British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Robin Cook visited Nepal in April 2000. He had come to Nepal on a two day official visit. And he is the first British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to make an official visit to Nepal. After arriving at the British embassy here this evening, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs opened the new office of Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Unveiling the plaque to inaugurate the new office, Cook said:

We can now work together even more closely to multiply the trading opportunities for our two countries. This will build on the work you have already started, promoting British wool in Nepalese carpet manufacturing and knitwear displaying UK products and services at the recent Himalayan Expo 2000, with specific and successful opportunities for British business, and forging new and dynamic initiatives in IT and other areas.<sup>186</sup>

According to him, when trade develops and prosperity grows, it would transcend aid as the basis for the country's development as Nepal and Britain move together into the new millennium. At that time, there were eight industries in operation under Nepal-British joint venture. "As stated by a press release of British Embassy, Kathmandu, Nepal would, henceforth, use British wool for her carpet industries. It further argued that trade could be extended on information technology and other areas as well<sup>187</sup>." Chairman of Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Rajendra Khetan, affirmed that the visit of British minister would greatly contribute to the

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<sup>186</sup> *The Rising Nepal*, 21 April 2000, p. 1.

<sup>187</sup> *Gorkhapatra*, 21 April 2000, p. 11.

development of Nepalese economy. In order to promote bilateral trade, diverse Nepalese business missions visited UK and vice-versa. A recent list of commodities exported to Britain is given in Appendix 1.

The above-mentioned statistics give an idea as regards the degree of export of Nepal to Britain. The amount of mercantile seems quite same except in the fiscal year 1998/99. Major reason behind it was the surge in export of some particular merchandise. Basically, the export of carpet and other textile floor coverings, articles of apparel and clothing accessories, paper and paper boards and articles of paper and raw hides and skin has increased from Rs.180.8 million to 250.2 million, Rs.170 million to 730.5 million, Rs.20.7 to 50.2 million and Rs.1.5 million to 11 million respectively. But in the fiscal year 2001/02, export of articles of apparel and clothing accessories and paper and paper boards and articles of paper decreased by Rs.300 million and 20 million respectively as compared with the fiscal year 1999/2000. As a consequence, the volume of total export appears somewhat different. Otherwise there seems only a small change. And again, export of paper and paper boards and articles of paper, articles of apparel and clothing accessories and works of arts, collectors' pieces and antiques and other made up articles surged by Rs.10 million, 60 million, 13 million and 20 million in the fiscal year 2002/03. Between 1998 and 1999, the amount of business was more than doubled. Thenceforth, it has virtually remained stagnant. A recent list of commodities imported from Britain is given in Appendix 2.

Import from UK has also more or less similar trend except in the fiscal year 2000/01 and 2001/02. The magnitude of import in 2000/01 is the most enormous. During these years, Nepal imported petroleum products alone of Rs. 7.12 billion. It, on that account, made Nepal to suffer a negative balance of trade of around Rs. 7.84 billion. Similarly, in the years 2001/02, petroleum products alone of Rs. 1.95 billion were imported. Thus, the trade deficit much soared than in other years. Other than import of large amounts of petroleum products, there is no major change in import transactions. Nepal did not

import any petroleum products from Britain in the fiscal year 1999/2000. Hence, Nepal suffered only a small magnitude of trade deficit in that particular year. As far as the fiscal year 2002/03 is concerned, it imported only a nominal proportion of petroleum products as compared with other years. Moreover, import of commodities such as malt roasted, preparation of cereals, flour, starch or milk pastry cook's products, tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes, articles of apparel and clothing accessories, gold and silver unwrought, imitation jewellery and imitation jewellery of base metal, copper and articles thereof, machinery and mechanical appliances, electrical equipment and parts, electrical machinery, sound recorder, television images and parts thereof has sharply declined. For this very reason, the long tradition of trade deficit against Nepal has been broken. For the first time after the restoration of democracy in Nepal, it has succeeded in making the balance of trade positive in favour of Nepal by Rs. 5.4 million.

Nevertheless, the state of trade in the latter years is somewhat pessimistic. Deputy Head of mission at the British embassy argued that trade between Nepal and Britain has declined on grounds of poor security situation by virtue of intensified Maoist insurgency. The grown Maoist activities did not only spoil the ongoing commercial transactions but also discouraged the aspiring British investors entering Nepalese market. During the late 1990s, British investors had appreciated the secure and reliable Nepalese environment for investment but the situation is quite different between then and now. Despite that there are 12 established investors in Nepal, who have largely indulged in consultancy services and tourism. "British trade figures published by the department of trade and industry in London show that trade between the two kingdoms is down<sup>188</sup>." As shown by the British statistics, nearly 8 million pounds sterling worth of goods was recorded as exports to Nepal in the year 2000. And it almost corresponds to the figures calculated by trade promotion centre, Kathmandu and Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

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<sup>188</sup> *The Himalayan Times*, 4 September 2002, p. 9.

British executive service overseas (BESO), a group of retired executive businessmen from the United Kingdom, come regularly to Nepal to advise on small scale industrial development, including women's craft organizations, to sheep farming and industrial manufactures, suggesting how to improve their production, organize their personnel and company structures and how to manage overseas exports to the United Kingdom and other countries.<sup>189</sup>

It implies that Britain seems much cooperative with Nepal to fast uplift downright poor Nepalese economy. On the other hand, Nepal has also been organising Himalayan expo annually to attract right customers for UK products in Nepal. Incumbent British ambassador to Nepal, Keith Bloomfield said in an interview to *Annapurna Post* that amount of bilateral trade between Nepal and Britain was quite small. In his opinion, "Britain primarily imports carpets from Nepal. Secondly, a significant number of British tourists come to Nepal<sup>190</sup>." In the fiscal year 2000/01 alone, Britain had imported Nepalese carpet worth Rs. 260 million. In the year 2000, 37765 British tourists visited Nepal and that is 8.1 percent of the total number of tourists in that year. That is the largest number of tourists except from a few other nations. As Nepal is already a member state of World Trade Organisation, there is much prospect in the growth of Nepal-Britain bilateral trade. British minister of State for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Douglas Alexander, MP, held talks with Nepalese businessmen and members of Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry on November 9, 2004, in Kathmandu. "The minister is scheduled to visit countryside of Nepal to inspect some Britain-funded projects and will address the business community<sup>191</sup>." At the reception hosted by British ambassador Keith Bloomfield and President of Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Rajendra Khetan, the latter argued that there was much prospect of expansion of bilateral transactions.

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>190</sup> *Annapurna Post*, 6 August 2004, p. 4.

<sup>191</sup> *The Kathmandu Post*, 10 November 2004, p. 1.

### 3.4.4.1 Joint Venture

In the recent past, British joint enterprises have also taken foothold in Nepal. Principal areas of joint ventures are "... hotel, travel and trekking, tea production, garments, biotechnology and consultancy. The British investment in Nepal has been to the tune of around Rs. 110 million as of July 15, 2001<sup>192</sup>." The amount of British investment appears extremely small. That being the case, a very big combined endeavour is needed to draw large amount of British capital. There is an agreement between Nepal and the United Kingdom signed on March 2, 1993, on promotion and protection of investment.

### 3.4.4.2 Tourism

The number of British tourists is fairly large. They come to Nepal every year basically for trekking, mountaineering and other leisurely activities. Among the total tourists arrived in Nepal, the British tourists constituted 8.1 and 9.3 percent in the years 2000 and 2001 respectively. The following figures provide a clear glimpse as to the British tourists:

**Table No. 7**  
**Number of Tourist from United Kingdom**

Year	Tourist from United Kingdom	Total Number of Tourist	Percentage Share of United Kingdom in Total Tourist
1991	24968	292995	8.5
1992	26492	334353	7.9
1993	23479	293567	8.0
1994	22504	326531	6.9
1995	26768	363395	7.4
1996	29466	393613	7.5

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<sup>192</sup> *Nepal-United Kingdom Relations, op. cit., f.n. 48, p. 13.*



1997	29998	421857	7.1
1998	35499	463684	7.7
1999	36852	491504	7.5
2000	37765	463646	8.1
2001	33533	361237	9.3
2002	21007	275468	7.6
2003*	19260	265600	7.3

Source: Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Kathmandu, n.d.

Note: \*By air only.

The number of the British tourists coming to Nepal is quite satisfactory as compared to other European nations. And there is a gradual surge in connection with the number of the British tourists during those thirteen years except in the latest years. The reason for the decline of the number of tourists is apparently due to the growing and intensifying activities of Maoists. Finally, in order to increase the number of the British tourists as well as Nepal-Britain bilateral trade, the very basic thing is political stability, which must prevail in Nepal at the earliest.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVOLUTION OF GURKHA RECRUITMENT

#### 4.1 A Cursory Review of Gurkha Recruitment Practices

##### 4.1.1 Gurkha Recruitment in Bhutan

Gurkha recruitment into British-Indian army was not a new practice. According to some documents, there existed a tradition of serving in foreign armies by Nepali youths as early as the seventeenth century. In 1624, Bhutanese King, Sabdung Nawang Namgel had visited the then Gorkha King Ram Shah and established friendly relationship. On the request of this king, a large group of Nepali martial race, i.e. Magars and Gurungs under the leadership of Bishun Thapamagar came to Bhutan and settled down there. "The king of Bhutan, again in 1640, visited Gorkha. This time, nevertheless, he also visited Kathmandu. Thereupon, another large group of Nepali people migrated to Bhutan and settled down in the border area. Some of them were entrusted with the assignment of border defence<sup>193</sup>." This fact amply proves that Nepalese had taken service in foreign armies even before they took service in the British-Indian army. Since the relationship between Nepal and Bhutan was old and cordial, Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa provided some Nepalese army high level officers to train the Bhutanese army and a considerable number of rifles and ammunition to Bhutan. "It was due to the severe short-fall in the supply of recruits during the first world war, Bhutan domiciled Gurkhas, in the cooperation of the Bhutanese government, were recruited into the British-Indian army<sup>194</sup>." An Indian scholar Asad Husain has also dealt with Gurkha service in foreign armies in addition to the British-

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<sup>193</sup> Radheshyam Lekali and Mahendra Bista (ed.), *British Gurkha: Sandhi Dekhi Sarbocha Samma* (British-Gurkha: From Treaty to Supreme Court), Kathmandu: British-Gurkha Centre for Studies and Research, Nepal, 2002, p. 43.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Indian army. "The story of the Gurkha bravery and dependability had not only been recognized in other parts of the world, they were greatly sought after, in the different provinces of India, in the princely states and in Burma. As far back as 1891, Rampur state was forbidden to employ Gurungs and Magars. Kashmir had nine companies of Gurkhas in the Kashmir imperial service corps and three companies in the regular army of the state<sup>195</sup>." It refers to the Gurkha soldiery, which was renowned in almost entire Indian sub-continent before and after they took service in British-Indian forces.

#### **4.1.2 Gurkha Recruitment in Sikkim**

Sikkim was a small neighbouring state of India that lies to the north-eastern border of the kingdom of Nepal. Population of Sikkim consisted of Lepchas, Bhutias and people of Nepali origin. Responsibility of state security in Sikkim, to the greatest extent, has been assigned to the people of Nepali origin; that is to say Limbus, Rais, Chhetris, Gurungs and Magars for centuries. "According to J.C. White, a political representative of British-India in Sikkim between 1887 and 1908, around 50,000 Nepalese were living in Sikkim. While he was in Gangtok (capital of Sikkim), and in the course of his visit to different places of Sikkim, he was almost always accompanied by the Gurkha security members. During the time of handover of Sikkim, the Gurkha security members were serving in the security of Maharaja's (king) palace<sup>196</sup>." Former MP and foreign policy expert Hiranya Lal Shrestha also mentions in one of his articles entitled "Gurkha Military Profession in Britain, India and Other Nations" that before the annexation of Sikkim to India captain Rolan Chhetri, captain Lal Bahadur Limbu, Basanta Kumar Chhetri

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<sup>195</sup> Asad Husain, *British-India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal from 1857 to 1947*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Minnesota University, 1965), p. 418.

<sup>196</sup> Om Prakash Aryal, *Legal Aspect of Gurkha Recruitment: An Overview*, (Unpublished LLM Dissertation, TU, n.d.), p. 12.

and many more Magar soldiers were in the service of the palace of King Chhogyal.

### 4.1.3 Gurkha Recruitment in Burma

As in Sikkim, Gurkhas had served and have still been serving in Burma.

After the complete occupation of Burma in 1886, the British government recruited 2,240 new recruits, who were given training in Mandalay. Among these recruits, the number of Gurkhas was predominant. Having given military training to them, they were organised in various forces such as Burma Frontier Force, Burma Military Police, Rangoon Armed Police and Garrison Force.<sup>197</sup>

Burma got independence in 1948. And with a view to strengthen her national unity and to protect her sovereignty and territorial integrity, the government reorganised its armed forces. In that process also, Nepali-origin martial people discharged their duty with complete sincerity and valour and worked shoulder to shoulder with the Burmese nationals.

### 4.1.4 Gurkha Recruitment in China

China also showed interest in employing Gurkhas in her armed forces and made some diplomatic endeavour to that end. The Nepalese government, however, refused that proposal. "Despite that later in 1909, the Chinese government recruited 9 Gurkhas into its armed forces born of Nepali fathers and Tibetan mothers<sup>198</sup>." This fact implies that the Gurkhas' finest military quality had been recognised beyond the Indian sub-continent even before the First World War was fought. "In 1911 corporal Man Bahadur Limbu and Asha Bir Rai were in 10th Gurkha Rifles then stationed in Burma. After deserting the army, they moved to Unan of China where they were employed as drill instructors<sup>199</sup>." To historian Bijay Kumar Manandhar, two or three other Gurkhas had also gone with them. The then commander of Burma division had reported it back to the commander-in-chief of British-India, thereupon

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<sup>197</sup> Lekali and Bista, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 45.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>199</sup> Aryal, *op. cit.*, f.n. 4, p. 13.

made effort to return the deserters to their original regiments. From that time on, British-India attempted diplomatically to stop the employment of Gurkhas in the Chinese armed forces. It is said that there are sixty to eighty thousand Nepalese (especially Gurkhas and their families) living in Hong Kong as citizens. It would not be a matter of wonder if their offspring in future will join the Hong Kong/Chinese army.

#### **4.1.5 Gurkha Recruitment in Punjab**

In similar fashion, brave and renowned King of Punjab state, Ranjit Singh, is no exception as regards the employment of Gurkhas. During the latter part of the Nepalese expansionist campaign, Gurkha soldiers underwent a serious setback from Ranjit Singh's army in Kangara. By the year 1809, there were Gurkhas serving as infantry soldiers in Ranjit Singh's army. It is still unclear whether they were defeated Gurkhas by the Punjabi soldiers in the course of the war of Kangara. "After the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16, even the famous Nepali war hero Balbhadra took service with Ranjit Singh. Budhakaji Amar Singh Thapa was also in Ranjit Singh's army<sup>200</sup>." Balbhadra Kunwar's daily wage in the early days was ten rupees and later increased to fifteen rupees whereas Amar Singh Thapa was paid only seven rupees per day. Having risen to the rank of captain, he would receive ten rupees. According to foreign policy expert Hiranya Lal Shrestha, Balbhadra Kunwar was one of the faithful generals of Ranjit Singh. Annexation of Peshawar of Afghanistan in 1822 by Ranjit Singh ensued war between them. Numerous Gurkhas, in this war, fought on the side of Punjab and again displayed their finest warring quality. In the course of this war, legendary soldier Balbhadra Kunwar earned martyrdom. "As a matter of fact, the Gurkhas, who joined Ranjit Singh's armed forces and who were stationed in Lahore, were termed as Lahure. And as time passed, everyone who took military or civil career

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

abroad began to be called Lahore<sup>201</sup>.” This makes it crystal clear that the world famous Gurkhas had already displayed their exemplary devotion to duty, patience, valour and, above all, unflinching loyalty to their bosses. “Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab had employed a separate Gurkha corps in the Sikh army. The exiled Amir of Afghanistan, Shah Shuja, had full-fledged unit of the Gurkha forces. Similarly, the Khan of Khelat had a corps of Gurkha bodyguards<sup>202</sup>.” This culture of joining Ranjit Singh’s army came to an end only when British-India defeated the Sikh state. Former Indian ambassador to Nepal I. P. Singh in his interview as to British Gurkhas also asserted that Gurkhas were first recruited into Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s army prior to the British-Indian army.

#### **4.1.6 Gurkha Recruitment in British-India**

By the first decade of the nineteenth century, both British-India, which was already metamorphosed from a business company into a formidable political power and Nepal, were at the height of expansionist campaign. The Colonial power realised a threat from Nepal. Hence, the Colonial power employed both coaxing and coercing strategy over Nepal. Nepal, however, did not give way, rather intensified her manoeuvre. Thereupon, British-India having made up its mind for war simply waited for a favourable time. Ultimately in 1814, these powers came face to face in the battlefield. Nepalese generals and soldiers, despite inferior and crude weapons and with primitive military tactics, displayed their matchless prowess. Interestingly, Nepalese army was composed of women and minors. Despite that, Nepalese became pre-eminent at least in the beginning. Gradually, the tide of war turned against the Nepalese, especially owing to the much larger number of soldiers and relatively sophisticated weapons on the part of the foe. Moreover, their

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<sup>201</sup> Lekali and Bista, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 41.

<sup>202</sup> Madan Kumar Bhattarai, *Diplomatic History of Nepal*, (Delhi: Madan Kumar Bhattarai, 1990), p. 24.

replenishment was far more effective and efficient. The war virtually went on for two years.

At long last, the well fortified forts, i.e. Kalanga and Malaun fell into the hands of the adversary. This proved such a bitter incident that it compelled the most daring Nepalese general Kazi Amar Singh Thapa to enter into a convention with British general David Ochterlony on 15 May 1815. The fifth article of the convention, which seems all the more important, runs thus: “all the troops in the service of Nepal, with the exception of those granted to the personal honour of the Kajee Umar Singh and Ranajore Singh, will be at liberty to enter into services of the British Government, if agreeable to themselves and the British Government choose to accept their services<sup>203</sup>.” The convention was, nevertheless, never ratified by the government of the kingdom of Nepal nor concluded any treaty in respect of Gurkha recruitment. In spite of that the recruitment drive continued one way or the other. After the tripartite treaty of 1947, the so-called treaty governs the age-old recruitment tradition. Some scholars fallaciously maintain that there is a provision incorporated in the treaty of Sugauli regarding Gurkha recruitment. That is, however, wide of the mark.

British-India, after all, achieved a pyrrhic victory over Nepal. The hardiest Gurkhas contrarily left a deep imprint on the greatest strategists such as General David Ochterlony and some subalterns. The following anecdote strengthens the above-mentioned statement further:

One day when the batteries were playing, a man was perceived on the breach advancing and waving his hands. The guns ceased for a while ... it was a Gurkha whose lower jaw had been shattered by a shot and who sought assistance from us, the enemy, and received. He recovered, and when discharged, signalled his desire to return to his camp to fight as again exhibiting thus through the whole incident; a strong sense of values of generosity and courtesy in warfare separated completely in his mind private and national feelings from each other

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<sup>203</sup> Purushottam Banskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British-Indian Army*, (New Delhi: Nirala Publication, 1994), p. 44.



... in biography of lieutenant (later general) Frederick Young narrating the anecdote at Kalung November 1814 between the battles that raged in October and November.<sup>204</sup>

The unique behaviour of the Gurkha soldier reflects ample national feeling and loyalty and obviously not less honesty and sincerity even on the war front. The British officers who were engaged in the conflict against the energetic mountaineers themselves closely witnessed the loyalty, gallantry, resolution and endurance consistently displayed by the intrepid little Gurkha soldiers especially during the battles of Kalanga, Malaun and Jaithak. Beyond everything, the Britons were fully convinced as regards the martial quality of Gurkhas. As maintained by John Shipp, then an ensign, they were the bravest of the brave:

These impressions of determined bravery and astonishing exertions spread through the army as the war continued. Hastings and his commanders in the field worried about the effect of the growing Gorkhali reputation upon their own native sepoys. There were reports of desertions and of sepoys fleeing in panic before a shot was fired when faced by the Gorkha soldiers. All the British commanders except Ochterlony seemed increasingly unnerved by the Gorkhali's abilities, and lost numerous opportunities to attack weaker forces.<sup>205</sup>

The above statement reveals how hard they were pressed. Having utterly failed all available measures, the British generals did not hesitate to carry out extremely deplorable actions of cutting off supply of water to the fort of Kalanga. This condemnable act ultimately forced the Gurkhas to abandon the strongly built fort of Kalanga. Most Gurkha troops composed of women and minors by this time were either killed or wounded. The following assertion makes this point further clear:

Blockading Gorkha forts was one of the most successful British strategies in the war. Starvation seems to have been an important

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<sup>204</sup> Lekali and Bista, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 414.

<sup>205</sup> Mary Katherine Des Chene, *Relics of Empire: A Cultural History of the Gurkhas 1815-1987*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1991), p. 44.

factor in both surrender and desertion. During a blockade of the Gorkha positions at black-hill near Jaithak in April, in 1815, Fraser recounts that ... the enemy were much pressed for provisions, and most uncomfortable in their cooped up situation. Deserters came every day in, which described the garrison as starving, and as parting with everything they had to procure scanty supplies of that food which their commanders could not or would not give them.<sup>206</sup>

These were the principal causes that helped collapse the Gurkha army and even to enter into the convention on the battleground despite their tremendous military prowess.

Most interestingly, the tenacity, endurance of hardship and loyalty to their salt forced General David Ochterlony and some of his ensigns to devise the plan of Gurkha recruitment for British-Indian army. Thus, the real architect of Gurkha recruitment, Ochterlony, made strong recommendation back to India to the then Governor General Lord Moira regarding the recruitment. Initially, the Colonial government might have two objectives in recruiting Gurkhas into their army.

... The Gurkhas were a great fighting people, who, if befriended could be as much a source of strength for the Indian Government as they could be a cause of danger if alienated, though it [is] politically wise to recruit Gurkhas in large numbers. Hence, the short, broad chested, flat faced, snub-nosed men with Khukuri in their belt possessing dependable character, hardiness of life, love of enterprise, endurance in privation, tenacity to adversity and contempt for caste prejudices and rash temper, and warlike material were considered desirable for the complete dominance of India.<sup>207</sup>

The above account refers to two significant aims. Firstly, the Colonial government would like to promote and consolidate its already impregnable Colonialism in Indian sub-continent. Secondly, it would like to draw the brave fighters into their own army in order to weaken Nepal militarily. So

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>207</sup> Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur, *The Gurkha: A History of the Recruitment in the British-India Army*, Third Edition, (New Delhi: Nirala Publication, 2000), p. 33.

that, the sword of Damocles, against them, could be avoided forever. A European scholar's perspective runs thus: "... their primary purpose in recruiting enemy troops was simply to weaken the Nepalese forces and gain allies among the recently subjugated peoples of the northwest Himalayan region<sup>208</sup>." This author also holds the same view as the previous one. But some scholars have implied to only one objective. To Purushottam Banskota, "it was the Governor General's intention to group these men into provincial battalions: some for the occupation of acquired hill territories and some for the use of the restored mountain chiefs<sup>209</sup>." This argument refers to the defence and promotion of the Colonialism. However, there is another view which asserts "... to weaken Nepal militarily and thus bring it to the terms of treaty of Sugauli<sup>210</sup>." On the whole, it becomes clear from the aforesaid analysis that British-India originally had two objectives in recruiting Gurkhas into their army. And, they were to protect and promote their colony and to cripple Nepal militarily to continue their bid for Colonialism without any obstacle from Nepal.

#### **4.1.7 Formation of Gurkha Regiments**

The seeds of nearly two-century-old cordial relationship between Nepal and Great Britain were sown in the times of ruinous Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16. Although some British scholars hold different view regarding the causes of Anglo-Nepal war, the British imperialist policy was much responsible for the war. One can easily assume from how the East India Company usurped the sovereignty and state authority of all independent Indian states and the policy it employed to gain that end. Otherwise, how could it have metamorphosed from a mere Business Company into a formidable Colonial Power? Anyway, the Gurkhas also felt that the British

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<sup>208</sup> Des Chene, *op. cit.*, f.n. 13, pp. 47-48.

<sup>209</sup> Banskota, *op. cit.*, f.n. 11, p. 45.

<sup>210</sup> Ananda Shrestha (ed.), *Seminar on Nepal-Britain Relations*, (Kathmandu: CNAS, 1986), p. 44.

soldiers very brave and highly disciplined. The Gurkhas admired the British soldiers for their valour and courage in the following words: “the English are as brave as lions; they are splendid sepoy, very nearly equal to us<sup>211</sup>.” The statement is true to some extent. As this researcher also spent seventeen years serving in the British army and more often than not came across the British soldiers during the service. Apparently, British army has maintained high standard of discipline perhaps better than the American, Chinese and the Malay soldiers. Their devotion to duty and always readiness for sacrifice abundantly reflects their deep patriotic sentiment. And, obviously, these two essential elements make a soldier of matchless standard.

Principal thinkers of Gurkha recruitment, when the war came to an end in the west part of Nepal, commenced to organise Gurkha deserters and war captives. “... About 4,650 soldiers of the Gurkha army had deserted and sought service with the Company in response to the invitations of the British commanders<sup>212</sup>.” They organised some of these Gurkha soldiers into two Nasiri (friendly) battalions. It was no other than General David Ochterlony who designated them as first and second Nasiri battalions. These battalions were actually raised from Amarsingh Thapa’s troops at Malaun and Subathu of Simla. Lieutenants Ross and Mhargie first commanded them. These Gurkhas were acquired in one of the two ways: they were either taken as prisoners and subsequently offered employment, or they deserted and came into the British camps seeking to take service with their erstwhile enemies. All of them, however, were not genuine Gurkhas but Kumaunis, Garhwalis and other such highlanders. The top brasses, in fact, mistook them for the genuine Gurkhas. The reasons behind this might be a lack of knowledge as for genuine Gurkhas. The same physical resemblance of these people to pure Gurkhas probably complicated the thing most. The authorities concerned formally

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<sup>211</sup> Brian Horrocks (ed.), *Britain’s Brigade of Gurkhas*, Reprinted, (Great Britain: A Leo Cooper, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>212</sup> Banskota, *op. cit.*, f.n. 11, pp. 44-45.

approved the Gurkha recruitment issue only on April 24, 1815. Hence, this date is formally considered the actual starting point of Gurkha recruitment into Colonial army. To tell the truth, the Nasiri battalion organised by general Ochterlony was the nucleus of the first King George's own Gurkha Rifles. These two Nasiri battalions of Malaun regiment "... were later amalgamated to form what became the 1<sup>st</sup> Gurkha Rifles<sup>213</sup>" that ultimately remained as the 1<sup>st</sup> King George V's own Gurkha Rifles. The merger occurred in 1826.

The organisation of Sirmoor battalion has an interesting anecdote. During the Anglo-Nepal war, the fort of Jaithak under the command of Ranjor Singh Thapa, the son of Bhim Sen Thapa, had remained a major mission of the foe. On the other hand "brave Gurkhas wanted to prove that their enemy basically were matchless to them<sup>214</sup>." The enemy forces, under the command of major Ludlow and major Richards, attacked the fort of Jaithak twice but of no avail. In the meanwhile, Amar Singh Thapa dispatched a reinforcement of eight hundred Gurkha soldiers under Rewantakaji to Jaithak. Having learnt this, lieutenant Frederick Young hastily enlisted two thousand recruits and launched an attack against the Nepalese forces. The British irregular forces, however, could not prove effective but fled right after first sight. It was no little wonder to the Gurkhas that lieutenant Young did not flee with his men. The Gurkhas captured him and in a dignified manner asked him the reasons why he did not run away. To this, his statement runs like this:

... He was a British officer commissioned by the Honourable East India Company in 1800 when he was just 15, and he did not come all this way simply to run off at the first sight of the enemy. The Gorkhas liked his style. Although a prisoner, Lieutenant Young became friends with his captors, and he, noted their cheerfulness and made a study, as best he could, of their customs. Young was eventually freed at the

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<sup>213</sup> John Parker, *The Gurkha: The Inside Story of the World's Most Feared Soldiers*, (London: Head Line Book Publishing, 1999), p. 37.

<sup>214</sup> Dhundi Raj Bhandari, *Nepal Ko Alochanatmak Itihas*, (Critical History of Nepal), (Banaras: Babu Sapra Sharma, 1971), p. 78.

time of the peace treaty, unharmed, well-fed and with a number of new friends.<sup>215</sup>

It was due to this reason that Lieutenant Frederick Young turned one of the greatest admirers of Gurkhas and in like manner the staunchest supporter of their recruitment. He pressed hard his government back in India for the recruitment of his former enemies into Colonial army. He received formal orders from his government on April 24, 1816, for the formation of Gurkha battalion. He raised a battalion in Nahan near Dehradun consisting of three elements, i.e. war captives, deserters and volunteers. It was designated as Sirmoor battalion. Lieutenant Young assumed command of this battalion, which was later designated as Second King Edward VII's own Gurkha Rifles. From that time on, it remained in existence until and unless all the British Gurkha battalions were merged into two battalions in the early 1990s and designated as First Royal Gurkha Rifles and Second Royal Gurkha Rifles. At present, one of the two battalions is stationed in the UK and the other is in Brunei. They change their stations every two years.

After Jaithak, Kumaon was also a luring objective for British-India on account of its strategic importance. The Company government, beyond everything, wanted to cut off communications between Kathmandu and western territories by usurping Kumaonis sovereignty. To realise this end, Edward Gardner, the commissioner of Kumaon, was given authority to raise some irregular forces. Hence, he organised some irregular forces composed of local hill men, but Gardner was not happy with the arrangement. During the war, Gurkha troops in Kumaon were under the command of Chautaria (royal collateral) Bum Shah. As Edward Gardner was also highly impressed with unswerving loyalty, unflinching cheerfulness and indomitable valour of Gurkhas, he made a convincing request to the authorities concerned for the permission to raise a separate Gorkha battalion in Kumaon. In response to his request, he was authorised to raise the Gurkhas as provincial troops for

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<sup>215</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 21, p. 36.

service in the hills. “Accordingly, a separate Gurkha battalion, designated as Kumaon battalion, was raised by Sir Colquhoun<sup>216</sup>.” Mary Des Chene, however, maintains that the founder of the battalion was Colonel Nicol. But this is untrue. “Of the three original regiments, this was really the oldest as it was raised in late 1814 when Colonel Gardner was attacking Almora. But officially it was raised by Colquhoun just a few days later than the First and Second Regiments<sup>217</sup>.” This battalion, later on, was designated as Third Queen Alexandra’s Own Gurkha Rifles. By this time they had raised four battalions as stated earlier. The battalions had eight companies each consisting of one hundred and twenty personnel. Thus, the seed of sustainable friendship between Nepal and the UK was sown on the battlefield by turning former adversaries into friends.

#### **4.1.8 Recruiting *Modus operandi***

Anglo-Nepal war was followed by an extreme need of Gurkha recruits for British-India so as to keep up the strength of the recently formed four Gurkha battalions. On the contrary, it was a very unpopular idea then in Nepal. Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa, throughout his life, maintained an awfully hostile attitude towards Colonial government. He had been quite antagonistic, cherished an intention of embarking on another war, and kept on advocating this design until he was alive. “Bhim Sen was the first Nepalese statesman who grasped the meaning of the system of protectorates which Lord Wellesley had carried out in India. He saw one native state after another come within the net of British subsidiary alliances, and his policy was steadily directed to save Nepal from a similar fate<sup>218</sup>.” In addition to this, he had well realised why the Colonial power was so determined to recruit the martial tribes of Nepal into its army. Major objectives of British-India in recruiting

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<sup>216</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, p. 36.

<sup>217</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 389.

<sup>218</sup> Tony Gould, *Imperial Warriors: Britain and the Gurkhas*, (Great Britain: Granta Publications, 1999), p. 70.

these martial tribes are sufficiently dealt with earlier. “Probably the first European to refer to Nepal’s ‘martial tribe’ was Hamilton, and from the time of the East India Company’s war with Nepal, during which the British discovered the fighting qualities of their Nepalese opponents, certain ethnic groups were regularly labelled in this way<sup>219</sup>.” Later this philosophy was concretised and also realised into practice by the staunchest supporter of the Gurkha recruitment, Brian Houghton Hodgson. This diplomat and essentially one of the greatest scholars of his time had spent almost twenty-five years in Nepal in various capacities including the resident.

Bhim Sen well understood Hodgson’s reasoning and was equally determined to prevent the wholesale recruitment of Nepalese soldiers into British service. So these two sparring partners, whose mutual wariness was tempered with respect, set the pattern of diplomatic pressure and pleading on one side and evasion and resistance on the other which prevailed for the next sixty years with regard to Gurkha recruitment. Nepal’s most astute ministers might be prepared to come to Britain’s aid in times of crisis and offer to send battalions to do battle on its behalf, but neither of the two strong men of nineteenth century Nepal, Bhim Sen Thapa and Jang Bahadur Rana, was prepared to stand by and watch British agents siphon off the cream of Young Magar and Gurung manhood into the Bengal Army.<sup>220</sup>

The preceding account manifests the real psychology of Bhim Sen Thapa in respect of recruitment. Therefore, it was unthinkable for Colonial government to augment the Gurkha recruitment in required number from desired clans. Magars and Gurungs of western Nepal only were recognised as martial tribes whereas Limbus and Rais of eastern Nepal were yet to be discovered and considered as martial races. For the reason that the army of Prithvi Narayan Shah had not included the martial races of eastern Nepal, i.e. Limbus and Rais and the Anglo-Nepal war was also mostly fought in western parts of Nepal. The British top brass, owing to the fact, remained completely ignorant regarding the Limbus and Rais until the next few decades. Anyway,

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<sup>219</sup> Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentlemen, Gurkhas in the Western Imagination*, Second Edition, (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2003), p. 121.

<sup>220</sup> Gould, *op. cit.*, f.n. 26, p. 72.



“for the next twenty years after the war the British contended themselves with keeping their Gurkha regiments up to strength by secretly sending men into Nepal to bring out recruits<sup>221</sup>.” After the third Anglo-Maratha war of 1817-18 and siege of Bharatpur in 1825-26, the Gurkhas in British-Indian army proved a more valued asset. In fact, the participation of Gurkhas in those wars was taken as an ordeal for Gurkhas by the British. The Gurkhas, nevertheless, still proved their hardihood, discipline, valour and beyond everything their unswerving loyalty and unflinching cheerfulness. This experience, for sure, intensified the aspiration of genuine martial race but to no avail. As discussed earlier, “Bhim Sen Thapa was the orthodox opponent of Colonial power. Hence, there was no question of him being positive as to the Gurkha recruitment. Despite Bhim Sen Thapa’s endeavour to totally strangle the recruitment practice, it was clandestinely continued by opening up temporary recruiting depots on the frontiers of Nepal at least to keep up with the strength of the Gurkha regiments, if not for augmentation<sup>222</sup>.” In point of fact, neither Bhim Sen Thapa could completely stop the Gurkha recruitment tradition nor the authority of British-India overcame him as an obstacle in systematising the smooth running of recruitment. Following the downfall of Bhim Sen Thapa and the active intervention of resident Brian Hodgson, British authority was hopeful in realising their aspiration. The dream, however, did not come true. It was due to growing inter-faction rivalry among barons and pre-eminence of British-India’s opponents followed by chaos and state of interregnum.

British-India underwent very bitter times during the era of Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa. Therefore, some of the scholars assert that there were indirect hands of Brian Hodgson in the downfall of Bhim Sen Thapa. The attitude of Nepalese courtiers followed by the fall of Bhim Sen Thapa, after all, remained unchanged. When Sir Edward Paget, the commander-in-

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<sup>221</sup> Des Chene, *op. cit.*, f.n. 13, p. 142.

<sup>222</sup> Parbati Subba, *Gurkha Bhartiko Samchipta Itihas ra Gurkha Bhutpurba Sainik Sangko Andolan*, (A Brief History of Gurkha Recruitment and the Movement of Gurkha Ex-servicemen’s Organization), (Unpublished MA Dissertation, TU, 2002), p. 44.

chief of the British army in India emphasised the augmentation of Gurkha regiments, resident Edward Gardner held slightly ambivalent view in this regard. His views are as follows:

even on venturing our service, the Gurkhas would not separate themselves entirely from their native country as they could not remove their families from Nepal (in the face of the Nepal's Government's strong disapproval of it) and ... that however faithfully they might conduct themselves on general occasions, in the event of any future rupture with Nepal they possessed that feeling of patriotism which would induce the greater part of them to adhere decidedly to their allegiance.<sup>223</sup>

Resident Hodgson, unlike his predecessors, asserted a very aggressive attitude towards Nepal. Moreover, he postulated the martial race philosophy and always strongly recommended the recruitment of Gurkhas into Colonial army. His findings are as follows:

These highland soldiers, who dispatch their meal in half an hour and satisfy the ceremonial law by merely washing their hands and face and taking off their turbans [sic] before cooking, laugh at the par-physical rigour of our sepaees, who must bathe from head to foot and pooja, are they begin to dress their dinner, must set merely naked in the coldest weather. and can not be in marching trim again in less than three hours, the best of the day. In war the former carry several days provisions on their backs, the latter would deem such an act intolerably degrading; the former see in foreign service nothing but the prospect of gain and glory, the latter can discover in it nothing but pollution and peril from unclean men and terrible wizards, goblins and evil spirits. In masses, the former have all that indomitable confidence each in all, which grows out of national integrity and sentiment in peril better than all human bonds whatever.<sup>224</sup>

The authority of British-India approved the notion of Brian Hodgson and asked the latter to materialise it to the best of his ability. Hodgson's conviction was that the Gurkhas were superior to the Indian native soldiers in all respects. In his assumption, there were at that time 30,000 dhakre (unemployed warriors) in Nepal. "In the view of one historian, the more these turbulent martial people were drained away from Nepal, the brighter would

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<sup>223</sup> Banskota, *op. cit.*, f.n. 11, p. 46.

<sup>224</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, pp. 44-45.

the prospect of Nepal become in being a weak and peaceful neighbour of British-India<sup>225</sup>.” Since Nepalese rulers were well aware of this British design, it became one of the chief reasons for them to vehemently oppose their youths’ enlistment into the foreign army. British-India, on her part showed the greatest perseverance until it got it. Brian Hodgson always remained advocating the notion of Nepalese youths’ enlistment into British-Indian Army, basically to drain the surplus soldiery from Nepal and to promote and strengthen the ever flourishing British colony. In this sense, Hodgson again urged his government by writing the following argument:

... I am well assured their service, if obtained, would soon come to be most highly praised. In my humble opinion they are by far the best soldiers in India, and if they were made participates of our reckon in arms, I consider that their gallant spirit and unadulterated military habits might be relied on for fidelity, and that our good and regular pay and noble pension establishment would serve to counterpoise the influence of nationality, especially in the Magars and Gurungs.<sup>226</sup>

Hodgson tried to the best of his ability to recruit Gurkhas into British-Indian army because he had physically seen, underwent a deep study as of them and had known that they were the best soldiers. He was fully convinced of their qualities and had much greed for mobilisation of them under British flag to expand, protect and promote the British Empire all over the world. Hodgson served in Nepal as a resident from 1833 to 1843, which is regarded the most turbulent period in Nepalese political history. Unfortunately, despite Hodgson’s intense aspiration of Gurkhas and his perseverance, the situation in this regard did not improve during his term in office. The following incident is sufficient to reflect the worse picture of the prevailing situation. Having established a recruiting depot in 1843 across the Nepal border, the authority concerned dispatched a recruiting agent into Nepal to procure the required men for the depot. Sadly, the Nepalese authority arrested the agent and the injunction on enlistment in the Colonial army was extensively publicised. Hence, British-India had to wait for a few more decades for

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<sup>225</sup> Caplan, *op. cit.*, f.n. 27, p. 122.

<sup>226</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, p. 45.

relaxation of Nepalese policy as to this issue. After all, Hodgson's huge contribution in this respect is highly praiseworthy. In the absence of his philosophy and advocacy, the recruitment of Gurkhas into the British-Indian army would have virtually been impossible.

#### **4.1.9 Jang Bahadur and Repudiation**

The emergence of Jang Bahadur as all-powerful chief of Nepal had certainly relieved British-India. Notwithstanding, their hopes were utterly dashed. As "Jang had formulated a policy towards British-India from which he never deviated, consisting of the greatest distrust of the foreigners inside Nepal and the friendliest attitude towards them outside Nepal<sup>227</sup>." According to this principle, it seems a very tough job for the British officials to translate it into practice. The clandestine methods employed so far had not rendered any satisfactory outcome, contrarily they had proved problematic, expensive and time consuming. A good opportunity, however, came when Jang Bahadur in 1850 arrived in India en-route to England. Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor General of India took up this issue with Jang Bahadur. Nepalese chief, in that case, assured him that he would help to obtain Gurkha recruits to the best of his ability. Believing this assurance, the British officials swiftly directed Resident Thoresby at the court of Nepal to exert pressure to the officiating Prime Minister Bam Bahadur to get as many recruits as possible. Outwardly, this chief displayed positive gestures but in practice thwarted the attempt. "A notice asking the recruits to come was issued by the Nepalese government but when thousands of Gurkha recruits came, the Nepalese Government prohibited them from going to Residency on the pretext that if they were allowed to go there, they would be forcefully enlisted<sup>228</sup>." In this manner, every attempt of the Colonial government to persuade the court of Nepal to relax the traditional policy as to recruitment was not bearing any fruit. "When being pressed again by the British Resident, Bam Bahadur renewed his cooperation, but wanted that the recruits be selected in his

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<sup>227</sup> Gould, *op. cit.*, f.n. 26, p. 90.

<sup>228</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, p. 47.

presence<sup>229</sup>.” The resident agreed with this stand, thereupon succeeding to procure a few recruits.

Jang Bahadur, as committed earlier to the British officials, even after returning from England, did not fulfil the aspiration of the British. He continued his old policy, maximum help outside Nepal and maximum hindrance within the country. That being so, he did not leave any stone unturned to offer swift help to India whenever there appeared any war and disorder.

Jang Bahadur had issued strict orders against the Nepalese leaving the country without the permission of the government. There was also a system of requiring passports for the Nepalese who wanted to go beyond Noakote [sic] and the Trishuli Ganga river. At first, he did not allow the Gurkhas already enrolled in the Indian army to return to Nepal on vacation to meet their family or any other work, except after discharge from the army. Later, he modified the rule and allowed them to return on vacation, provided they came in civil dress and behaved as Nepalese subjects.<sup>230</sup>

Thus, the British officials’ ever growing drive to procure genuine Gurkha recruits from the time of Bhim Sen Thapa was always thwarted. The officials sent to get martial race youths from Nepal by the Colonial government were required to have letters from the Nepalese authority. Oscillating Jang Bahadur did not even hesitate to send letters of different contents to Nepalese officials of various districts. On the one hand, he directed the Nepalese officials to employ strict measures to stop Nepalese youths from joining the Indian army and display as much cooperative gestures as possible to the British officials whenever necessary. In addition, the recruiting agents were “... fiercely resisted by the Nepal durbar, and the *gallawallas*, as recruiters came to be known, had to resort to ever more clandestine methods in mustering their batches of recruits; they could move

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<sup>229</sup> Banskota, *op. cit.*, f.n. 11, p. 53.

<sup>230</sup> Bhattarai, *op. cit.*, f.n. 10, p. 27.

them only at night and risked execution if they were caught<sup>231</sup>." From these above facts, it becomes crystal clear that the then Nepal government was extremely reluctant to let its youths get recruited into foreign army. It also makes amply clear how acute aspiration the Colonial government had to get Gurkha youths for its army. It seems they were determined to lose everything such as money, energy, life and what not, to obtain the valued element.

The successful suppression of Indian revolution of 1857-58 by heavily using Gurkhas further enhanced the image of Gurkha. The hard-pressed Colonial power, in the absence of Gurkhas' crucial role, would have been pushed out of India then and there. They consequently raised two more Gurkha battalions at Pithoragarh and Abotabad, later designated as 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Gurkha rifles respectively. By virtue of this:

a vigorous recruitment drive was undertaken after 1858, and a number of illegal recruitment teams were sent into the Nepal hills to see volunteers for the five Gurkha battalions. Jang Bahadur obstructed the recruitment programme in several ways. Nepalese frontier guards were instructed to arrest recruiting agents who penetrated into the hills, using force if necessary. He also issued an order that no subject of the four classes and thirty six castes of our country shall go [to] India for recruitment without prior approval.<sup>232</sup>

One who breaches this order would have his house and land seized – expropriated. He would not be entitled to murder his wife's paramour if she had one. If he did, he would deserve capital punishment. The Colonial government, as such, had no alternative but to accept however disappointing policy the Nepalese government adopted. The Gurkhas being the most valued elements, the authority concerned did not want to displease Nepal as well. They were determined and waited for the right time to procure it at some point in future.

#### **4.1.10 Post Jang Bahadur Relations**

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<sup>231</sup> Gould, *op. cit.*, f.n. 26, p. 96.

<sup>232</sup> Banskota, *op. cit.*, f.n. 11, p. 57.

The sudden demise of Jang Bahadur followed a dog-eat-dog power struggle between his sons led by Jagat Jang and Shamsher branch led by his youngest brother Dhir Shamsher. Seeds of intra-familial rivalry had already been sown. As General Dhir Shamsher was a predominant figure in court politics and owing to many other reasons, Ranodip Singh, the new and weak prime minister naturally felt insecure. Hence, soon after assuming the office of prime minister, he proclaimed his policy as shown: "he had been entirely in the confidence of late Sir Jang Bahadur, who had exhorted and instructed him to pursue the same course of steady and undeviating friendship towards the British Government<sup>233</sup>." It clearly manifests that he would like to maintain status quo. As a result, an active policy of obstruction on recruitment went on until a favourable situation was created. "Yet, it is an irony of history that it continued with an increasing momentum with the passage of time<sup>234</sup>." It means that both Nepal and British-India failed to impose their policies to each other as effectively as they had desired. Therefore, there was always a shortage of genuine Gurkha recruits. Considering this bitter fact, they even implemented a new measure to compensate the shortage at least to some extent. They continued to recruit "... line boys. They were the sons of sepoy of the regiment of Gurkha or Hindustani hill-women. The percentage of the line boys in the army was not more than five, but they were excellent soldiers and more intelligent than recruits from Nepal<sup>235</sup>." In order to make this idea functional, British-India had already promulgated a charter, which for the first time allowed Gurkhas to buy land and settle down near their stations, i.e. Dharmasala, Dehradun, Almora, Bakloh and Abbottabad. With the passage of time, these areas turned into Gurkha colonies and thereby helped British authority to get excellent recruits, but not enough.

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<sup>233</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 161.

<sup>234</sup> Prem R. Uprety, *Nepal: A Small Nation in the Vortex of International Conflict*, (Kathmandu: Pugo Mi, 1984), p. 128.

<sup>235</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 393.

This strategy alone could not satisfy their demand. Colonial government continued its pressure over the court of Nepal through its resident. They actually wanted the subsisting restrictions put on the enlistment of Gurkhas into Colonial army completely removed. The officiating resident took up this matter with Ranodip Singh who having felt immense pressure "... hesitatingly agreed to allow those who are willingly to go of their own accord for enlistment in the British army<sup>236</sup>." Besides, Ranodip Singh, in order to prove himself a staunch British supporter, issued orders to his officers of all districts to persuade youths to join the British-Indian army. Thereupon, it was reported to the resident that they had collected 115 recruits in Kathmandu alone. Likewise, recruits were collected in Kumaon, Dhankutta and Illam as well. The growing positive attitude, though in slow pace, was disturbed by an incident. "A Subedar in the British service had sent two sepoy of his regiment to Butwal; there they induced some men, including the two sepoy of the Nepalese army, to run away to Gorakhpur for enlistment in the British army<sup>237</sup>." This kind of act apparently enhanced the suspicion of prime minister as to British motive. He strongly opposed the incident. The resident also warned his government by fearing that such incident might deteriorate the relationship. However, bowing down to mounting political pressure and persuasion, the court of Nepal collected 559 youth, "... of whom as many as 373 were summarily rejected - being found the lame, the halt, the maimed and the blind<sup>238</sup>." With this disappointing result, the Colonial authority determined to continue the old underhand practice of maintaining the Gurkha regiments up to strength. This practice impelled the Nepalese government to issue the following stringent orders: "any person who is detected in an attempt to leave the country for this purpose will be imprisoned, and that the goods, house, and lands of any

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<sup>236</sup> Banskota, *op. cit.*, f.n. 11, p. 63.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.



persons so enlisting will be confiscated. Any persons who on their return to Nepalese territory are suspected of having served in a British regiment will be severely dealt with<sup>239</sup>." Beyond everything, one informant told the Resident Gridlestone that if anybody were found involved in such a disgusting act would be cut into pieces. The possible war of Nepal against Tibet impelled Nepal to ask for 4,000 breach-loading rifles. And British seemed impatient to exploit the situation. Yet, this plan did not yield any fruit since the dispute was settled without war.

"The death of Dhir Shamsher in October 1884 marked the beginning of Ranodip Singh's liberal attitude towards the Gurkha recruitment issue<sup>240</sup>." Henceforth, the orthodox traditional policy towards recruitment was gradually relaxed. It rendered some relief to British-India.

Bir Shamsher, second generation Rana and nephew of the assassinated Prime Minister Ranodip Singh, stepped in blood. On the other hand, British officials had been waiting for decades for a conducive environment. Bir Shamsher was naturally anxious to make his regime recognised by the British government. He essentially feared the cousins at that time living in India who might secure British help to topple the former's government. This made a major departure from the old nationalistic policy of Nepal. The opinion of the British officials on the issue of recognition was not unanimous.

Resident Gridlestone wanted to fully exploit the initial instabilities of the new regime. The British government, which was threatened by the deteriorating relations with Russia, wanted the expansion of their army. Roberts, the then commander-in-chief of India, proposed to raise five additional Gurkha Battalions as soon as possible. He also suggested that the only way to get recruits within a reasonable span of time was to open recruiting depots at Kathmandu and to put

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<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>240</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, p. 65.

adequate pressure on Nepal Darbar to allow the British recruiting agents to operate in the hills of Nepal.<sup>241</sup>

Roberts held even the view of threatening Bir Shamsher of his removal if he did not cooperate with the supply of recruits. His removal would have been realised by inciting his enemies then taking refuge in India. But Bir Shamsher, having already anticipated the possible eventuality, commenced to supply recruits to the best of his ability. "As a result of which within a month of his rise to power, Bir Shamsher supplied 700 recruits<sup>242</sup>." A swift move of Bir Shamsher relaxed the suspicion and anger of the Colonial government. Thereupon, on the basis of resident's strong recommendation, the British-Indian government granted recognition to Bir Shamsher's regime in 1886. Shamsher branch was considered anti-British and Bir Shamsher apparently was of no exception. He had no intention of deviating from the traditional policy of isolation from Colonial power, but it was his compulsion.

Bir Shamsher authorised the British-Indian authorities to raise five more Gurkha battalions, made available as many recruits as necessary and even sanctioned to open up recruiting depot in Gorakhpur. In addition to the relaxation brought by Bir Shamsher, "they continued the old surreptitious and enticing method through brokers that surged the number of recruits<sup>243</sup>." It could not, however, fully satisfy the British officials as they were aspiring for a permanent solution as to the recruiting problem. Bir Shamsher, in order to prove his honesty and loyalty and to assuage their deep-rooted suspicions towards Shamsher family, exerted force to get necessary number of recruits. He promulgated even a regulation according to which all villages were compelled to provide a certain number of recruits. But *the modus operandi* showed disgusting consequences of this practice. The Nepalese people fought with the British recruiting agents to stop youths joining the British-Indian

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>243</sup> Lekali and Bista, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 148.

army. Despite the fighting and resistance, 8,000 men were presented before the army doctor. Sadly, only 2,200 met the British army requirements. Having obtained the large number of physically fit genuine Gurkha recruits, they raised three regiments, i.e. 42nd, 43rd and 44th Gurkha Light Infantry. Later their names were changed. Bir Shamsher, again, attempted to demonstrate his real sentiment in the following words: “my friends, since I have been looking out for means to please the British government I should not have hesitated to a thing, had it not been beyond my powers<sup>244</sup>.” This statement also could not satisfy the British authority. In actual fact, they wished for an unflinching arrangement regarding the recruitment for which they were crying out for seventy years. They continued their pressure. Eventually, Bir Shamsher was made to issue the following decree to all district chiefs of Nepal:

Whereas the British government wishes to obtain subjects of the Nepalese Government as recruits for service in the British Army, the Nepalese Government desiring to show its friendship for the British Government hereby notifies that if you wish to enlist in the British Army you should present yourselves to the nearest Nepalese officer, from whom you will learn all particulars as to the terms of pay, service, and pension, etc. There is full permission from my Government to enlist in the British service and there is no restriction whatever about it. The Nepalese Government will be pleased with those who go to enlist. The persons going to enlist should present themselves to the British Recruiting agents on the frontier.<sup>245</sup>

The contents of the order still could not make the British-Indian government fully elated nor did it render a better result. The British government officially presumed that the Nepalese authority itself was playing the role of an obstructionist in this process. They compelled the Prime Minister to issue another order representing the British sentiment. And this time, the resident himself drafted the order, which is as follows:

The British Government wishes to have Nepalese recruits for British regiments. British Government is our friend. Therefore, we issue this

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<sup>244</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, p. 75.

<sup>245</sup> Des Chene, *op. cit.*, f.n. 13, p. 146.

notification that if you wish to enlist in British regiments we give you full permission to go and take British service. There is no prohibition whatever. We shall not be displeased with those who go to enlist. We shall be much pleased with them. See those who served there and gained military talents have on their return here been so lucky as to have been raised to captainships here, and in future also deserving people will be given such posts. This order is issued with the view that good many people may go and return after qualifying themselves in military talents and thus render benefit to their countrymen and that they may after doing full service gain pension. Therefore go to the British Recruiting Agents on the frontier.<sup>246</sup>

At long last, this order proved to be a panacea to solve many issues concerned basically with the Gurkha recruitment after which they had been hankering for several decades. The British-Indian government, henceforth, showed only positive attitude as regards making concessions towards Nepal. But they were essentially symbolic such as honours and titles. On the contrary, Nepalese overriding concern was the recognition of Nepal by the British as an independent state.

Being highly encouraged by the successful recruiting process, they proposed a new idea, that is, "... there should be a recruiting depot in Kathmandu<sup>247</sup>." This proposal was put forward because a depot in Kathmandu would have reduced the expenses and helped procure better quality recruits. Nevertheless, the dream did not come true. The Nepalese prime minister disapproved this proposal as disgusting. The British diplomats changed their mind and no longer put pressure on the Nepalese government in this regard. They, quite the opposite, recalled Major Durand, the mastermind of this idea and appointed Colonel Wylie as Resident of Nepal. Soft policy of Wylie further strengthened the bilateral relationship and also flourished the recruitment process.

### **Table No. 8**

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>247</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 408.

### Trend of Augmentation of Gurkha Regiment (1815-92)

Year	Ruling Prime Ministers	Recruits Supplied by Nepal (in each figure)	Strength of Battalion	Total no. of Battalions
1815-37	Bhim Sen Thapa	-	-	3
1837-46	More than one Prime Minister	-	-	3
1846-77	Jang Bahadur	-	825	5
1877-85	Ranodip Singh	166	825	5
1885-92	Bir Shamsher	7662	912	15

Source: Banskota, Purushottam, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British India Army*, 1994, p. 112.

The above mentioned table seemed stagnant for a long time. The augmentation of Gurkha regiments once occurred after the first Indian revolution of 1857-58 and then only when Bir Shamsher rose to power. Sadly, to realise that British-India had to have the greatest degree of perseverance as well as continued a tenacious endeavour for over eight decades.

In the past, the recruiters would smuggle Gurkha recruits into British territory. Following the order of the Nepalese Prime Minister, this became a legitimate business. It remained, however, a very unpopular institution in Nepalese villages until around 1970s. As a result, the availability of recruits was always insufficient in number. In order to negate the adverse situation, they employed various strategies. "There is a large fair held at Tribeni and Showpur every year at the time of the Maghia Sangrati. Temporary villages of grass spring up, and thousands of villagers flock in to bathe and traffic. At this fair a certain number of recruits can generally be obtained<sup>248</sup>." Basically, martial race youths would go to such fairs for personal entertainment. In hilly villages, it is still a popular institution among Limbu-Rai and Gurung-Magar

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<sup>248</sup> Eden Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, (New Delhi: J. Jetley, 1991), p. 156.

communities. These races comparatively indulge much in pleasurable activities than the others. Girls of these races in the past would also enjoy a vast freedom regarding relaxation including flirting with boys. For this reason, boys of these races (potential recruits) could be found in large number in such fairs. In addition to this, "they would be sent on long expeditions into the hills to gather up young men to serve in the British army in India. The battalions also dispatched teams of men to roam the Indian border towns to entice the young hill men who came to plains of India as porters, usually a drink was offered although many of the young men needed no such persuasion<sup>249</sup>." It gives the impression that the recruitment institution at least until mid 1970s was in no way voluntary. The British officials were forced to use various illegal measures including money, alcohol and brokers. First, they would offer alcohol followed by persuasion and incentives, which appears a very effective strategy.

The final decade of the nineteenth century marked the commencement of soft diplomacy followed by concessions owing to the assumption of office by Resident Colonel Wylie. The recruiting institution was systematised. Several "other recruiting depots were also opened up at Darjeeling, Pilibit and Bahraich. The enlistment of Rais and Limbus from eastern Nepal also started<sup>250</sup>." Before this time, only Magars and Gurungs from western parts of Nepal were recruited. Recruitment of Sunwars, Tamangs and Sherpas was commenced even later than this. Governor General Lansdowne, being satisfied with the policy of Bir Shamsheer towards British-India, conferred K.C.S.I. (knight commander of the star of India) upon the Prime Minister as a mark of appreciation.

In order to propagate the policy of concession, the British administration, after a series of transactions, agreed to give 8,000 Martiny Henry Rifles and six 7 pounder field guns desired by Bir

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<sup>249</sup> Parkar, *op. cit.*, f.n. 21, p. 39.

<sup>250</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 15, pp. 85-86.

Shumsher. ... promising help to Nepalese Government in procuring arms and ammunition from India and England, the British Government not only worked to liberate the trade and to make Nepal accessible for Europeans but also was able to get the desired number of recruits of selected tribes from Nepal with the due support of Nepal Darbar.<sup>251</sup>

Thus, Nepal-British-India relations entered a new era of belief, cooperation and concessions. Nepal in the past did not cooperate in respect of recruitment nor gave British-India ever any concessions to the former as to the purchase of arms and ammunition. British-India, more precisely, cherished a suspicious attitude towards Nepal and consequently their behaviour always remained cautious and vice-versa. Their overriding concern was Nepal at any point in future might turn against them. But along with the emergence of Bir Shumsher to power, the hitherto existing complications were resolved forever.

Chandra Shumsher usurped the power of Prime Minister of Nepal after exiling his elder brother Dev Shumsher. He was the most ambitious, prudent, clear-headed and shrewdest politician among the Ranas. With a view to strengthen his position and to govern the nation without any Gordian knot, Chandra Shumsher adopted an extremely positive attitude towards the Colonial government. To convince them, he wrote a letter to the viceroy in the following words:

I shall take this opportunity to assure your Excellency's Government that I shall always deem it a sacred duty and valued privilege, not only to cultivate and continue unimpaired the friendly relations subsisting between the Governments of India and Nepal, but to strengthen and improve them, so that we may realise all those expectations which the association with such a power like that of England naturally raises in your mind. I am fully conscious that our interests can best be served by the continuance of friendly relations between India and Nepal.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

The former account amply demonstrates that Chandra Shamsher fancied cooperating with the Company government as much as he could. To tell the truth, he did not leave any stone unturned in cooperating with the Company government. Strictly speaking, he remained a volunteer throughout his term in office to help and make concessions for British-India whenever he deemed it necessary. It was due to his full cooperation that about 200,000 Nepalese youths participated in the First World War on the side of Britain. Financial and material help were also provided by Nepal. Hereafter, there never appeared any complications between Nepal and British-India.

Another staunchest supporter of British-India, Juddha Shamsher, followed the footsteps of Chandra Shamsher. By the time of Juddha Shamsher, policy of the Nepalese government had also completely changed. "The Nepalese rulers were willing to exchange hill peasants for things they wanted that included, at different times, assurances of Nepalese independence, restoration of territory, honours and titles, money, guns and ammunition, and aid in industrialization<sup>253</sup>." Thus, Gurkha recruits, with the passage of time, turned into a tool of diplomacy. The Nepalese government extensively used this element to extract what they wished for from British-India. Besides, Gurkha recruitment into Indian army had become an essential part of Nepalese national economy. Juddha Shamsher swiftly realized the gravity of the situation and acted accordingly. During the Second World War he fully extended his support and even encouraged the Nepalese youth to join the Colonial army. Due to his support and encouragement, the number of Gurkha soldiers who participated along the British side in the Second World War reached 250,000. In this fashion, as time passed, Gurkha recruitment became a bit more volunteering institution. From this time on, no Nepalese ruler disrupted this tradition, except minor frictions owing to Nepalese communist parties and individuals.

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<sup>253</sup> Des Chene, *op. cit.*, f.n. 13, p. 141.



**Table No. 9****Recruit Intakes for the British Army's Gurkha Regiments between 1875 and 1998**

Date	No. of Recruit	Date	Number of Recruit
1875	5120	1909	18331
1876	5551	1910	18846
1877	5255	1911	19051
1878	5374	1912	19128
1879	5300	1913	19170
1880	5551	1914	19169
1881	5946	1915	21361
1882	6270	1916	31436
1883	6484	1917	42310
1884	6564	1918	51560
1885	6684	1919	59209
1886	7445	1920	44711
1887	10001	1921	29117
1888	8374	1922	19754
1889	10397	1923	19807
1890	10799	1924	19480
1891	11419	1925	19709
1892	11939	1926	19795
1893	12566	1927	19683
1894	12864	1928	20051
1895	12864	1929	20169
1896	12847	1930	20219
1897	12910	1931	20264
1898	13017	1932	19918
1899	13253	1933	20127
1900	13251	1934	20169
1901	13273	1935	20165
1902	13591	1936	20092
1903	13564	1937	20227
1904	15107	1938	20125
1905	17188	1939	20401
1906	16513	1940	20640
1907	17043	1941	39415
1908	17432	1942	61242
1947	Nil	1973	270
1948	2400	1974	318
1949	1405	1975	326

1950	525	1976	299
1951	531	1977	312
1952	1104	1978	393
1953	594	1979	1030
1954	545	1980	919
1955	1044	1981	840
1956	823	1982	486
1957	1018	1983	490
1958	1198	1984	498
1959	1236	1985	482
1960	1382	1986	300
1961	1562	1987	225
1962	1042	1988	212
1963	448	1989	276
1964	967	1990	303
1965	936	1991	120
1966	763	1992	153
1967	402	1993	153
1968	403	1994	153
1969	365	1995	153
1970	304	1996	160
1971	207	1997	160
1972	178	1998	181

Source: Lekali, Radheshyam and Mahendra Bista (ed.), *British-Gurkha: Sandhi Dekhi Sarbocha Samma (British Gurkha: From Treaty to Supreme Court)*, 2002, p. 425.

This institution, as stated earlier, nevertheless, remained unpopular for a long time in Nepalese villages “... in spite of all the incentives, inducements and moral persuasions from the Nepalese officials, village headmen did meet with stiff resistance from the local populace. The common scenes of weeping and wailing mothers of the proposed recruits in front of the British Residency in Kathmandu can be taken as a mark of docile protest by the Nepalese women folks to the institution of recruitment in Nepal<sup>254</sup>.” Generally speaking, this institution became fully voluntary only after the mid 1970s. During the early 1970s, the Gurkha regiments began to be based in Hong Kong and one of the regiments in the UK in rotation. The authority fairly

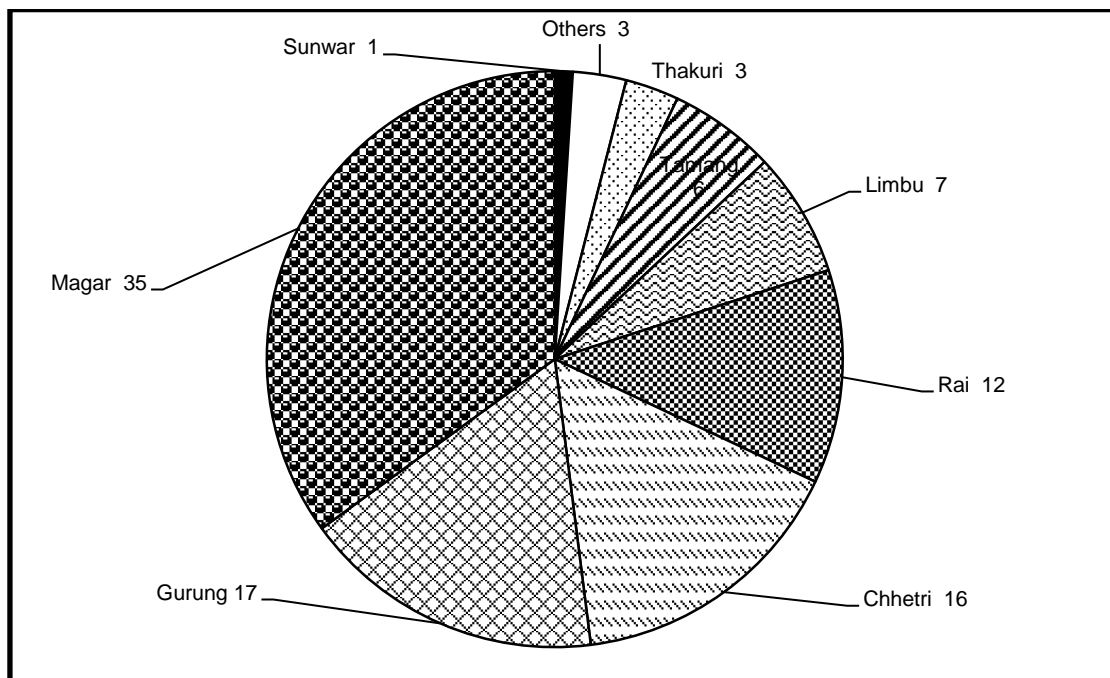
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<sup>254</sup> Uprety, *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, pp. 135-136.

improved their facilities and also increased their salary. From this time on, the Gurkha soldiers could spare and bring a bit more money than before when they would come on furlough. This is the major factor, which attracted the poor Gurkhas and the British Army service became fully a volunteer in real sense. The Kandangwas and the Tumbahangfes (clans of Limbu tribe) had boycotted this practice until mid 1970s terming it an extremely defamatory and slavish profession. These two Limbu clans are still considered much more educated in Limbu tribe. Hence, the number of ex-Gurkha soldiers from these two clans are found much few in towns such as Dharan, Itahari, Damak and Birtamod where most ex-Gurkha soldiers live, whereas their population at that time in hilly villages was larger than most other Limbu clans. This makes it clear that only a few youths joined the British army from these clans.

**Figure No. 1**

**Caste-wise Distribution of the Gurkhas during the Second World War**



Until that time, parents, brothers and sisters of the potential recruit used to hide their boys from recruiters and brokers. They vehemently discouraged and stopped their youths from entering the British-Indian army. Notwithstanding, most parents failed in this regard owing to evil elements,

i.e. inducements, conspiracy, brokers and persuasion. Ultimately, slightly better facilities and salary made the century old unpopular institution fully volunteer. Since then, its importance and popularity has ever been growing among Nepalese youths. In the recent years, thousands of potential youths present themselves in the selection process for only two hundred vacancies. But there is still a serious discrimination between Gurkhas and their counterparts. The discrimination issue will be dealt with in next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# GURKHA CONTRIBUTIONS

British-India began Gurkha recruitment tradition when the Anglo-Gurkha war (1814-16) was still going on. The British officers were already highly impressed with the intrepidity of the Gurkhas. They were, however, impatient to reascertain the loyalty of the Gurkhas. Soon after recruiting them in their army, the British had an opportunity to mobilise them in the war of Maratha (1817-18). The Gurkhas, in that war, displayed unswerving loyalty towards the British officers; this greatly helped remove the suspicion over Gurkhas if the British had any. The British officers retested the Gurkhas' devotion to duty by engaging them in the war of Bharatpur (1825-26). And again, the gallant soldiers fully proved their fidelity. Thenceforth, these soldiers have continuously been fighting for Britain. The major wars which they fought are dealt with below.

### **5.1 Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817-18)**

It is crystal clear that the Nepalese martial race people have fought along with Britain in almost all military confrontations right from 1815 till today. There have been numerous big and small wars fought by the Gurkhas particularly in India and abroad in general even before the first deadly World War was fought. They shed much sweat and blood in these wars to promote and strengthen the worldwide British Colonial rule. The Gurkhas underwent heavy human loss in all these years simply for the aliens. It is, however, a mockery that all the historians and some versatile writers have not mentioned even a few words in respect of these Wars. Almost all have only talked as to the First and Second World Wars and very few have dealt with sepoy mutiny of 1857. And the rest have not been dealt with except in regimental histories. It is an injustice to Gurkhas in particular as well as to Nepal in general. "During 1810s, the Colonial government had yet to usurp the sovereignties of

several Indian states and consolidate its power within and outside India. On that account, they were continuously fighting with various regional powers<sup>255</sup>." Immediately after the recruitment of Gurkhas, the British officers trained the Gurkhas and imparted various skills to make them of British standard. The founding father and the first commanding officer of Sirmoor battalion, Frederick Young after six months of training had reported to his headquarters that the Gurkhas were fit for active service. "But the important factor that emerged almost immediately after raising of the battalions was the enthusiasm of the British officers, who were convinced of the martial qualities of Gurkhas and wanted to test their worthiness in the British Indian Army<sup>256</sup>." Ironically, two years were to elapse before their wish was realised. The finest hill men (Sirmoor battalion) now joined General Sir David Ochterlony's army which was the first experience of war under the British command. In this campaign, David Ochterlony's army fought with perseverance and bravery against Maratha. This hard pressed the rebels to come to terms. "Only a village called Sambhar was there any opposition and the Sirmoor battalion as part of the reserve division, helped to take the place without difficulty<sup>257</sup>." This helped them earn a reward. More precisely, the Sirmoor battalion was selected to escort the 300 guns surrendered by the Maratha army to Delhi. This war completely crushed the power of Marathas and made them unable to raise their head again. "The wars subdued not only the native armies, but the native mind and taught the princes and people of India to regard the supreme command in India as indisputably transferred to a foreign power<sup>258</sup>." The East India Company Government, henceforth,

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<sup>255</sup> VC Reception Committee, *Gurkha VC Souvenir*, (Kathmandu: VC Reception Committee, 1994), p. 80.

<sup>256</sup> Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur, *The Gurkha: A History of the Recruitment in the British-India Army*, Third Edition, (New Delhi: Nirala Publication, 2000), p. 42.

<sup>257</sup> Brian Horrocks (ed.), *Britain's Brigade of Gurkhas*, Reprinted, (Great Britain: A Leo Cooper, 1994), p. 10.

<sup>258</sup> Vidya Dhar Mahajan, *British Rule in India and After*, Eleventh Edition, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co. (Pvt.) Ltd. 1973), p. 99.

enjoyed so much power in India that even the Emperor Aurangzeb had never enjoyed. Gurkhas also triumphed to win the heart and mind of their British masters through this test.

## 5.2 Battle of Bharatpur (1825-26)

First of all, Gurkhas of the British-Indian regiments underwent action in 1817 against Marathas. The Anglo-Maratha war further enhanced the prevailing glory of Gurkhas. Basically, “the Gurkhas were used against dacoits for about thirty years from the inception of recruitment. Yet, they sometimes had to participate in war<sup>259</sup>.” In 1825, Baldeo Singh, the King of Bharatpur passed away and a complicated situation followed. “There was dispute at Bharatpur after the death of the Raja. The British Government recognized the claims of the minor. Durjan Sal, the other claimant, started war preparations to vindicate his right<sup>260</sup>.” It led to the imprisonment of the young ruler. The British Indian Government took this incident seriously since it recognised the sovereignty of Balwant Singh, son of late King Baldeo Singh. “The move for restoration was initiated and a force of 21,000 men and 100 guns under the command of Lord Combernare was dispatched to siege the fort of Bharatpur. The Sirmoor and Nussuree [sic] Gurkha battalions actively participated in the battle displaying a spirit of unswerving loyalty to their new masters<sup>261</sup>.” They fought an awful battle in January 1826 that ascended Balwant Singh (legitimate king) to his throne and imprisoned the rebel. According to the regimental history of first Gurkha Rifles, “... the opponent suffered thirteen thousand casualties, of whom at least four thousand were killed<sup>262</sup>.” On Gurkhas part only 9 got killed and fifty five wounded.

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<sup>259</sup> Surendra K. C., *Gurkha Bharti, Katha, Byatha ra Andolan*, (Gurkha Recruitment: Tradition and Assertion) Kathmandu: Sabita Prakashan, 2005, p. 61.

<sup>260</sup> Mahajan, *op. cit.*, f.n. 4, p. 104.

<sup>261</sup> Rathaur, *op. cit.*, f.n. 2, pp. 42-43.

<sup>262</sup> D. S. Panesar, *The Roll of Honour and Honours and Awards, 1815-1947*, (Chandigarh: Azad Hind Store, 1994), p. 12.

Some Gurkhas, during the war, distinguished themselves from others by their outstanding feats. In recognition of the gallantry "Sub Kamalapati was promoted to the special rank of Subedar Major in June 1832 and Sword of Honour and a Khillat (robe of honour) presented to him besides a cash award of Rs. 1,000<sup>263</sup>." Above all, both Nasiri and Sirmoor battalions had earned their first battle honour "Bharatpur" which though, was approved only after forty eight years, i.e. in 1874.

### 5.3 First Sikh War (1845-46)

The Sikh army organised by the late King Ranjit Singh, for the first six years, was free of civil authority, and seemed rather as king makers. It became uncontrollable and "... it began to kill all those who came in its way<sup>264</sup>." During that crucial situation, war between the British and Sikh was inevitable. The British learnt that the Sikh occupied the formers' territory, which followed pillage, looting and destruction. But it is a British version. Presenting the incident as an excuse, General Sir Hugh Gough dispatched detachments to intervene in the situation. During the war, both Nasiri and Sirmoor battalions were mobilised and they fought with excellent valour as in the past. "After the battle of Mudki, the Sikhs retired to Ferozsha, where a very severe battle was fought, in which the English met with disasters unparalleled in the history of their warfare in India<sup>265</sup>." Yet, the Sikhs were defeated.

The major attack was to be launched by the first division comprised of Gurkhas at village Sobraon. It was done on February 10, 1846. But "the attack met stiff opposition and the division lost four hundred and eighty nine in the first half an hour and yet the attack was renewed<sup>266</sup>." The heavy loss on the

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<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>264</sup> Mahajan, *op. cit.*, f.n. 4, p. 162.

<sup>265</sup> B. D. Basu, *Rise of the Christian Power in India*, Vol. II, (Allahabad: R. S. Publications House, 1981), p. 877.

<sup>266</sup> Panesar, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 13.



British part provides an idea that the war was claiming hundreds of Gurkha lives. Having done a reorganisation, along with field guns and cavalry, three divisions of infantry tossed the Sikhs back into the river. Several hundred Sikhs were to die from drowning or from British fire. It was probably the severest fight, which claimed even the life of Captain Fisher, Commandant of Sirmoor rifle. Over one hundred Gurkhas of this battalion alone were killed or wounded. Five Gurkhas received Indian Order of Merit in the battle of Aliwal and Sobraon for the first time in history. Besides, these battalions added Aliwal and Sobraon battle honours to Bharatpur.

#### 5.4 Operations against Tribal People

The sixth Gurkha rifles underwent first operation in Cuttack district against rebellious Kols. Little information is available as regards the role played by this regiment in this campaign. The Kols displayed bravery and hardihood, yet suffered heavy casualties. "The corps at this time consisted of cavalry and artillery, as well as three companies of infantry, so that the first commander of the Regiment, capt [sic] Simon Fraser, had about 650 men under his command<sup>267</sup>." The strong force easily contained the Kols tribe.

The second Gurkha rifles underwent a tragedy in 1839 at the regimental base in Sadiya. "For the first time the regiment was commanded by an officer above the rank of major<sup>268</sup>." The commander, Lieutenant Colonel White tried to improve relationship with the local tribe Kampati despite that the Subedar Major had informed the commandant as to the rife of rumour of an impending attack against the regiment. Nevertheless, "just before daylight on 28 January 1839, the cantonment was suddenly attacked from three directions by a large force of tribesmen. Regardless of age or sex, everyone whom the tribesmen met was massacred, the magazine was taken, Col White was cut to pieces on his way to the lines and the Subedar Major

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<sup>267</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 15.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

died after a gallant fight in which he killed seven of the enemy<sup>269</sup>." The other companies of the regiment swiftly launched a counter attack. Now, the tribesmen were overpowered and broke into small factions; some hid in the jungle. Later, they were cornered near the Brahmaputra River, few escaped death or captivity and a large number were deported to various parts of India. Thereafter, they stopped disturbing activities.

Battle against the tribesmen, in those days, was very common. In the northeast border of Assam, Lieutenant Eden was given undertaking of capturing the chief of Mishmi tribe, Kishi Gohon. The chief was attempting to murder some French missionaries. Lieutenant Eden "selected twenty men, and after eight days of forced marching, swinging over dangerous torrents on bridges of single canes, experiencing bitter cold in the high ranges, and showing a wonderful endurance of great hardships, Eden's party reached the village on the banks of a river in the grey dawn of a misty morning<sup>270</sup>." At around dawn, this detachment raided the chief's house and captured him in bed. They sneakily took the captive back to their base and hanged him after a trial.

Gurkhas remained on active service in Assam between the Indian mutiny and the outbreak of First World War. These soldiers' major duty was to maintain and promote British interests in this area as industry developed. "In 1858 the Abors broke the peace with a murderous attack on a village near Dibrugarh. The Abors were expert shots with bows from which they fired poisoned arrows<sup>271</sup>." The troops assaulted the tribesmen but ended up in failure owing to uncooperative attitude of civil authority. Recriminations between Colonel Hanney and a civil officer intensely went on.

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<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

At long last, Colonel Harney with an amphibious force attacked three principal Abor villages. The valiant and unflinching defence of Abors caused forty five casualties. Even then the Gurkhas captured their villages.

The Nagas, Lushais, Abors and the other tribesmen always challenged the British authority. The Lushai was a wild tribe inhabiting the Lushai hills in the south east of Assam. "Their arms were primitive flintlock muskets, dahs, spears, and bows and arrows<sup>272</sup>." Being a savage and an aggressive tribe they had been creating a lot of trouble to their neighbours and the British authority. The Lushais frequently assaulted the neighbouring tea gardens and massacred many local coolies and some Europeans. "In one such raid, a British couple named Winchester from Elgin, Scotland, were among the victims. Their daughter Mary, then aged five, was abducted by the leaders of the raiding party<sup>273</sup>." Several negotiations, even with an offer of a reward to release Mary, did not materialise. Hence, the authority decided to dispatch a punitive expedition. "Two battalions were taken from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas to join a large force mounted under Brigadier General C.H. Brownlow<sup>274</sup>...." Many Skirmishes took place in the rugged terrain of Lushai hills. But the greatest battle ensued at Lal Gnoora on January 3, 1872.

The Lushai had evacuated their people and encircled the village with lines of nine-foot high bamboo spikes. They also created screens of smoke by burning their own property. A Gurkha rifleman, Indra Jit Thapa, selected a location under the cloud of smoke, then clambered over the stockade and launched an attack against the enemy. They found little Mary alive in which they had clear doubt. She was unharmed, no sign of malnutrition but for sure she had adopted the ways of the Lushais. Her parents were no longer alive.

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<sup>272</sup> Ronald Macdonell and Marcus Macanlay, *A History of the 4th Prince of Wales's Own Gurkha Rifles, 1857-1937*, Vol. 1, (London: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1940), p. 79.

<sup>273</sup> John Parker, *The Gurkha: The Inside Story of the World's Most Feared Soldiers*, (London: Head Line Book Publishing, 1999), p. 66.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Therefore, the authority sent her to Scotland and delivered her to her grand parents.

Manipur was a protected state, slightly larger than Wales, which lay in the southeast of Assam. "Since 1879 the Maharaja of Manipur had been a friend and an ally of the British. In 1890, however, a revolution in the state was engineered by the Senapati, or commander-in-chief of the Manipur Army, and the Maharaja had fled<sup>275</sup>." Mr. Quinton, chief commissioner of Assam, moved with a force to investigate into the issue and if deemed necessary, to deal with the rebels. Quinton and some officers accepted a cease-fire that followed a dialogue in the palace where Quinton and three other officers had gone without any escort. The Manipuris murdered them in cold blood. About 450 Gurkha troops were left behind in the residency and without knowledge of what had happened in the palace. They did not have any commander nor were they issued any orders. The rebels attacked them at night all of a sudden and even shelled. Two British officers Major Boileau and Captain Butcher had already fled from the residency. Some of the Gurkhas followed these officers but 270 were stranded behind. The stranded Gurkhas fought against the enemy until they had any ammunition. And they still fought with Khukuris and bayonets until they were subdued by the enemy's overwhelming number. As stated above "...the remaining 270 Gurkhas, all of whom were eventually captured or killed<sup>276</sup>." The government as such sent punitive forces. It had three columns that consisted of 42<sup>nd</sup> regiment and the first battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkhas.

It ensued a light fighting. Rebel leaders were captured and the claimant was brought to justice and hanged. Thereafter, peace prevailed in Manipur. "Always to remain in the men's memories were the marches across forest clad hills in great heat; each man carried a grey coat, waterproof sheet, 170 rounds

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<sup>275</sup> Macdonell and Macanlay, *op. cit.*, f.n. 18, p. 95.

<sup>276</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 69.

of ammunition plus all his other kit<sup>277</sup>." This statement implies the hardest life of Gurkha troops. During this campaign, cholera claimed thirty two lives of the 2nd Gurkhas out of fifty eight cases. The 42<sup>nd</sup> regiment also lost fifty eight soldiers from the same disease. According to the British army historians, cholera and malaria during this period used to claim more life than the enemy.

Thus, the Gurkhas had to be engaged in hundreds of such big and small operations in the course of promotion and consolidation of the Colonial rule within and outside India for which thousands of invaluable Gurkha lives were sacrificed.

## 5.5 The Indian Mutiny (1857-58)

The Indian mutiny, a significant event in the history of the British rule in India, triggered off in Meerut on 10 May 1857. Britain and India have different perspectives as to this event. Britain calls it Sepoy (soldier) Mutiny whereas India asserts it as the first war of independence. This issue, however, will not be analysed here.

The mutiny, like wild fire, quickly spread throughout India; only the Gurkhas remained unaffected. The major reason of the mutiny was the newly issued Enfield rifles to the British-Indian forces. The rumour was widespread that cartridges of the new rifle were coated with pig and cow's fat. "To both Hindu and Muslim soldiers, who had to bite off the end of the cartridges to release the powder, it was an outrage to their religious feelings as the grease was alleged to be a mixture of pig and cow fat<sup>278</sup>." For this reason, the mutineers assumed it as an unprincipled design rather than an accident in an attempt to convert the Indian soldiers to Christianity. Gurkhas did their best to convince them by demonstrating on a musketry course that there should be

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<sup>277</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 32.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

no problem in using the greased cartridges. But the native soldiers still refused to use them. "Eighty-five soldiers were chained for refusing to use the new cartridges and became the focal point of the mutiny<sup>279</sup>." These soldiers got freed by their comrades and involved in indiscriminate killings and after that headed for Delhi to join their colleagues. Rebels also attacked on Cawnpur and Lucknow where they vastly outnumbered the British soldiers. The British authority pulled in Gurkhas from all quarters to intercept the greater number.

The Gurkhas were playing a crucial role in defence of the British positions in Delhi. But the British were hard-pressed holding out in Meerut, so the Sirmoor battalion was ordered to get to this location at the earliest. To this end, the Gurkhas had to march forty eight kilometres a day in the blazing heat of the Indian summer in war order. They were assaulted by a large group of assailants en route from Dehradun to Meerut but the assailants were overpowered, captured, tried and shot if found guilty. Here, the Sirmoor battalion unexpectedly received another order to move to Delhi to support a British force under General Archdale Wilson, which was under attack. They proceeded to the new location by marching all night, another forty three kilometres. This contingent was welcomed by 60<sup>th</sup> rifles with rousing reception but could not respond owing to intolerable exhaustion. Some rebels attempted to persuade this detachment to join them. Thereupon, the Gurkhas pretended as if they would, and proceeded towards the rebels. But when they reached less than twenty five meters away from them, the Gurkhas charged them killing forty scoundrels. Henceforth, the contingent "met numerous attacks, often by as many as 8,000 rebels at a time, eventually in hand-to-hand combat with Kukris drawn<sup>280</sup>." The preceding incident abundantly substantiates that the Gurkhas always devoted themselves to their masters with complete loyalty, perseverance, discipline and matchless valour. Above

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<sup>279</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 44.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

all, they rebuffed the inducements offered by the rebels. "... The Gurkhas proved their worth again at Chanda, when a column of eleven hundred men attacked and dislodged a force of five thousand rebels posted in a strong and well-chosen position aided by very efficient artillery. ... Further successful actions were reported during November, until the Gurkhas had established a great reputation for marching and fighting<sup>281</sup>." The mutiny exploded in Meerut but was essentially confined to Bengal army. There were 55,000 Indian soldiers between Bengal and Calcutta who all turned rebels except five thousand Europeans.

Delhi was occupied by 10,000 rebels. So, it was quite difficult to defeat the assailants. British commanders had realised the fact and the preparation was already underway to launch a major assault. To help the Sirmoor battalion, the Kumaon battalion was called to Delhi. On August 1, the aforementioned two Gurkha battalions arrived in Delhi. "Brigadier John Nicholson, known as the lion of the Punjab, personally led the assault on Delhi at the head of the Kumaon Gurkha Regiment; around 8,000 soldiers of other units, including the main column provided by the 52<sup>nd</sup> foot, followed them in<sup>282</sup>." Then, there followed a fierce battle. Brigadier Nicholson and Major Reid who had commanded the column of 2,500 got wounded. Finally due to the joint effort of Sirmoor and Kumaon battalions, Delhi was freed from the hands of rebels on September 20, 1857. The suspicions and disbeliefs as for Gurkhas, if there was any in the mind of the British masters was this time completely removed. Commanding officer Major Reid by virtue of severe wound lost consciousness. A Gurkha carried him on his back and delivered to a hospital where he got a second life.

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<sup>281</sup> Nigel G. Woodyatt, *The Regimental History of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles (1815-1927)*, (London: Philip Allan and Co. Ltd., 1929), p. 33.

<sup>282</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 47.

Soon after the start of the rebellion, Nepalese Prime Minister Jang Bahadur showed his acute desire to help Britain in that critical juncture. Jang Bahadur immediately sent off 3,000 Nepalese soldiers under the command of Colonel Pahalman Singh Basnet. Another contingent was dispatched under Hira Singh to liberate Gorakhpur which was seriously threatened. Later, these contingents were mobilised in Ajamgarh and Jaunpur areas, which contained many rebel groups of thousands in strength.

Jang Bahadur loosing patience "... hurried to the help of the British with a force of 8,000 men, which was later increased to 14,000 men (a very large force for Nepal)<sup>283</sup>." The number of Nepalese soldiers that was dispatched in aid of British-India differs from scholar to scholar. Jang Bahadur defeated the rebels in Gorakhpur and restored the authority of the British. It followed a deliberation between Jang Bahadur and the authority concerned over the strategy to be employed to recapture the Lucknow city. "In several days of action, Jang's Gurkha forces captured the famous Chattar Manzil and the Moti Mahal. Finally, the Gurkha assault on the Kaisar Bagh completed the relief operation at Lucknow<sup>284</sup>." Thus, the Nepalese army, under the command of the prime minister himself, played a pivotal role to quell the rebellion of tens of thousands. Being highly impressed with the excellent performance of Gurkhas, "... twenty five Indian Order of Merit awards were given to men of the Sirmoor Rifles during the siege of Delhi, twelve won by line boys, the sons of serving soldiers<sup>285</sup>...." Until that time, it was the highest award that could be conferred upon Gurkhas. From that time on, Gurkhas are called Rifleman instead of Sepoy. In actual fact, it brought about many changes, essentially in British attitude with regard to Gurkhas. British-India, being extremely grateful to Nepal for her crucial help, returned the Terai area of Nepal ceded after the Anglo-Nepal war. On the whole, without both Gurkhas' and Nepalese army's vital role, Britain would have

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<sup>283</sup> Asad Husain, *British-India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal from 1857 to 1947*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Minnesota University, 1965), p. 87.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>285</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 46.



been expelled from India then and there. Ironically, the Colonial regime extended by another ninety years.

## 5.6 The Second Afghan War (1878)

The intransigent attitude of Viceroy Lord Lytton had strained their relationship with Sher Ali, the Amir of Afghanistan. The state of affairs further deteriorated when Afghanistan formally and publicly received Russian embassy with which British-India was on the verge of war on account of Turkish complications. There was no alternative but to accept war. British troops along with sufficient logistic support departed for Kandhar on October 12, 1878. "Owing to the rough nature of the stony tracks, the gun bullocks broke down from the severe strain, while their bleeding hoofs were so sore they could do no pulling. It was then a case of man-handling. March after march, men of the 59<sup>th</sup> foot, 60<sup>th</sup> Rifles and 3<sup>rd</sup> Gurkhas dragged these heavy guns over rock and sand, through water and shingle, along cliffs and precipices and up considerable ascents<sup>286</sup>." They, however, did not undergo any heavy clashes. "On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, 1879, the Amir Sher Ali died and was succeeded by his son Yakub Khan, who, soon after his accession, notified his willingness to open negotiations<sup>287</sup>." Most British troops returned to India but Gurkhas were ordered to stay on in an adjacent village. About a month later, they suffered from an epidemic of cholera, which claimed forty two lives.

In due course, the ulterior motive of the new ruler Yakub Khan clearly became manifest. "The British envoy to His Highness the Amir of Kabul, Sir Louis Cavagnari, and his entire escort had been murdered by the Afghans<sup>288</sup>." The shock in India, soon transformed into indignation that was followed by preparations for punitive action in the greatest speed. Second

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<sup>286</sup> Woodyatt, *op. cit.*, f.n. 27, p. 40.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>288</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 35.

Gurkha rifles, under the command of Brigadier General McPherson at Charasiah, were to launch an assault against a large body of Afghans. They had held a strong position on a hill. Initially, their steady fire pinned down the attackers. Nevertheless, they were later put in danger, thereupon they fled. General Frederick Roberts, with four brigades under his command, left for Kandhar from Kabul. Commanding Officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkhas, Colonel Battye sustained a bullet wound in the shoulder. Yet the village was captured the following day. They came across a large enemy group composed of some thousands armed with guns. Combined force of the Gurkhas and the Scots hill men charged the enemy, overran and even captured the guns. British side lost a few hundred whereas the enemy's loss was over one thousand. "In this campaign the Gurkhas were engaged in every theatre of war including Robert's famous march from Kabul to Kandhar, and had highly impressed the commander-in-chief with their fighting qualities<sup>289</sup>." Britain conquered Afghanistan by extensively using Gurkhas. After all, British-India decided to raise second battalions for each of the five regiments.

## 5.7 Younghusband Mission (1903-04)

Both Russia's growing interest in Tibet and the latter's unwillingness to establish relationship with British-India implied an imminent outbreak of war. "As a result, British-Indian government took a decision to send off an expedition to Tibet<sup>290</sup>." Captain Younghusband expedition set out for Tibet, which also included the 8<sup>th</sup> Gurkha rifles. "They were, on this occasion, to become Gurkha cavalry, although they were not well versed in the equestrian arts and kept falling off their horses. They were given small packhorses rather than proper cavalry mounts so that they did not have so far to fall<sup>291</sup>." Having learnt of this expedition, Chandra Shamsheer called a meeting of

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<sup>289</sup> Purushottam Banskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British-Indian Army*, (New Delhi: Nirala Publication, 1994), pp. 87-88.

<sup>290</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 32.

<sup>291</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 71.

barons, and insisted in favour of British-India, though the barons were against it. His offer of troops, however, was politely rejected but accepted the loan of several thousand yaks and porters for transportation.

Sometimes, this force had to fight at a height of 18,000 feet. There were, as such, seventy cases of snow-blindness and the Gurkhas had to remain thirty six hours without food. A supply column was struck by a snowstorm. "After defeating the poorly armed Tibetan forces in a number of engagements, he [Younghusband] advanced first to Gyantse and finally to Lhasa, which was occupied on August 3, 1904<sup>292</sup>." Younghusband and his party, except some missionaries and pilgrims, entered the city of Lhasa as the first Europeans. In this expedition, Lieutenant John Grant and Sergeant Karbir Pun were awarded VC and IOM respectively. IOM can also be considered equal to VC, for IOM was the only highest decoration, which could be conferred upon Gurkhas until then.

## **5.8 The First World War (1914-18)**

The youths of Nepalese martial race had been continuously furthering Britain's imperialist goals for the last one-century by the time the First World War began.

"The leading echelon of the South Asian contingent, which primarily consisted of the Gurkha battalion, landed in Marseilles on October 1, 1914; and was given a warm splendid reception by the French people<sup>293</sup>." All men, women and children swarmed the Gurkhas and laughed and cheered throughout the route. "... They were at that time totally unsuited, completely unprepared, badly equipped, wearing the wrong clothes and with arms that were barely adequate to fight rebels on the North West Frontier in nineteenth

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<sup>292</sup> Leo E. Rose, *Nepal Strategy for Survival*, (Bombay: John Brown, 1971), p. 157.

<sup>293</sup> Prem R. Uprety, *Nepal: A Small Nation in the Vortex of International Conflict*, (Kathmandu: Pugo Mi, 1984), p. 75.

century India, let alone the guns and gas of the German war machine in the world's first mechanical war<sup>294</sup>." Nor had they known the real causes of war. Even the senior-most Gurkha officers did not know at all, what exactly they were fighting for.

On 30 October they were posted in the trenches vacated by the Europeans a little northeast of *Neuve Chapelle* in France. "At dawn, their baptism of fire began when German shell fire rained down relentlessly on them in the cold, miserable and mud-filled, stinking dugouts, followed by an infantry attack in the late morning against the right flanks of the 2/8th position<sup>295</sup>." It caused a severe loss on the part of Gurkhas. In the first twenty four hours, 6 British officers, 4 Gurkha officers and 146 other ranks got killed, and 3 British officers and 61 other ranks wounded. After the nightfall, they were sent to billet. They returned to battle having simply three days' rest and remained in the battlefield for another nineteen days. During that operation, they lost about a quarter of their troops. Another fighting near *Festubert* proved too dreadful. In one action alone, the losses were 1 Gurkha officer and 22 other ranks; 5 British officers, 1 Gurkha officer and 22 other ranks were wounded. After some dreadful actions, its strength was awfully reduced. Only 293 men managed to survive but even they were severely affected by frostbite and trench foot. "Elsewhere in the main sectors, the battle continued and was nothing short of a bloodbath, so that by the offensive pattered out in November, the Allies had lost nearly a quarter of a million men and gained to advantage whatever<sup>296</sup>." The following statement helps make a more clear assumption: "1200 yards gained, 12,000 men lost<sup>297</sup>." It implies the highest ever intensity among the wars fought until then. By the fall of November 1914, more Gurkha battalions were dropped in France. The first battalions of 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and the second battalions of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 78.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>296</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 50.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Gurkhas underwent several fierce fighting. One of the biggest battles was fought in the southern part of France where the seventh Indian division was involved. In one of the skirmishes of this battle Rifleman Kulbir Thapa, on 25 September 1815, displayed an unprecedented valour. As a mark of respect and inspiration, he was, for the first time in Gurkha military history, conferred the highest medal – the Victoria Cross.

The first greatest devastating war in the human history went on relentlessly until 1918. The number of deaths and casualties surged. The assertion of Mary Des Chene makes it further clear: “as war casualties mounted, the news filtering back into Nepal made enlistment even less popular. In their (Ranas’) eagerness to supply recruits, the Ranas told the British in 1915 to stop sending notices to the families of men who were wounded. The British thereafter sent only death notices<sup>298</sup>.” The British owing to shortage of martial race recruits also accepted non-martial race recruits such as the Newars, Tamangs and the Sherpas. At long last, they accepted even prisoners. A regimental clerk accounts to one of his friends as regards the intensity of the war in a letter in the following words:

This war is very terrible. There is no safety for a man on the earth, or under the earth, in the air, or on the sea, strong fortresses are overturned like dust, what chance then has anything else? When the artillery fires continuously, hills are converted into dust heaps, and the same thing happens to ships on the sea. Under the sea, submarines go and fight. On land, poisonous gases and liquid fire are used. Under the earth, mines are dug and exploded 200 or 300 yards away. In the air ‘Aeroplane’, ‘Zeppelin’, ‘Fokker’, etc., make war among themselves.... The fighting is not confined to one locality. It is spread all over the world. From all this it would seem that the god is displeased with the people of the world.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Mary Katherine Des Chene, *Relics of Empire: A Cultural History of the Gurkhas 1815-1987*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1991), p. 151.

<sup>299</sup> Tony Gould, *Imperial Warriors: Britain and the Gurkhas*, (Great Britain: Granta Publications, 1999), p. 183.

Perhaps, no other words can exactly describe the intensity of the war better than the above account. Despite tremendous loss and hardest time, the Gurkhas played a decisive role in the war of France. And that ultimately restored France.

Gallipoli was a front where another dreadful war was fought. General Sir Ian Hamilton had seventy thousand troops to fight against the joint army of Germany and Turkey. That included 1/5th, 1/6th and 1/10th and later 2/10th and 2/5th Gurkha rifles. "On 25 April 1915, the expeditionary force prepared to land on five sites around the locations of Cape Hellas on the peninsula and at An Burnu, 12 miles (19 kilometres) or so north<sup>300</sup>." The allies' troops came ashore and moved towards the objective with little opposition. But at An Burnu, the Turks were lying in the trenches from which they fired ferociously against this force. The ferocious fire compelled the allies to turn back losing 5,000 men. The 1/6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha battalion led one of the major operations in Cape Hellas area. At the end of a skirmish, the Gurkhas had to resort to hand-to-hand fighting. In this operation, Gurkhas decapitated twelve enemy troops in addition to a large number shot dead. On the part of Gurkhas, 18 were killed and 42 wounded. Other Gurkha battalions also used Khukuri to a great extent with striking effect. The Turks lost 10,000 men in a week whereas British casualties crossed 70,000. Though General Hamilton was satisfied with the outcome of the war, the situation by then had become appalling. "... the heat, flies and dysentery continued to plague the living soldiers while the dead lay unburied and rapidly decomposing in No-Man's-Land<sup>301</sup>." For this reason, the Gurkha battalions always suffered shortage of reinforcement.

Now their mission was to capture hill Q. In order to capture the hill, 20,000 reinforcement was received. The terrain was extremely rugged and steep which was covered with dense prickly clumps of scrub. They had no

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<sup>300</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 92.

<sup>301</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 76.

alternative but to overcome the hardships. The troops began to move along the beach but found difficulty in the absence of reconnaissance. The movement of columns was much delayed since the guides lost their way. "Seven and half hours after scheduled time, the main attack by the right assaulting column whose strength on the spot amounted to four and a half battalions, was opened with five companies<sup>302</sup>." They at once met heavy rifle and machinegun fire that badly affected the leading troops and pinned down the 2/10<sup>th</sup>. They clung to the position under heavy and incessant fire from the crest. Orders were received for a fresh attack. Here, 1/6<sup>th</sup> advanced to the crest of the ridge, which ensued fierce fighting. "The 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas did not accept defeat and throughout the day they tried to inch their way forward, gaining some fifty yards only and then being forced to fight desperately for the positions they had won<sup>303</sup>." During this battle, the south Lancashire and the Warwickshire regiments arrived for help. After a quick reorganisation, a joint troop, i.e. Gurkhas, British, Australian and New Zealander, assaulted the hill Q. The right flank managed to reach simply fifty metres below the crest but then was forced to stand still by heavy fire and bombardment from hill Q. The Turks quickly realising the adversity of the enemy, counter attacked and forced 10<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas to turn back. The following morning accurate naval bombardment was carried out in the Turkish position. It soon turned into a mass of smoke and dust and things like that flew in the sky. Then and there, the joint force dashed the position that followed hand-to-hand fighting for about ten minutes. Gurkhas used Khukuris and others used rifles and pistols as clubs. By now, the Turks being over-powered fled. Then the entire peninsula came in British hands. This deadly battle caused 12,000 British casualties but the Turkish losses were much higher. General Sir Ian Hamilton ascertains the Gurkhas' decisive role in Gallipoli in the following words: "... each little Gurk might be worth his full weight in gold at Gallipoli<sup>304</sup>." It is

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<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>304</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 92.

needless to add anything on Hamilton's assertion since it rationalises itself the Gurkha role in superb words. "... casualties during the Gallipoli expedition totalled 205,000 out of 410,000 called into service there; the French sustained 47,000 casualties out of 79,000 men, and the Turks between 250,000 and 300,000 out of 500,000<sup>305</sup>." The figure above provides a crystal clear picture with regard to the vast size and intensity of the battle, which was fought by Gurkhas in Gallipoli peninsula.

"During the four years of other wars the soldiers of the Gurkha Brigade fought and died in France, Flanders, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Gallipoli, Salonica and Palestine<sup>306</sup>." On the Mesopotamia front, on account of blazing heat and malaria 2/7 alone lost 450 people. Corporal Harka Raj Rai distinguished himself in this battle by using his Khukiri against Turks to the greatest extent while his scream was *Ayo Gurkhali* (Gurkhas are upon you), which encouraged others as well. This scream has proved blood curdling for all enemies of Gurkhas until today. "On this front, thirteen Turks were decapitated<sup>307</sup>." Turks were also fighting with equal bravery. Hence, General Townsend's troops utterly failed to materialize their mission in the battle of Baghdad. It lost 4,600 soldiers. Though two divisions reinforcement was received, it still could not succeed. On the contrary, 21,000 troops were killed or wounded.

A major offensive against the Turks was yet to be launched. For this major attack, Major General Frederick Maude assumed command; he was provided a massive force of 166,000 men. It included 1/2<sup>nd</sup>, 4/4<sup>th</sup>, 1/7<sup>th</sup>, 2/9<sup>th</sup> and 1/10<sup>th</sup> Gurkha battalions. This large contingent en route to Baghdad confronted several clashes. Despite the severe challenges and difficulties, the troops succeeded in entering Baghdad on March 11, 1917. The offensive,

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<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>306</sup> Madan Kumar Bhattarai, *Diplomatic History of Nepal*, (Delhi: Madan Kumar Bhattarai, 1990), p. 34.

<sup>307</sup> K. C. *op. cit.*, f.n. 5, p. 185.



however, claimed, "4,335 officers and 93,244 other ranks maimed or wounded and 29,700 lost their lives<sup>308</sup>." The commander of this offensive Major General Frederick Maude also died of cholera. But the British government, later on, accepted that lives were unnecessarily sacrificed for a dirty, unattractive city of fetid alleys. Thus, Gurkhas made tremendous contributions in all theatres during the First World War.

In addition to this, the oligarchic government led by Chandra Shamsher also voluntarily contributed in cash, in kind and by providing loans out of Nepalese state's army as much as it could. Moreover, it did not leave any stone unturned to supply Gurkha recruits to maintain Gurkha strength in the British-Indian army. To procure sufficient number of recruits, persuasion and inducements were also employed. "The Durbar even went so far as to say that those who served the British during the war would be considered to have been in the service of their own country<sup>309</sup>." It clarifies how much the then feudal ruler had submitted to ingratiate himself with British-India. All these strategies employed helped supply over 200,000 finest hill infantrymen during the First World War. To meet the ever-growing demand and to ease the recruiting procedure, recruiting depots in Nepal were also increased to ten. The total number that joined the British Gurkha regiments was 25% of the total male population of the martial class.

As mentioned earlier, Chandra Shamsher lent 7,501 men for the first time. They were employed for garrison duty to relieve other soldiers to be sent abroad. "A second contingent of 4,000 troops was sent to India in December in 1915<sup>310</sup>." Likewise, third and fourth contingents were also dispatched under the command of Lieutenant General Kaisher Shamsher and Major General Sher Shamsher respectively. In total, over 15,000 Nepalese soldiers were lent to the government of India.

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<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>309</sup> Husain, *op. cit.*, f.n. 29, p. 259.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

Last but not least, contributions in cash and kind were also provided. The following table shows the actual help:

**Table No. 10**  
**Contributions in Cash**

Year	Amount	Occasion/Purpose
September 1914	Rs. 300,000	To purchase machineguns for Gurkhas in the British-India army
January 1916	Rs. 300,000	
January 1917	Rs. 300,000	
1918	Rs. 200,000	On the happy occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the auspicious wedding of their Imperial Majesties the King and Queen of the British Empire

Source: Bhattarai, Madan Kumar, *Diplomatic History of Nepal (1901-1929)*, 1990, p. 36.

Additional contributions in varying amounts were given to hospitals and other humanitarian activities, like war funds with 'princely liberality.'

**Table No. 11**  
**Contributions in Cash**

Year	British-Indian Rupees	Nepalese Silver Coins
1917 & 1918	10,100000	2,500000

Source: Bhattarai, Madan Kumar, Diplomatic History of Nepal (1901-1929), 1990, p. 36.

**Table No. 12**  
**Contributions in Kind**

Materials	Amount or Quantity
Cardamoms	40,000 pounds
Tea	84,699 pounds
Broad-gauge sleepers for Indian railway (free of royalty)	200,000 (Sal timber, <i>Shorea robusta</i> )
Sisham logs ( <i>Dalbergia sissoo</i> ) (free of cost)	220 pcs.
Jacket	200 pcs.
Great coats	12 pcs.
Blankets	quantity unknown
Vickers-Maxim guns	31 pcs. (on the auspicious birthday of His Majesty the King Emperor (1915))

Source: Bhattarai, Madan Kumar, Diplomatic History of Nepal (1901-1929), 1990, p. 36.

The above help in cash and kind for a small and poor nation like Nepal was really a great thing. "It was not founded on obligation but upon goodwill and sympathy<sup>311</sup>." It was the remark of Asquith, the then Prime Minister of Britain. Though, Nepal was totally unrelated to the causes of the First World War, it moved heaven and earth to provide all possible help for Britain.

## 5.9 The Second World War (1939-45)

It is said that the seed of World War II was sown in the treaty of Versailles as it was extremely humiliating to Germany. World War II began simply after two decades of the World War I and once again the entire

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<sup>311</sup> Bhattarai, *op. cit.*, f.n. 52, p. 38.

humanity directly or indirectly was entangled in the vortex of the war. In this war “... a quarter of a million men are said to have been recruited into approximately fifty-five battalions of Gurkhas<sup>312</sup>.” In this regard, some scholars maintain that there were about forty-five Gurkha battalions.

Like in the World War I, Gurkhas virtually fought in all fronts such as North Africa, Europe, Middle-East, South-East Asia and Burma. Formidable attacks of Germany caused Britain’s ally France to capitulate in June 1940. In that critical situation, the then Nepalese Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher was approached for additional twenty battalions of Gurkhas. The Prime Minister’s reaction was as follows: “... does a friend desert you in time of need? If you win, we win. If you lose, we lose<sup>313</sup>.” This Prime Minister also, as his predecessors, fully submitted to India. Ironically, national resources of Nepal were also placed at the British disposal.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Gurkha Lorried Infantry Brigade under eighth army was mobilised in Italy. It included several battalions of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> regiments. In this front also, intrepid little Gurkha soldiers demonstrated unprecedented valour, unflinching loyalty and highest standard of discipline. Two brave Gurkhas Rifleman Thaman Gurung and Rifleman Sher Bahadur Thapa fought ignoring the shower of enemy bullets thereupon, earned world famous VC medals. Woefully they succumbed to death in the battlefield. Four VCs and some World War II Gurkha veterans were interviewed in detail by Himal Book and it is published in book form, entitled *The Story of Lahure*. In that book major Bharati Gurung states:

They were landed at *Taranto* in southern Italy. The sea was covered with the American/British warships and the sky was with fighter planes. The fighter planes would fly as eagles in the sky and dropped big house size bombs. They fought in *Gothic* line (permanent German defence), presumably the hardest war in Europe during World War II. Shower of bombardments and shelling were always incessant. He alone lost nine soldiers. He himself was shot two times. However,

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<sup>312</sup> Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentlemen, Gurkhas in the Western Imagination*, Second Edition, (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2003), p. 31.

<sup>313</sup> Walter Waker, *Fighting on*, (London: New Millennium, 1997), p. 220.

Gurkhas conquered this front. Major Bharati Gurung earned an MC, a medal which is one step lower than VC.<sup>314</sup>

*Gothic* line was the well-fortified German defence built in months. The fall of this defence demoralised the Germans and became one of the principal factors of defeat. "Two Lieutenants Bakhan Dhoj Rai and Harka Jit Limbu cut off six and five German soldiers into two respectively. Britain suffered a terrible setback at Hangman hill. In this battle, ninth Gurkha rifles lost 815 soldiers<sup>315</sup>." It means loss of a virtual battalion. In that place, "a giant boulder still bears the ninth Gurkha's badge, (crossed-Khukuries) carved on the rock<sup>316</sup>." It symbolises the Gurkhas' sweat, blood, toil and immense sacrifice, which was devoted to Britain.

*Cassino* was another front, which proved costly for the British army. It was defended by a large German force. According to one of the war veterans, Lal Singh Gurung, "German location was on a high ridge whereas Gurkhas were on a low ridge. Despite several attempts to occupy the enemy location, British army was repulsed. The loss was heavy on Gurkha side<sup>317</sup>." One of the principal reasons of failure was the disadvantageous position. At last, eighth army was mobilised. "... the Germans were unable to withstand an assault delivered in such unexpectedly overwhelming strength. They gave way and both Monastery Hill and the road to Rome were captured at last<sup>318</sup>." The enemy withdrew to the North. The Gurkhas and all other soldiers enjoyed euphoric days of victory by entering the towns and villages in Italy and having heady Italian wine. Santa Bahadur Rai who fought this

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<sup>314</sup> Basanta Thapa and Mohan Mainali (ed.), *Lahureko Katha* (Story of Gurkhas Soldiers), (Kathmandu: Himal Kitab, 2002), pp. 24-25.

<sup>315</sup> K. C., *op. cit.*, f.n. 5, p. 211.

<sup>316</sup> Uprety, *op. cit.*, f.n. 39, p. 223.

<sup>317</sup> Thapa and Mainaly, *op. cit.*, f.n. 60, p. 58.

<sup>318</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 104.

battle asserts: “blockading of supply of provisions pushed Germans to retreat. About 700 Gurkhas died in this battle<sup>319</sup>.”

Enemy forces also met similar fate. The British army bravely and successfully resisted an Italian invasion and booted them out of Libya. In addition succeeded in “... capturing 130,000 prisoners, 400 tanks and 1,290 guns<sup>320</sup>.” It was really a great victory, which to the greatest extent helped boost Gurkhas’ morale. The 2/7<sup>th</sup>, 2/4<sup>th</sup> and 2/5<sup>th</sup> were involved in this battle. British side lost 500 life and 1,373 wounded. Following this unpleasant incident, Hitler was compelled to change his war strategy and chose his ablest General Rommel to encounter the British army.

Burma front, in real sense, proved most effective and touching, where the Gurkhas had displayed their matchless valour. Out of nine Victoria Crosses conferred upon the Gurkhas in World War II, six were earned in Burma. Surprisingly, two of them were received by Gurkhas of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles in one single operation. The British had to fight in three phases in Burma. In the first two phases, it was to retreat. Needless to say, Gurkhas were the decisive force in the disastrous war of Burma. Again, number of Gurkhas in Burma was greater than the number of Gurkhas engaged in rest of the fronts.

A heroic battle was fought to conquer a bridgehead at Mogaung in Burma. The small contingent was under the command of Rifleman Tul Bahadur Pun. The objective of this contingent was to destroy the bridge, which was hitherto under the control of the Japanese in order to check the advance of the British army. “How suicidal was this mission is indicated by the fact that the three separate groups of British, Chinese and African commandoes who had volunteered for this task had perished leaving no survivors. Besides about 500 allied comrades had already perished in the

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<sup>319</sup> Thapa and Mainaly, *op. cit.*, f.n. 60, pp. 65-66.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

enemy's assault<sup>321</sup>." Tul Bahadur Pun and two other soldiers did an epic feat to ascertain the mystery of the bridgehead which had cost hundreds of precious lives of the allies. Tul Bahadur Pun realised it was the only entrance to the city; and hence it was heavily guarded by Japanese troops with heavy modern weapons. Even a small noise in the vicinity of the bridge followed a heavy shelling and rain of bullets. Tul Bahadur, as such decided to employ a different strategy for which he conducted an experiment from a safe position. "At 10 p.m. he tapped at the bridge with a long stick and to his surprise shells and bullets fell on top of the bridge like rain. He again repeated the same experiment at 1 a.m. and all was calm and quiet<sup>322</sup>." He assumed that the enemy had slept and dared to cross the bridge at the dead of the night. He witnessed the Japanese were sleeping with their brenguns and machineguns. After this successful experiment, Tul Bahadur launched an attack on the bridge in the post-mid-night hour; as expected the bridge easily fell to them. The legendary feat of Tul Bahadur Pun VC and his comrade in arms made possible the Gurkha battalions to proceed towards Mogaung city, which was heavily fortified by the Japanese. "His outstanding courage and superb gallantry against all odds, which meant almost certain death, was inspiring to all ranks and beyond praise<sup>323</sup>." To respect his outstanding valour, he was awarded a Victoria Cross.

The Japanese army, all of a sudden, dropped bombs in Rangoon in December 1941. It was quite unexpected for the British army. It followed a fierce battle and the British army had no alternative but to retreat. "The Japanese made for Rangoon and, in particular, sought to seize the Sittang Bridge, a vital link if their advance was not to be held up<sup>324</sup>." The Japanese chased the retreating British army and by the time the latter arrived at the

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<sup>321</sup> Uprety, *op. cit.*, f.n. 39, p. 227.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>324</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 120.

Sittang Bridge, the situation was desperately shocking. Four battalions of Gurkhas were under heavy and continuous Japanese attack and were made incompetent to join up with the bridgehead force. Overall control was lost. In this critical juncture, General Smythe had to make a bold and less harmful decision in a few minutes. "Then, at five-thirty a.m. on the 23rd two tremendous flashes lit the sky, followed by explosions. For a short time there was a complete silence and those still on the east bank of the Sittang did not know whether the Japanese had seized the bridge and blown it up or whether it had been destroyed by the British<sup>325</sup>." Since it was no longer possible to hold on the bridge, General Smythe sacrificing thousands of his troops made the terrible decision to blow the bridge up. Nar Bahadur Chhetri, a retired Major and participant of this operation states:

A division British troops was still across the river. All soldiers jumped into the 1,000 metre wide Sittang river after the demolition of the bridge to avoid bullets which were showering upon them. The river was fully covered by the troops. Only 2,500 out of 9,000 troops managed to survive by swimming across the river. He also swam across. All of them abandoned their accoutrements and weapons in the water.<sup>326</sup>

Thereafter, the authority concerned issued orders to troops to come to Punjab on their own. After the withdrawal of the British army from Burma, Japan ruled Burma for three years. Major Nara Bahadur Chhetri en-route to Punjab witnessed an extremely pathetic and shocking scene. The most pathetic and unthinkable incident in line with him was: "An infant was sucking his dead mother's breast. His father simply looked on him for a while and with a heavy heart and tearful eyes proceeded<sup>327</sup>." En-route from Burma to Punjab, hundreds of soldiers, women and children died owing to diarrhoea, malaria, hunger and epic journey. "Only 800 Gurkhas arrived in

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<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>326</sup> Thapa and Mainaly, *op. cit.*, f.n. 60, p. 95.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.



Punjab out of 9,600<sup>328</sup>." Some of them might have been stranded but most died.

Later, having completed a thorough reorganisation, the British army, essentially Gurkhas, re-launched attacks against the Japanese army in Burma. On several fronts, menacing battles were fought. The magnitude of loss was considerable. Moreover, the British army struck a fatal blow against the Japanese. "Of 100,000 Japanese who marched on Manipur, it is estimated that 75,000 were killed or died of wounds, disease or starvation<sup>329</sup>." "Eventually, the World War II in Burma formally came to an end only on August 15, 1945 as Japan herself unconditionally capitulated.

### 5.10 The Malayan Emergency (1948-58)

As soon as the Second World War had concluded and since Britain's interests were already fulfilled, huge demobilisation of Gurkha regiments began. For the British government the strength of Gurkhas had now reached to an anti-climax, which was actually commenced with smuggling of recruits. What an irony? Britain transferred four Gurkha regiments out of ten each with two battalions to Malaya as an integral part of the British national army. The Gurkhas, soon after their transfer, were engaged in epic war. This time, their enemy were communist terrorists (termed by Britain) who were earlier trained by Britain to fight against the Japanese during the Second World War. They would be based in interior parts of dense Malayan jungle, camps cleverly stationed and well hidden. Above all, the enemy approaches were carefully guarded round the clock. "Strengths varied considerably and, at the start of the emergency, numbered about 5,000 active soldiers, far lower than the armed forces<sup>330</sup>." But the Gurkha regiments were severely in shortage of well-trained soldiers partly because of the huge demobilisation and partly

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<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>329</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 137.

<sup>330</sup> J. P. Cross, *In Gurkha Company: The British Army Gurkhas, 1948 to the Present*, (London: Arms and Armour Press Limited, 1986), p. 27.

because of the unwillingness of the Gurkhas to choose the British regiments over the Indian regiments. "Before the recruits had even learnt how to fire their rifles they were sent to guard key points in the towns, where their orders were to refrain from loading rifles but to use the kukri or bayonet instead<sup>331</sup>...." The British officers underestimated the ability of the communist terrorists, as they had not undergone a revolutionary war, totally different from the World War they had recently fought. They had assumed it would probably be over by Christmas.

On the contrary, the dreadful games of hide and seek continued for more than a decade. "What became known as the Malayan Emergency, a communist-led revolution against imperialist rule, had been simmering since the end of the war and came to the boil on 16 June 1948 when Chinese communists murdered three British rubber planters<sup>332</sup>." In swift response, the Gurkhas were to launch monotonous patrols to seek and kill the terrorists. The Gurkhas designated the vast stretch of 643 kilometre Malayan peninsula as green hell. The climate is very hot, wet and the land is mostly covered by dense tropical rainforest and marshes. The troops while moving into the overgrown rubber, as dawn was breaking came under heavy enemy fire. The company commander, "Major Richardson, ordered his left hand platoon under the company Sergeant Major to go round the left flank and cut off the bandits, while he with No. 4 Platoon charged straight in<sup>333</sup>." Major Richardson, as he was a skilful soldier, killed three bandits himself with his gun while the rest attempted to run across the paddy field. Now they confronted with the cut off Gurkha group and were hit by rain of bullets. The Gurkhas found twenty-five enemy dead bodies but lost one rifleman. "By March 1950 the CTs (communist terrorist) had taken a hefty toll 863 civilians, 323 police officers and 154 soldiers had been killed. The terrorists had also suffered, largely at the hands of the Gurkhas, and the casualty figures were

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<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>332</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 177.

<sup>333</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 149.

1138 killed, 645 captured and 359 surrendered<sup>334</sup>." Captain Dil Bahadur Gurung, a Malayan emergency veteran, despite his pangs of conscience, was chosen to join the British regiment. He asserts "the bandits were adept in making weapons. The Gurkhas were to attack large groups of bandits but they used to fear the Gurkhas. The bandits used to convey messages to dissuade Gurkhas. The Gurkhas, however, did not know then that they were not their enemies. This veteran claims that he killed many enemies<sup>335</sup>." Another veteran of Malayan emergency Major Bharati Gurung recollects the war thus: "Gurkhas now had to fight against Chinese terrorists. The foes were spread all over jungle. They would eat all wild animals available in the jungle. The jungle was infested with malaria, terrible wild animals, poisonous snakes and scorpions. Life in Malaya was so hard which is in fact beyond expression. Notwithstanding, they fought as usual being fully loyal to their traditional masters<sup>336</sup>." To come to Malaya for the Gurkhas, in real sense, was to open the box of Pandora. The Pandora's Box haunted the plain speaking Gurkhas for the eighteen-long dreadful years.

Numerous clashes and skirmishes occurred between the Gurkhas and the foes. Capture and surrender also took place in large number. However, the insurgency did not seem to be concluding soon. That being the case, General Sir Harold Briggs introduced fresh strategies hoping to end the war earlier. His first plan was "... to close down 410 Malayan villages, most of them shanties inhabited by Chinese, and move the Inhabitants to fortified regions, thus out of contact with the terrorists<sup>337</sup>...." For the reason, that the shanty dweller Chinese were fully cooperative to terrorists. Second strategy was to sternly check their supply of provisions by manning long range patrols of Gurkhas. The Gurkhas conducted up to twelve-week long patrol carrying eighty pound weight on their back. The implementation of this strategy made

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<sup>334</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 178.

<sup>335</sup> Thapa and Mainaly, *op. cit.*, f.n. 60, p. 74.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>337</sup> Paker, *op. cit.* f.n. 19, p. 179.

some headway in tracking, arresting and killing the elusive Chinese terrorists. Besides, the then High Commissioner to Malaya Gerald Templer, an ex-General, originated an idea designated as “hearts and minds<sup>338</sup>.” He maintained that pouring troops into the jungle could not render any solution. The solution to the greatest degree: “... lay in winning the hearts and minds of the Malayan people with kindness, gifts, where necessary, some unofficial corruption<sup>339</sup>.” Some practical ideas of some generals combined with indomitable Gurkha valour, at long last, brought the communist terrorists to their knees. Gurkha soldiers, as in the past, bagged hundreds of gallantry medals but the gallantry was displayed for unknown reasons.

The war formally ended in 1958. Some military experts assert that the Malayan emergency would have turned another Vietnam for Britain, if Gurkhas had not fought on the side of Britain. Moreover, Gurkhas’ perpetual fighting for eleven years stopped Malaya from turning a communist state.

### **5.11 Brunei Revolt (1962)**

Malayan emergency was followed by the Brunei revolt. It occurred on December 7, 1962, under the leadership of A.M. Azahari. He had threatened to take over the control of the state. The rebels attacked police stations, Prime Minister’s office and palace. They held fifty Europeans as hostages. As the appeal was made to Britain for help, two Gurkha companies of 1/2 Gurkha rifles then stationed in Singapore were rushed into Brunei to rescue the Brunei Sultan (king). Later, more troops were mobilised.

A number of clashes occurred but without significant loss. D Company on December 9, came under enemy fire that made a few casualties including a British officer. The British officer subsequently died. “For three weeks the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Goorkhas operated day and night against the rebels, seeking them out in the jungle, killing a few but bringing the majority of them back

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<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

into captivity<sup>340</sup>." The number of prisoners was simply over eight hundred. Some rebels fled to Indonesia as they heard that Gurkhas had landed in Brunei to fight against them. "In the process of quelling the rebellion, the king of Brunei who was hidden in a toilet was rescued unharmed along with fifty other European hostages<sup>341</sup>." In this significant job, Gurkhas' role is highly praiseworthy. For this reason, the king turned extremely grateful to Gurkhas. The speed of Gurkhas to land in Brunei, the determination displayed by them and basically the best fighting quality and image of the Gurkhas concluded the revolt earlier than expected and without much loss.

## 5.12 The Borneo Confrontation (1963-66)

Peace reigned in Brunei but the spark of uprising flared across the border into Sabah and Sarawak. Britain was responsible for the defence of the above mentioned two states. "Those states, it was hoped, would join the Federation of Malaya to form a powerful and stable alliance. The 'Mad Doctor' Sukarno was doing his damndest to prevent it<sup>342</sup>." Sukarno's evil intention, in fact, caused the four year long guerrilla war by attacking a police outpost in Sarawak. This was followed by a multitude of patrols, attacks and ambushes in the vast stretches of Indonesian/Malayan border area and sometimes even deep into Indonesia. "The Gurkhas especially had had the Walker principles of ambush and jungle warfare drummed into them more golden rules: instant recognition of human tracks, urine, crushed grass, footprints, broken twigs and so on. When they made camp, no rifleman was allowed to eat, smoke or unscrew his water bottle without his platoon commander's permission<sup>343</sup>." Sentries posted would be ordered to prod any

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<sup>340</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 165.

<sup>341</sup> K. C., *op. cit.*, f.n. 5, p. 142.

<sup>342</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 187.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

soldier if they made any sound while asleep. It appears they observed highest level of discipline.

The Gurkhas' prime duty displayed numerous feats in the course of guerrilla warfare. One of the boldest actions worth mentioning was carried out by Lieutenant Indrajit Limbu and Lance Corporal Nanda Bahadur Rai. This officer had only fifteen men when enemy bullets were rained upon them. However, "... without hesitation, the platoon charged the enemy displaying great courage<sup>344</sup>." In this bold action, two Gurkhas succumbed to bullet injury but all nine enemies were accounted for. Indrajit Limbu and Nand Bahadur Rai earned MC and MM respectively. The Gurkhas "... hunted the raiders remorselessly, every company taking its turn in eliminating the enemy. Helicopters shifted the groups of Gurkhas into cut off positions to seal the enemy's escape; boats navigated the creeks and inlets, taking troops to new and from old positions, foot patrols, in the more accessible areas, knitted a web around the Indonesians to prevent them from breaking contact<sup>345</sup>." D Company was posted in a swampy area to cut off the enemy's escape through that route south to the frontier. Their dogged effort, finally, realised them twenty dead enemies, thirteen captured and another thirteen surrendered. An American general made a remark in respect of South Asian turmoil that "... only well disciplined troops such as Gurkhas, under experienced and capable leaders, could have won the successes that were obtained<sup>346</sup>." For the reason that the intensity of the Borneo confrontation was in no sense less than that of Burma campaign that held at the latter part of the Second World War.

Lance Corporal Ram Bahadur Limbu owing to his distinguished feat proved a legendary soldier. "The Indonesians occupied a strong position on top of a high, sheer-sided hill which could only be approached along a knife-edged ridge. By superb field craft, the leading man reached a point, barely

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<sup>344</sup> Cross, *op. cit.*, f.n. 76, p. 103.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

twenty yards from the enemy position in complete silence<sup>347</sup>." An enemy gunner opened fire which wounded one of Ram Bahadur Limbu's support groups. Ram Bahadur, without hesitation, dashed forward and killed the enemy gunner then and there. This action followed a concentration of fire against Ram Bahadur's group which wounded two of his men. Ram Bahadur posted his men in a better firing position and then attempted to evacuate his wounded men. "His first attempt at crawling forward failed under accurate fire, Ram Bahadur decided that speed alone might give him a measure of protection, so by a series of rushes, he reached one of the wounded men, covered by fire from his own comrades, the young NCO carried him to a position of safety<sup>348</sup>." The enemies were looking for an opportunity to shoot at him but bold Ram Bahadur did not hang back. He bid to dash forward but was pinned down by the heavy enemy fire. He rushed forward once more to hurt himself by the side of the second wounded soldier. He shouldered the wounded man and got back to a safe location as fast as he could through hail of enemy bullets. Thanks to god, he got back unhurt. Ram Bahadur Limbu recalls that "his group completely destroyed the strong enemy defence. They killed twenty four enemies and occupied all the weapons that the enemy had. He carried both dead and wounded soldiers to a safe position<sup>349</sup>." On February 22, 1966, Ram Bahadur Limbu learnt that he was going to get a medal for an outstanding job. But he still did not know what medal he would be conferred upon. A number of officers and well wishers congratulated him. He knew only when a general announced in an official function that it was the world famous Victoria Cross medal. He is the last Gurkha VC recipient. An author rightly observes the Gurkhas' feats that were demonstrated all through eighteen years in South East Asian wars. His remark runs thus:

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<sup>347</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 169.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>349</sup> Thapa and Mainaly, *op. cit.*, f.n. 60, p. 142.

Gurkhas accomplished the job without any problem in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia which the US failed to do in Indo-China. The guerrilla war virtually continued for two decades and ended in 1966. Britain escaped safely out of the epic war on account of Gurkha bravery. Otherwise, Malaysia would have turned another Vietnam for Britain. During that time, Gurkhas were the best element in the world in that kind of jungle warfare. Soldiers of western nations did not have experience and competence to fight in such hot and tropical climate.<sup>350</sup>

It was natural for Gurkhas to brave the Malayan jungle because they were brought up in hilly and dense jungle lying in extremely rugged and steep terrain. Furthermore, their inherent qualities, i.e. hardihood, bravery, unswerving loyalty and high standard of discipline added them to be the best of all. May be they, throughout their life, recollect their second home (1948-66), the swamp and the jungle of Malaya, that creates a nostalgic emotion.

### 5.13 Peace Time Duty in Hong Kong (1967-82)

The conclusion of the South East Asian guerrilla warfare followed a sixteen-year peace. The Gurkhas shifted to their new home in Hong Kong. Hardly had they finished their administrative arrangements, some problems erupted on the border of Hong Kong and Red China. Relationship between Britain and China then was not cordial. But the problem was solved without any delay. By 1970, it relaxed and “the scowls of the sentries on the other side of the border changed to smiles<sup>351</sup>.” Major part of Gurkha duty in Hong Kong was to arrest Chinese illegal immigrants who would try to come to Hong Kong to seek better future. The illegal immigrants were prepared to put their life in jeopardy in an attempt to get rid of Chinese brand of communism. The number of illegal immigrants was ever growing. “The climax was reached in mid-1979 when nearly 90,000 were arrested<sup>352</sup>....” To meet the

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<sup>350</sup> K. C., *op. cit.*, f.n. 5, p. 143.

<sup>351</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 174.

<sup>352</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 214.



ever growing challenge, a new Gurkha battalion (2/7<sup>th</sup>) was raised in 1981. It was due to the effective and efficient performance of Gurkhas that already over-crowded Hong Kong was saved from being swarmed with communist refugees. Hence, the Gurkhas earned high respect from the Hong Kong people.

Another duty entrusted to Gurkhas in Hong Kong was to maintain internal security. So, they were kept busy in doing high standard of internal security training whenever they were free from border duty. But nothing unfortunate took place as Hong Kong is a homogenous nation as regards religion, culture, language, etc. In addition, it is a democratic and developed country under the British. Last but not least, Gurkhas always beat the British regiments and used to set new records in army related competitions such as running (sometimes with load), drilling, shooting and field exercise. Gurkhas, a number of times, became best shooters in the entire British and many nations' armies. The prizes were given away by Queen Elizabeth herself for the best shooters. Despite the new types of duties and various competitions, the Gurkhas, as the duty was far easy than the jungle warfare in South East Asia, took a sigh of relief and enjoyed the peace time environment to the fullest.

#### **5.14 Falklands War (1982)**

In 1982, 7<sup>th</sup> Gurkha rifles, with little warning received orders to move to Southampton and embark on the Queen Elizabeth II (QE). The QE II is a large, seven storey ship which is considered the most expensive in the world. The ship, boarded with most feared soldiers in the world (Gurkhas), bounded for Falklands, the place which was invaded and occupied by the Argentineans for about a month ago. This time, the Gurkhas had to take up arms against the Argentineans. "1/7 GR had indeed trained very hard since its arrival in England in 1981 and the soldiers were both in a different frame of mind and fitter, militarily and physically, than the other two battalions of 5 infantry

Brigade<sup>353</sup>....” It is a fact that Gurkhas had always been given hard training and kept in an alert condition. Therefore, it was natural that Gurkhas were fitter than the British soldiers.

Reputedly, the British are the greatest propagandists. And they know very well that psychological warfare plays a vital role in war. In order to realise this end, media was invited to report on the Gurkhas before their departure to Falklands. “Photographs of the Gurkhas sharpening their kukris and action shots of them charging across a field were published around the world<sup>354</sup>....” Moreover, much appalling and fearful things under huge headlines were published in soldier magazines. The Argentinean soldiers read “... who get high on drugs, eat babies and kill prisoners<sup>355</sup>.” All this information, most likely, created fear rather than disgust in the mind of adversaries. However, they had no alternative but to wait with bated breath for the arrival of these reputedly barbarous troops in the British uniform.

Quite a long voyage on the QE II proved a very pleasant time for Gurkhas. One Gurkha’s emotion regarding the ship is as follows: “Such a ship had to be seen to be believed. Why, it was even larger than any building I have seen back home.... Never have I slept in such beautiful surroundings or in such a big soft bed nor perhaps would I ever again. If I was to go to war, then there is no better way to go<sup>356</sup>.” It is said that the ship is the most expensive and luxurious in the world. It can accommodate many battalion troops. It can carry numerous fighter planes and helicopters that can take off and land simultaneously. The ship has almost all facilities ranging from parade grounds, sports fields, swimming pools, gymnasiums, hotels, restaurants, bars to discotheques. However, it does not mean that they indulged in the ambience of the ship all day and night. They had rather engaged in training from dawn to dusk which included fitness, minor tactics,

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<sup>353</sup> Cross, *op. cit.*, f.n. 76, p. 173.

<sup>354</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 218.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>356</sup> Horrocks, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, pp. 199-200.

weapon handling, command and control, communication skills, etc. After twenty one continuous days on the sea, they landed at Sancarlos and proceeded to Goose Green. Thereafter, they had to march towards an objective with full kit and additional load to carry during which, the foes sighted them and followed mortar shelling. It wounded a Gurkha Captain and three riflemen, though not seriously.

On 13<sup>th</sup> June, the battalion received new orders. They were now part of the fifth brigade going to attack after midnight on 14<sup>th</sup> June. "In extremely difficult country, moving slowly in single file with illuminating shells of all kinds lighting up the sky and crisscrossing the hills in front of them, the battalion was nearing its start point when part of the column was hit by enemy gun fire<sup>357</sup>." The incident followed a long and frustrating wait. It was at this point when white flags were seen waving over Port Stanley. The Argentinians surrendered and the war came to an end. "In total eight Gurkhas were wounded but two seriously. A Corporal died while clearing minefield planted by the enemy<sup>358</sup>." Most importantly, Gurkhas' best soldierly image played a major part in achieving a bloodless victory in Falklands. Otherwise, thousands more lives would have been lost. This is a strong belief maintained by many British Generals and Officers.

### **5.15 Gulf War (1991)**

When Saddam Hussain, President of Iraq, annexed Kuwait in the fall of 1990, the US declared war on Iraq. British army as part of the allied force, decided to deploy Gurkhas. But this time, they did not send infantry soldiers. They sent 28 Squadron Gurkha Transport Regiment and 250 Squadron Gurkha Signals in support of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> armoured brigades in the Gulf war. Both corps units discharged their duty extremely well and once again proved that Gurkhas were capable of operating in any theatre of war with any role. It

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<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>358</sup> K. C., *op. cit.*, f.n. 5, p. 151.

was due to the *en masse* surrender of the Iraqi army hardly the ground war had begun; the war concluded. Thereupon, it did not render any human loss on the part of Gurkhas.

Subsequent to the Gulf war also, Gurkhas have been mobilised in actions one way or another. The wars Gurkhas engaged in are Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001) and second Iraq war (2003). Sadly, the war of Kosovo claimed life of Sergeant Bal Ram Rai while clearing minefield. Death of Bal Ram Rai followed a world wide bitter criticism against the British government owing to paltry pension and compensation provided for Bal Ram's widow. It was one of the incidents through which the world learnt that the world's best soldiers have been severely discriminated by the champion of democracy and human rights. "The then British minister for defence was vehemently condemned in the parliamentary committee<sup>359</sup>." Thereafter, the British government increased the pension and compensation of the Gurkha soldiers but still faraway from equal. Therefore, there are some Gurkha ex-army organisations that have been fighting for equality.

In recent times, Gurkha recruits are more educated than British recruits. They can cope with any sophisticated technology and can be both effective and efficient at any theatre of war. John Parker asserts that "... if anyone wanted to do the research, they will find that Gurkhas were better students, more receptive to further education and embarrassingly better educated than many of the British recruits<sup>360</sup>." This treatise was written about eight years ago. Things have changed a lot between then and now. Hence, these days, still more educated and talent Gurkha recruits have been recruited into the British army.

The discussion in the above chapter adequately convinces that Gurkhas' contribution to Britain is really immense. In this regard, one author writes as follows: "there is probably no place on earth where Gurkhas were

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<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>360</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 242.

not engaged wherever there was a threat of war, and have been employed at the frontlines in every British military campaign<sup>361</sup>.” Ironically, Gurkhas are always worst treated.

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<sup>361</sup> D. B. Gurung, “Prejudice against Gurkha Veterans”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 24 June 2006, p. 4.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CURRENT STATUS OF GURKHAS

#### 6.1 Discrepancies between the British and the Gurkha Soldiers

Gurkha is one of the essential elements to make Nepal known abroad. The British officers of the Gurkha regiments gave this term to the simple-minded youths of martial races (Rai, Limbu, Gurung, and Magar) that hail from the foothills of the Himalayas to the service of the British crown since 1815. This term, as time passed, became quite famous across the world as the innocent speaking people displayed matchless feats in all wars fought by Britain in most parts of the world. History of Gurkha feats is nearly two-centuries old. During that long history, the Gurkhas unfailingly maintained their unflinching loyalty, exceptional bravery, and made an immense sacrifice for Britain. Though Britain accounted them otherwise, "... they have bled, suffered and feared like any other human being who goes into battle<sup>362</sup>." It was their compulsion and moral obligation to show outstanding bravery on the war fronts as front-line soldiers to earn their livelihood. Hence, they did it as far as they could. Britain, in spite of that, demobilised the poor fellows empty handed and bare footed as soon as her interests were fulfilled. Britain did not value the colossal contribution made by Gurkhas; quite the opposite they were dishonoured by committing discrimination against them. The points of major unjust treatment are dealt with below.

##### 6.1.1 Unreasonable Salary

Gurkha soldiers' salary was almost non-existent as long as they served in India under the British Colonial rule. There was no clear provision as regards this point. It remained a discretionary issue of high ranking British

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<sup>362</sup> GAESO International Committee for Justice, *Racial Discrimination and Human Rights Violations by the United Kingdom against British Gurkhas and their Families*, (Kathmandu: GAESO, 2001), p. vi.

officers. Padam Bahadur Gurung, President of Gurkha Army Ex-servicemen's Organisation (GAESO) claims that "they were given only pittance before 1947 just to buy boot brush, polish, and toiletries and for travel expenses to go home on furlough<sup>363</sup>." It seems true. It is due to this reason that post-retirement economic status of the British Gurkhas did not become any better than before they had joined the British-Indian army service. The elderly parents and young wives could not carry on the farming and household business properly when the young sons or husbands were away from home. Thus, they lost what they had by reason of the exorbitant interest rates of local moneylenders. On the other hand, having achieved victory in the Second World War, Britain demobilised Gurkhas *en masse*. By the time the war ended, exhausted soldiers reached home, the pittance Britain gave them would have already finished. And the life of destitute would begin. Thousands of unfortunate Gurkhas lived a life hardly any better than of poor peasants, many with maimed or amputated limbs in the remote hilly country of Nepal.

After the independence of India (1947), Britain withdrew to Malaysia with four Gurkha regiments to have dominance over South East Asia. Gurkhas' condition in Malaysia also did not improve. QGO Major Saran Kumar Limbu, a veteran of Malaysian insurgency, states that the "salary after conversion in Malayan Ringgit would be \$45. The soldiers were not allowed to draw more than \$10 for monthly expenses. The condition of the Gurkhas was a little better than a street beggar<sup>364</sup>." This researcher also experienced this kind of restriction in the UK in 1981. The army authority did not sanction to draw more than 30 sterling pounds for monthly expenses. It was not an easy job to withdraw more than the above said amount even after a full justification was furnished. The company 2IC (QGO captain) would at all times discourage in bossy manner to draw any further. This veteran further

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<sup>363</sup> Oral Interview, Padam Bahadur Gurung, President of GAESO, 28 September 2005.

<sup>364</sup> Written Interview with Saran Kumar Limbu, ex-British QGO major, 6 September 2005, p. 3.

asserts that “almost all the Gurkhas after spending two months of leave would go bankrupt and had to borrow money from friends and relatives to complete the rest of their leave<sup>365</sup>.” It was a common practice during 1960s and 1970s. Hence, this author also witnessed their poverty-stricken life. Another QGO Lieutenant Akal Bahadur Meyangbo maintains that “I never expected 17 hours hard work everyday, half fed, very little pay, harsh treatment and discrimination<sup>366</sup>.” There was always a gap of 10 to 15 times as regards pay and pension between Gurkhas and their British counterparts. The pathetic condition of Gurkhas remained unchanged until early 1990s. This author can recollect that till early 1990s, monthly salary of a ‘C’-grade Gurkha soldier (there were three grades in soldier rank) was 700 Hong Kong (HK) dollars whereas the lowest paid Philippine maid servant (at that time their number was 100,000 in HK) would get 4,000 dollars. The irony is that the British and Chinese soldiers then would draw over 10,000 dollars. It is due to the downright low salary that 85 percent Gurkhas who retired before 1995 failed to build even a one-storey house in town. Some of them did not have even a small plot of land in town to build a house on.

The Gurkhas would always be confined to barracks from early morning to late evening by compelling them to work as *corvee* labourers. They would be kept utterly isolated from outside world and vice-versa. They could seldom go to downtown to buy clothes or some other things only for a short time when they were to come home on leave. That is too, after completing long and complicated procedures. The hardest thing was to get permission from barracks in-charge. The barracks world was totally unaffected by the outside world. The outsiders were also kept fully ignorant of how the Gurkha soldiers were treated beyond the Gurkha army fence. They, however, became unsuccessful in saving any money, because as explained above they used to

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<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>366</sup> Written Interview with Akal Bahadur Meyangbo, ex-British QGO Lieutenant, 8 September 2005, p. 2.



get extremely pathetic pay. The pathetic pay was also meant to buy the things, which were essential to continue the soldier profession.

The modern houses of ex-British Gurkhas which one can see in cities is not the product of the British military service but the outcome of second, third and even fourth employments beyond the British army. Gurkha retirees of that time including this writer would reach home without any savings. Afterwards, they had no option but to look for some other employment at the earliest. Most joined Gurkha Reserve Unit (GRU) in Brunei; an illegal ex-British Gurkha army organisation. They earned so much money there in two years, which they could not earn in fifteen years from the British army. Brunei sultanate used to give 10 times more to the ex-British Gurkha soldiers in GRU Brunei than in British army service. "British officers who were working then in GRU wanted to keep this point secret as far as they could<sup>367</sup>." Having completed GRU service, some of them as luckiest persons got some job in sultanate's palace as security guards. The salary was exceptionally handsome in this profession. And again, a large number of Gurkha retirees began second employment in Hong Kong. In latter years, they have even been working in luxurious tourist ships, in Japan, Afghanistan and in Iraq. Thus, "it is only in the last decade or so that the Gurkha soldiers and their dependents have shown better lifestyle to the extent that their own countrymen are jealous<sup>368</sup>." The above analysis amply proves that the better economic status of Gurkhas of today is not owing to the British army service but because of other employments that offered far handsome money than Britain. After all, one should ponder how many generations of Gurkhas lived the life under the sword of Damocles and what a heavy sacrifice they have made for Britain to arrive at this stage? And, what a hard life they lived both during their service and after retirement? Now it is clear that the real motive of Britain was to

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<sup>367</sup> Press Statement Released by GRU Committee, Kathmandu, 21 December 1998, p. 2.

<sup>368</sup> D.B. Gurung (ed.), *Nepal Tomorrow: Voices and Visions*, (Kathmandu: Koselee Prakashan, 2003), p. 634.

provide them just lentil and rice and use them in wars as disposable things to the greatest extent. Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, legal advisor of GAESO and a human rightist, strongly argues, "They had been treated like slaves and bonded labourers<sup>369</sup>." Almost all Gurkhas and most intellectuals who possess some knowledge of Gurkha recruitment agree on the above version. Geoffrey Bindman (GAESO's UK based lawyer) and others submitted a working paper in an international conference on the plight of the Gurkhas organised by GAESO, states that "... the 1947 Tripartite Agreement between Britain, India and Nepal which formalises Gurkha recruitment has been becoming an increasing source of discontent among Gurkhas, given that Nepal was not a party to the elements of the agreement relating to pay<sup>370</sup>." The British government has implemented a provision of bilateral treaty concluded between Britain and India. Gurkhas and their lawyers strongly argue that the provision does not bind Nepal, since Nepal is a sovereign independent country, as well as not a party of the treaty. It becomes further clear through discussion of inhuman treatment towards Gurkhas in many other areas.

### 6.1.2 Unfair Pension

Regarding pension, there is all the time an unbelievable gap between the Gurkhas and English soldiers. Bhakta Sher Rai, a former British Gurkha soldier maintains that "his pension just in 1996 was only 13 sterling pounds whereas his counterpart used to draw 500 sterling pounds. It is not only unfair but a heinous crime<sup>371</sup>." Due to this unjust treatment, Gurkhas' post-retirement life turned considerably poor. They have realised now that they joined British army solely to suffer hardships, insults and destroy their

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<sup>369</sup> Written Interview with Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, Legal Advisor of GAESO, 14 September 2005, p. 1.

<sup>370</sup> Geoffrey Bindman *et. al.*, Working Paper Submitted in an International Conference on Plight of the Gurkhas, Kathmandu, 18-20 September 1999, p. 1.

<sup>371</sup> Written Interview with Bhakta Sher Rai, ex-British Gurkha soldier, 28 September 2005, p. 3.

conjugal life and household. Hundreds of thousands of former Gurkha soldiers have already died down and out in the last two centuries. Some VC holders (highest British military medal) do not have even a small house of their own and have been living in ancestral homes. One can easily imagine from this bitter fact how impoverished life they lead in inaccessible hills of Nepal. British lawyers assert that "... British ex-Gurkhas continue to receive a similar pension to Indian ex-Gurkhas, which is often up to twenty times less than that of a British soldier<sup>372</sup>." It suggests the incredible size of gap. Over and above, former British Gurkha soldiers and former Indian Gurkha soldiers cannot be compared as the former lived in rich countries during their service such as Hong Kong, UK, Brunei, etc. In consequence, British Gurkhas developed different culture and could not make any savings on account of mere peanuts but high living standard. British Gurkhas could enjoy furlough only after three to four years' forced separation from their families. Indian Gurkhas' case is completely different. They enjoy more or less the same culture as that of Nepal but frequently come home on leave. And, they could save some of their pay, however little that is, for the living standard is the same.

There are some awful facts, which imply the moving condition of Gurkha war veterans. Kamal Mohan Giri enlisted in the British army on 21 October 1943, and participated in the on going Second World War. He was discharged in 1946, now aged 84. "He lives in a one room hut with his wife and another Sadhu (or holy man). The hut which they call Ashram (place of meditation) is made of stone and mud and the roof is corrugated iron<sup>373</sup>." After an epic struggle, he is given a welfare pension of about 17 pounds. That is yet not enough to support his living and is supplemented by alms and charity from local people. Lachhuman Gurung, aged 88, veteran of the World War Second is also living a poignant life. "I live with my eldest son and

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<sup>372</sup> Bindman *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 9, p. 3.

<sup>373</sup> Ian Macdonald QC *et. al.*, *The Gurkhas: The Forgotten Veterans*, (Kathmandu: GAESO, 2005), p. 56.

daughter in-law. They do not want me with them but I have nowhere else to go. I sleep in the corner of the kitchen<sup>374</sup>." British army service, as such, has made Gurkha war veterans' life redundant, isolated and a burden to others. Durga Bahadur Sunuwar, another British war veteran, lost both his legs in enemy machinegun fire. He is now too old and frail. "He maintains his livelihood by begging<sup>375</sup>." Bishnu Joshi served in British army from 1939 to 1947. He fought throughout the World War II and lost his genitals while fighting against the Japanese. To our dismay, "he, at the age of 88 lives on begging and sleeps in den and temple and mostly in the street<sup>376</sup>." Bhakta Bahadur Pariyar joined British army in 1964. He participated in the Indonesian confrontation in the dense tropical jungle of Malaysian peninsula. "These days, he and his two sons stitch cloth on the footpaths of Dharan while his wife helps him<sup>377</sup>." These are only a few examples. As mentioned earlier, tens of thousands died by now and thousands still are living a hard life. Besides, another spine breaking strategy of Britain is to peg Gurkha pension to Indian currency. This policy often proved a heavy blow to Gurkha pensioners. Since, Nepalese and Indian currencies are ever weakening against British currency. The table below evidently shows the surging trend:

**Table No. 13**

**Exchange Rate**

1967 Pound 1 = NC Rs. 21.30	1977 Pound 1 = NC Rs. 21.31
1987 Pound 1 = NC Rs. 35.08	1997 Pound 1 = NC Rs. 103.00
2007 Pound 1 = NC Rs. 140	

Basic Pay			
1987	Pounds	1997	Pounds
Major (QGO)	102.43		35.75
Capt (QGO)	82.52		29.64
Lt (QGO)	70.39		25.98
WO 2	56.12	WO 2	20.16

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>375</sup> *Sanghu Weekly*, 15 January 2001, p. 2.

<sup>376</sup> *Space Times*, 17 January 2001, p. 3.

<sup>377</sup> *Nepal Samachar Patra*, 17 April 2001, p. 3.

CSgt	55.29	CSgt	19.51
Sgt	52.91	Sgt	19.01
Cpl	49.51	Cpl	17.79
LCpl	48.50	LCpl	17.42
Rfn	47.33	Rfn	17.00
Recruit	36.41	Recruit	13.08

Source: Nepal Ex-Servicemen Association's News Bulletin No. 2, 3 November 2004, p. 4.

The above table provides a window into how Gurkha pension is moving downward instead of upward. The Nepalese currency is weakened by over 300 percent between 1987 and 1997. And, in the same proportion, the Gurkha basic pay has been decreased. The very basic pay is the base given as pension to Gurkhas. Had it been quoted in sterling pounds, the pension of a Gurkha rifleman would have been over 100 pounds by 1997; even though Britain had maintained a traditional increment system, i.e. 8 percent maximum. Thus, it is due to the British deceptive tactic, a Gurkha junior rank's pension remained below 60 pounds even after 192 percent or so increment by 2000.

As late as 1990s, a Gurkha soldier's monthly pension was only about 25 pounds. That is, too, after many times of increment by 1990s owing to Gurkha retirees' movements. On the contrary, an English soldier had over 500 pounds. Therefore, retired Gurkha soldiers organised themselves taking advantage of the restored democratic condition in Nepal and established an organization called Gurkha Army Ex-servicemen's Organisation (GAESO). Ever since its establishment, it has been working very hard under the leadership of President Padam Bahadur Gurung and human rights lawyer Gopal Siwakoti Chintan. There are some other former Gurkha soldiers' organizations but this is the one, which commands the popular support of Gurkha retirees. During the course of its twelve-year movement, it has carried out a lot of pressure programmes to eradicate the nationality based two-century old grave discrimination. The pressure programmes include from submitting memoranda to both the governments (Nepalese and British),

protest rallies, mass meetings, sits-in, press conferences, international conferences to several delegations to take up grievances with the Nepalese government, political parties and leaders. Sadly, they have not yielded any fruit. "Major reason of failure is indifference of the Nepalese government. To Gurkhas' dismay, Nepalese government sometimes became a stumbling block<sup>378</sup>." Late Harka Gurung fully agrees with this view. He has written a foreword to Lionel Caplan's *Warrior Gentlemen: Gurkhas in the Western Imagination* where he mentions thus: "this book is about marginalisation of the Gurkhas at home and abroad. At home, they were used as diplomatic currency to align the rulers with an imperial power. Even today, they remain marginal since the Gurkhas are primarily ethnic tribals while the power structure is monopolised by the high castes<sup>379</sup>." As stated by Harka Gurung, Gurkhas have become victims of exploitation and discrimination both within and outside. Again, the Nepalese government does not lag behind in delivering lip service but never took up Gurkha issue seriously and sincerely with the British government. Harka Gurung, in another book entitled *Gurkha Recruitment: Tradition and Assertion* authored by Surendra KC, maintains as follows:

The Government is not serious as the large majority of Gurkhas belong to ethnic tribe and the nation is always ruled by aristocratic class. Hence, they are persecuted through two different policies of the two governments: first, apartheid policy of Britain; and second, racial policy of Nepal. The Gurkha movement is an internal and nationalities' issue in the context of the Nepalese government and external and national in the context of the British government. But in the struggle with external power, former Gurkhas have become orphans in the absence of the government's sincere help.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Siwakoti Chintan, *op. cit.*, f.n. 8, p. 3.

<sup>379</sup> Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentlemen, Gurkhas in the Western Imagination*, Second Edition, (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2003), p. IX.

<sup>380</sup> Surendra K. C., *Gurkha Bharti, Katha, Byatha ra Andolan*, (Gurkha Recruitment: Tradition and Assertion) Kathmandu: Sabita Prakashan, 2005, p. VI.

Almost all Gurkhas absolutely agree with this view. They have frequently expressed this line of opinions through articles, speeches and at personal chats.

Nevertheless, it is due to the GAESO's relentless fighting for equality that Britain made a patch up redress in former Gurkhas' pension in April 2000. The increment sounded very huge for the reason that the increments ranged from 100 to 192 percent. This might have seriously misled those who still do not know the glaring disparity between the Gurkhas and their British counterparts. As 100 percent of one hundred is only one hundred but 10 percent of ten thousand is one thousand. For this reason, even after the 192 percent increment, Gurkha corporal's monthly pension did not cross 60 pounds. Britain, however, exaggerated it as far as it could and blew her own trumpet. One can imagine how much was the pension of a Gurkha Corporal before this increment? Quite the opposite, a British Corporal then used to get 562 pounds. Now, this fact makes clear the level of discrimination meted out to Gurkhas. The following tables make a comparison further easy.

**Table No. 14**  
**Monthly Gurkha Service Pension Rates (Indian Currency Rupees) for Queen's Gurkha Officers and Gurkha Other Ranks with Effect from 1 April 2001**

Years	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Below Cpl	5463.02	5721.80	5721.80	5984.19	6242.95	6505.34	6505.34	6505.34						
Cpl	5565.08	6119.03	6119.03	6396.01	6676.62	6953.61	7230.59	7511.22						
Sgt	6308.55	6939.04	6939.04	7252.46	7569.52	7882.95	8200.01	8513.44						
CSgt	6560.89	7216.60	7216.60	7542.54	7872.3	8198.27	8528.03	8853.98						
WO2	6823.33	7505.27	7505.27	7844.26	8187.2	8526.19	8869.15	9208.13						
WO1	7096.25	7805.46	7805.46	8158.01	8514.67	8867.23	9223.89	9576.45						
Lt(QGO)	9158.51	10073.2	10073.2	10528.8	10988.0	11447.2	11902.7	12361.9	128117.5	13276.7				
		6	6	2	3	1	9	8	4	8				
Capt(QGO)	10813.0	11895.4	11895.4	12434.8	12974.3	13517.2	14056.6	14596	15139.03	15678.0	16217.8	16760.8	17300.2	17839.5
)	7	8	8	7	6	9	5			5	1	3	0	7
Maj(QGO)	1110.00	11654.9	12208.9	12766.5	13320.5	13874.4	14432.0	14985.9	15539.94	16093.9	16651.5	17205.4	17759.4	18313.3
		5	3		1		2	9		1	0	5	2	0

Source: Lekali, Radheshyam and Mahendra Bista (ed.), British-Gurkha: Sandhi Dekhi Sarbocha Samma (British Gurkha: From Treaty to Supreme Court), 2002, p. 425.

Rates shown below are after completion of 22 years service with the Army. Twenty-two years is the minimum service required for British personnel to qualify for a service pension.

**Table No. 15**

**Rate of service pension for British personnel as at January 2002**

Below Corporal	£ 445.33 per month
Corporal	£ 562.58 per month
Sergeant	£ 623.08 per month
Staff Sergeant	£ 709.33 per month
Warrant Officer 1	£ 733.25 per month

Source: Lekali, Radheshyam and Mahendra Bista (ed.), *British-Gurkha: Sandhi Dekhi Sarbocha Samma (British Gurkha: From Treaty to Supreme Court)*, 2002, p. 425.

The above two tables unmistakably suggest the huge difference that still remains between the two races. This is the pension after the so-called historic increment of April 2000. In line with the tables, a Gurkha Corporal's pension is around 63 pounds at the current exchange rate. Thereafter also, a normal annual enhancement is taking place to negate the Nepalese inflation. However, a Gurkha rifleman's pension is still hovering below 100 pounds. It means, there is yet over six times gap.

Then, GAESO and one or two other very small organisations have continued their movements so as to eliminate the yet existing discrimination and deliver justice to the glorious service they discharged in the last two centuries. GAESO, as part of its movement, organised two international conferences in Kathmandu. About twenty-five foreign scholars from around the world and twenty Nepalese scholars participated in the first three-day-long conference. Though, the conference was expensive, time consuming and problematic, it succeeded and proved worthwhile. It became useful essentially to make publicity, create pressure on both the governments and ascertain the complications from all perspectives. Having had extensive discussions over many working papers, the delegates unanimously adopted a declaration called "Kathmandu Declaration". The declaration states "... Gurkha soldiers should have obtained the same amount of salary, allowance and other facilities as the British soldiers on equal footing according to the



provisions of the Letter of Exchange as mentioned in Appendix 3 of the Treaty<sup>381</sup>.” The article 1 of Appendix 3, states about equal treatment. Thus various organisations as well as people of both countries (Nepal and Britain) have asserted that the treatment towards Gurkhas should be rationale and justifiable.

As said earlier, there are some other organisations, which are also releasing their pent up emotions through various activities. Among them, Nepal Ex-servicemen’s Association, which claims that it, is the first Gurkha organisation to raise its voice against the discrimination. However, its deeds are confined to issuing press statements, submitting memoranda and sometimes giving interviews and writing articles by its President. It does not command any popular support of the ex-British Gurkhas. Basically, it holds quite a different view in regard to strategy to deliver equality and justice. This organization of Gurkhas vehemently criticises *the modus operandi* of GAESO calling it extreme. “It argues that the Gurkha issue should be resolved through diplomatic means. And again, it firmly believes that the problem will be solved only by the support of the Nepali Congress government<sup>382</sup>.” It seems biased. Primarily, it never talked about treaty, human rights, law and other norms and values; nor did it ask for equality. It simply asks for more money to meet the sky rocketing inflation in Nepal. It threatens, if GAESO continues its extreme actions, to backfire.

Another recently instituted organisation related to Gurkhas is United British Gurkhas Ex-servicemen’s Association (UBGEAN). This organisation consists of many different smaller organisations essentially associated with various political parties. “The aim of this institution, as stated, is to launch a joint movement to bring the British to their knees. GAESO’s vigour alone is

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<sup>381</sup> Kathmandu Declaration, Adopted by International Conference on Plight of the Gurkhas, 20 September 1999, p. 2.

<sup>382</sup> Press Statement Released by Nepal Ex-servicemen’s Association, 2001, p. 1.

not enough to materialise the points<sup>383</sup>.” Despite this, the Gurkha organizations have been working independently. Some efforts to unite and launch a joint campaign were made in the past but failed to yield any positive results. They, on the contrary, involved in bitter recriminations. This organisation blamed GAESO that it “did not demand for equality in the British high court<sup>384</sup>.” But the blame is untrue as this author was physically involved in the dispute. The UBGEAN also does not command any popular support of former Gurkhas. In consequence, it has been confined to actions of press conferences, submission of memoranda, dispatching delegations, sits-in, etc. It has recently been carrying out some of its pressurising activities in the UK. Even so, it cannot organise things like protest rallies and mass meetings owing to extremely weak support base. It, unlike Nepal Ex-servicemen’s Association, demands absolute equality to Gurkhas.

Despite these organizations’ relentless agitations, predominantly GAESO’s, Britain has not shown any sign of treating former Gurkhas on equal footing. Britain, instead, is going to provide equal treatment only to those who retired on or after 1 July 1997. This cut off line has blatantly ignored the real sufferers, such as VC awardees and war veterans. It is not legal nor is it justifiable. As a result, GAESO has challenged the British authorities in the British court claiming it the most disgusting racial discrimination in the world against the loyal, straightforward, brave and primarily poor Gurkhas. A year or so back, GAESO achieved a historical victory in the case of prisoners of war in the British high court. Following the victory, Gurkha war prisoners got 10,000 pounds (about 14 lac rupees). The victory is considered a landmark event in the history of GAESO movement. But Britain did not fulfil GAESO’s other demands and the legal battle is already underway. In other words, some

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<sup>383</sup> Press Statement Released by United British Gurkhas Ex-servicemen’s Association, Dharan, 20 October 2005, p. 1.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

cases have been filed in the British court and some others are under preparation.

### 6.1.3 Unjust Compensation

British officials and ministers whenever necessary, without any hesitation, claim that they highly respect Gurkhas and at all times pay serious attention to their facilities and welfare both during service and post-retirement. How could it be true as it has not left any area undiscriminated? Britain has grossly discriminated on compensation too. "Almost 60 percent of those serving at the end of the World War II had to return home to Nepal with 20 battalions dismantled immediately<sup>385</sup>." Though, both Nepal and Britain did not keep or do not want to make public any authentic statistics of the Gurkhas killed, maimed, disappeared and made redundant, one can make a rough calculation on the basis of the above percentage. But the above-mentioned figures do not seem accurate. Most military historians agree that over 250,000 Gurkhas had participated in the Second World War. Among them, Britain took 10,000 and left 20,000 in India. Interestingly, "British Burma Regiments were left in Burma without proper arrangement<sup>386</sup>..." Its number is said to be 3,000. According to GAESO's estimate, over 30,000 might have been killed in the World War II alone. These figures altogether make 63,000 only. Now, what might have happened to other 187,000 Gurkhas? One possibility is that the number of Gurkhas killed was much higher than the estimate; and the rest should have been made redundant. The above analysis strengthens the idea that "Nepal was faced with integrating some 200,000 war veterans who were left redundant with minimal financial assistance<sup>387</sup>." In accordance with the above calculation, about 200,000 Gurkhas were demobilised immediately after the end of Second World War.

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<sup>385</sup> MacDonald QC *et al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 12, p. 55.

<sup>386</sup> GAESO, *United Kingdom and Human Rights Violations*, (Kathmandu: GAESO, 2001), p. 34.

<sup>387</sup> Macdonald QC *et al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 12, p. 15.

They were sent home with little or no compensation and pension. We can take a few examples here. Sarba Dhoj Limbu served in the British-Indian army for seven years. He fought all through the World War II. But he "... received ICRs 1,100 (£14) on discharge<sup>388</sup>." It proves Britain's unfair treatment. Moti Raj Gurung was wounded in action while fighting against the Japanese in Burma. He "... received NCRs 2,000 (£ 25) from British army on discharge in 1946<sup>389</sup>...." It is hard to understand why the money given to Gurkhas is so meagre. The money seems not enough even for travel expenses. Sergeant Indra Bahadur Rai was wounded in a bomb explosion, which shattered his knee and made him spend many years in hospital in Italy. After twelve years' of service "... he received only (ICRs 25) £0.31 at today's rate of discharge in 1960 and receives no pension<sup>390</sup>." Similarly, Britain discriminated the widows of war veterans. Thousands of Gurkhas sacrificed themselves for the sake of British Empire but their poor widows neither received pension nor any compensation. Nok Bahadur Sahi's widow did not get anything. "She broke down in the middle of giving her testimony and told us that she and her family are in the most pitiable state and need immediate and substantial help. She told us that she has been left with nothing and just wants a decent pension that will alleviate her from what she sees as a life of misery<sup>391</sup>." There were tens of thousands of cases of this kind as the redundancy was huge. However, their number is reduced to very small as most of them have died by now.

Not only after the Second World War but also after the end of South East Asian political turmoil, Britain unilaterally stroked the hack on Gurkhas. "... in 1969, 10,000 Gurkha soldiers were retrenched under a redundancy scheme. While ample compensation was paid to the British nationals who

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<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

were retired, the Gurkhas were sent back to their home country Nepal with only £ 150 at once and for good, and some did not even receive this<sup>392</sup>.” Some redundant Gurkhas assert that the amount of compensation given to them was only “5,000 NC<sup>393</sup>.” The amount of compensation, depending upon their length of service and rank, was different only by a few hundred rupees. And, it is a bitter truth that Britain grossly discriminated Gurkhas with reference to compensation.

Latest event of gross discrimination on compensation, which raised a hue and cry throughout the world, was the case of Sergeant Bala Ram Rai. Over 600 Gurkha soldiers were deployed in Kosovo. While Sergeant Bala Ram Rai and Lieutenant Gareth Evans were detailed to dispose the unexploded bombs and mines near Pristina in Kosovo. While clearing bombs, both died when a bomb went off. “Both president Bill Clinton and prime minister Tony Blair expressed their condolences, paying tribute to the work of NATO combat engineers engaged in the highly dangerous work of clearing unexploded bombs and mines in Kosovo: “brave men who were well aware of the dangers of dealing with explosives but were prepared to risk their lives to make life safer for others<sup>394</sup>.” Quite the opposite, these great leaders of the world failed to realise in practice what they had professed in words. The British government announced 19,000 pounds as compensation and 64 pounds as monthly pension for Bala Ram Rai’s widow. Extensive coverage was made by British newspapers as to this, which followed uproar all over the world. “Parliamentary committee vehemently protested British defence minister deploring and condemning the compensation and pension as

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<sup>392</sup> Racial Discrimination and Human Rights Violations by the United Kingdom against British Gurkha Army and their Families, *op. cit.*, f.n. 1, p. 10.

<sup>393</sup> Memorandum submitted to Nepalese Prime Minister, Kathmandu: GAESO, July 1997.

<sup>394</sup> John Parker, *The Gurkha: The Inside Story of the World’s Most Feared Soldiers*, (London: Head Line Book Publishing, 1999), p. 253.

paltry<sup>395</sup>." In Nepal also, it provoked an outcry. *Kantipur* daily made coverage entitled "paltry compensation and pension for the best soldier in the world<sup>396</sup>." The discrimination came to public when Britain announced the pension and perks for British national lieutenant Gareth Evans who was also destined to die in the same unfortunate accident. "It is linked to living standards in India and Nepal under the 1947 agreement, so that sergeant Rai's widow would receive around 7.5 percent of what the widow of an equivalent British soldier would receive<sup>397</sup>." In the redundancy of 1991 too, Britain did not treat Gurkhas equally. Britain's argument of living standard does not have any rationale. It should follow the principle of equal pay for equal work, which is enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter of the UN. Furthermore, it has violated clear provisions of the tripartite agreement and often interpreted it as a doctrine of pleasure.

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<sup>395</sup> K. C., *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 153.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>397</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 33, p. 254.

#### 6.1.4 Substandard Meal

Gurkha brigade authority used to provide poor quality food; sometimes even date expired and rotten. “In the late forties, the Gurkha soldiers were given bread made of date-expired flour in Hong Kong and Malaysia leftover from the Second World War supply stock, which was unfit for human consumption. The Gurkha officers and soldiers who complained about it were dismissed from the service<sup>398</sup>.” It apparently makes clear that the British appraisals for Gurkhas with high sounding words but repeated commitments for respect are never realised in practice. It is only their outward facade. Another QGO (unqualified officer) who possesses the nasty experience of discrimination while serving in Malaysia maintains thus: “... their comrade-in-arms (British soldiers) used to receive 20 dollars (Malaysian dollar) for fresh ration, but 1 dollar for Gurkhas. After half a decade of investigation, it was found out that owing to malnutrition food [sic], considerable number of Gurkhas suffered from tuberculosis and tropical diseases<sup>399</sup>.” The hardest reality is that they had to leave the army to die in Nepal because treatment was not available then in Nepal and they could not afford to go to India. Not only before but in 1980s also, Gurkhas were sometimes only half fed and were served poor quality food. This researcher too, experienced this kind of situation in the UK in 1981. This author and some other soldiers who were detailed for ambush and patrol for over a week were served only half meals. The quality of food was also poor. It was mixed up of packed beef, few peas, flour boiled in water. Naren Rai, an ex-British Gurkha soldier of 10 G.R. recollected a similar case. “In 1988, 10GR was detailed for border operation for two months, i.e., to defend Hong Kong border and arrest Chinese illegal immigrants. During the entire operation, the

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<sup>398</sup> Limbu, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 1.

<sup>399</sup> Meyangbo, *op. cit.*, f.n. 5, pp. 2-3.

authority served only half meal<sup>400</sup>.” This researcher had also participated in the above mentioned operation to act as a radio operator in Pak Hok Chau (Hong Kong) and the above said awful experience is still fresh in memory.

Gurkhas’ meal is very plain and the dishes never change. It consists of lentil, rice, vegetable and meat. Contrarily the English soldiers’ meal normally consists of not less than twenty items. They would be laid out for buffet. “The English soldiers could have their choice whatever they liked which was not possible in Gurkha mess<sup>401</sup>.” Prem Bahadur Begha asserts thus: “the food provided for the British soldiers was ten times expensive than that of Gurkha soldiers and nutritional enough. But Gurkhas’ consisted of far less items, cheap, less nutritional [sic] and of low quality<sup>402</sup>.” All meals, that is to say, breakfast, lunch and dinner for Gurkhas were traditional and for sure, there would be very few things, same dish, cheap, and not good enough from the health perspective. On 15 April 1947, when Britain was envisioning transferring some of the Gurkha regiments with them to South East Asia, Captain of 2<sup>nd</sup> G.R. R.N.W. Bishop wrote a letter to Tom Williams (minister for agriculture and fisheries) that “Gurkhas are cheap, loyal and hard working. Nothing else is needed for them but a square meal<sup>403</sup>.” It clarifies the original British psychology about Gurkhas. What they claim these days is merely an outward facade. Moreover, the mockery is that they failed to realise even their own minimal commitment.

### 6.1.5 Inadequate Accommodation

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<sup>400</sup> Written Interview with Naren Rai, ex-British Gurkha soldier, 6 October 2005, p. 1.

<sup>401</sup> Written Interview with Puranjan Rai, ex-British Gurkha soldier, 25 September 2005, p. 1.

<sup>402</sup> Written Interview with Prem Bahadur Begha, ex-British Gurkha Soldier, 8 September 2005, p. 1.

<sup>403</sup> Radheshyam Lekali and Mahendra Bista (ed.), *British Gurkha: Sandhi Dekhi Sarbochcha Samma* (British-Gurkha: From Treaty to Supreme Court), Kathmandu: British-Gurkha Centre for Studies and Research, Nepal, 2002, p. 320.



The British army authority did not spare any area where it could discriminate. The authority, in fact wanted to carry out harsh policy against Gurkhas to the greatest extent possible. Akal Bahadur Meyangbo, a QGO Officer recollects, “Gurkha soldiers accompanied by their wives had to stay in common tents and share common toilets and bathrooms<sup>404</sup>.” This statement proves how harsh the treatment was towards Gurkhas and their wives. How could they maintain their privacy in such common tents? On the one hand, the British nationals boast that they are the most cultured race in the world but in Gurkhas’ case they did not think even the minimal norms and values of gender and kept them together. “They provided spring bedstead for the British soldiers with mattress but bug infested choir bedstead with two itchy blankets for Gurkhas and no pillows<sup>405</sup>.” This situation continued until early 1970s.

Now some improvements are certainly taking place as the things have been changing but the tradition of discrimination continues unabated. A QGO major Saran Kumar Limbu maintains as follow:

Married British officers and other ranks used to be provided separate and spacious bungalows furnished with expensive furniture, carpets, utensils and crockery and other household goods. The Gurkha officers and other ranks had to live together in Gurkha family lines where they were provided very basic married quarters with a single bed room and sitting room. No extra bed room used to be given to those who had more than two or three children.<sup>406</sup>

Those Gurkha married quarters were beyond comparison to British married quarters. Grown up children and sometimes even guests had to sleep on the floor. Shortage of bedrooms always remained a point of tension to Gurkhas and their wives.

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<sup>404</sup> Meyangbo, *op. cit.*, f.n. 5, p. 3.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>406</sup> Limbu, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 1.

A major problem, which at all times gave hard time for both husbands and wives were dilapidated quarters, barracks and old and low quality utensils. Both husbands and wives had to spend hours and hours to make them look as if they were new. If they would not find as instructions on inspection of the British officers and memsahib (wife of British officer); husband would be punished or fined in cash. "As far as barracks is concerned, minimum twelve to twenty soldiers had to sleep in a room while the English soldiers used to enjoy single rooms<sup>407</sup>." What an irony is this? In England, it is illegal to share a bedroom even by two own brothers.

According to weather, white soldiers enjoyed both cooling and heating facilities. Gurkhas were to satisfy themselves only with ceiling fans. "All the British officers live separately in luxurious bungalows far away from the Gurkhas<sup>408</sup> ...." Gurkhas would visit these bungalows for *corvee* labour i.e., to mop the floor, to clean dishes, to wash clothes, to maintain gardens, to cater them and their children, etc., after parade and whenever there is a holiday. In the transit camp in Kathmandu (Bikram Bhawan) too, even now married accompanied soldiers have to share a common room, which is incredible for whites, let alone its application.

### 6.1.6 Unjustifiable Promotion System

Gurkhas in the British army cannot get a rank above a QGO (Queen's Gurkha Officer) Major, however qualified and talented they are. QGO is an unqualified officer who does not need to get through officers' training in Sandhurst (UK) and many other courses, which a British officer must do. This has remained an anachronism in the British army. A twenty year old white Second Lieutenant who has just completed the cadet course is considered senior to a senior most QGO Major who has thirty years' experience in the

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<sup>407</sup> Begha, *op. cit.*, f.n. 41, p. 1.

<sup>408</sup> Mary Katherine Des Chene, *Relics of Empire: A Cultural History of the Gurkhas 1815-1987*, (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1991), p. 14.

army. Therefore, a QGO Major who is the senior most officers among the Gurkhas in the battalion must salute and respect the Second Lieutenant. What a shameful and humiliating treatment is this? An ex-General of Nepalese army and former ambassador to Britain asserts, "QGOs are not officers. They are Jamdars and Subedars only (below a junior most officer and unqualified for an officer)<sup>409</sup>." Education wise also, they are not eligible to be officers. Whatever stated above seems true. These QGOs do not command any respect among the soldiers. A scholar Mary Des Chene also expresses the same line of view thus:

The soldiers look upon them with mistrust and regard them as moles who misrepresent their views to the British officers in order to curry favours in the form of promotions, good postings, longer services, granting of honorary ranks which carry some monetary benefits on their retirement, etc. The Gurkha soldiers call the QGOs "Dharke" referring to the bank of ribbons they wear with pips and is a derogatory term to define their status.<sup>410</sup>

To tell the truth, most QGOs never realised their responsibility. What they know is to ingratiate themselves with the British officers to fulfil their selfish interests. When they materialise their individual interests, they think that they did a great job. In fact, they had mistaken the selfish interests for their basic duty.

This is one of the factors, which helped continue the discrimination for two centuries. Most importantly, a large majority of these people lack the ability to perceive that they themselves and other Gurkhas have been treated very unfairly. And, it was unimaginable that these QGOs could think as regards the improvement of the situation, which was their primary duty. The QGO's major concerns are administrative work, listen to the grievances of the soldiers and look after their welfare. Whenever necessary, they should put

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<sup>409</sup> Oral Interview with Bharat Keshar Singh, ex-general of Nepalese Army and former Ambassador to Britain, Kathmandu, 19 July 2005.

<sup>410</sup> Mary Katherine Des Chene, "Gurkhas in the Service of the Crown", *Gurkha Sainik Aawaj*, Vol. 9, No. 4, July-August 2000, p. 15.

forward for action but they never did this. There were few Sandhurst commissioned officers but they were, too, unable to ascertain that the things were beyond imagination and must be improved. They enjoyed British facility and they knew nothing else. A QGO Major Sharan Kumar Limbu has felt this bitterly. He says as follow: "this rank has not been stipulated either in Queen's Regulation or manual of military law. A British rank subaltern could not be charged on failing to salute a Gurkha Captain or Gurkha Major. This rank is created to humiliate the Gurkha officers and soldiers<sup>411</sup>." Moreover, this discrimination is clearly related to the provision, which is enshrined in clause 1 of annexure 3 of the tripartite agreement. The clause runs thus: "in all matters of promotion, welfare and other facilities the Gurkha troops should be treated on the same footing as the other units in the parent army, so that the stigma of mercenary troops may for all time be wiped out<sup>412</sup>." Unfortunately, Britain did not follow the treaty nor put any value and norm of this century nor of human rights and various covenants of which Britain is a party. Because, Britain's ultimate motive is to get cheap soldiers. No matter however great contribution these soldiers made by sacrificing themselves when they were really in crucial situation. But Britain does not care for it. On the other hand, the Rana rulers, especially, Chandra Shamsher strengthened British malevolent intention by writing a letter to the Colonial government. He, in that letter wrote, "Gurkha soldiers must not be promoted above a subedar (QGO captain) <sup>413</sup>." History proves that Chandra Shamsher is the most corrupt and irresponsible Rana tyrant. He wanted nothing more than honours, titles, money, arms and ammunition and to strengthen his aristocracy by selling raw materials of soldiery to British-India. Mary Des Chene rightly maintains thus: "... Gurkhas have had another utility as the coin which Nepal traded in the market place of international diplomacy. If the

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<sup>411</sup> Limbu, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 4.

<sup>412</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 190.

<sup>413</sup> Dhundi Raj Bhandari, *Nepal Ko Alochanatmak Itihas*, (Critical History of Nepal), (Banaras: Babu Sapra Sharma, 1971), p. 158.

Nepalese rupee is not a convertible currency, Nepalese bodies have long been a valued currency in that other market place<sup>414</sup>.” Oligarchic Rana despots materialised their selfish interests through the trade of Nepalese bodies but remained utterly indifferent as to their plight.

Britain, however, offered king’s commission rank to a few selected Gurkhas. There are not more than twenty properly commissioned Gurkha officers in the Brigade of Gurkhas. The British government accepted to offer this opportunity to Gurkhas only when India decided to offer regular commission to qualified Gurkhas. Senior British officers were hard pressed during partition because a large number of Gurkhas did not opt for British service as they had presumed. “The officers, in such a case, tried to negate the Indian advantage by holding out the possibility of a few Gurkhas entering Sandhurst at an unspecified future date to become genuine king’s commissioned officers<sup>415</sup>.” In fact, Britain was reluctant to this provision. Interestingly, these Gurkha officers also, cannot be promoted above a major’s rank. So far, only two king’s commissioned Gurkhas are exceptionally promoted to the rank of a lieutenant colonel. Unfortunately, this provision remained effective only for about fifteen years. Afterwards, Britain unilaterally annulled it.

Surprisingly, there is another type of Gurkha officers in the Brigade of Gurkhas who are called Gurkha Commissioned Officer (GCO). This brand of officers is not available in other armies except in the Brigade of Gurkhas. They select this brand of officers from among the QGO officers through a rigorous competition, which they hold if they consider it necessary. Since the competition is very arduous and the vacancy falls less than two; the QGOs (about 500) move heaven and earth to secure a place. They do not leave any

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<sup>414</sup> Mary Katherine Des Chene, “Soldiers, Sovereignty and Silences: Gurkhas as Diplomatic Currency”, *Gurkha Sainik Aawaj*, Vol. 8, No. 7, October-November 1999, p. 32.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

stone unturned to ingratiate themselves with the British officers. There were about twelve GCOs in the Gurkha brigade in 1990s. The status of this sort of officers falls between QGO and king's commissioned officer. This is another anachronism and does not have any meaning. Its sole aim is to entice them and exploit unnecessary labour engaging them at all times in hard jobs.

### **6.1.7 Disproportionate Family Permission**

Perhaps, the hardest reality for a British Gurkha soldier is to sacrifice his basic human needs. British Gurkha soldiers (below colour sergeant) could have family permission only for three years within fifteen years' service. It apparently demonstrates that Gurkhas have been treated inhumanly. This treatment has produced a lot of sufferings – both physical and mental – on the part of Gurkha wives. At worst, it destroyed hundreds of households as well as conjugal lives. Some women eloped with other boys leaving kids at natal home as orphans if they had any; some others involved in extra-marital affairs and still others lost mental balance being unable to handle the stress of separation. A unique consequence of separation is as follows: “... the Gurkha soldier fought and was injured and left for dead in Burma. His wife and two children were left as a widow and fatherless children. She later married her brother-in-law and had four children of her own. The husband after many years returned back to the village after his recovery and saw the new state of affairs. He left the village and was never heard of again<sup>416</sup>.” This is only an example of the painful story. There are hundreds of such cases among Gurkha soldiers.

In early 1980s, the Gurkha brigade authority reduced even the three years' family accompanied service to two and a half years. And again, it was reduced to two years in 1990s. Some retired without family permission. Even then, the QGOs, as part of their primary concern, did not utter a single word. They accepted it as if they had done a great deed. Some QGOs, on the

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<sup>416</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 94.

contrary, reprimanded and threatened those who attempted to complain against the reduction. "During that extremely short family tour also, Gurkhas would be sent for overseas exercise, each two months long (i.e. Australia, Fiji, the US, New Zealand, Cyprus, Belize, etc.), border duty of two months long each, to UK for various courses, Brunei, Hong Kong, etc., of not less than six weeks and field exercises of comparatively shorter span<sup>417</sup>." For this reason, the soldiers cannot live together with family for more than fifteen months out of fifteen years service. In English society, there is a deeply entrenched norm that a married couple must stay together. So, the British army authority, as far as applicable, does not separate the white married couples. If sometimes circumstances do not allow keeping them together; the authority concerned provides them separation allowances. But in Gurkha's case, they adopt an unfair policy that seems very inhuman. The British women enjoy the legal right of divorce, if the separation is of a longer span.

The converse of the policy of Britain towards Gurkhas has resulted in widespread socio-economic and psychological ramifications. Gopal Siwakoti Chintan maintains like this:

The effects of such situation has been that wives of Gurkha soldiers have been the continuous victims of frustration, family separation, mental distress, sexual harassment and exploitation, and other forms of violence back home and in their feudal communities. At the same time, their children have been deprived of parental care, schooling and proper childhood development.<sup>418</sup>

As referred to earlier, many spoiled both household and conjugal life and many other developed even neurosis. Their children left off school during teenage; afterwards they led a life of vagabond, became victims of various perversions and many turned drug addicts.

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<sup>417</sup> Written Interview with Jit Bahadur Rai, Central Committee Member and Treasurer (GAESO), 12 September 2005, p. 2.

<sup>418</sup> Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, "Some Human Rights Concerns on Gurkha Soldiers in British Army", *Gurkha Sainik Aawaj*, Vol. 8, No. 5, August-September 1999, p. 16.

There are large numbers of instances of extreme pain, which the wives undergo back at feudal society. And, it would not be unreasonable to cite some of them here. Prem Kumari Begha, a resident of Panchthar district encountered an epidemic while her husband was serving in the British army in Hong Kong. The epidemic proved too fatal to her. She lost three children at once. "The first one to succumb was my eldest daughter, then after twenty-two days my new born son and then my last child<sup>419</sup>." Nevertheless, her husband did not come home to solace her and to share the grief and anguish let alone family permission. She followed all procedures through welfare office but the army authority turned a deaf ear and did not allow her husband to come home. She further accounted thus:

I was half mad with grief and depression. I had to handle everything myself. With no one to turn to for solace, I tried to smoke and drink to forget my grief. However, at night I used to feel suffocated. I wished that my husband had been there to share the grief and give me moral support. I remembered my children and cried myself to sleep. I alone know how I spent those dreadful moments of my life. When I saw the birds hopping about, I felt as if they were the spirits of my children. I hated staying in the house and used to wander in the fields, sit among the flowers and cry my heart out. But there was no peace. I used to wander off alone in the jungle. I used to wait there in vain, wishing that I could see my children.<sup>420</sup>

It is hard to make an assumption why the authority concerned did not allow the soldiers to visit their wives for a few days in such a humanitarian and heart-breaking situation. This is a bitter fact that Britain does not treat Gurkhas as they should have been treated. Furthermore, the British officers know very well that the Gurkhas and their wives do not know how to fight against this type of inhuman treatment and exploitation. This case clearly manifests how British officers treat Gurkhas.

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<sup>419</sup> Anand Aditya and Gopal Siwakoti Chintan (ed.), *Stories Untold*, (Kathmandu: GAESO Litigation Committee, 2003), p. 43.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.



Not only this, separation caused various emotional traumas. Ram Maya Limbu, who is aged 80, has a surprising and painful experience. She says, "I was immature at the time of my marriage. I had not even had a proper glimpse of my husband. Married at the age of 14, within three or four years I had forgotten my husband's face and I wondered how he looked like<sup>421</sup>." It is natural as her husband left home after twenty days of marriage and did not come back home for five years. During those days, the World War II was going on. Here, a similar story becomes worth explaining. "... when I came home on leave I did not recognize her, nor did she recognise me. I was walking towards my father's house and this little child ran past me. My sister cried out, 'that is your daughter ...' and tears welled up my eyes<sup>422</sup>." This soldier left home when his wife was pregnant and came home only after three years. That is why he failed to recognise his own daughter.

Even during the short family tour, these people fail to live together in peace with satisfaction. Amrikal Gurung gives a vivid account, which she underwent during Malaysian war.

The day I reached Singapore, my husband went away. There was a war going on somewhere in the jungle. I was alone, new and with no money. I did not know where to buy food, how to cook it and what to do. But a neighbour's wife was somehow very kind to me. She offered to share her food with me and consoled me that everything would be fine once my husband came back.<sup>423</sup>

How problematic would it have become to her in an alien country that is too on the first day? The woman had hailed all the way from the foothills of Himalchuli (remote hilly village) where the culture, language, religion, etc., were completely different. Her husband came back for a few days after three months and again disappeared. How she handled the stress, physical and emotional?

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<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>422</sup> Parker, *op. cit.*, f.n. 33, p. 236.

<sup>423</sup> Aditya and Siwakoti Chintan (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 58, p. 18.

She was alone in an unknown land and her husband was fighting a war as front line soldier. It is indeed a shocking fact.

Some other aspects of separation are equally moving. A Nepali litterateur, Khagendra Sangroula, exactly perceives and writes as follows:

One day I witnessed a scene in which my neighbour, a British Gurkha soldier burst into tears while parting from his wife and children. I had a firm belief that the bravest Gurkha soldier, Khukri slung on his waist, would never cry. But on that day, he cried. From that day onwards, I realised the Gurkhas otherwise. A human being both laughs and sobs. He does not have only a sharp Khukuri on his waist but also a kind heart under his chest.<sup>424</sup>

Nevertheless, Britain never considers them as this. Probably for two reasons: firstly, utter ignorance of Gurkhas as regards how inhumanly they have been treated; secondly, Gurkhas' absence of idea to the course of action to redress them. Another litterateur, Yagya Nidhi Dahal, refers to a similar type of story, which the Gurkha wives often have to undergo back in poverty-stricken feudal villages. That runs like this:

Abject poverty and epidemic across the country kill children one after another. Mothers' breasts swell with milk owing to extreme love of the dead child while recuperating from the pangs of birth. At the same traumatic condition, she receives a letter tied with a red thread that implies something unpleasant. After going through the letter, she learns that her husband also died in the war. Thus, the women have to suffer double agonies.<sup>425</sup>

In this way, the Gurkha wives underwent and have been undergoing immense grief and pain. Britain's racial policy and masterly attitude are fully responsible for these repercussions.

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<sup>424</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 462.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471.

The arrangement of family permission and quarters is the sole responsibility of the Gurkha Major. As the most senior QGO in the battalion, commanding officer also does not hurt his sentiment. But he abuses power:

... such as nepotism, favouritism in the forms of (a) granting promotions to his kin, relatives and fellow villagers superseding those well qualified, (b) good post and postings going to these men over others, (c) granting of family permissions to those not eligible, and (d) even interfering with the employment of locally employed teachers and midwives are common practices.<sup>426</sup>

Some Gurkha Majors amended even the prevailing rules of promotion to favour their kins and those who offer them bribe and valuable gifts. Mary Des Chene adds further: “there is a saying in the Brigade that qualification does not count, mollification [sic] does which means however qualified one may be, one’s qualification will go to waste unless and until he bribes the Gurkha major with gifts and ‘table parades’ (wining and dining)<sup>427</sup>.” Some QGOs also involve in such bribes, gifts and wining and dining practices. Soldiers who want promotion, good posts and postings should offer beer and whisky almost everyday after game parade and offer gifts whenever they come from overseas exercise or from Nepal holiday. Some used to offer even gold to get these things. Soldiers in Kalaratri celebration (black night) have begun to reflect these perversions through comedies when the brigade got infested with this practice. However, it did not show any sign of improvement.

### **6.1.8 Unfair Uniforms and Civilian Clothes**

Gurkhas are discriminated in terms of uniforms as well. The authority never provides adequate new uniforms. To exchange new uniforms for old ones all the time remained a point of tension for them. The officials discourage exchange of new ones in harsh tones. In this regard, Gajendra Isbo

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<sup>426</sup> Mary Katherine Des Chene, “Gurkhas in the Service of the Crown”, *Gurkha Sainik Aawaj*, Vol. 9, No. 4, July-August 2000, p. 14.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

recollects as follows: “they were to often stitch and patch up the old shabby uniforms themselves. It was hard to get a new uniform and was considered an amazing achievement if someone got it. Contrarily, the British soldiers were lavish in this matter<sup>428</sup>.” Regarding quality, some of them were terribly poor. One can never forget the itchy thick shirt, which Gurkhas had to wear during drill parade. The shirt owing to its poor quality takes not less than one hour to iron it. Ironically, some soldiers sometimes owing to their shabby uniforms had to buy some of these uniforms in the market in order to meet the demand of the parade and escape from punishment.

Sadly, Gurkhas and their wives are forbidden from wearing decent civilian clothes of their choice. During off times and holidays, they should have enjoyed the right to choice. But they must wear mufti, a civilian dress as mentioned in the battalion order, whenever and for whatever reason they leave barracks. Its aim may be to show the British officers and British other ranks different from Gurkhas in the eyes of locals and other nationals. Dharma Rai, an ex-British Gurkha soldier, says the following; “Gurkha soldiers and their families were indeed ordered to follow dress rules strictly and many who were found violating the orders by wearing jeans and dresses other than mufti were punished one way or another. In comparison, their counterparts, the British and the Chinese soldiers and their families had the freedom to please themselves by wearing dresses of their choice<sup>429</sup>.” There are plenty of cases of defiance of the dress rules by Gurkhas. For, the mufti is extremely unpopular among the rank and file. Consequently, the violators received punishment. In this regard, Bijay Pehim maintains thus: “they enforced mufti in order to show Gurkhas as a savage tribe in the eyes of the

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<sup>428</sup> Written Interview with Gajendra Isbo, Central Committee Member (GAESO), 8 September 2005, p. 3.

<sup>429</sup> Written Interview with Dharma Rai, ex-British Gurkha Soldier, 28 September 2005, p. 2.

general public<sup>430</sup>.” This author also has a bitter feeling of being displayed as a butt of laughter to whichever country they went. To Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, “it is the violation of article 8 and 14 of the European Human Rights Convention<sup>431</sup>.” It is not a compulsion of the British Officers but intention and it violates the human rights of Gurkhas. Now, the British who at all times take laws in their hands as regards Gurkhas should rethink about their unfair treatment.

### 6.1.9 Discrimination on Green Card

Britain has put a ban against Gurkhas from entering to and settling down in the UK. “This is a global practice well recognised by the international law that if a person has lived for a certain and unbroken period of time in an alien country, the government concerned grants him/her green card<sup>432</sup>.” But Gurkhas who have been shedding sweat and blood for Britain for the last two centuries as an integral part of the British national army have been deprived of this privilege. The unprecedented sacrifices of these soldiers essentially made her history glorious. On the contrary, they have been, throughout the history, treated as a foreign *legion*.

Roderick Charles, a British researcher of Nepali literature asserts “millions of people from the former British empire entered the UK after the World War II<sup>433</sup>.” And the tradition of entering the UK is still continued. All ranging from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Malaysian to Africans have earned green cards. Hence, the current population of Muslims in the UK is

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<sup>430</sup> Written Interview with Bijay Pehim, Central Committee Member (NESA), 28 September 2005, p. 2.

<sup>431</sup> Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, *State of Lawsuits and Points of Pleading*, Gurkha Sainik Aawaj, Vol. 11, No. 10, February 2003, p. 20.

<sup>432</sup> Parbati Subba, *Gurkha Bhartiko Samchipta Itihas ra Gurkha Bhutpurba Sainik Sanghako Andolan*, (A Brief History of Gurkha Recruitment and the Movement of Gurkha Ex-servicemen’s Organization), (Unpublished MA Dissertation, TU, 2002), p. 88.

<sup>433</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 33.

over two and a half million, let alone Indians. However, the British government, as far as possible, prevented its best infantrymen from enjoying this privilege too. Why, a big question mark hangs? It is very difficult to ascertain. Yet, one of the reasons may be that the British government is scared of Gurkhas as the latter will, taking advantage of the full-fledged Westminster democracy, fight against the evil deeds meted out by the former. That may cost the British dear.

The following statement clarifies the latest situation in this regard: "... the position of ex-soldiers used to be that they became fully subject to control and were given no kind of opportunity to come to the UK to work or settle. That has now all changed<sup>434</sup>." The first sentence confirms only the earlier discussion but the last implies a change. The British government on October 25, 2004, announced that the Gurkhas who retired on or after July 1, 1997, would be allowed to enter, work and settle in the UK. After all, GAESO's over a decade's immense pressure brought Britain to her knees, but again, the cut off date July 1, 1997, still seems deceptive. It is due to the cut off line, only a few thousand Gurkhas are made eligible to enjoy the right to entry and leaves out the large bulk who is the real founders of her glorious history. It does not have any legal, political and moral justification. They are all members of the British national army, which has been legally considered integral. The cut off line commences a new discrimination between Gurkhas and Gurkhas. What a sad thing to all those VC awardees and war veterans? Interestingly, it does not have any legal and political rationale.

#### **6.1.10 Discrimination on Parade**

There is a big difference between the parades of Gurkhas and their counterparts. The English soldiers do mere formalities, while Gurkhas, on all occasions, have to do very hard work with the highest standard of discipline. During field training exercises, Gurkhas are to observe all rules of battle

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<sup>434</sup> Macdonald QC *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 12, p. 70.

whatever seems applicable. Frequency of hard trainings is high for the Gurkhas. The British officers often tell Gurkhas that they should work very hard to keep up their forefathers' name. Its implicit meaning is to accept their age-old discriminatory practice for Gurkhas without any question. They want to be seen as real masters of Gurkhas and unchallengeable. They become happy when they feel this and persecute Gurkhas if they feel otherwise. On the other hand, the English soldiers stay in a relaxed state. They do not do hard work nor do they maintain discipline and fitness as much as Gurkhas do. These are the most important characteristics of an army but very hard to carry out. As a result, the Gurkhas always excel them whatever competitions they hold, i.e., running, shooting, combat order running, sports, field training exercises, etc.

They keep Gurkhas extremely busy from early morning to late evening. In Gurkha camps, it is difficult to distinguish parade time and off time. A QGO Major, Saran Kumar Limbu, states like this: "the Gurkhas were treated as insensitive human race unable to differentiate between working hours from holidays. They were made to work during weekends and holidays. The Gurkhas tolerated this sort of inhuman treatment for ages. The British soldiers, after the duty hours, used to be free as birds. There was no restriction of movement to them<sup>435</sup>." The Gurkhas, during weekends, holidays and off hours are to sweep and mop rooms, clean bathrooms/toilets, clean area, plant flowers and trees, water them, root out weeds, cut grass, often work as waiters in the officers' mess and also work in the officers' quarters. No leisure at all! This seems as the last vestige of *corvée* labour. If there is leisure in the evening after dinner, the seniors, as mandatory, deliver epic lectures till 10 p.m. Sometimes they continue till 11 p.m. on room, toilet/bathroom cleaning, mopping, area cleaning, boot polishing, hair cutting, ironing uniforms, maintaining discipline, etc. Thus they are prevented from doing creative things in their leisure time. Its principal aim

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<sup>435</sup> Limbu, *op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 1.

may be to stop them from being conscious by letting them to involve in non-military activities, which also may help them ascertain the unfair treatment meted out to them. So, they are compelled to waste their invaluable time of life doing such unreasonable things.

Nevertheless, the white soldiers are always utterly free from these unnecessary works. "They could leave the barracks after parade on Friday till Monday 7 am<sup>436</sup>." Some of them go to Germany and others to France to meet their girlfriends and still others disappear in the crowd of London. As a whole, Gurkhas maintain high standard of discipline and remain at all times physically fittest and work at least twice more than the English soldiers. In addition, the immense sacrifice and unflinching loyalty makes Gurkha soldiers extremely rewarding, but sadly, to get ten to twenty times less than their counterparts.

#### 6.1.11 Hefty Tasks

Gurkhas have undoubtedly been used as the front line soldiers. There are perhaps two reasons. First, Gurkhas' mere presence with their blood-curdling war cry 'Gurkhas are upon you' may solely prove enough for the enemy to surrender. We can take Falklands' war as the latest example. Secondly, if the attack turns fatal they do not have to worry too much because it is the Gurkhas who will die for, Gurkhas might have been considered as expendable or replaceable commodity. "It is due to the established traditions of the self-deprecatory Rana rulers; Gurkhas have become cannon fodders of imperialists<sup>437</sup>." In the Brigade of Gurkhas, the Gurkhas themselves consider their life cheaper than a simple rifle. Hence, there is a common saying that you may lose yourself, but not the rifle. The so-called Gurkha officers and other ranks do not understand how irrational the comparison between a rifle and a human being is. Moreover, 98% Gurkhas do not know at all the points

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<sup>436</sup> Rai, *op. cit.*, f.n. 40, p. 2.

<sup>437</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 464.



of exploitation, discrimination, *corvee* labour, cannon fodder, etc. Especially, the seniors learn by rote what the white officers say and they say it to juniors. Thus, the complete unconsciousness of Gurkhas helps the practice of harsh discrimination to take a strong root.

It is a fact that these best infantrymen “all the time used to be pushed into most dangerous fronts<sup>438</sup>.” Another scholar also writes to the same effect. “The Gurkhas were always deployed in the front line in wars to annex more provinces and also to crush rebellions. In the Maratha and Pindari wars and Kachhaar expeditions, high casualty figures were reported<sup>439</sup>.” No doubt Gurkhas bore the brunt of all the wars, which were fought under the British command. The presumption of Gurkhas might have been true that they were used as guinea pigs in the battles, which were fought in the early years of Gurkha recruitment to bring many independent states of Indian sub-continent under the control of British Raj because experience of war would be advantageous for Britain to expand, strengthen and promote the existing and new empires. And, it was not possible from others but Gurkhas. British-India could use the Gurkhas the way they wished, as the latter’s guardian, the Ranas were fully corrupt and irresponsible towards their citizens. Puranjan Rai asserts, “Britain used Gurkhas both as cannon fodder and guinea pig<sup>440</sup>.” It is difficult to find a British Gurkha soldier who does not have this feeling. Senior Nepali lawyer, Ganesh Raj Sharma also “accepted<sup>441</sup>” this sentiment when asked during the course of an oral interview. Former ambassador to Britain Bharat Keshar Singh and former ambassador to France Keshab Raj Jha too did not deny this view in the course of their oral interviews.

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<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 466.

<sup>439</sup> Gurung (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 7, p. 629.

<sup>440</sup> Rai, *op. cit.*, f.n. 40, p. 5.

<sup>441</sup> Oral Interview with Ganesh Raj Sharma (lawyer), 20 July 2005.

One more statement expressed by Pratyoush Onta in his article is also worth mentioning. “When the Brigade attacks, the Gurkhas and Sikhs go first and the white troops are put in the second line<sup>442</sup>.” Apart from this, their harsh treatment for the last two centuries sufficiently implies this. And, Gurkhas get mere pittance, discrimination and humiliation.

## 6.2 Humbling Behaviour of the British Officers

Gurkhas often become victims of humiliation. Some British officers hurt their self-respect by terming them as beggars, savages, poor, uneducated, uncultured, etc., who can not afford a square meal, never eat meat, have meal without washing hands, do not wear shoes, etc. Gurkhas had been exercising restraint upon such unbearable remarks for long. However, on one occasion they sought themselves a vent to release the pent up fury in Hawaii:

In May 1986, members of the 1/7<sup>th</sup> Gurkha regiment were sent to Hawaii on a training exercise. The training exercise was carried out jointly with US forces. It is generally reported that the Gurkhas were angered by, *inter alia*, offensive remarks made by their company commander. Major Corin Pearce came to a head injury resulting in an attack on the company commander and his captain by some of them.<sup>443</sup>

This researcher then was serving in Hong Kong and 100 percent sure that the reason cannot be other than insults to their race and country. The British officers themselves claim that Gurkhas are both loyal to them and to salt. Therefore, generally speaking, Gurkhas can never be imagined to physically assault their British officers but the loss of pride. Later, the army authority unfairly dismissed all 111 Gurkhas. How all these Gurkhas could beat one person that is too in the dark? The light was cut off before the assault began. It is certainly a shameful act of civilised people like the British to

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<sup>442</sup> Pratyoush Onta, “Dukha during the World War”, *Gurkha Sainik Aawaj*, Vol. 8, No. 6, September-October 1999, p. 14.

<sup>443</sup> Macdonald QC *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 12, p. 66.

punish all the innocent Gurkhas without carrying out a proper investigation. Again, they were deprived of gratuity and pension.

Another unpleasant incident took place in Hong Kong in 1988 when a British Major of the 2/2 GR kicked in the teeth of the Gurkhas in similar manner. The officer, at all times, used to make offensive remarks against these soldiers. They retaliated against him by hiding a grenade in a drawer of the officer's table only when the humiliation surpassed the limit of toleration. The major died on the spot and a QGO Captain sustained serious injury when the grenade went off. These are only a few examples. In fact, acts of dishonouring Gurkhas have been taking place for ages and the Gurkhas also attempted to bring into the open their wrath one way or another. Nevertheless, following the above-mentioned incidents, Gurkhas felt much relief.

### **6.3 Violation of Right to Religion**

Gurkhas in the British army cannot enjoy the right to religion. They are forced into practice of Hindu religion. "It is mandatory for soldiers to go to Hindu temples every Sunday to listen to the preaching of a Hindu priest<sup>444</sup>." Every Sunday and on all Hindu festivals, the Hindu priests deliver sermons and perform religious rituals. And the non-Hindu Gurkhas must attend the traditions and involve themselves even physically in the rites. Those who refused would be punished. Defence committee report of Britain of 1989 states that "Nepal is predominantly a Hindu country with a minority of Buddhists and a smaller number of Muslims. The majority of Gurkhas recruited are Hindus<sup>445</sup>." This statement is untrue. The majority of indigenous nationalities that join the British army are Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Sunuwar, Dewan, Gurung and Magar. The rest constitute less than 3 percent. Now,

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<sup>444</sup> Written Interview with Santosh Thalang, ex-British Gurkha Soldier, 8 September 2005, p. 1.

<sup>445</sup> Defence Committee First Report, The Future of the Brigade of Gurkhas, (London: The House of Commons, 1989), p. xxiv.

Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar and Dewan belong to Kirant religion; Tamang and Gurung to Buddhist, however, there is a division among Magars. Some Magars have a faith in Hindu religion and some others have in Buddhism. Therefore, more than 85 percent Gurkhas are non-Hindu. Contrarily, the army authority has imposed Hindu religion upon them. Hindu has been written in all documents that bear any identity of a Gurkha soldier. The authority employs a Brahmin priest for each Gurkha battalion. Unfortunately, no priest is there for a large majority of Gurkhas, who have faith in other religions such as Kirant and Buddhism. These people are compelled to conduct their rites and rituals by the Hindu priest. And as stated above, they must listen to the religious teachings of the Hindu priest and give hand to the priest to perform all Hindu rites and rituals. This practice is very unpopular and one of the disgusting things among rank and file. Though the QGOs know very well the sentiment of Gurkhas, they never utter a single word. Most of them, quite the opposite, supported to make it mandatory. Over 95 percent of these self-titled officers are yes-men of the white officers who at all times engage in sycophancy. For this and other reasons, the authority is indirectly encouraged to impose the unwanted religion onto Gurkhas. "The act of imposing Hindu religion upon Gurkhas is a violation of the articles 9 and 14 of the European Human Rights Convention<sup>446</sup>." It is hard to understand, why Britain, as a champion of democracy, has been violating the right of Gurkhas to religion.

A politician-cum-diplomat holds the same line of view. "Many of the Gurkhas enlisted in the British army are followers of Buddhism and Kirantism. However, they are enlisted as Hindus. Priests are not available for non-Hindu Gurkhas to perform their religious rites. The word Hindu along with the army number is marked on the identity discs of Gurkhas<sup>447</sup>." Despite this, the British government unscrupulously asserts that they are

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<sup>446</sup> Siwakoti Chintan, *op. cit.*, f.n. 70, p. 21.

<sup>447</sup> Hiranya Lal Shrestha, "Human Rights Violation", *The Kathmandu Post*, 16 March 2001, p. 4.

Hindus and the democratic government of Nepal maintains silence. This factor has made the situation further worse. Pari Thapa, a leftist parliamentarian adds to this: "The British army has imposed alien religion to nationalities of Nepal. They are non-Hindus but their birth and death rites have been performed as per Hindu religion<sup>448</sup>." It is due to this reason that they have become catalytic to spread out Hindu religion and culture among their relatives and communities. Sadly, they do not know how to perform their religious and cultural rituals in line with their own traditions and customs. Beyond everything, if it is not redressed, they will convert to Hindu and their own religion may disappear.

#### **6.4 Gurkha Brigade: a Lucrative Human Trade**

Undoubtedly, the Gurkha brigade is an integral part of the British national army. The tripartite treaty of 1947 has clearly enshrined this provision. Britain herself asserts it whenever necessary and flatly rejects that Gurkhas are mercenary. "British secretary of state for Defence, Geoffrey Hoon, reiterated this fact on December 14, 2000, in Kathmandu while he was on a two-day visit to Nepal<sup>449</sup>." The deeds of both Nepal and the British governments, however, do not manifest this. Most scholars who possess some knowledge about recruitment history argue that the Rana elites reaped huge profits out of the practice. "War under Secretary James Dane's speech of 10 December 1961 in the British parliament discloses that Chandra Shamsher used to take £25 secretly per soldier. Again, it became clear from the top brass that he used to pocket the last figure of these soldiers' salary. For instance, if the salary was 450, the soldier would get only 45<sup>450</sup>." It seems logical, since, there was a big difference between the income and expenditure of Nepal and the money he had in his foreign bank account. From where did the additional money come? Mary Des Chene after a PhD research on Gurkhas maintains so:

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<sup>448</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 63.

<sup>449</sup> *Nepal Samachar Patra*, 14 September 2000, p. 1.

<sup>450</sup> Bhandari, *op. cit.*, f.n. 52, pp. 158-159.

“Gurkhas have been sold and bartered and they have been the coin of international diplomacy at key moments in Nepalese history<sup>451</sup>.” Right from the beginning of oligarchic Rana regime, Gurkhas turned both coin and tool of diplomacy but this trend turned out to be intense and institutional as soon as Bir Shamsheer came to power. The Ranas lavishly employed the hill nationalities during the two World Wars both as coin and tool of diplomacy and got what they had aspired for. “Another government of Ranas sold another generation of Gurkhas to the British in return for further markers of their status and additions to their treasury<sup>452</sup>.” It makes clear that Gurkhas were extensively sold throughout the Rana regime. Surprisingly, *Panchayat* and post-*Panchayat* ostensible democratic regimes also have not brought any tangible change. As suggested by Padam Bahadur Gurung (GAESO president) and Gopal Siwakoti Chintan (GAESO legal advisor), Nepalese government has, sometimes, come out to be a stumbling block in the course of finding a panacea of the savage British treatments.

Britain has also been trading Gurkhas as commodities. It paid to Ranas for Gurkhas and extensively exploited them for imperialist purpose. It sold them to others when it did not need them. “Britain has been earning profits by using the Gurkhas as saleable and resalable items. When the Gurkhas were used to fight guerrillas in Malaya, Britain received \$450 per soldier but paid only \$42 to each of the Gurkha soldiers<sup>453</sup>.” The war in South East Asia continued from 1948 to 1966. Over 18,000 Gurkhas were mobilised in the war for eighteen years. How much profit Britain made within those eighteen years, if it earned 408 Malaysian dollars per head per month? In the opinion of former legal advisor of GAESO, Yuba Raj Sangrola: “participation in this war was contracted by the British government with the Malayan

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<sup>451</sup> Des Chene, *op. cit.*, f.n. 47, p. 32.

<sup>452</sup> Mary Katherine Des Chene, “Soldiers, Sovereignty and Silences: Gurkhas as Diplomatic Currency”, *Gurkha Sainik Aawaj*, Vol. 8, No. 8, November-December 1999, p. 34.

<sup>453</sup> Shrestha, *op. cit.*, f.n. 86, p. 4.

Government<sup>454</sup>....” Britain has not yet given up this old despicable policy. It did the same in Singapore too. “In Singapore police service, it paid 600 Singapore dollars to each English policeman whereas it paid 106 dollars to Gurkhas. Like in Malaya, Britain pocketed the 494 dollars per head<sup>455</sup>.” As the South East Asian war ended, Britain, under her redundancy scheme, demobilised 10,000 Gurkhas. Afterwards, it maintained strength of only 8,000. Out of this, “a battalion of 1,000 was posted at Brunei, subject to an annual royalty of 1 million pounds to be paid by the Brunei Government to the British Government<sup>456</sup>.” On a rotational basis, Britain has still been stationing one of the Gurkha battalions in Seria, Brunei. At this time of study, 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Gurkha Rifles has been posted there. Furthermore, “Britain asks in payment £30 million as monthly expenses of the battalion. Ironically, it spends only £6 million and the remaining huge amount of money goes to the British ex-chequer<sup>457</sup>.” After all, Britain, until early 1990s, did not give any salary to Gurkhas but poor quality food, sometimes half fed, and a very small amount of pocket money. During 1990s, while this researcher was serving in Brunei, Gurkhas were paid twelve times less than those of Bruneian soldiers. This fact provides a window into Gurkhas’ real condition for those who do not have knowledge as regards this.

Since mid 1970s, Britain unilaterally began to send former British Gurkha soldiers to Brunei to act as security guards for the sultanate. As time passed, Britain converted it into regular army and called it Gurkha Reserve Unit (GRU). Its strength in 1997 was 2,500. And again, GRU was under the command of the British officers through special arrangements with the sultan of Brunei before a vehement agitation took place during late 1990s against

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<sup>454</sup> Yuba Raj Sangroula, “Tripartite Treaty between England, India and Nepal, 1947: Some Legal Implications”, Working Paper submitted on an International Conference on Plight of the Gurkhas, 18-20 September 1999, p. 4.

<sup>455</sup> K. C., *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 445.

<sup>456</sup> Sangroula, *op. cit.*, f.n. 93, p. 4.

<sup>457</sup> K. C., *op. cit.*, f.n. 19, p. 445.

discriminations, perversions and the GRU's illegitimacy under this researcher's leadership. The agitation lasted for one and a half years. During the agitation, the authority in actual practice was exercised by the rebels. The GRU, in actual fact, recruits former British Gurkhas as security guards but mobilises them as regular army and pays less than a security guard. It does not provide any pension, which is a must for a soldier. Nepal has, throughout the history, maintained silence as to this illegal army organisation and has not shown any concern about Britain's monopoly. In addition to this, "... Gurkhas have alleged that the British Government has been earning a huge profit by supplying Gurkha soldiers to Brunei to work under its security service<sup>458</sup>." It may be true as Britain's principal concern has been to earn money out of Gurkha business. Otherwise, it would not have involved in such a complicated affair putting Nepal aside. Hence, like in the British army, the GRU authority does not pay Gurkhas equal to Malay soldiers.

Britain trades Gurkhas to Singapore too. Following the disbandment of Sikh contingent in 1949, it founded a Gurkha contingent (police force) in Singapore without knowledge of the Nepalese government. Ever since, the British army officers have commanded the contingent. Over 2,000 Gurkhas have been serving in this police organisation for the last five decades. Yet, there is no agreement between Nepal and Singapore. Nepal, even if, has not raised any question as to it and hence Britain has been enjoying the sole rights in this regard. Recruitment undertaking, for Singapore Gurkha contingent, takes place every year under the auspices of British Gurkhas Nepal (BGN). "All these arrangements are done on a repayment basis between Singapore and Britain. Here, the British are trading the Gurkhas directly to a third party<sup>459</sup>." Deepak Maskey also maintains similar line of view. "Gurkhas are meant to be recruited exclusively for the Indian and the British army, so why

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<sup>458</sup> Shrestha, *op. cit.*, f.n. 86, p. 4.

<sup>459</sup> Om Prakash Aryal, *Legal Aspect of Gurkha Recruitment: An Overview*, (Unpublished LLM Dissertation, TU, n.d.), p. 25.



are they being sold to the Singapore Police Force<sup>460</sup>?” British Gurkhas Nepal arranges *inter alia* meals and accommodation in transit camp (Bikram Bhawan) when they come on furlough and return to Singapore. British welfare centres look after their post-retirement welfare. But for sure, the British government charges exorbitant price for this business on the Singapore government. The above analysis shows that Britain has been trading Gurkhas to third parties. It is due to the lucrative human trade, Britain does not need to bear any expenses for Gurkhas from her treasury, quite the opposite, and it makes a handsome profit. There is one more thing to note that when Britain had stationed Brigade of Gurkhas in Hong Kong, it used to charge the Hong Kong government 75% of the total expenses but would use for her purpose, i.e., Falklands’ war, Gulf war, etc. Hong Kong people had to do nothing with these wars. Britain has, throughout the history, employed this policy. In the twenty first century, it is an extremely unjust, irrational and disgusting act of Britain – a country which is respected as a champion of democracy, human rights, rule of law and press freedom. Basically, it goes on until and unless Nepal shows concern over the independent status of Nepal, and Gurkha organizations intensify their movement and legal battle against such policy.

## 6.5 Britain’s and Others’ Logics

Basically, Britain has been forwarding her own arguments on discrimination against Gurkhas. It argues that the provision of tripartite treaty bars from making the Gurkha facilities equal to the English soldiers. The British defence secretary Geoffery Hoon states thus: “I accept, of course, that there are differences between Nepal and UK pension rates, but this reflects the Tri-Partite Agreement<sup>461</sup>...” This is a false assertion. The minister is referring to clause 11 of annexure 1 of bipartite treaty held between India and Britain on 7 November 1947, of which Nepal is not a party. It is clear to all

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<sup>460</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 101.

<sup>461</sup> *Spotlight*, 15 December 2000, p. 1.

that a treaty of other countries cannot be binding to Gurkhas as they are citizens of a sovereign independent nation. Quite the opposite, Britain must abide by clause 1 of annexure 3, which is an integral part of the tri-partite agreement. That is as follows: “in all matters of promotion, welfare and other facilities the Gurkha troops should be treated on the same footing as the other units in the parent army so that the stigma of mercenary troops may for all time be wiped out. These troops would be treated as a link between two friendly countries<sup>462</sup>.” When this logic was advanced by GAESO and its supporters and sympathizers, it created high pressure on Britain that tendered the approval of the government of India. In other words, India’s approval is a must prior to Britain’s bringing about a change in Gurkhas’ status. In the course of time, Indian ambassador to Nepal made clear India’s stance so: “this is an issue between the UK and Nepal. As far as India is concerned there is no difference with regard to pay or pensions in respect of Indian soldiers and Nepalese serving in the Indian Army<sup>463</sup>.” This view placed Britain in an uneasy position. Britain’s original envision might be to keep Gurkhas as a foreign *legion*, nothing else and still suffering from the same imperialistic hangover.

Again, it came up with an argument of cheap living standard. Gurkha pension is enough given the “... very low standard of living and the absence of a sophisticated system of state benefits and support<sup>464</sup>.” This line of reasoning, however, does not hold any water. Surendra Phuyal argues: “Can United Nations pay less compensation to UN General Secretary Kofi Annan, just because Annan comes from Ghana, where the cost of living is cheaper<sup>465</sup>?” Moreover, Britain has commenced discrimination even

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<sup>462</sup> GAESO, *op. cit.*, f.n. 25, p. 52.

<sup>463</sup> Lekali and Bista (ed.), *op. cit.*, f.n. 42, p. 118.

<sup>464</sup> Macdonald QC *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, f.n. 12, p. 33.

<sup>465</sup> Surendra Phuyal, “And Khukuri Keep Shining”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 6 March 2003, p. 5.

between Gurkhas themselves. Sandhurst commissioned Gurkha officers draw equal pension to their British counterparts. They also live in Nepal. And, why the treatment is different? Some serving Gurkhas work in the British camps in Kathmandu and Pokhara but receive equal pay to those of other Gurkhas who work in Brunei and the UK. Again, the principle of living standard does not apply here.

While going through the statements and resources of the British authority and interviewing some intellectuals regarding the British Gurkha issues, there are logics of their own perception. The logics do not justify the norms and values of the democratic government. As the UK is a Commonwealth country and champion of human rights, her behaviour and treatment does not tune to the egalitarian policy of equity. Contrarily, Britain often argues that:

The Gurkha pension scheme provides pensions that are comparable with professional salaries in Nepal, and are updated annually for local inflation. Virtually all Gurkhas complete at least 15 years' service, which earns them a pension for life, and beyond that for their close dependents. Traditionally Gurkhas, as Nepalese citizens, have retired to Nepal after their service, and their pension package is tailored to suit life there.<sup>466</sup>

But Gurkha soldiers and their organizations hold the view that it is irrational to compare British Gurkha pension to the salaries of Nepalese professionals. Gurkhas have done no less work rather done much more than the British soldiers. And it is also unfair to reflect the cost of living in Nepal. This policy is not applied as for British and other nationals but Gurkhas. A British minister further argues that "... service with the Brigade of Gurkhas remains a very rewarding and worthwhile career for many young Nepalese men. The very stiff competition for the available places on the Brigade's annual intake of recruits bears testament to this<sup>467</sup>." It is true for young

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<sup>466</sup> Duty Minister Lord Drayson's Reply to UBGEAN, 11 August 2005, p. 2.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

people of a poor and developing country like Nepal. However, they still deserve the right to be treated equally, fairly and in line with the prevailing laws and current norms and values. Nepal is one of the members of the world community (UN). So, it should not be under-treated. A free, sovereign and independent nation Nepal enjoys its own equal status in the world affairs. Employees these days all over the world join their profession spontaneously as well as passing through a rigorous competition. Yet they enjoy the right to oppose whenever they feel exploited and discriminated by the agency concerned. Due to the realisation of discriminatory policy post formation of GASEO, things have been gradually changing towards a positive direction.

Madhukar Shamsheer JB Rana, former finance minister of Nepal said to this researcher in an interview that “Britain is bound by the tripartite treaty to treat Gurkhas discriminatorily. He accepted also the principle of cheap living standard and to justify his view quoted the principle, purchasing-power parity<sup>468</sup>.” This person referred to the provision enshrined in the bilateral treaty held between Britain and India, which, Nepal as a sovereign independent country is not bound to bring into effect. As regards the intention to reflect the cost of living too, his logic seems somewhat traditional. In this civilised and advanced world, no human being can be discriminated on any excuse. Realising the seriousness of equality among people, the UN and other international organisations pay on equal basis regardless of place of origin and do not apply separate rules for payment based on the local cost of living. The world has become so advanced that it has even commenced to enthusiastically advocate animal’s rights let alone the equal rights of human-race.

Greta Pennington, a British national also ascertained the discriminatory treatment to Gurkhas as just and fair. She further said that “the Gurkhas retiring at the age of early 30s should not sit idle. And the Gurkha

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<sup>468</sup> Oral Interview with Madhukar Shamsheer JB Rana (Former Finance Minister), 24 September 2007.

organizations should not act like political parties<sup>469</sup>.” Her logic implies that the British treatment to Gurkhas is reasonable and suggests that the retirees have to do something if the pension is not enough to run their households. But her suggestions do not match the humanistic and legal approach. The point is, Britain should not discriminate Gurkhas on the basis of race and other regards.

As far as Gurkha organizations’ (GAESO) activities are concerned, they are peaceful and democratic. During initial days, their activities were limited to submitting memoranda, leading delegations, issuing press statements, etc. They resorted to other courses only when their previous courses failed to draw attention of the right authority. Post-retirement life is a civilian life. It is universal. As other civilians, their protest activities can go to the extent, which is within the parameter of current democracy. A Nepali diplomat Keshab Raj Jha holds that “it is wrong to demand equality. According to an Arabian tale, a camel just thrusts its head to avoid rain and gradually moves others out of place<sup>470</sup>.” This argument does not logically justify Gurkhas’ case just because they are foreign nationals and belong to a poor country. A Nepali scholar expresses his view thus “... for Gurkhas to get the same privileges as a British soldier would be unthinkable, though they can keep on trying. Any country distinguishes between citizens and foreigners<sup>471</sup>.” This reason does not seem rational as the Gurkha facilities are being better followed by Gurkha agitation. And a democratic country like UK should not hire foreign nationals and use them for hegemonising the globe. Another major thing to take into account is the discrimination of one or the other between people and people, or race and race and or colour and colour, which has virtually caused all conflicts in the

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<sup>469</sup> Oral Interview with Greta Pennington (British National), 24 September 2007.

<sup>470</sup> Oral Interview with Keshab Raj Jha (Former Ambassador to France), 17 July 2005.

<sup>471</sup> Ramesh Khatri, “Mercy on Mercenaries”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 10 April 2007, p. 5.

world. In order to bring peace and harmony among different races, colours and cultural groups, discrimination of all kind must be ended.

Former ambassador to Britain, Bharat Keshar Singh accepts Britain's inequitable treatment to Gurkhas and says: "beggars cannot be choosers"<sup>472</sup>. But Gurkhas are not beggars. They are rather integral part of the British national army and have been serving for Britain for the last two centuries. Hence, this view may be unproductive and hard to endorse. Ganesh Raj Sharma, a senior lawyer, also holds more or less similar line of view. He says, "Britain, as a democratic country, may concede agitation to some extent, if it exceeds, it may backfire. There is a limitation in accepting agitation"<sup>473</sup>. His view implies to the possible close down of the Gurkha recruitment tradition if the Gurkha movement continues. And he suggests embracing the prevailing treatment. But, it would not be justifiable to unilaterally close down a two century old institution. The incumbent British ambassador to Nepal writes: "until now Gurkha pensions have been linked to the rates paid to Indian army pensions. Why? Because that was the agreement the then governments of Nepal, India and the United Kingdom signed up in 1947 when the British Indian army was wound up and some Gurkha regiments were re-assigned to the British Army and some to independent India's Army"<sup>474</sup>. Such agreement is not embodied in the above-mentioned treaty. But this reference was laid down in the bilateral treaty held only between India and Britain without knowledge of the then Nepalese government. On the contrary, provision of equal facility is enshrined. Therefore, Gurkhas now are fighting for fair treatment. The ambassador further writes, "... Gurkha soldiers will be paid the equivalent of their British counterparts (as a Lance Corporal 2.25 lakh rupees a month, as a Sergeant 3.15 lakh rupees a month and as a captain 4.16

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<sup>472</sup> Singh, *op. cit.*, f.n. 48.

<sup>473</sup> Sharma, *op.cit.*, f.n. 80.

<sup>474</sup> Andrew Hall, "Britain's Gurkhas Get a Fair Deal", *The Kathmandu Post*, 30 March 2007, p. 5.

lakh rupees a month<sup>475</sup>." It reveals the latest situation. But the ambassador did not disclose that the Gurkhas right from 1815 to 1999 would receive 15 times less than the British. For example, a Gurkha Lance Corporal would receive ten thousand rupees a month and his British counterpart would receive over one hundred thousand rupees in 1990. Only after April 2000, owing to the unabated GAESO movement for equality, serving Gurkhas began to get a salary more or less equal to their British counterparts. Despite that, the pre 1 July 1997 Gurkha retirees still get 8 times less pension than that of the British.

Despite Britain's chameleon arguments, Gurkhas are clear that they have been unfairly treated and hence determined to get what they deserve. So, GAESO and other organizations should endeavour to seek support of post people's movement II progressive government, which may turn cooperative to resolve the issue easily, quickly and honourably. If, they still fail to get a genuine support of the Nepalese government, they should, as determined by GAESO intensify both movement and legal battle together. However, their protests should always be democratic and peaceful but not aggressive. Sooner or later, Britain should accept equal pay for equal work slogan of the twenty first century.

## **6.6 Struggles of Serving Soldiers**

In order to eradicate the perversions which have prevailed in the Brigade of Gurkhas for ages, this researcher, Naren Rai, Santosh Thalang, Puranjan Rai, Mani Kirant Rai and Krishna Rai had begun rebellion sometimes overtly and other times covertly since early 1980s. All these soldiers had political background back in Nepal and education wise also fell on the top rung. These people had aimed to enhance the status of Gurkhas by doing away with the existing discriminations and exploitations as well as would like to do some creative work utilizing their leisure. They could realise

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<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

the rapid change that was coming around the world. Therefore, this small group formed an underground organisation to achieve the aforesaid goal. They worked both individually and collectively. Most did not dare to join the organisation. "To rebel in the army is not like being involved in the political movement in civilian life. Quite the opposite, it is like the sword of Damocles. Hence, one must have guts<sup>476</sup>." Had anything gone wrong, they would have been dismissed from the army. This group, nevertheless, ventured to work to bring about a change in the appalling working conditions as analysed above.

Some worth quoting events are jeans movement, provident fund movement, movement against unequal pay increment and against the poor quality service of the British Forces Broadcasting Service (Nepali). This author and Puranjan Rai took the risk of delivering speech in the NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) in Gallipoli Lines (Hong Kong) in the 10<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles to convince the soldiers about the necessity of jeans movement. They are perhaps the first speeches delivered inside the barracks in the last two hundred years' Gurkha history. One day before the speeches, the Commanding Officer of 10 G.R., Lieutenant Colonel RNA Lewis, had banned Gurkhas from wearing jeans trousers by issuing a special order. Gurkhas were not allowed to wear not only jeans but also decent civilian clothes of their choice in their private time. This made Gurkhas a laughing stock among civilian people for decades. But the English and the Chinese soldiers have no prohibition. Therefore, after two days of the special order, over 95 percent soldiers rebelled by wearing jeans trousers. They went to have dinner followed by a downtown visit. The Adjutant Captain Warrington showed up to stop them but nobody listened to him. The authority had decided to take severe action against ringleaders, however, failed since the leadership had excellent command over the soldiers and had enjoyed strong support of them. Had they taken any action against them that would have followed disastrous

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<sup>476</sup> Naren Rai's version is based on Conversation with this Researcher, 2 October 2006.



ramifications. Realising the gravity of the situation, the authority quietly shelved the plot. In real sense, the incident was a mutiny.

In 1991, Gurkhas' salary was increased. Before this increment, Gurkhas were given only pocket money. But the percentage of increment began from 12 and ended at 65. The 12 percent was for rifleman and the 65 for a QGO major. There were already gaps in pay between ranks. The higher the rank, the more salary they would get. Greater percentage of increment for higher ranks could make the gap too much wide. For this reason, the percentage of increment should be the same for all ranks. Therefore, the agitators called it an unscientific pay rise. Its aim might be to please the QGOs that could encourage them to suppress the voice of unsatisfied lot. And, due to the handsome salary, the entire rank and file would make a sole aim to become a QGO as well as be ready to tolerate any savage treatments. The leaders of the underground organisation prepared a letter of discontentment and dispatched it to all the Gurkha Majors and Company 2ICs (second in command) in the Brigade of Gurkhas. "After a week or so, this researcher and Lal Subba came across two British officers in a Nepali restaurant in Fanling (Hong Kong). Discussion with them went on for two hours regarding the then unscientific pay rise<sup>477</sup>." The officers showed big surprise with the reasons presented to them and could not believe that this author and Lal Subba were Gurkha soldiers. They expect Gurkha soldiers to be like a primitive tribe who accepts everything without a question. The above persons guaranteed them that even a single Gurkha soldier was not happy with the unequal pay rise. If anybody was happy then he must be either god or mad.

Point of provident fund also caused a chaos in 10 G.R. Soldiers were compelled to keep some of their salary in the provident fund but were not allowed to draw it even after genuine reasons were furnished. There was always a big amount of fund of about 8,000 soldiers. But they never furnished any statement. Reportedly, the authority used to invest the money and earn

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<sup>477</sup> Lal Subba's version is based on Conversation with this Researcher, 15 January 2007.

profit out of it. This issue, at all times, made the rank and file disgruntled. The Company 2IC (QGO captain) used to deal with it in the company but most of them on most occasions would reject the request of the soldiers to get the provident fund drawn. On the contrary, they would scold the soldiers. Its one of the ultimate motives was to force the soldiers to make some savings which they could get on their retirement and the other is to get profit through the investment of the huge money. In the absence of this design, it was impossible for Gurkhas to save any money as they used to get only a pittance. Though reluctant to this policy, Gurkhas could take some money on their retirement and the British could boast of the money saying they had paid good money to Gurkhas. Besides, it might prevent the soldiers from being destitute and the British welfare centre would not need to support them financially in their post-retirement life. A rebellion under the leadership of the above mentioned soldiers occurred in 10 G.R. when the situation turned unbearable. The soldiers' argument was: it was their suitcase's money, which they had earned as salary and the officers of whatever rank did not have any right to deal with the money. Some QGOs, mole in real sense threatened to punish the leaders. However, they were brought to their knees since they were completely wrong and this was one of the most unpopular issues in the Gurkha Brigade.

This group of soldiers made a lot of contributions in the case of British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) too. BFBS had many problems such as nepotism, poor presentation, broadcast of unwanted programmes, etc. These people always actively participated in most programmes. They used to send letters regularly to BFBS praising their good aspects and pointing out weaknesses. These people always provided healthy suggestions on and off air. Staff of BFBS sometimes felt hard pressed by the comments of these people. The comments were, however, all the time creative and constructive. In this manner, this group continued an untiring struggle not only in the British army but also in Gurkha Reserve Unit, Brunei, though, it was extremely risky. The leaders, i.e. this researcher, Naren Rai, Santosh Thalang,

Puranjan Rai and Lal Subba quit their job in the course of rebellion in GRU (Brunei) but only after a grand success.

## **6.7 Attraction of the Nepalese towards British Army**

Despite the discrimination in the British army against the Gurkhas, tens of thousands of Nepali youths, every year, take part in the selection process to join the British army. The competition is always very tough as the vacancy falls only around three hundred. The major reason to hanker for the British army by the Nepali youths is, though still not equal to the British counterparts, owing to the far handsome salary and perks in comparison to the salary and perks they get in Nepal. The British government, since the late 1990s and thereafter, has continuously been improving the facilities of Gurkhas. Therefore, this is probably the best job available in the world for those Nepali youths who have just got through SLC (minimum) or intermediate level (maximum). Nepal, these days, is passing through the hardest time and unemployment problem is very serious. In addition, the youths, who join the British army, belong to backward ethnic community. And to get job for them in Nepal is still harder. Every year, thousands of youths go to Gulf countries for employment where the salary and perks are much below than in the British army. The tradition of joining the military service among the Rai, Limbu, Gurung and Magar tribes for ages is also responsible to some extent to make them choose British army service. Hence, though having a better economic status as well as being talent students with excellent performance in the study also prefer to join British army rather than to pursue higher study. Some of them decide to join with a hope to visit several developed European countries. After being a British soldier, it is not difficult for one to visit 10-15 countries within 15 years and that is impossible for them in Nepal. However, the predominant aspect is the financial benefits they get in the British army. And they, after retirement, could improve their quality of life. Another important factor is the quality education of the UK the Gurkhas could give to their children. Therefore, the Nepali youths, though

there is discrimination, make first choice to go through the difficult selection process to get a vacancy in the British army.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 Summary

Nepal came in contact with the East-India Company when the latter metamorphosed into a formidable political power after the battle of Plassey (1757). The East-India Company thereupon showed its real facade that is to say began to gobble up thus far independent states. But the crusade coincided with the intensified expansionist campaign of the Gurkha Chief Prithivi Narayan Shah. The Company government took the steady rise of the house of Gorkha as a threat to itself and the former dispatched an expeditionary force in favour of the last Malla King of Kathmandu. The expeditionary force, however, failed miserably to rescue the Malla King. The expedition, rather, suffered a terrible loss.

The British rulers, realising the new political situation of Nepal, made a major policy change and ingratiated themselves with the regime of King Prithivi Narayan Shah. The Colonial government, as shortage of new market for their hugely produced commodities, was hankering to conduct an unhindered trade with Nepal and Tibet and western part of China through Nepal. To this very end, it was to develop a cordial relationship first with Nepal. To their dismay, Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors, having extreme disgust upon the British, followed a policy of isolation. British-India, somehow, managed to conclude a treaty of commerce in 1792 when Nepal was waging war against Tibet and China. But the treaty obligations did not come into effect owing to the opponents of British-India.

Despite the failures, the Colonial rulers continued their tenacious endeavours through peaceful diplomacy for the missions headed by the English did not yield any positive outcome, dispatched mission led by a non-English gentleman. That is too of no avail. British-India played off even the

Nepalese barons against the self-exiled King Rana Bahadur Shah then living in Banaras. Ultimately, British-India triumphed to conclude a treaty of friendship with Nepal in 1801. This treaty, sadly, enshrined the most disgusting clause for the Nepalese, which permitted British-India to dispatch a British political agent, i.e. resident, to Kathmandu and vice-versa. Again, the triumphant arrival of the exiled king prevented the treaty obligations from execution.

By this time, British-India was exhausted in employing peaceful means and decided to resort to force to reduce Nepal to a poor hilly state so as to end the ever-growing danger from it forever. British-India after being free from Napoleonic war, declared war on Nepal. The foe got outright victory over Nepal on account of sophisticated weapons, larger number of troops, and effective and efficient supply of provisions and systematic and relatively modern military training. The Nepalese defeat followed a conclusion of dishonouring treaty for Nepal, which essentially allowed the Colonial government to accredit a British resident to Nepal. Nepal lost almost all-fertile plain land and the Nepalese war of expansion came to an end forever. During the subsequent years also, Bhim Sen Thapa did not bow down to British pressure, he rather remained determined to his earlier philosophy of greater Nepal and to pushing out the whites from South Asia in cooperation with the neighbouring states. Things took a sharp turn when Brian Houghton Hodgson assumed the responsibility of Resident in Nepal. It is said, as well as believed, that Resident Hodgson considering Bhim Sen Thapa as an inborn foe of the English interfered with the Nepalese politics in order to oust the latter from power and to realise his aspirations. The resident, at last, succeeded in forming a government of his choice called "English ministry" led by royal collateral Fatte Jang Shah. The years between the fall of Bhim Sen Thapa and before the emergence of Jang Bahadur (the founder of Rana oligarchy) were probably the most volatile in the Nepalese political history. Out of that volatile politics, Jang Bahadur Rana emerged as all-powerful

political figure in Nepal. He, by realising the gravity of the situation, submitted fully towards British-India. His submissive attitude developed a relationship of dependency between Nepal and British-India. He, however, employed some restrictions against British-India, i.e. stern check on Gurkha recruitment. This Nepalese chief, at all times, tried his best to become a most confident but ostensible friend of British-India. Because, he wanted to get weapons, ammunition, honours, titles and money from the Colonial government. Above all, he wanted to keep his position safe from all foes. Hence, Jang Bahadur provided lavish help to the Colonial government when the latter was fighting the last ditch battle against the mutineers in 1857. It is a fact that the combined role of Gurkha regiments and Jang Bahadur's army restored British authority in India. As a reward for the help, Nepal got back the ceded plain land to British-India after the conclusion of Sugauli treaty.

British-India was still having hard time to get able-bodied Gurkha recruits from the right race in required numbers. After over seven decades of patience, Bir Shamsheer, who had come to power through a *coup d'etat*, completely fulfilled the aspirations of the Colonial government. But it was Bir Shamsheer's compulsion rather than intention. Now the power safely got transferred from Jang branch to Shamsheer branch, which continued unbroken till 1951. These concessions made the bilateral relations touch the top-rung. Chandra Shamsheer surpassed all his predecessors in cooperating with British-India. Sadly, Britain never cooperated with Nepal in similar fashion. It, being very sceptical at all times, put stern check on import of arms and ammunition one way or another and never recognised the total independence of Nepal. It often advanced equivocal arguments and put Nepal always in illusion as to this issue. Chandra Shamsheer offered all the resources of Nepal on the disposal of the British emperor when he heard the outbreak of the First World War. Over 200,000 Gurkhas fought on the side of Britain. Nepal and her allies won the war. Britain, taking into account the psychology of Chandra Shamsheer, offered only one million rupees annually as a reward for his help.

Above all, it was due to Chandra Shamsher's strong stand that British-India recognised the independent status of Nepal, which unequivocally raised the status of Nepal above the level of the Indian native states.

In 1934, Nepal established formal diplomatic relations with Britain. This move further enhanced the existing ties. In September 1939, second time on this planet, the Second World War broke out. In this war too, Juddha Shamsher, the then Prime Minister of Nepal helped Britain to the greatest extent possible. About 250,000 Gurkha soldiers participated in the war alongside Britain. But Juddha Shamsher fetched nothing special in return for help provided to Britain. Britain's withdrawal from India and the latter's independence shook the whole edifice of the familial Rana rule. Britain, during the revolution against the oligarchic Rana regime, initially supported the establishment but later came in line with India. The Rana regime, as it had stood on a weak base, crumbled. By this time, the importance of Nepal to Britain was relegated in comparison to the past. Between the interim period and before the murder of infant Westminster model democracy, Nepal-Britain relations remained uneventful but friendly. Late King Mahendra, as a part of his diversification policy, paid a state visit to the UK in 1960. Having returned from the state visit, King Mahendra staged a coup against the first democratically elected government headed by the charismatic leader late B. P. Koirala. After the murder of the nascent democracy, political parties and some other concerned asked the government of the UK for moral support as well as to cancel the scheduled state visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the kingdom of Nepal. Alas, the UK government rather tilted towards dictatorship against its time-tested political norms and values.

It followed a series of exchange of visits which incorporated king, queen, royal family members, political figures and high-level bureaucrats. This added a new dimension to relations and made them most cooperative and friendly. As the friendliest country and traditional ally of Nepal, the UK supported the peace zone proposal of Nepal during late King Birendra's visit



to the UK and became the first European nation to provide such support. In course of the visit, King Birendra attempted to rationalise the necessity and importance of peace zone proposal. Both sovereigns expressed pleasure since the relationship was based on mutual respect, friendship and understanding. Most importantly, the state visit proved worthwhile in the sense that the two monarchs exchanged views on a wide range of issues. In February 1986, Queen Elizabeth II paid a five-day state visit to Nepal on the invitation of late King Birendra. It was a silver Jubilee visit of her majesty. Nepal is the only non-commonwealth country where the British sovereign paid a state visit twice despite her extremely busy schedule.

Nepal-Britain relations, however, have some dark sides also. In 1982, when Britain unilaterally deployed Gurkhas of 7G.R. in Falklands; some Nepalese politicians and media expressed deep concern and protested. Argentina is a friendly country of Nepal. Hence, they argued, Gurkha soldiers, on moral grounds, should not be employed against Argentina. In spite of the protest, Britain mobilised Gurkhas in that war. Next unpleasant incident occurred in 1986, when Brigade of Gurkhas dismissed 111 Gurkhas *en masse* on the charge of assault upon a British officer. Sadly, all 111 Gurkhas certainly were not guilty. Sometimes, such incidents have cooled the friendliest ties. But the century-old deepest ties overpowered the weak aspects of bilateral relationship.

In the people's revolution of 1990, Britain did not speak up in favour of the rebellion as other European nations did. One British diplomat admitted that it was its compulsion to be sympathetic towards the *Panchayat* government just not to jeopardize the smooth Gurkha recruitment arrangements. During democratic era, the traditional ties of the two countries have been further strengthened. Exchange of visits of royalties and high dignitaries has frequently taken place. Taking advantage of the liberal political system, ex-British Gurkha soldiers began agitation against the age-old glaring discrimination and savage treatment meted out to them by the

British government. Some foreign policy experts and diplomats expressed serious concern that the vehement protest of the ex-Gurkhas would cool the relations. The perception may be wrong. The Gurkhas are not opposing the British government and the British people nor do they want to take any revenge. The sole aim of the struggle is to end the century-old injustice and to establish equal and respectful status of Gurkhas compatible with the current world. Britain too, should have taken it as a natural phenomenon as well as a different part of bilateral relationship. The epic ex-Gurkha movement has yet to yield desirable results. Hence various lawsuits have been filed in the British courts.

Britain is playing proactive role in recent Nepalese politics. It is the only country that accredited a special envoy Sir Jeffrey James to help resolve the ever-deepening political crisis of Nepal. He made his best effort to coordinate UK's and international support to solve the problem. Interestingly, it broke the old-traditional attitude of supporting the establishment and spoke out against the authoritarian regime. UK probably might have found it hard to go against democracy, human rights, rule of law, press freedom, etc, raised by the Nepalese political parties. In this regard, since the world has come a long way, it is hard for Britain to ignore these ever-talked elements.

Trade is also one of the integral parts of Nepal-Britain relations. Trade with Britain began when it usurped the sovereignty of Bengal. It had different nature during the Rana period and before. Nepal used to import luxurious commodities for aristocratic consumption but exported only primary goods. The technology, Nepal has been using so far is obsolete. Consequently, the products are traditional. Price and quality consciousness are equally important to make Nepalese commodities competitive in the international market. Unstable politics and unclear policy in regard to foreign trade are some of the factors for slow booming. Participation in various fairs and advertisements of goods are inevitable to fast boom a modern trade. There is no scientific and progressive tax system in Nepal. Tourism, in which Nepal

has much potential, is also not satisfactory owing to the lack of infrastructures and the long armed conflict. Thus Nepal always suffered a trade deficit with Britain. Systematic trade with Britain began only in 1965 and the volume of trade since then has also surged. However, the old trend of negative trade balance is still prevailing. So far, only a few times, Nepal had surplus in trade with Britain. In brief, Nepal has to do very hard work and has to come a long way to end the trade deficit with Britain.

Gurkha recruitment commenced when the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16 was still going on. From this time onwards, the Company government, shelving most other issues, put highest emphasis on the augmentation of Gurkha regiments. Unfortunately, the Colonial government's aspiration fulfilled only when Bir Shamsheer came to power. Thenceforth, the British colonial rulers never faced any problem to procure the required number of Gurkha recruits from the right tribe. The British government extensively used Gurkhas as frontline soldiers. Perhaps there is no place on this planet where Gurkhas are not mobilised wherever there is a war going on. From this perspective, the debt Britain owes to Gurkhas for the immense contribution can never be paid back in cash. Woefully, Britain has been treating Gurkhas unfairly. In addition, Britain had and still has been trading Gurkhas to Malaysia (from 1948-68), Singapore and Brunei. Until early 1990s, Gurkhas pay was almost non-existent but peanuts. It was to buy boot brush, polish, toiletries and some other essential things for soldiery. There is, at all times, a gap of twelve to twenty times in comparison to the British and the Chinese (in Hong Kong) counterparts as regards pay, pension, compensation, allowances, etc. The Brigade of Gurkhas does not promote Gurkhas above than a QGO major. This is not a qualified officer and has remained as an anachronism in the Brigade of Gurkhas. As stated by a Nepalese General (Nepal army), Bharat Keshar Singh, QGOs are junior to a Second Lieutenant. Therefore, a QGO major with thirty years of service must salute and obey a second

lieutenant, who has just completed a basic officer's training. To tell the truth, no area is left where it could discriminate.

Furthermore, Gurkhas work double of their British counterparts. As mentioned earlier, from early morning to late evening, the authority engages them in parade followed by various other chores. The Gurkhas' relations with the outside world is like two separate banks of a river and the outside world does not know at all that the last relic of Colonial regime is in full fledge beyond the gates of Gurkha barracks. Gurkhas are far better in regard to military skills, fitness, sports and discipline than the English soldiers. Despite that, the bitter truth as stated by late Harka Gurung is that they have been persecuted through apartheid policy of Britain and racial policy of Nepal. However, Gurkha element is the only strong link between Nepal-Britain bilateral relations.

## **7.2 Conclusion**

The British-East-India Company came to India in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a mercantile agency to explore new markets. The industrial revolution, took place in England during that period helped produce huge amount of commodities, which necessitated new markets to sell her goods as well as to extract raw materials, especially from the undeveloped countries. As time passed, the trading company metamorphosed into a political power in South Asia when it conquered Bengal (1757) followed by Oudh (1764). During those days, the Company government began to make efforts to establish cordial relations with Nepal. Kathmandu, at that time, was an *entrepôt* in South Asia. Thus, it was impossible to commercially exploit this region without friendly relationship with Nepal.

Britain was the leading power in the contemporary world and was heavily engaged in building her empire across the globe. There was a cutthroat competition going on between Britain and France in empire building. In India too, it was usurping the sovereignty of hitherto

independent princely states one after the other. The Nepalese rulers were closely watching the behaviour of British-India upon Indian states. This policy of Britain helped develop a negative attitude on Nepalese minds towards the former. Nepal's overriding concern was to safeguard her independence and territorial integrity and that was hard to realise without stopping the British endeavour to enter into Nepal. Prithvi Narayan Shah had great fear and suspicion of the English people. Therefore, it was his obligation to adopt a policy of isolation. Later, he propounded even a principle called *Dibhya Upadesh* (divine counsel) to save Nepal from foreign aggression. Successors of Prithvi Narayan Shah also followed his footsteps. Despite the tenacious but peaceful efforts of British-India, its aspiration of developing friendly relations with Nepal did not materialise. On the other hand, Nepal had also been expanding her territory. The territorial expansion of Nepal had been taken as a threat by the Company government.

When Nepal was waging war against the joint force of Tibet and China, Britain turned the critical time of Nepal to her advantage. The commercial treaty of 1791 was the outcome of the strategy. They had enshrined many British interests in the treaty but failed to bring it into effect owing to the opposition of the nationalist Nepalese barons. Whenever there was an opportunity, the Company government did not lag behind even to play off one faction of Nepalese barons against the other. The Nepalese politics, during that period, was entangled in intrigues and vendetta. The tendency always used to put the patriotic courtiers in trouble. Even so, Nepal maintained her independence. And it was a great thing for a small and undeveloped country like Nepal, for hundreds of other countries both big and small had been losing their independence all over the world.

The unwillingness of Nepal to develop relationship with British-India ultimately led to the Anglo-Nepal war (1814-16). Even after the war, a true nationalist and orthodox Prime Minister, Bhim Sen Thapa, did not compromise with the British. However, British-India, after the war, began to

accredit British a resident to Nepal and that was the most disgusting thing for the Nepalese people. To fulfil one's interests was to lose others'. Hence, Nepal did not have other option but to employ a cautious policy with British-India. In 1833, Brian Houghton Hodgson, an arrogant diplomat and the greatest scholar of his time, came to Nepal as British Resident. He, unlike his predecessors, interfered in Nepalese internal affairs. His interfering policy and the inter-faction politics of the selfish Nepalese elites caused a tragic downfall of Bhim Sen Thapa. The downfall of Bhim Sen Thapa was followed by a state of interregnum in Nepal. During that volatile situation, Jang Bahadur Rana, staging a *coup*, emerged as an all powerful political figure in Nepal. But he had great fear of his foes who were gathering in India. They might seek help of British-India to oust him from power. Contrarily, he wanted to cling to the chair of power until he remained alive. In order to remain in power, by foiling the plot of his enemies, Jang Bahadur made a departure from the traditional isolationistic policy of Nepal. These two former adversaries (Nepal and Britain) after eight decades of untiring effort of Britain turned friendly. Jang Bahadur, however, was not absolutely submissive to British-India. He had put a stern check on the Gurkha recruitment tradition. British-India had also constrained Nepalese independence as well as employed a cautious policy on the import of arms, ammunition and other military hardware. Although Jang Bahadur was selfish and submissive, he did a great deed by getting back the plain and fertile land ceded to British-India. It is hard to imagine what would have happened to Nepal and the Nepalese people if the land was not returned.

Latter the Rana rulers turned further compliant to Great Britain. Consequently, Britain managed to get corresponding concessions. As a matter of fact, the entity of the two regimes depended upon mutual cooperation. In the absence of one, the other would collapse. Bilateral relations, owing to Chandra Shamsheer's policy, reached the crest. But the Ranas never paid a heed to the well-being of general public. Britain had vast experience of

democratic political system and had crossed the crucial phase of development. Sadly, they did not utter a single suggestion to the Rana rulers. The British turned a blind eye to the way the oligarchic Rana rulers ruled Nepal.

During the First World War, Britain had privilege to bring into her service over 200,000 Gurkhas among other things. After the war, British-India raised the status of Nepal above that of the Indian native states. The war re-strengthened the bilateral ties. The formal diplomatic relation (1934) of Nepal with Britain is a part of this strategy. Then the Second World War broke out. In this war too, over 250,000 Gurkhas bravely fought for Britain's cause. Ironically, Juddha Shamsher fetched nothing out of the grand help he provided to Britain. Juddha Shamsher forced Nepali sons to shed huge amount of sweat and blood in unknown lands and for alien's interest. It was due to that, he became very unpopular and exiled himself to India. Britain defeated the combined forces of Nazism and Fascism; however, it could not suppress the fervent desire of independence and democracy of the Indian people. Both India and Nepal could not remain unaffected from the world wide wave of democratisation. The wave of democratisation crumbled the two-century old British Colonial rule in India. Then, Britain had no option but to withdraw home. Britain's withdrawal from India ended an age of submissive foreign policy of Nepal forever. The age of mutual dependence was over and the nature of relationship also changed.

Britain's return from India expedited the collapse of the oligarchic Rana regime. After the collapse of the two regimes, Nepal-Britain relations returned to normalcy. Britain accepted the bitter fact that the power vacuum created by her was filled by India. Thereafter, Britain aligned its policy with an Indian perspective regarding Nepalese issues. During Panchayat regime, Nepal-Britain relations, under the leadership of the Nepalese kings, remained cordial. After the introduction of democracy to Nepal (1951), Nepal-Britain relation is based on respect, friendship and understanding. The two countries

had recognised each other's values and traditions. Both had attached emphasis to equal rights of nations, to peace, freedom and independence. Britain, as her traditional ally and friendly country, kept offering all assistance to Nepal. Britain, when former Soviet Union was strongly opposing Nepal's membership in the UN, sincerely spoke for Nepal and the latter at last got the membership. Britain was the first European country to lend support to Nepal's peace zone proposal. Nepal on her part always remained helpful and cooperative in respect to the Gurkha recruitment institution.

Surprisingly, even as a champion of democracy and human rights, Britain always used to support autocratic establishments whenever there occurred any political upheavals in Nepal. But as regards the latest revolution in Nepal, Britain broke her tradition and supported the rebels. After the restoration of democracy (1990) in Nepal, the bilateral ties are developing well. Britain is the only country in the world which accredited an envoy Sir Jeffrey James to give a way out for the long-standing political stalemate. The envoy visited Nepal several times within a short span and carried out shuttle diplomacy London-Kathmandu-Delhi and vice-versa. Britain this time broke its traditional policy (e.g. supporting the king or establishment) and expressed its opinion in favour of political parties. In spite of its sincere effort, its role has probably been sidelined by the overactive role of India and the US.

There are some dark sides as well in Nepal-Britain relations. Nepal, as a member of Non-aligned Movement and essentially a diehard advocate of small and undeveloped countries, had opposed Britain's interfering policy in world affairs. But the tones remained softer. Bilateral relations slightly cooled at one point in the past by reason of *en masse* dismissal of the Gurkhas. The extensive coverage of national dailies as well as criticism of many parliamentarians against the dismissal made Kathmandu hot. The wise thing both the governments did was the exercise of restraint. At the end of the day, the relations, which have stood the test of time, returned to normalcy. The Gurkhas, during their two-century long service, fought a large number of



wars as front line soldiers for Britain. They fought many battles even before the World Wars. These intrepid little Gurkhas have won 13 coveted Victoria Cross (VC) medals. As a matter of fact, the contribution of these soldiers towards Britain is really immense. And it, under no circumstances, can be compared with money. Britain treats, all other nationals, such as Africans, New Zealanders, Fijians, etc., who still serve in her army, on equal footing but Gurkhas. Why? A big question mark hangs. After the restoration of democracy in Nepal, the British ex-Gurkha soldiers have formed various interest groups. The interest groups largely Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organisation (GAESO) launched a movement against the discriminatory treatment of Gurkhas by Britain. The degree of discrimination is beyond imagination. Until early 1990s, the gap between salaries, pension, etc. was over twenty times. Whatever may be the reason behind it, it mocks the human civilisation and tarnishes Britain's image.

Moreover, Britain has violated the tripartite treaty of November 9, 1947, the article 1 of the UN charter, the Race Relation Act of Britain (1976), human rights of Gurkhas and their dependents and the minimum norms of the twenty first century world.

Unabated Gurkha movement put the British government in an awkward position. The GAESO held two international conferences in Kathmandu, organised press conferences in Hong Kong, London, Geneva, etc. and during latter years concentrated all its protest programmes in the UK. Therefore, Britain, realising the pathetic condition of her saviour Gurkhas, made a historic increment in April 2000. Thus, the serving Gurkhas (about 3500) get on par to their British counterparts. The Gurkhas' amazing achievement followed by GAESO's movement is the right to live in the UK but only those who retired on or after July 1, 1997. Over 50 thousand Gurkhas (including dependents) by enjoying this right have already settled down in the UK. Ironically, the cut off line deprived the real sufferers and VC winners, who had in fact shed much more sweat and blood for Britain than those who

got the right to settle in the UK, from this right. Moreover, there is still a big gap between the pension of the Gurkhas and that of the British. The organisations, basically the GAESO, are determined to get on par and have filed many suits in the British court. Some are in the offing. But many diplomats and experts hold it otherwise. In line with them, the demand for equality is irrational and the aggressive ways the Gurkha organizations have adopted to realise their demands are wrong.

British-India, after the suppression of Bengal, began trade with the Newar traders (a business tribe) of Nepal. The Indo-Nepalese trade then interconnected with Indo-European trade. Nepal used to export both the Nepalese and the Tibetan merchandise to India which were further re-exported to Europe. In the same manner, the goods imported from Europe and India were further re-exported to Tibet and China. But the trade disturbed when Prithvi Narayan Shah occupied Kathmandu. He expelled all foreign traders from Nepal as well as banned all kinds of alien mercantile. He laid emphasis on indigenous goods and levied exorbitant tax on foreign goods.

But during the Rana regime, the Ranas employed a very liberal policy. They imported only luxurious goods for their consumption. They did not try to modernise and systematise the Nepalese trade. In fact, national trade of Nepal in those days was monopolised by a few elites and relatives of Jung Bahadur. There were very few and inadequate road networks for trade traffic. Therefore, there was no possibility of a booming Nepal-Britain trade. Nepal concluded a commercial agreement with Britain in 1965 and that followed a new pattern of trade with the UK. Afterwards, the bilateral trade has considerably improved in comparison to the past. However, Nepal is still suffering a trade deficit. Hence, Nepal still has to go a long way to balance the trade with the UK. On the whole, Nepal's relations with Britain are towards friendly, cooperative and cordial.

### 7.3 Recommendations

The following remedial measures, essentially to resolve the Gurkha issues, could be helpful:

- The tripartite treaty of 1947 is too old to deal with current issues. Therefore, parties concerned might review and revise it if it has become a stumbling block to treat Gurkhas on par and replace it by a new one.
- Britain, being a champion of democracy and human rights, and on the basis of current laws and norms and values, has to rethink on Gurkha issues.
- The Gurkha organisations should adopt amicable means to realise their plight rather than aggressive ways.
- The Nepalese parliamentarians ought to raise this issue in parliament and draw the attention of the British parliamentarians and government in the same line to create pressure upon both the governments.
- The Nepalese human rights activists could hold discussions on the abuse of Gurkha human rights and create pressure to make them redressed by the governments concerned. They should also extend relationship with their British counterparts to do the same.
- The political parties of both the countries, like the Liberal Democratic Party of Britain, are advisable to become proactive to resolve this longstanding problem. They should also hold mass meetings, peaceful rallies and dispatch delegations to the British prime minister.
- Justice and human rights loving people of both the countries are to come forward to participate in deliberation on Gurkha points and to take part in peaceful rallies as well as in mass meetings as a considerable number of the British people have been doing.
- Media has a very powerful role to play on such issues. They should help publish related articles, especially in the British newspapers, propagate the issue and develop relationships with the British journalists to get their support.

- The lawyers of both the countries should analyse the treaties to find out whether Britain is legally binding or not to treat Gurkhas on equal footing. Favour of the British lawyers, in this case, should also be sought.
- The intelligentsia's role is equally important. They could help by writing articles especially in the British newspapers on Gurkhas' loyal service but unfair treatment. They should also seek support of the British intelligentsia.
- Britain is one of the oldest friendly countries of Nepal. The continuous and unabated agitation of Gurkha organisations may cool the existing bilateral relations. Therefore, all parties concerned especially the government of Nepal and the GASEO should seriously think about how to resolve the problem and explore a reasonable meeting point. The Gurkha organisations should reduce their demands of absolute equality to British soldiers especially on pension. The British government also should be little bit more liberal than now and demonstrate positive attitude to them as one of the big five of the UN, particularly in respecting their human rights.
- Regarding trade, stable politics, clear policy, progressive tax, regular participation in trade fairs, ads of commodities, quality of goods, modern technology are the major factors to be taken into account. And Nepal government is to ask the British government for concessions until the former becomes competent.
- By and large, the Nepalese government and officials and diplomats concerned ought to make their performance timely, effective and efficient in order to maintain friendly, cooperative and cordial relations with Britain.

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## APPENDIX 1

### NEPAL'S EXPORT TO UNITED KINGDOM

S.N.	Description of Productions	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
1	Lentils (pulses)	-	1794	17517	-	-
2	Coffee, tea	-	-	-	978	-
3	Nigerseeds, plant and parts of plants	2001	1148	1830	245	-
4	Bhadrakshya	-	-	425	-	-
5	Malt extracts	-	-	-	-	293
6	Orange juice	-	-	-	-	3888
7	Beverages, spirits and vinegar	1749	2202	588	1481	3577
8	Homeopathic medicaments	-	-	-	-	3055
9	Essential oils and resinoids perfumery cosmetic and toilet preparations	366	814	2314	1432	5479
10	Plastics and articles thereof	386	2667	-	-	-
11	Raw hides and skins	1577	11159	1480	-	-
12	Articles of leather	12321	14718	21046	30757	23136
13	Wood and articles of wood	1624	939	1174	797	998
14	Paper and paper boards and articles of paper and paper board	27051	52798	30638	45318	52509
15	Calendars, pictures, designs and photographs	-	-	127	880	339
16	Silk Fabrics	-	306	-	-	260
17	Woven fabric of coarse animal hair or horse hair	3779	7114	-	-	-
18	Woven fabrics of vegetable textile fibers woven fabrics of paper yarn	-	2138	235	134	341
19	Woven fabrics, printed	489	-	-	-	-
20	Carpet and other textile floor coverings	188315	252161	262327	177369	160446
21	Textile wall coverings	-	164	-	-	-
22	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories knitted or crocheted	62676	69581	46328	78801	110538
23	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	171085	735264	544812	426378	628453
24	Other made up textile articles	2733	3655	3683	8212	21276
25	Foot wears	-	-	-	-	438
26	Hats and head gears	13470	14970	7778	10923	9490
27	Ceramic products	1358	-	675	-	-
28	Glass beads, bangles; glass micro sphere; statuettes and other ornament of lamp worked glass	-	-	247	352	-
29	Silver jewellery and imitation jewellery	1869	2459	3139	6045	8808
30	Copper scrap	-	-	5917	-	218
31	Statuettes of base metal	-	-	380	-	-
32	Machinery for working Plastic or rubber	-	-	6420	-	164
33	Musical instruments; parts and accessories of such articles	-	-	351	477	433
34	Gurkha knives	-	-	-	593	393
35	Parts of seats, metal and wooden furniture, pillows	214	177	416	1163	503
36	Works of art, collectors pieces and antiques	28550	15969	20633	16179	35491
	Others	207	270	186	237	211
	Total	511820	1192437	980666	808751	1070737

Source: Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NBCCI), Trade Promotion Centre, Kathmandu, n.d.

## APPENDIX 2

### NEPAL'S IMPORT FROM UNITED KINGDOM

Value in '000 Rs.

S.N.	Description of Products	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
1	Fowls of he species gallus domestics; live poultry not more than 185 kg.	-	-	7234	3242	3452
2	Pacific salmon; dried fish whether or not salted but not smoked	-	168	186	160	367
3	Dairy products	40711	12677	-	-	-
4	Fruits of the genus capsicum	114	-	-	-	135
5	Cereals	-	-	-	890	-
6	Malt, roasted	1198	22127	14629	19056	-
7	Mustard seeds; seeds, fruit, and spores, of a kind used for sowing	-	2014	172	-	-
8	Vegetable saps and extracts	731	-	-	36	-
9	Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products	7750	2969	2669	904	-
10	Prepared and preserved tunas, hams	-	892	-	36	-
11	Sugar confectionery not containing cocoa	-	-	162	1793	-
12	Cocoa and cocoa preparation	2994	1374	9311	470	3579
13	Preparation of cereals, flour, starch or milk pastry cook's products	9969	6855	8373	9583	7470
14	Preparation of vegetables, fruits, nuts or other parts of plants	101	-	3736	3047	1548
15	Miscellaneous edible preparations	6757	353	1183	144	1569
16	Beverages, spirits and vinegar	76928	116852	142462	94070	109389
17	Animal food	8845	-	2840	-	393
18	Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes	26440	22407	40364	23255	-
19	Hydraulic cement	4260	-	-	-	-
20	Zinc ores	-	-	2945	-	-
21	Petroleum products	517128	-	7128972	1958461	25053
22	Inorganic chemicals	1575	-	-	1233	3631
23	Organic chemicals	50308	11671	2727	4768	15197
24	Pharmaceutical products	14670	5927	33961	26250	21818
25	Fertilisers	-	98529	-	180	-
26	Dyes pigments and other colouring	1046	482	16154	1971	1899



	matter, paints and varnishes; putty and other mastics; inks					
27	Essential oils and resinoids; perfumery cosmetic or toilet preparation	25824	31045	48409	31907	45414
28	Soap, organic surface active agents, waxing and lubricating preparations	5883	3481	10137	2753	414
29	Albuminoidal substances; modified starches; glues; starches	155	499	811	-	-
30	Fireworks	2911	-	-	-	-
31	Photographic or cinematographic goods	1944	2947	11755	3584	10580
32	Miscellaneous chemical products	4283	3407	8392	3948	6713
33	Plastics and articles thereof	8790	8045	16884	3438	36252
34	Rubber and articles thereof	3980	1474	682	7697	7868
35	Trunks, suitcase, vanity case, briefcases and similar containers	205	-	-	95	174
36	Casks, barrels, vats, tubs and other coopers products	632	-	-	365	-
37	Paper and paperboards, articles thereof	6494	1967	2878	3405	6903
38	Printed books, newspaper, pictures and other products of the printing industry; manuscripts, typescripts and plans	5650	5113	3878	1362	124100
39	Yarn spun from silk waste	-	4169	-	-	-
40	Raw wool, yarn of corded wool	7152	210	-	979	1337
41	Woven fabrics of cotton, bleached and unbleached	-	346	1665	-	-
42	Manmade filaments	4589	382	503	-	-
43	Manmade staple fibers	4455	3423	5894	3677	2887
44	Non-woven, whether or not impregnated coated, covered or laminated weighing more than 150gm/m <sup>2</sup>	1098	1603	1403	-	-
45	Carpet, floor coverings	2394	-	-	-	-
46	Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial users	1566	2248	580	901	-
47	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	243	3430	-	-	-
48	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	709	624	1368	5192	2380
49	Other madeup textile articles; sets; worn clothing and worn textile articles; rags	-	4207	1311	1708	2004
50	Footwear, gaiters and the like; parts of	2493	9110	6152	2529	1532

	such articles					
51	Safety headgears	-	-	371	-	1056
52	Slag wool; fabricated asbestos	-	1293	-	669	855
53	Refractory ceramic goods	1082	-	-	-	-
54	Glass and glassware	3313	-	-	484	-
55	Gold and silver unwrought: imitation jewellery and imitation jewellery of base metal	8156	28583	1334	56212	171
56	Iron and steel, MS billet	25610	8108	31814	26	-
57	Articles of iron and steel	26716	6856	343	4772	15006
58	Copper and articles thereof	27040	96402	388921	79249	34025
59	Aluminium and articles thereof	-	270	33127	9063	2533
60	Lead	-	-	-	5800	-
61	Zinc alloys; unwrought zinc, not allowed	-	1335	8396	-	15584
62	Tools, implements, cutlery, spoons and forks, of base metal and parts thereof	1177	5884	9911	17684	7571
63	Miscellaneous articles of base metal	6872	181	1309	80	289
64	Machinery and mechanical appliance electrical equipments and parts	163823	281472	142249	99072	61917
65	Electrical machinery, sound recorder, television images and parts thereof	145668	201761	71156	103878	42973
66	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock and parts and accessories thereof	65243	66250	251589	38663	35383
67	Parts of aeroplane and helicopters	193445	221903	169456	76392	224762
68	Inflatable rafts	208	-	-	-	-
69	Optical, photographic, measuring medical or surgical equipments	51638	91255	139963	53758	77622
70	Time switches with clock or watch movement	-	323	126	-	-
71	Arms and ammunition, parts and accessories	32830	15503	13177	17242	75896
72	Furnitures of metal, wood, plastic; mattresses; pillow	19160	7576	18058	4483	24375
73	Toys, games, sports requisites; parts and accessories thereof	1517	24902	1287	953	-
74	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	3028	6708	3417	3505	972
	Others	39	259	413	318	288
	Total	1639540	1462521	8827202	2795392	1065336

Source: Nepal-Britain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NBCCI), Trade Promotino Center, Kathmandu, n.d.

## APPENDIX 3

### WRITTEN AND ORAL INTERVIEWS OF DIPLOMATS, LAWYERS AND EX-BRITISH GURKHA SOLDIERS

#### Oral

1. Bharat Keshar Singh (Former Nepalese Army General and Ambassador to UK), July 2005.
2. Keshab Raj Jha (Former Ambassador to France), July 2005.
3. Ganesh Raj Sharma (Senior Advocate), July 2005.
4. Padam Bahadur Gurung (President GAESO), September 2005.
5. Prof. Dr. Mohan Prasad Lohani, (Former Ambassador to Bangladesh), September 2007.
6. Madhukar Shamsher JB Rana (Former Finance Minister), September 2007.
7. Greta Pennington (British National), September 2007.

#### Written

1. Gopal Siwakoti 'Chintan' (Legal Advisor, GAESO), September 2005.
2. Naren Rai (Former British Gurkha Soldier), October 2005.
3. Krishna Kumar Rai (Vice President GAESO), September 2005.
4. Gagendra Isbo (Central Committee Member), September 2005.
5. Jit Bahadur Rai (Treasurer GAESO), September 2005.
6. Prem Bahadur Begha (Central Committee Member), September 2005.
7. Major Saran Kumar Limbu (Former British Gurkha Officer), September 2005.
8. Lieutenant Akal Bahadur Meyangbo (Former British Gurkha Officer), September 2005.
9. Lieutenant Indra Hang Limbu (Former British Gurkha Officer and Former MP), September 2005.
10. Puranjan Rai (Central Committee Member, GAESO), September 2005.
11. Bhakta Sher Rai (Former British Gurkha Soldier), September 2005.
12. Santosh Thalang (Former British Gurkha Soldier), September 2005.
13. Lal Thebe (Former British Gurkha Soldier), January 2007.
14. Baudha Man Limbu (Former British Gurkha Soldier), September 2005.
15. Bijay Pehim (Central Committee Member, NESAs), September 2005.
16. Dharma Rai (Former British Gurkha Soldier), September 2005.
17. Mahendra Rai (General Secretary, GAESO), September 2005.
18. Dr. Surendra KC (Historian), July 2005.

## APPENDIX 4

### QUESTIONNAIRE ON "NEPAL-BRITAIN RELATIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GURKHAS"

Dear Interviewees,

I am Ram Narayan Kandangwa, currently doing research for earning a degree of PhD on "Nepal-Britain Relations with Special Reference to Gurkhas" from Tribhuvan University under the guidance of Professor Dr. Ram Kumar Dahal. In connection with Gurkha issues, especially on their plight, there is an extreme shortage of relevant materials that can be used as reliable sources. Therefore, to be affluent of reliable information and to make the research outcome further qualitative and substantive, your oral/written interview is highly desirable and would be of immense value to this study.

It is said that Gurkhas have been discriminated in the British Army. And it is an opportunity to know as regards them whether or not they have been unfairly treated by Britain for the last two centuries. Therefore, I would request you to make your observations on the following issues. Strict confidentiality shall be maintained about your interview.

1. What was the management with regard to meals, accommodation, and uniform like? vfgf, cfjf; / jbl{sf] s:tf] Joj:yf lyof] <
2. Were Gurkhas and their wives allowed to wear a decent dress of their choice during shopping, visiting, picnic, party, etc.? uf]vf{ / ItgLx?sf kl/jf/nfO{ lsgd]n, e|d0f, jgef]h, kf6L{ / ljbfsf] ;dodf ItgLx?n] rfx]sf] plrt a:q nufpg] 5'6 lyof] ls lyPg <
3. What was the treatment of Gurkhas by the British officers? tkfO{+n] la||6; clws[tx?af6 s:tf] Jojxf/ kfpgeof] <

4. What is the difference between Gurkha family permission system and the British counterparts?  $uf]vf\{ / a]nfotL ;\}lgsx? dfem cf\grave{g}f] kl/jf/ ;fy\}df /fVg kfpg] ;DaGwdf s] leGgtf 5 <$
5. Gurkhas were allowed to take their wives with them only for 2.5 years within 15 years' service. Is that a just treatment?  $uf]vf\{x?nfO\{ !\% jif\{sf] ;\}jfsfndf hDdf ;F9] b'O\{ jif\{sf nflu dfq pgLx?sf] kl/jf/ ;fydf /fVg lbOGYof] . s] Tof] Gofof]lrt Jojxf/ xf] <$
6. Is it true that Gurkhas have been compelled to work many more hours than the British, such as after parade, on weekends, block leaves, Dashain/Christmas/holidays, etc?  $uf]vf\{x?n] la|l6;x?eGbf w]/\} a9L ;do sfd ug'\{k5\{, h:t\}— cf\grave{g}f] st\{Jo k"/f u/L ;s]/, ;KtfxfGt, b;\}+, ltxf/, lqm;d; / cGo k'm;\{bsf] ;dodf . s] of] ;f"rf] xf] <$
7. Were Gurkhas confined only to army barracks and forced to be cut off from the outside world?  $uf]vf\{x?nfO\{ ;w\}" ;\}lgs 5fpgLdf /fv]/ aflx/L ;+;f/;"u s'g} ;DaGw /fVg lbO"b\}g eGg] ;To xf] <$
8. It is said that Britain has been trading Gurkha soldiers. Have you got any proof or logic of such a trade?  $la|6]gn] uf]vf\{x?sf] Jofkf/ ul//x]sf] 5 elgG5 . tkfO\{+;"u o:tf] Jofkf/sf] s'g\} k|df0f 5 <$
9. Britain, post-Second World War and subsequent wars, demobilized Gurkhas *en masse* with little or no pension, nor had they been given neither any gratuity nor any compensation. Then, how did they live in the hills?  $la|6]gn] uf]vf\{nfO\{ bf];|f] ljZjo'4 kl5 / To; kl5sf o'4 kl5 klg xhf/f\}+sf] ;^a\Vofdf lagf k]G;g tyf pkfbfg /$

lagf lfltk"lt{ 3/ k7fof] . ItgLx?n] kxf8df s:tf] hLjg ofkg  
ul//x]sf 5g\ <

10. How much salary was given to a Gurkha soldier during 1990s?  
!(() sf] bzslt/ Pp6f uf]vf{ l;kfxLsf] tna slt lyof] <
11. Was the salary enough to settle down in a town in Nepal? Tof] tnan]  
ufp“af6 ;x/ a;fO{ ;/]/ a:g ;lsGYof] <
12. A Gurkha soldier's pension was merely a pittance (Rs. 1500) in 1994. Is  
that a due respect and justice towards Gurkhas as claimed by the  
British government? Pp6f uf]vf{ l;kfxLsf] !(((\$ df k]G;g ċ  
!,%)).– dfq lyof] . o:tf] Jojxf/af6 a]nfotn] bfjL u/]h:tf]  
uf]vf{x?nfO{ plrt ;Ddfg / Gofu lbPsf] k'li6 x'G5 <
13. If the salary was 1,000 Hong Kong dollars and pension was 1,500  
rupees in mid 1990s, then what facilities could have been enjoyed by  
their predecessors? olb !(() sf] bzsd f uf]vf{ l;kfxLsf] tna  
x<sup>a</sup>s<sup>a</sup> 8n/ !,))) .– / k]G;g ċ= !,%) .– lyof] eg] Tof]eGbf  
cuf]8sf l;kfxLx?sf] s:tf] cj:yf lyof] xf]nf <
14. What might have happened to their children who received care neither  
from their fathers nor from mothers? tL afnaRrfx?sf] cj:yf s]  
eof] xf]nf h;n] g t afa'sf] g t cfdfsf] df of kfP <
15. Why have the Sandhurst commissioned Gurkha officers been treated  
on equal footing by Britain? lsg la[6]gn] ;]G8:6 sld;g uf]vf{  
clws[tx?nfO{ ;dfg ;'ljwf lbPsf] 5 <
16. Is the significant increment in the facilities of Gurkhas, namely,  
pension, salary, compensation, etc., the outcome of the Gurkha army  
Ex-Servicemen Organisation's (GAESO) movement? ljz]if u//

uf]vf{x?sf] k]G;g, tna, lfltk"lt{ cflbdf ePsf] P]ltxfl;s a[l4  
uf]vf{ e"tk"j{ ;}lgs ;Ë7gsf] cfGbf]ngn] ubf{ ePsf] xf] <

17. Was it possible without GAESO movement? u];f]sf] cfGbf]ng  
lagf of] a[l4 ;Dej lyof] <

18. It is said that Britain was compelled to make that increment by the  
pressure of GAESO and other Gurkha organisations' movement. What  
is your opinion? d'ntM u];f] tyf cGo uf]vf{ ;}lgs ;Ë7gx?n]  
rnfPsf] cfGbf]ngaf6 pTkGg bjfjsf kmn:j;k a]nfot ;/sf/  
uf]vf{x?sf] ;'ljwf a[l4 ug{ afWo eof] elgG5 s] of] ;xL  
xf] <

19. The UK Government has divided Gurkhas into two groups by making  
July 1, 1997 a cut-off line. Gurkhas who retired on or after the above-  
mentioned date have been granted British citizenship and their  
facilities will be made equal to the British counterparts in future. What  
is your say? a]nfot ;/sf/n] ! h'nfO{ !((& nfO{ ;Ldf /]vf  
agfP/ uf]vf{x?nfO{ b'O{ ;d"xdf ljeflht u/]sf] 5 . Tof] ldl  
cyjf Tof] ldlteGbf kl5 lgj[Q ePsf uf]vf{x?nfO{ a]nfotL  
gful/stf lbOPsf] 5 . ;fy} ItgLx?sf] ;'ljwf eljiodf a]nfotL  
;}lgs;/x agfOg]5 . o; ;DaGwdf tkfO{+sf] egfO s] 5 <

20. It is said that Gurkhas were used as cannon fodder and guinea pig.  
How true is this? uf]vf{x?nfO{ tf]ksf] rf/f] / lugLlkusf?kdf  
k]of]u ul/of] elgG5 . of] egfO slt ;xL xf] <

21. In accordance with the tripartite treaty of November 9, 1947, and its  
supplements, Gurkhas had to be treated equally. But the British  
government is not doing so in the name of cheap living standard of  
Nepal. Is it a just treatment? ( gf]e]Da/ !(\$& sf] ;lGw / cGo

;DalGwt b:tfj]hx?sf] cfwf/df a]nfotn] uf]vf{x?nfO{ ;dfg Jojxf/ ug'{kg]{ xf] t/ a]nfotn] ;:tf] hLjg z}nL / cGo axfgf nfO{ cfwf/ dfGb} ;dfg Jojxf/ u/]sf] 5}g . s] of] Gofof]lrt 5 <

22. The British government states that consent of India is a must prior to increasing facilities of Gurkhas on par with the British soldiers. What is your say? a]nfot ;/sf/sf] egfOcg';f/ uf]vf{x?sf ;'ljwfx?nfO{ a]nfotL ;}lgs ;/x agfpgsf nflu ef/t ;/sf/sf] ;xdlr rflxG5 . tkfO{+sf] egfO s] 5 <

23. Should Nepal, as a sovereign-independent country, comply with the provisions and spirit of the bilateral treaty held between Britain and India on November 7, 1947? ;fj{ef}d;Qf ;DkGg / ;jtGq b]z g]kfnn] & gf]e]Da/ !(\$& df a]nfot / ef/tsf] dfemdf ePsf] ;!Gwsf] k|fjwfgx? / efjgfsf] kfngf ug'{k5{ <

24. If it is a question of sovereignty and national independence, then why does the government of any political party in Nepal maintains indifference? olb of] g]kfnsf] ;fj{ef}d;Qf / /fli6«o :jfwLgftf;"u uf"l;Psf] k|Zg xf] eg] lsg h'g;'s} bnsf] ;/sf/ cfP klg df}g ;flw/x]sf] 5 <

25. Do you think the Gurkha movement cooled the bilateral relations post-restoration of multiparty democracy? g]kfndf ax'bnLo k|hftf]Gqs Joj:yfsf] k'ga{xfnL kl5 uf]vf{x?sf] cfGbf]ngn] g]kfn / a]nfotsf] ;DaGwnfO{ lr;f] agfPsf] 5 <

26. There are two schools of thought with reference to Gurkha recruitment tradition. Some people argue that the Gurkha recruitment in the British



Army should be ceased; however, others insist it to continue. What would be the best solution in this regard? clxn] uf]vf{ etL{sf] ;DaGwdf b'O{ k|sf/sf] ljr/ kfOG5 . Psy/L dflg;x? o;nfO{ aGb ul/g' k5{ eG5g\ eg] csf]{ y/L hf/L /fVg' k5{ eG5g\ . o;sf] ;aeGbf /fd|f] ;dfwfg s] x'g ;S5 xf]nf <

*Thank you very much indeed for your kind cooperation!*

## APPENDIX 5

### THE VICTORIA CROSS HOLDER GURKHAS

S. No.	Rank	Name	Regiments	Place of Action	Country	Date of Action	Gazetted in London Gazette	War	Remarks
1	Rifleman	Kulbir Thapa Magar	2/3rd G.R.	Fauquissart	France	25/09/1915	18/11/1915	World War I	Died in 1956
2	Rifleman	Karmabahadur Rana Magar	2/3rd G.R.	El. Kefr.	Palestine	10/04/1918	21/06/1918	World War I	Died in 1973
3	Subadar	Lalbahadur Thapa Magar	1/2nd G.R.	Ress-es-Zouai	Tunesia	5-6/04/1943	15/06/1943	World War II	Died in 1968
4	Havildar	Gaje Ghale	2/5 G.R. (F.F.)	Chin Hills.	Burma	27/05/1943	30/09/1943	World War II	
5	Rifleman	Ganju Lama	1/7 G.R.	Ninthoukhong	Burma	12/06/1944	07/09/1944	World War II	
6	Rifleman	Tulbahadur Pun Magar	3/6 G.R.	Mogaung	Burma	23/06/1944	09/11/1944	World War II	
7	Naik	Agamsingh Rai	2/5 G.R. (F.F.)	Bishenpur	Burma	26/06/1944	05/10/1944	World War II	
8	Subadar	Netrabahadur Thapa Magar	2/5 G.R. (F.F.)	Bishenpur	Burma	26/06/1944	12/10/1944	World War II	Posthumous Award
9	Rifleman	Sherbahadur Thapa	1/9 G.R.	San Marino	Italy	18-19/09/1944	28/12/1944	World War II	Posthumous Award
10	Rifleman	Thaman Gurung	1/5 G.R. (F.F.)	Monte San Bartolo	Italy	10/11/1944	22/02/1945	World War II	Posthumous Award
11	Rifleman	Bhanubhakta Gurung	3/2 G.R.	Tamandu	Burma	05/03/1945	05/06/1945	World War II	
12	Rifleman	Lachhiman Gurung	4/8 G.R.	Taungdaw	Burma	12-13/5/1945	27/07/1945	World War II	
13	L/Corporal	Rambahadur Limbu	2/10 G.R.	Bau	Bornco	21/11/1965	22/04/1966	Post World War II	

Source: VC Reception Committee, Gurkha VC Souvenir, Kathmandu: VC Reception Committee, 1994, p. 99.

**APPENDIX 6**  
**CITATIONS OF GURKHA VC HOLDERS FROM**  
**LONDON GAZETTE**

---

**Rifleman Kulbir Thapa Magar, VC**

---

2129 Rifleman Kulbir Thapa, 2nd Bhattalion, 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles.

"For most conspicuous bravery during operations against the German trenches south of Mauqissart.

When himself wounded, on the 25th September, 1915, he found a badly wounded soldier of the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment behind the first line German trench, and, though urged by the British soldier to save himself, he remained with him all day and night. In the early morning of the 26th September, in misty weather, he brought him out through the German wire, and, leaving him in a place of comparative safety, returned and brought in two wounded Gurkhas one after the other. He then went back in broad daylight for the British soldier and brought him in also, carrying him most of the way and being at most points under the enemy's fire".

---

**Rifleman Karmabahadur Rana, VC**

---

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Victoria Cross to:

4146 Rifleman Karmabahadur Rana, Gurkha Rif.

"For most conspicuous bravery, resource in action under adverse conditions, and utter contempt for danger.

During an attack he, with a few other men, succeeded under intense fire, in creeping forward with a Lewis gun in order to engage an enemy machine gun which had caused severe casualties to officers and other ranks who had attempted to put it out of action.

No I of the Lewis gun opened fire, and was shot immediately. Without a moments' hesitation Rifleman Karamabhadur Rana pushed the dead man off the gun, and in spite of bombs thrown at him and heavy fire from both flanks, he opened fire and knocked out the enemy machine-gun crew; then, switching his fire on to the enemy bombers and riflemen in front of him. He [sic] silenced their fire. He kept his gun in action and showed the greatest coolness in removing defects which on two occasions prevented the gun from firing. During the remainder of the day he did magnificent work, and when a withdrawal was ordered he assisted with covering fire until the enemy were close on him. He displayed throughout a very high standard of valour and devotion to duty."

---

**Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa, VC**

---

"On the night of the 5th/6th April, 1943, during the silent attack on the Rass-Ez-Zouai feature, Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa was second in command of "D" Company. The commander of No 16 Platoon was detached with one Section to secure an isolated feature on the left of the Company's objective. Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa took command of the remaining two Sections and led them forward towards the main feature on the outer ridge, in order to break through and secure the one and only passage by which the vital commanding feature could be seized to cover the penetration of the Division into the hills. On the capture of these hills the whole success of the Corps plan depended.

First contact with the enemy was made at the foot of a pathway winding up a narrow cleft. This steep cleft was thickly studded with a series

of enemy posts, the inner of which contained an anti-tank gun and the remainder medium-machine guns. After passing through the narrow cleft, one emerges into a small arena with very steep sides, some 200 feet in height, and in places sheer cliff. Into this arena and down its sides numbers of automatic weapons were trained and mortar fire directed.

The garrison of the outer posts were all killed by Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa and his men by Khukuri or bayonet in the first rush and the enemy then opened very heavy fire straight down the narrow enclosed pathway and steep arena sides. Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa led his men on and fought his way up the narrow gully straight through the enemy's fire, with little room to manoeuvre, in the face of intense and sustained machine-gun concentrations and the liberal use of grenades by the enemy.

The next machine-gun posts were dealt with, Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa personally killing two men with his Khukri and two more with his revolver. This Gurkha officer continued to fight his way up the narrow bullet-swept approaches to the crest. He and two Riflemen managed to reach the crest, where Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa killed another two men with his Khukri, the Riflemen killed two more and the rest fled. Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa then secured the whole feature and covered his Company's advance up the defile.

This pathway was found to be the only practicable route up the precipitous ridge, and by securing it the Company was able to deploy and mop up all enemy opposition on their objective. This objective was an essential feature covering the further advance of the Brigade and of the Division, as well as the bridgehead over the anti-tank ditch.

There is no doubt that the capture of this objective was entirely due to this act of unsurpassed bravery of Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa and his small party in forcing their way up the steep gully, and up the cliffs of the arena under withering fire. The outstanding leadership, gallantry and complete

disregard for his own safety shown by Subadar Lalbahadur Thapa were an example to the whole Company, and the ruthless determination of this Gurkha officer to reach his objective and kill his enemy had a decisive effect on the success of the whole operation."

---

**Havildar Gaje Ghale**

---

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS TO:

No 6816 Havildar Gaje Ghale, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force), Indian Army.

"In order to stop an advance into the Chin Hills of greatly superior Japanese forces it was essential to capture Basha East hill which was the key to the enemy position.

Two assaults had failed but a third assault was ordered to be carried out by two platoons of Havildar Gaje Ghale's company and two companies of another battalion.

Havildar Gaje Ghale was in command of one platoon: he had never been under fire before and the platoon consisted of young soldiers.

The approach for this platoon to their objective was along a narrow knife-edge with precipitous sides and bare of jungle whereas the enemy positions were well concealed. In places, the approach was no more than five yards wide and was covered by a dozen machine guns besides being subjected to artillery and mortar fire from the reverse slope of the hill.

While preparing for the attack the platoon came under heavy mortar fire but Havildar Gaje Ghale rallied them and led them forward.

Approaching to close range of the well-entrenched enemy, the platoon came under withering fire and this N.C.O. (Non-Commissioned Officer) was wounded in the arm, chest and leg by an enemy hand grenade.

Without pausing to attend to his serious wounds, and with no heed to the intensive fire from all sides, Havildar Gaje Ghale closed his men and led them to close grips with the enemy when a bitter hand to hand struggle ensued.

Havildar Gaje Ghale dominated the fight by his outstanding example of dauntless courage and superb leadership. Hurling hand grenades, covered in blood from his own neglected wounds, he led assault after assault encouraging his platoon by shouting the Gurkhas' battle-cry.

Spurred on by the irresistible will of their leader to win, the platoon stormed and carried the hill by a magnificent all out effort and inflicted very heavy casualties on the Japanese.

Havildar Gaje Ghale then held and consolidated this hard won position under heavy fire and it was not until the consolidation was well in hand that he went, refusing help, to the Regimental Aid Post, when ordered to do so by an officer.

The courage, determination and leadership of this N.C.O. under the most trying conditions were beyond all praise."

---

**Rifleman Ganju Lama, VC, MM**

---

"In Burma, on the morning of the 12th June, 1944, the enemy put down an intense artillery barrage lasting an hour on our positions north of the village of Ningthoukhong. This heavy artillery fire knocked out several bunkers and caused heavy casualties, and was immediately followed by a very strong enemy attack supported by five medium tanks. After fierce hand to hand fighting, the perimeter was driven in one place and enemy infantry,

supported by three medium tanks, broke through pinning our troops to the ground with intense fire.

"B" Company, 7th Gurkha Rifles, was ordered to counter-attack and restore the situation. Shortly after passing the starting line it came under heavy enemy medium machinegun and tank machine-gun fire at point blank range, which covered all lines of approach. Rifleman Gnaju Lama, the No. 1 of the P.I.A.T., gun, on his own initiative, with great coolness and complete disregard for his own safety, crawled forward and engaged the tanks single handed. In spite of a broken left withering cross fire concentrated upon him, Rifleman Ganju Lama succeeded in bringing his gun into action within thirty yards of the enemy tanks and knocked out first one and then another, the third tank being destroyed by an anti-tank gun.

In spite of his serious wounds, he then moved forward and engaged with grenades the tank crews, who now attempted to escape. Not until he had killed or wounded them all, thus enabling his company to push forward, did he allow himself to be taken back to the Regimental Aid Post to have his wounds dressed.

Throughout this action Rifleman Ganju Lama, although very seriously wounded, showed a complete disregard for his own personal safety, outstanding devotion to duty and a determination to destroy the enemy which was an example and an inspiration to all ranks. It was solely due to his prompt action and brave conduct that a most critical situation was averted, all positions regained and very heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy."

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**Naik Agamsingh Rai, VC**

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"In Burma on 24th and 25th June, 1944, after fierce fighting, the enemy, with greatly superior forces, had captured two posts known as "Water Piquet" and "Mortar Bluff". These posts were well sighted and were mutually



supporting and their possession by the enemy threatened our communication.

On the morning of 26th June, 1944, a company of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force), was ordered to recapture these position.

After a preliminary artillery concentration, the Company went into the attack but on reaching a false crest about 80 yards from its objective it was pinned down by heavy and accurate fire from a machine-gun in "Mortar Bluff" and a 37 millimetre gun in the jungle, suffering many casualties. Naik Agamsingh Rai, appreciating that more delay would inevitably result in heavier casualties, at once led his section under withering fire directly at the machine-gun and, firing as he went, charged the position, himself killing three of the crew of four. Inspired by this cool act of bravery the section surged forward across the bullet swept ground and routed the whole garrison of "Mortar Bluff".

This position was now under intense fire from the 37 millimetre gun in the jungle and from "Water Piquet". Naik Agamsingh Rai at once advanced towards the gun, his section without hesitation following their gallant leader. Intense fire reduced the section to three men before half the distance had been covered but they pressed on to there objective. Arriving at close range Naik Agamsing Rai killed three of the crew and his men killed the other two. The party then returned to "Mortar Bluff" where the rest of their platoon were forming up for the final assault on "Water Piquet". In the subsequent advance heavy machine-gun fire and showers of grenades from an isolated bunker position caused further casualties. Once more. with indomitable courage, Naik Agamsing Rai, covered by his Bren gunner, advanced alone with a grenade in one hand and his Thompson Sub-Machine gun in the other. Through devastating fire he reached the enemy position and with his grenade and bursts from his Thompson sub-Machine gun killed all four occupants of the bunker.

The enemy, demoralised by this NCO's calm display of courage and complete contempt for danger, now fled before the onslaught on "Water Piquet" and this position too was captured.

Naik Agamsing Rai's magnificent display of initiative, outstanding bravery and gallant leadership, so inspired the rest of the Company that, in spite of heavy casualties, the result of this important action was never in doubt."

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**Subadar Netrabahadur Thapa Magar, VC**

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The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:

Jemadar (acting Subadar) Netrabahadur Thapa (28467/IO), 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force), Indian Army.

"Subadar Netrabahadur Thapa was in command of the garrison of 41 men of the 2/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) which on the afternoon of 25th June, 1944, took over the isolated piquet known as Mortar Bluff situated on the hillside commanding the base at Bishenpur in Burma. The piquet position, completely devoid of any cover, was situated some 400 yards from the next piquet from which it could be supported to some extent by 3 inch mortar fire, but was commanded by Water Piquet, a short distance away on high ground to the South, which had been over-run by strong enemy forces on the previous night and was still in enemy hands. Owing to its commanding position the retention of Mortar Bluff was vital to the safety of other positions farther down the ridge and to Bishenpur itself.

The relief had been harassed by enemy snipers at close range but was completed at 1830 hours without casualties. A little more than an hour later the enemy began to attack. For this purpose a 75 millimeter and a 37 millimetre gun were brought on up to the high ground overlooking the

position and poured shell after shell at point blank range for ten minutes into the narrow confines of the piquet, and this was followed by a determined attack by not less than one company of Japanese. A fierce fight ensued in which Subedar Netrabahadur Thapa's men, exhorted by their leader, held their ground against heavy odds and drove the enemy back with disproportionate losses.

During this time Subadar Netrabahadur Thapa with tireless energy and contempt for his own safety moved from post to post encouraging his young N.C.O.s (Non-commissioned Officer) and riflemen, of which the garrison was largely composed, and tending the wounded.

A short lull followed during which Subedar Netrabahadur Thapa gave a clear and concise report on the telephone to his Commanding Officer and asked for more artillery defensive fire. Having done this he made preparations to meet the next onslaught which was not long in coming.

Under cover of the pitch dark night and torrential rain the enemy had moved round to the jungle from the cover of which they launched their next attack. Still in considerable strength and as determined and ferocious as ever the enemy poured out from the jungle across the short space of open ground to the piquet defences under cover of small arms and 37 millimetre gun fire from a flank. For a time our men held their ground until, as ill-luck would have it, both the L.M.G. and T.M.G. of one section jammed.

With much reduced fire-power the section were unable to hold on, and the enemy forced an entrance and over-ran this and another section, killing or wounding 12 out of the 16 men comprising the two sections. Having no reserve Subedar Netrabahadur Thapa himself went forward from his Headquarters and stemmed any further advance with grenades.

The situation was however, critical. With more than half his men casualties, ammunition low, and the enemy in possession of part of his perimeter, Subadar Netrabahadur Thapa would have been justified in

withdrawing, but in his next report to his Commanding Officer he stated that he intended holding on and asked for reinforcements and more ammunition.

So efficient were his plans for defence and such was the fine example of this gallant Gurkha officer that not a man moved from his trench and not a yard more ground was gained by the enemy, despite their desperate attempts.

Thus the night passed until at 0400 hours a section of eight men with grenades and small arms ammunition arrived. Their arrival inevitably drew fire and all the 8 were soon casualties. Undismayed, however, Subadar Netrabahadur Thapa retrieved the ammunition and himself with his platoon Headquarters took the offensive armed with grenades and Khukuris. Whilst so doing he received a bullet wound in the mouth followed shortly afterwards by a grenade which killed him outright. His body was found next day, Khukuri in hand and a dead Japanese with a cleft skull by his side.

True to the traditions of the service and his race Subadar Netrabahadur Thapa had fought against overwhelming odds for 8 hours before he was killed. His fine example of personal bravery and his high sense of duty so inspired his men that a vital position was held to the limit of human endurance.

His valour and devotion to duty will remain an epic in the history of the Regiment."

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**Rifleman Tulbahadur Pun Magar, VC**

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The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:

No. 10119 Rifleman Tulbahadur Pun, 6th Gurkha Rifles, Indian Army.

"In Burma on 23rd June, 1944, a Battalion of the 6th Gurkha Rifles was ordered to attack the Railway Bridge at Mogaung. Immediately the attack

developed the enemy opened concentrated and sustained cross fire at close range from a position known as the Red House and from a strong bunker position two hundred yards to the left of it.

So intense was this cross fire that both the leading platoons of "B" Company, one of which was Rifleman Tulbahadur Pun's, were pinned to the ground and the whole of his Section wiped out with the exception of himself, the Section Commander and one other man. The Section Commander immediately led the remaining two men in a charge on the Red House but was at once badly wounded.

Rifleman Tulbahadur Pun then seized the Bren Gun, and firing from the hip as he went, continued the charge on this heavily bunkered position alone, in the face of the most shattering concentration of automatic fire, directed straight at him. With the dawn coming up behind him, he presented a perfect target to the Japanese. He had to move for thirty yards over open ground, ankle deep in mud, through shell holes and over fallen trees.

Despite these overwhelming odds, he reached the Red House and closed with the Japanese occupants. He killed three and put five more to flight and captured two light machine guns and much ammunition. He then gave accurate supporting fire from the bunker to the remainder of his platoon which enabled them to reach their objective. His outstanding courage and superb gallantry in the face of odds which meant almost certain death were inspiring to all ranks and were beyond praise."

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**Rifleman Sherbahadur Thapa, VC**

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The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:

No. 70690 Rifleman Sher Bahadur Thapa, 9th Gurkha rifles, Indian Army.

"In Italy on the night 18th/19th September, 1944, a Battalion of the 9th Gurkha Rifles was fighting its way forward into the state of San Marino against bitter opposition from German prepared positions dominating the river valley and held in considerable strength in depth.

Rifleman Sherbahadur Thapa was a number one Bren Gunner in a rifle Company, which just before dawn came under heavy enemy observed small arms and mortar fire. He and his section commander charged an enemy post, killing the machine gunner and putting the rest of the post to flight. Almost immediately another party of Germans attacked the two men and the section commander was badly wounded by a grenade, but, without hesitation, this Rifleman, in spite of intense fire, rushed at the attackers and reaching the crest of the ridge, brought his Bren gun into action against the main body of the enemy who were counter attacking our troops.

Disregarding suggestions that he should withdraw to the cover of a slit trench, Rifleman Sher Bahadur Thapa lay in the open under a hail of bullets, firing his Bren gun which he knew he could only bring to bear on the German emplacements from his exposed position on the crest of the hill, as they would not have been visible from the slit trench.

By the intensity and accuracy of the fire which he could bring to bear only from the crest, this isolated Gurkha Bren gunner silenced several enemy machine guns and checked a number of Germans who were trying to infiltrate on to the ridge.

At the end of two hours both forward Companies had exhausted their ammunition and, as they were by then practically surrounded, they were ordered to withdraw, Rifleman Sherbahadur Thapa covered their withdrawal as they crossed the open ground to positions in the rear and himself remained alone at his post until his ammunition ran out. He then dashed forward under accurate small arms and mortar fire and rescued two wounded men, who were lying between him and the advancing Germans.

While returning the second time he paid the price of his heroism and fell riddled by machine gun bullets fired at point blank range.

The great bravery of this Gurkha soldier was instrumental in saving the lives of many of his companions and his outstanding devotion to duty contributed largely to the severe reverse which the enemy eventually suffered when our troops counter-attacked. His name will live in the history of his Regiment as a very gallant soldier."

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**Rifleman Thaman Gurung, VC**

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The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:

No. 55537 Rifleman Thaman Gurung, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force), Indian Army.

"In Italy on 10th November, 1944, a Company of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles was ordered to send a fighting patrol on to Monte San Bartolo, an objective of a future attack. In this patrol were two scouts, one of whom was Rifleman Thaman Gurung.

By skilful stalking both scouts succeeded in reaching the base of the position undetected. Rifleman Thaman Gurung then started to work his way to the summit, but suddenly the second scout attracted his attention to Germans in a slit trench just below the crest, who were preparing to fire with a machine gun at the leading section.

Realizing that if the enemy succeeded in opening fire, the Section would certainly sustain heavy casualties, Rifleman Thaman Gurung leapt to his feet and charged them. Completely taken by surprise, the Germans surrendered without opening fire.

Rifleman Thaman Gurung then crept forward to the summit of the position, from which he saw a party of Germans, well dug in on reverse slopes, preparing to throw grenades over the crest at the leading section. Although the sky-line was devoid of cover and under accurate machine gun fire at close range, Rifleman Thaman Gurung immediately crossed it, firing on the German position with his Tommy Gun, thus allowing the forward section to reach the summit, but due to heavy fire from the enemy machine guns, the platoon was ordered to withdraw.

Rifleman Thaman Gurung then again crossed the skyline alone, and, although in full view of the enemy and constantly exposed to heavy fire at short range, he methodically put burst after burst of Tommy gun fire into the German slit trenches, until his ammunition ran out. He then threw two grenades he had with him and rejoining his section, collected two more grenades and again doubled over the bullet-swept crest of the hillock and hurled them at the remaining Germans. This diversion enabled both rear sections to withdraw without further loss.

Meanwhile, the leading section, which had remained behind to assist the withdrawal of the remainder of the platoon, was still on the summit, so Rifleman Thaman Gurung, shouting to the section to withdraw, seized a Bren gun and a number of magazines. He then, yet again, ran to the top of the hill and, although he well knew that his action meant almost certain death, stood up on the bullet swept summit, in full view of the enemy, and opened fire at the nearest enemy positions. It was not until he had emptied two complete magazines, and the remaining sections was well on its way to safety, that Rifleman Thaman Gurung was killed.

It was undoubtedly due to Rifleman Thaman Gurung's superb gallantry and sacrifice of his life that his platoon was able to withdraw from an extremely difficult position without many more casualties than were actually incurred, and very valuable information brought back by the platoon,



resulted in the whole Monte San Bartolo feature being captured three days later."

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**Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung, VC**

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The King has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the Victoria Cross to:

No. 10020 Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, Indian Army.

"In Burma, on 5th March, 1945, a Company of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles attacked an enemy position known as Snowden East. On approaching the objective one of the sections was forced to ground by very heavy light machine-gun, grenade and mortar fire, and owing to the severity of this fire was unable to move in any direction. While thus pinned, the section came under accurate fire from a tree sniper some 75 yards to the south. As this sniper was inflicting casualties on the section, Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung, being unable to fire from the lying position stood up fully exposed to the heavy fire and calmly killed the enemy sniper with his rifle, thus saving his section from suffering further casualties.

The section then advanced again, but when within 20 yards of the objective was again attacked by very heavy fire. Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung, without waiting for any orders, dashed forward alone and attacked the first enemy fox-hole. Throwing two grenades, he killed the two occupants and without any hesitation rushed on to the next enemy fox-hole and killed the Japanese in it with his bayonet.

Two further enemy fox-holes were still bringing fire to bear on the section, and again Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung dashed forward alone and cleared these with bayonet and grenade. During his single-handed attacks on these four enemy fox-holes, Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung was subjected to

almost continuous and point - blank light machine gun fire from a bunker on the north tip of the objective. Realizing that this light machine gun would hold up not only his own platoon which was now behind him, but also another platoon which was advancing from the West, Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung for the fifth time went forward alone in the face of heavy enemy fire to knock out this position. He doubled forward and leapt on to the roof of a bunker from where his hand grenades being finished, he flung two No. 77 smoke grenades into the bunker slit. Two Japanese rushed out of the bunker partially blinded by the smoke. Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung promptly killed them both with his Khukuri. A remaining Japanese inside the bunker was still firing the light machine gun and holding up the advance of No. 4 Platoon, so Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung crawled inside the bunker killed this Japanese gunner and captured the light machine gun.

Most of the objective had now been cleared by the men behind and the enemy driven off were collecting for a counter-attack beneath the North end of the objective. Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung ordered the nearest Bren Gunner and two riflemen to take up positions in the captured bunker. The enemy counter-attack followed soon after, but under Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung's command the small party inside the bunker repelled it with heavy loss to the enemy.

Rifleman Bhanubhakta Gurung showed outstanding bravery and a complete disregard for his own safety. His courageous clearing of five enemy positions single-handed was in itself decisive in capturing the objective and his inspiring example to the rest of the company contributed to the speedy consolidation of this success."

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**Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung, VC**

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"At Taungdaw, in Burma, on the West bank of the Irrawaddy, on the night of 12/13th May, 1945, Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung was manning the most forward post of his platoon. At 01.20 hours, at least 200 enemy assaulted

his Company position. The brunt of the attack was borne by Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung's section and by his own post in particular. This post dominated a jungle path leading up into his platoon locality.

Before assaulting, the enemy hurled innumerable grenades at the position from close range. One grenade fell on the lip of Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung's trench; he at once grasped it and hurled it back at the enemy. Almost immediately another grenade fell directly inside the trench. Again this rifleman snatched it up and threw it back. A third grenade then fell just in front of the trench. He attempted to throw it back, but it exploded in his hand, blowing off his fingers, shattering his right arm and severely wounding him in the face, body and right leg. His two comrades were also badly wounded and lay helpless in the bottom of the trench.

The enemy, screaming and shouting, now formed up shoulder to shoulder and attempted to rush the position by sheer weight of numbers. Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung, regardless of his wounds, fired and loaded his rifle with his left hand, maintaining a continuous and steady rate of fire. Wave after wave of fanatical attacks were thrown in by the enemy and all were repulsed with heavy casualties.

For four hours after being severely wounded Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung remained alone at his post, waiting with perfect calm for each attack, which he met with fire at point-blank range from his rifle, determined not to give one inch of ground.

Of the 87 enemy dead counted in the immediate vicinity of the Company locality, 31 lay in front of this Rifleman's section, the key to the whole position. Had the enemy succeeded in over-running and occupying Rifleman Lachhiman Gurung's trench, the whole of the reverse slope position would have been completely dominated and turned.

This Rifleman, by his magnificent example, so inspired his comrades to resist the enemy to the last, that, although surrounded and cut off for three days and two nights, they held and smashed every attack.

His outstanding gallantry and extreme devotion to duty in the face of almost overwhelming odds, were the main factors in the defeat of the enemy".

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**Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu, VC, MVO**

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The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS TO:

21148786 Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu, 10 Princes Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles.

"On 21st November 1965 in the Bau District of Sarawak, Lance Corporal RAMBAHADUR LIMBU was with his Company when they discovered and attacked a strong enemy force located in the Border area. The enemy were strongly entrenched in Platoon strength, on top of a sheer sided hill the only approach to which was along a knife edge ridge allowing only three men to move abreast. Leading his support group in the van of the attack he could see the nearest trench and in it a sentry manning a machine gun. Determined to gain first blood he inched himself forward until, still ten yards from his enemy, he was seen and the sentry opened fire, immediately wounding a man to his right, Rushing forward he reached the enemy trench in seconds and killed the sentry, thereby gaining for the attacking force a first but firm foothold on the objective. The enemy were now fully alerted and, from their positions in depth, brought down heavy automatic fire on the attacking force, concentrating this onto the area of the trench held alone by Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu.

Appreciating that he could not carry out his task of supporting his platoon from this position he courageously left the comparative safety of his

trench and, with a complete disregard for the hail of fire being directed at him, he got together and led his fire group to a better fire position some yards ahead. He now attempted to indicate his intentions to his Platoon Commander by shouting and hand signals but failing to do so in the deafening noise of exploding grenades and continuous automatic fire he again moved out into the open and reported personally, despite the extreme dangers of being hit by the fire not only from the enemy but by his own comrades.

It was at the moment of reporting that he saw both men of his own group seriously wounded. Knowing that their only hope of survival was immediate first aid and that evacuation from their very exposed position so close to the enemy was vital he immediately commenced the first of his three supremely gallant attempts to rescue his comrades. Using what little ground cover he could find he crawled forward, in full view of at least two enemy machine gun posts who concentrated their fire on him and which, at this stage of the battle, could not be effectively subdued by the rest of his platoon. For three full minutes he continued to move forward but when almost able to touch the nearest casualty he was driven back by the accurate and intense weight of fire covering his line of approach. After a pause he again started to crawl forward but he soon realised that only speed would give him the cover which the ground could not.

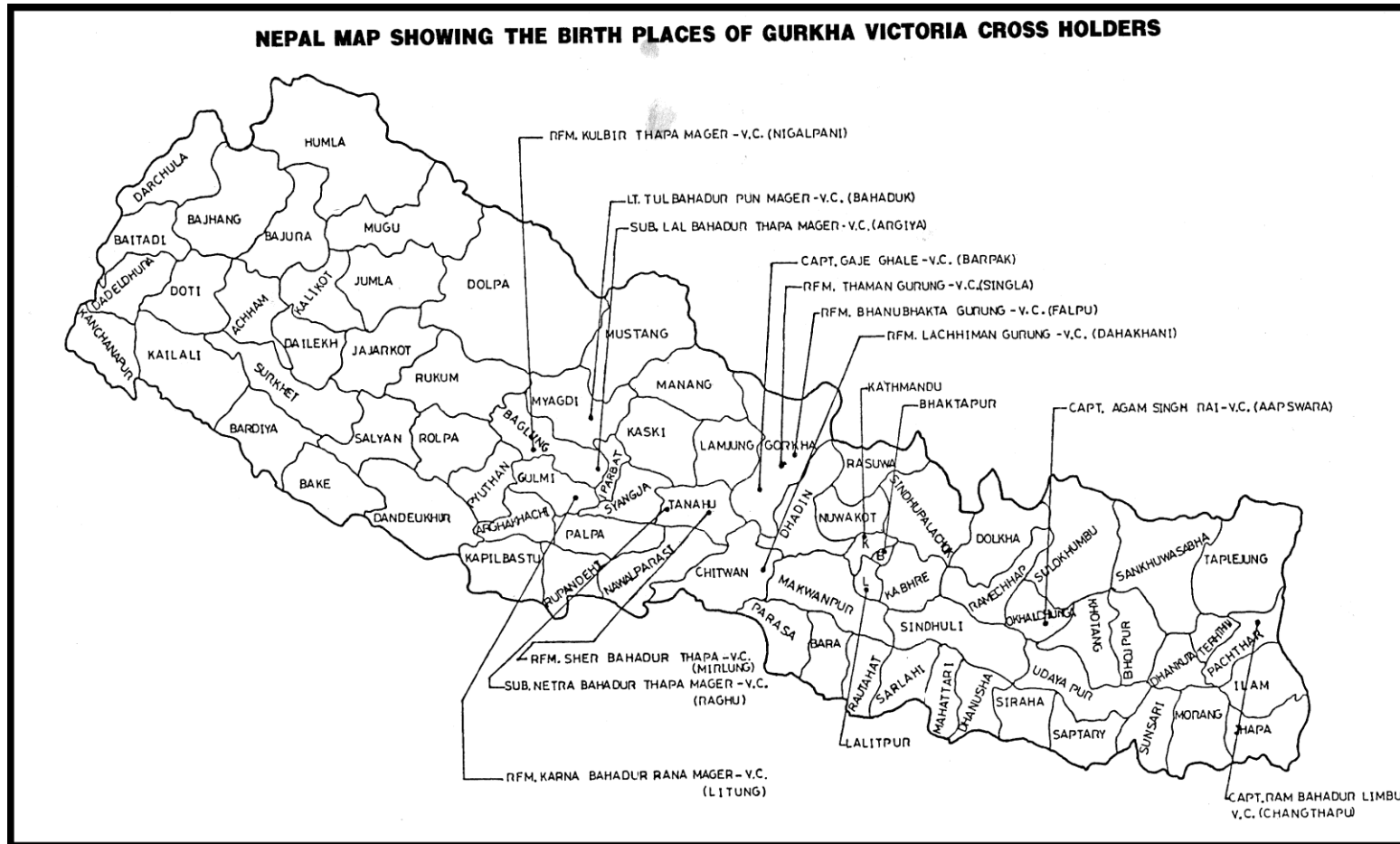
Rushing forward he hurled himself on the ground beside one of the wounded and calling for support from two light machine guns which had now come up to his right in support he picked up the man and carried him to safety out of the line of fire. Without hesitation he immediately returned to the top of the hill determined to complete his self imposed task of saving those for whom he felt personally responsible. It was now clear from the increased weight of fire being concentrated on the approaches to and in the immediate vicinity of the remaining casualty the enemy were doing all they could to prevent any further attempts at rescue. However, despite this Lance Corporal RAMBAHADUR again moved out into the open for his final effort.

In a series of short forward rushes and once being pinned down for some minutes by the intense and accurate automatic fire which could be seen striking the ground all round him he eventually reached the wounded man. Picking him up and unable now to seek cover he carried him back as fast as he could through the hail of enemy bullets. It had taken twenty minutes to complete this gallant action and the events leading up to it. For all but a few seconds this young Non-Commissioned Officer had been moving alone in full view of the enemy and under the continuous aimed fire of their automatic weapons. That he was able to achieve what he did against such overwhelming odds without being hit is miraculous. His outstanding personal bravery, selfless conduct, complete contempt of the enemy and determination to save the lives of the men of his fire group set an incomparable example and inspired all who saw him.

Finally rejoining his section on the left flank of the attack Lance Corporal RAMBAHADUR was able to recover the light machine gun abandoned by the wounded and with it won his revenge, initially giving support during the later stages of the prolonged assault and finally being responsible for killing four more enemy as they attempted to escape across the border. This hour long battle which had throughout been fought at point blank range and with the utmost ferocity by both sides was finally won. At least twenty four enemies are known to have died at a cost to the attacking force of three killed and two wounded. In scale and in achievement this engagement stands out as one of the first importance and there is no doubt that, but for the inspired conduct and example set by Lance Corporal RAMBAHADUR at the most vital stage of the battle, much less would have been achieved and greater casualties caused.

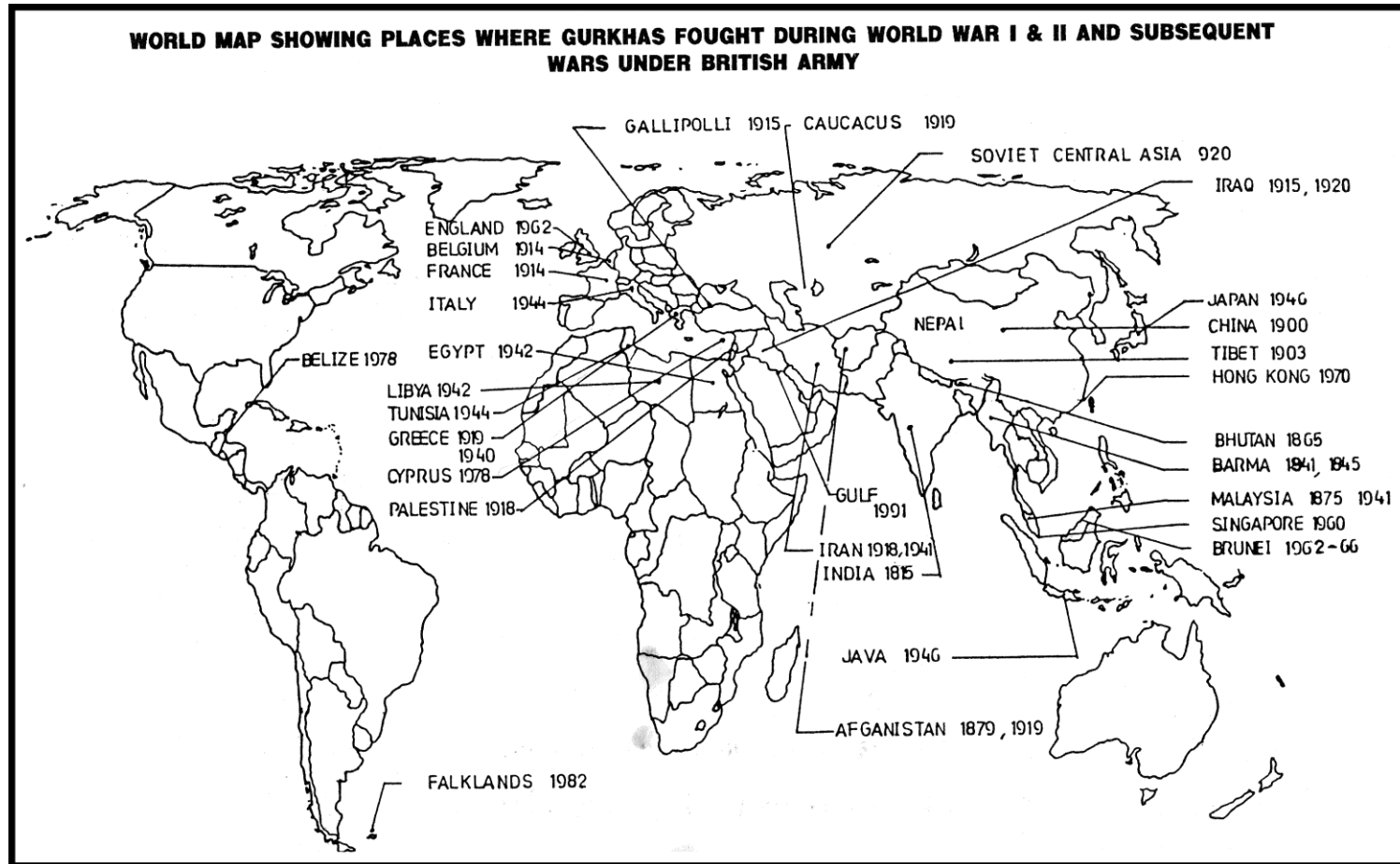
He displayed heroism, self sacrifice and devotion to duty and to his men of the very highest order. His actions on this day reached a zenith of determined, pre-mediated valour which must count amongst the most notable on record and is deserving of the greatest admiration and the highest praise.

## APPENDIX 7



Source: VC Reception Committee, Gurkha VC Souvenir, Kathmandu: VC Reception Committee, 1994, p. 100.

## APPENDIX 8



Source: VC Reception Committee, Gurkha VC Souvenir, Kathmandu: VC Reception Committee, 1994, p. 101.



## **APPENDIX 9**

# **TRIPARTITE AGREEMENTS AFTER PARTITION TO RETAIN GURKHA SERVICES IN BRITISH & INDIAN ARMY-1947**

### **Memorandum of Agreement**

#### **Article I**

At a meeting held at Kathmandu on 1st May 1947 between representatives of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom; the Government of India and Government of Nepal, His Highness the Prime Minister and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Nepal stated that he would welcome the proposals to maintain the Gurkha connection with the armies of the United Kingdom and India on the following basis. If the terms and conditions at the final stage do not prove detrimental to the interest or dignity of the Nepalese Government, my government will be happy to maintain connections with both armies, provided men of the Gurkha Regiments are willing so to serve (if they will not be looked upon as distinctly mercenary).

#### **Article II**

Discussions have taken place in Delhi between representatives of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and of the Government of the Dominion of India and the points of agreement are embodied in the Memorandum dated 7th November 1947 a copy of which forms Annexure I of this document. Necessary financial adjustment between the two Governments are still under consideration.

#### **Article III**

Further discussions between the representatives of the three Governments have taken place at Kathmandu during which the Government of Nepal have put forward certain pertinent observations on the

memorandum of agreement referred to in the preceding paragraph which are set out in Annexure II. In regard to these points, the representatives of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and of the Government of the Dominion of India have replied as follows:

- a. Location of the Recruiting Depots: These use of the existing depots at Gorakhpur and Ghum has been sought by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for a temporary period only pending establishment of their depots in Nepal. The wishes of the Government of Nepal have been noted and arrangements for the establishment in India or the Recruiting Depots required to meet the needs of the Gurkha units of the British Army will be settled between the United Kingdom and Indian Governments.
- b. Desire of the Government of Nepal that the total number of Gurkha units to be employed in the Armies of the United Kingdom and of India shall be limited and brought down to the peace-time strength of 20 battalions out of which 8 battalions will be allowed to the British Army.

The representatives of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and of the Government of Dominion of India have taken note of the wishes of the Government of Nepal.

The representative of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom has explained that the long term planning of the British post-war Army has proceeded on the assumption that the Government of Nepal would be prepared to furnish sufficient men to establish the equivalent of an Infantry Division in south-east Asia and he has received an assurance from the Government of Nepal that a final succession on the question of recruitment of Gurkha in excess of 8 battalions at peace-time strength shall be left open until His Majesty's

Government in the United Kingdom have had an opportunity of considering the views of the Government of Nepal.

As regards the reduction of the Gurkha units in the Indian army the Government of Nepal have informed the representative of the Government of the Dominion of India that the reduction should not be carried out immediately in view of the existing political situation in India.

- c. Arrangements for the import of the foreign currency belonging to the Gurkha units of the 8 battalions serving overseas.

It is noted that the Government of the Dominion of India has agreed to afford all normal facilities in regard to the import of foreign currency belonging to these men (Annexure I, item 10). A reply to the specific point raised in this connection will be sent to the Government of Nepal in due course.

#### **Article IV**

The Government of Nepal being generally satisfied in regard to the terms and conditions of employment of Gurkha troops and taking note of the agreement dated 7th November 1947 reached between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and of the Government of Dominion of India hereby signify their agreement to the employment of Gurkha troops in the armies of he [sic] United Kingdom and of India.

## **Article V**

In addition to the observations referred to above the Government of Nepal have put forward certain suggestions connected with the employment of Gurkhas in the armies of the United Kingdom and of India. These suggestions are contained in Annexure III of this document and the views of the two Governments thereon will be communicated to the Government of Nepal in due course.

## **Article VI**

Note has been taken of the desire of His Majesty's Government in United Kingdom that prompt action be taken to ascertain in wishes of the personnel of the 8 Gurkha battalions concerned as whether they desire to, be transferred for service under the United Kingdom Government. With this object in view a questionnaire and Memorandum embodying terms and conditions of service have been prepared by the representatives of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. These documents are acceptable to the Governments of India and Nepal they will be issued to the personnel of the 8 units concerned as soon as possible. In accordance with the wishes of the Government of Nepal as well as those of the Government of India it is agreed that their representatives will be present with the 8 units while the referendum is being taken.

## **Article VII**

The representatives of the three Governments desire to place on record that their deliberations have been conducted in an atmosphere of cordiality and goodwill and are confident that the friendly relations which have existed in the past will be further cemented as a result of the arrangements which have been agreed for the continued employment of Gurkha soldiers in the armies of the United Kingdom and of India.

## **Article VIII**

Signed in triplicate at Kathmandu this 9th day of November 1947.

ACB Symon (sgd.) Kunwar Dayasingh Bedi (Lt-Col.)

(For the Government (For the Government of the of the United  
Kingdom) Dominion of India)

Padma Shamsher JBR (Sgd.)

(For the Government of Nepal)

# **Memorandum of Government of the Dominion of India and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom**

## **(Bilateral Agreement to Retain Gurkha Services in their Respective Army)**

1. That all volunteers from regular battalions of each of the Second, Sixth, Seventh and Tenth Gurkha Rifles, together with personnel of their Regimental Centres, shall be transferred to His Majesty British Army, subjects to the negotiation of terms and conditions with the Government of Nepal.
2. That the personnel arms and equipment of those units if required by HM Government will be issued on payment, and removed overseas with the units.
3. That HM Government may for the present continue to use the existing recruiting depots at Gorakhpur and Ghum, and that the British and Gurkha military personnel serving in them may wear uniform.
4. That the plans of HM Government for recruiting in Nepal up to a possible strength of a Division (say 25,000 men), shall not in any way interfere with recruitment to the Gurkha units in the Indian army.
5. That Gurkha officers, recruits, soldiers, ex-soldiers and pensioners of Gurkha units serving HM Government, and their dependants, shall be permitted to travel freely between Nepal and an Indian port of their lawful occasions, provided mufti is worn in transit through India; the stipulation regarding dress shall not apply to the four regiments named 2nd GR (the Sirmoor Rifles); 6th GR; 7th GR and 10th GR.
6. That the normal road and rail transport facilities in India shall be available, at the public rates prevailing from time to time, to all British officers serving with Gurkhas, officers and their families and the necessary maintenance stores and baggage of such personnel in the service of HM Government and that such staging facilities as may be required shall be provided at the expense of HM Government.

7. The India's postal, money-order and telegraphic services to and from Nepal shall be available to HM Government, at normal rates prescribed from time to time.
8. That the Government of India shall make available annually to HM Government, for the use of Gurkha soldiers, the following quantities of foodstuffs:

Atta	2,200 tons
Ghee	750 tons
Dhal	1,200 tons
Condiment	150 tons
Condiment Power	150 tons

Provided HM Government arrange to supply the Government of India with 2,200 tons of wheat in replacement of the atta supplied to them.

9. That the Government of India shall make available to HM Government such Indian currencies as may be necessary for purposes connected with their employment of Gurkha soldiers, provided that the sterling equivalent there of shall be credited to the Government of India Sterling Account One.
10. That Gurkha officers, soldiers, ex-soldiers, pensioners and their dependants shall have the right to send or take Indian money back to Nepal subject only to such Indian currency regulations of general application as may be in force from time to time: foreign currency imported into India shall be subject to the general Indian currency regulations obtaining from time to time.
11. That the basic rates of pay admissible to Gurkha officers and soldiers serving HM Government shall approximate to those laid down in the present Indian pay code which rates personnel serving at the depots in Gorakhpur and Ghum shall be paid: and that a special allowance, to compensate for permanent service overseas and high cost of living, shall in addition be admissible to Gurkha officers and soldiers serving HM Government overseas.

12. After the 8 battalions have been asked to opt for service under HM Government, Government of India will try to make up the deficiency caused by those who do not wish to serve with HM Government, by asking other soldiers who have completed their existing engagement -- - who do not wish to continue to serve in the Indian army units. If the required number can not thus be made good the deficiency will be made up by HM Government by direct recruitment.

For His Majesty's Government  
in the UK  
(ACB Symon)

For the Government of the  
Dominion of India  
(Lt-Col. Kunwar Dayasingh  
Bedi)

Kathmandu: 7 November 1947

**Rana Governments Reaction to 'Points of Agreement' Between  
Government of India and HMG in the United Kingdom  
to Retain Gurkha Troops**

1. (Para3): It appears that the arrangement of having recruiting Depots of Gorakhpur and Ghum for the British Gurkha Regiments has as an after-thought been made of a temporary character. Nepal Government feels that it would definitely be more convenient to all three parties, if the recruiting is carried on for both Indian and British armies at the present depots or any other places in India.
2. (Para4): In view of our long-standing friendship the Government of Nepal had agreed to raise the strength of the Gurkha Regiments during the period of the last war. But she feels that the continuation of this emergency measure will be too much of a drain on the man-power of the country. So she desires that the total be limited and brought down to the peacetime strength of 20 battalions to be divided between the Indian and British Armies, as already arranged.
3. (Para9): Nepal Government desires that the foreign currency brought by the personnel of the Gurkha Regiments serving abroad be



credited in to the Nepal Government account in any back (to be settled afterwards); the Government of Nepal providing Indian Currency thereof at the prevailing market rate.

### **Annexure III**

#### **(Related to the Triparties and Bilateral Agreement)**

1. In all matters of promotion, welfare and other facilities the Gurkha troops should be treated on the same footing as the other units in the parent army so that the stigma of 'mercenary troops' may for all time be wiped out. These troops should be treated as a link between two friendly countries.
2. The Gurkha troops should be given every facility so that it might be officered by their own men and they should be eligible to commissioned ranks with no restrictions whatsoever to the highest level to which qualified officers may be promoted.
3. The Gurkha troops should not be used against Hindu or any other unarmed mobs.
4. To avoid any clash between the Gurkhas themselves, Gurkha troops should not be used if any contingency of their having to serve in opposite camps arises.
5. To enable as supply better quality men, we request that our following military needs may be met:
  - a) A well-equipped army and ammunition factory producing all modern small arms and ammunitions.
  - b) A few army transport planes.
  - c) Our requirements of army stores and civil supplies could be discussed later on.

6. To establish better liaison [sic] between Nepal and the troops, liaison [sic] officers would be appointed by the Nepalese Government and would form part of the unit of the Gurkha troops.
7. It is very desirable that the moral of the recruits as well as the armed forces, should remain unimpaired. Therefore all activities prejudicial to the interest and security of any party should be prevented in the territories of the other parties.
8. The government of Nepal reserves the right to withdraw all Gurkha troops in case Nepal is involved in any war.
9. All facilities for the training of the Nepalese officers in the military academies of India and Britain should be provided as and when the Nepal Government wants.
10. As Khukri is the religious and national emblem of the Gurkhas forming also a part of the uniform of the Gurkha army, the carrying of Khukri by Gurkhas of all categories must not be banned in territories where the Gurkhas reside.
11. When Gurkhas troops go on active service, intimation might be given to the Government of Nepal.

The above mentioned points are to be incorporated in a treaty and or agreement to be signed between the parties in due course.

### **Footnotes to Annexure III (Nepalese Suggestions)**

#### **Section II**

1. In his letter to the Maharaja of Nepal dated 7th November (1947), the terms of which were acknowledged and confirmed by the Maharaja on the 9th November Mr. Symon made clear that "Subject to the Limitations of finance and supply, welfare facilities would be provided for Gurkha troops on similar lines to those provided to British (United

Kingdom) troops". In a Tripartite meeting at Kathmandu on the 7th November Mr Symon emphasised that the United Kingdom Government in no way regarded Gurkha troops as mercenaries and that they, would form an integral and distinguished part of the British Army.

### **Statement by the Minister of Defence in the House of Commons on Monday, 1 December 1947**

1. "I am glad to be able to inform the House those discussions about the future employment of Gurkha troops between representatives of the Government of Nepal. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of India which have been proceeding at Kathmandu in an atmosphere of cordiality and goodwill have resulted in signature there on 9 November of a tripartite memorandum of agreement and accompanying documents.
2. The arrangements made in the documents signed by the heads of the three delegations include a number of detailed points in regard to which agreement on the main items having been reached in principle, further negotiations will be required to effect a final settlement. Moreover, a referendum in accordance with arrangements agreed between the three Governments is about to be held to ascertain the wishes of the men of eight regular battalions of the Gurkha Rifles and their regimental centres to whom transfer to series with the British Army is being offered.
3. In these circumstances the three Governments are agreed that, pending the conclusion of a definite settlement covering not only the points already agreed at Kathmandu but also the detailed matters remaining for negotiation here after, publication of the texts of the documents would be premature and might be misleading.

4. It has accordingly been decided to announce the main points on which the three Governments are agreed as follows:
- a) Arrangements have been made for the continued employment of Gurkha Officers and Soldiers in the armies of the United Kingdom and of India.
  - b) The Government of Nepal have agreed that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom may employ Gurkha Officers and Soldiers up to the number required to maintain 8 battalions or their equivalent at peace time strength, on mutually satisfactory terms and conditions of service. The two Governments will consult together on the questions of recruiting Gurkha troops in excess of this strength.
  - c) It has been agreed to transfer to service with the British 5. Army all volunteers from the regular battalions of the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 10th Gurkha Rifles together with personnel from their regimental centres who opt for such service in the referendum about to be held. The Government of India will endeavour to make good, Gurkha soldiers from other regiments who have completed their engagement and do not wish to complete their service in the Indian Army, any deficiency caused by those who decline the options.
  - d) The Government of India have agreed to the use by the British Arm Authorities of the existing recruiting Depots at Gorakhpur and Ghum for a temporary period pending the establishment elsewhere in India or in Nepal of permanent recruiting depots required for Gurkha units of the British Army.
  - e) The Government of India have agreed to make available on mutually satisfactory terms for purpose connected with the employment of Gurkha Troops.

- i) The necessary transit facilities for the conveyance by road and rail of personnel and stores between Nepal and an Indian port.
  - ii) The use of Indian postal money order and telegraphic services.
  - iii) Specified quantities of certain special foodstuffs required for rations.
  - iv) The necessary currency for pay, etc.
  - v) Facilities for transmitting Indian currency to Nepal.
  - vi) The Government of United Kingdom have agreed to use the corresponding Indian pay codes and rates of pay as the basis of the scale to be applied to Gurkha Officers and soldiers and to give an appropriate additional allowance during service abroad.
5. I feel sure that the House will share the Government's view that these arrangements are very satisfactory and will wish me to convey to His highness the Maharaja and the Nepal Government and to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Government. His Majesty's Governments cordial appreciation of the friendly and co-operative spirit in which our wishes have been met. We are confident that with equal goodwill the further negotiations will also be successful. For our part we are determined to operate the agreement in a spirit of understanding and mutual trust; we have no doubt that as between friends its provisions will be loyally observed and can be smoothly carried into effect.

Source: KC, Surendra, Gurkha Bharti Katha, Byatha ra Andolan (Gurkha Recruitment: Tradition and Assertion), Taplejung: Sabita Prakashan, 2005, pp. 559-572.