

CHAPTER - VI

PADMA SHUMSHER'S REFORM AND ITS FAILURE

According to the confidential report of Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, Padma Shumsher was aware of his weakness and wanted external help. He invited Surya Prasad Upadhyaya to Nepal soon after he became the Prime Minister. But Upadhyaya refused to go to Nepal unless the Prime Minister promised that he would introduce reforms in Nepal.¹

Upadhyaya went to Nepal in March 1946, after getting fourteen telegrams from the Nepal Prime Minister. He was requested by the Maharaja to meet Jawaharlal Nehru and he met Jawaharlal Nehru on 1st July 1946, at Lucknow² Upadhyaya writes "He gave me some suggestions which I sent to P.M. So was with Dr. Rajendra Prasad".³ But the P.M. did nothing.

In November, Upadhyaya again went to Nepal and found that the Ranas were divided on the question of reform.⁴ A section of educated young Ranas took side of Maharaja Padma

1. Note of Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, (J.P.file) pp. 106-107.)
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Shumsher and the King also declared his support to introducing reforms. But the Prime Minister did not move.

Upadhyaya also contacted some young Ranas who "openly declared against the existing system." One of the educated young Ranas, General Brahma Shumsher, went to India to meet Jayaprakash Narayan. As J.P. was then in Bombay General Brahma met Jawaharlal Nehru on October 2, 1946 and promised Nehru that he would work for introducing reforms in Nepal.⁵ After his return he pressed the Prime Minister for reforms but observed that "the P.M. is too weak, that he should give up believing that he can go against reactionaries" (Rana).⁶ According to Upadhyaya, the Prime Minister was thinking of declaring to the people that he could not introduce reforms and he was resigning because he sensed the danger of being shot or exiled by the reactionaries.⁷

Nepal at the Asian Relations Conference

For the first time in the Nepalese history, the Nepalese delegates took part in an international conference - the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi, March-April

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

1947.⁸ The conference was organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs and was attended by participants from 28 countries.⁹ The Nepali delegates were Sardar Narendra Mani Dikshit, Professor Ratna Bahadur Bisht, Principal Rudraraj Pande, Surjya Prasad Upadhyaya all led by Major General Bijoy Shumsher. There were three observers: Major General Subarna Shumsher, Lieutenant Colonel Khadga Narasingh Rana and Sardar Gujna Man Singh.¹⁰

According to Upadhyaya's note, he was requested by the Maharaja to attend the conference as a Nepali delegate, but he first decided to ^{attend it} as a guest. But when he heard about the Biratnagar strike he thought "that the Ranas might have come with preparation and sinister motives, I wanted to watch from within".¹¹ He talked with the Maharaja and then went there as ^a delegate. He met Gandhiji on P.M.s request.¹²

When the Nepali delegates were busying themselves in public relation with the Indian leaders, Upadhyaya contacted Nehru, Patel and Rajendra Prasad and requested them to

8. Shaha, Rishikesh, op.cit. p.173.

9. Surya Pasad's note. (J.P.file) p.107.

10. Shah, op.cit., pp.173-174.

11. Upadhyaya's note, op.cit., (J.P.file).

12. Ibid.

support the reforms.¹³ Upadhyaya was satisfied that the Indian leaders did it. In the pursuit his goal of he was helped by Achariya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan.¹⁴

On the other hand, Upadhyaya was very unhappy. He writes "By giving funds to the Asian conference, to the Malaviya Memorial through Jawaharlalji and personal presents from Maharaja to Panditji, Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sarojini Naidu, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mrs. Pandit and Sardar Baldev Singh and by exploiting their worries about the Gorkha troops, the Ranas wanted to secure themselves against people's movement in Nepal."¹⁵ Upadhyaya reports that "Sardar Baldev Singh, Sarojini Naidu and, lately, Girija Sankar Bajpaie have been the mouthpiece of the Ranas. Sardar Baldev Singh, (the, then) Defence Minister of India, had further assured the Ranas that he would keep Panditji within limit and not allow him to ⁿembarrass the Ranas siding with the people's movement in Nepal."¹⁶

However, Maharaja Padma Shumsher made a public statement on 16th May, 1947 which contained the following

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

decisions.¹⁷

- i) to set up a reform committee and invite an eminent constitutional lawyer to advise on constitutional reforms suitable to Nepal.
- ii) to set up elected municipalities and district boards of different towns and districts in the capital and other places.
- iii) to set up an independent judiciary outside the control of the executive.
- iv) to open 7(seven) schools in the capital, Girls schools would also be opened in the country.
- v) to publish national budget annually.
- vi) to appoint consuls in different places like India and Burma where necessary to protect the Nepalese subjects.¹⁸

However, he announced that "these matters would take

17. Gupta, op.cit., p.30.

18. Shaha, op.cit., p-175. Gupta, op.cit., pp.30-31

six months to one year to materialise."¹⁹ On May 28, 1947, the Reforms Committee started functioning with General Bahadur Shumsher as its Chairman. On the 2nd of June N.N.C. withdrew its agitation and, on 11 June, 1947, election was held to the Kathmandu municipality. The franchise was restricted. There were ten nominated members in the council and there were twenty one members elected from twenty one wards and belonging to three 'functional classes.'²⁰

- a) The Business Community 7
- b) The Scholastic Professions 7
- c) Other Occupations 7

Prof. Anirudha Gupta notes that, inspite of official control, some independents and sympathisers of Nepali Rashtriya Congress were elected in the Kathmandu municipality.²¹ and it held its first conference on May 28 at Kathmandu.²²

In July 1947, the students of Sanskrit collegiate school started a movement called "Jayatu Sanskritam". They staged

- 19. Copy of the speech delivered by the Maharaja, in J.P.'s file.
- 20. Shaha, op.cit., pp.178-180.
- 21. Gupta, op.cit., p.32.
- 22. Shaha, op.cit., pp.180-181.

a strike demanding higher pay for their teacher, better facility for them in the hostel and the modernisation of the curriculum by including subjects like history, economy and other social sciences. The "Jayatu Sanskritam" movement was called off on Padma Shumsher's assurance that the demand would be fulfilled.²³ After the movement was suspended Mohan Shumsher, Commander-in-Chief, came down heavily upon the students and some of them were forced to leave the hostel as well as Kathmandu. Some important leaders of this movement, like Rajeshwar Debkota, Shri Bhadra Khanel, Kashi Nath Gautam and Gokarna Raj Shastri had to flee to India. They also joined the Nepali Congress there.²⁴

On the other hand, a team of advisors, viz, Shri Prakash, a personal friend of Jawaharlal Nehru and a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, Ram Ugra Singh, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Lucknow University and a member of U.P. (Council, Legislative), Raghunath Singh, arrived at Kathmandu on 13th June, 1947. The team with ^{the} collaboration of Rana representatives and Maharaja Padma Shumsher prepared a draft constitution for Nepal. They handed it over to Rana Padma Shumsher and returned to India on 26th July 1947.²⁵

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

In the month of July, when Bahadur Shumsher, a Pro-Padma Rana, resigned from his post of presidentship of the Reforms Committee, the Maharaja felt very insecure. After the resignation of Bahadur Shumsher, his son, Nara Shumsher also resigned from his post of Director General of Police.²⁶ Padma Shumsher, however, before his abdication, promulgated the Government of Nepal Act, 2004 V.S. (1948 A.D.) on January 26, 1948.²⁷ in the name of the King and himself.

It was the first written constitution in Nepal's history which assured the Nepalese people of a moderately democratic set up through certain fundamental rights.

After announcing the new constitution Rana Padma Shumsher left Kathmandu on February 21, 1948 and went to Ranchi and settled down there. His letter of resignation reached Kathmandu by 30th April, 1948.²⁸

Split in the Nepali Rashtriya Congress

It is possible that Rana Mohan Shumsher, who captured the Prime Minister's office, was indirectly encouraged by a -----

26. Ibid.

27. Gupta, op.cit., p.32.

28. Shaha, op.cit., p.189.

split of Nepali Rashtriya Congress shortly after the withdrawal of Satyagraha. The reason of the split was not ideological but factional.

After the arrest and during the detention of B.P. Koirala, his brother, M. P. Koirala, took up the reins of the party as its acting President.²⁹ Ganesh Man Singh, a Praja Parishad member, opposed the elevation of a member of a Koirala family to the post once held by B.P.Koirala.³⁰ So, at the delegate's conference held at Banaras in July 1947, D.R. Regmi, was elected as acting president. After his return from jail, B.P. Koirala claimed the post of acting chairman back, D.R. Regmi refused to oblige B.P. Koirala and the Party split.³¹

Both the factions expelled each other and the name Nepali Congress continued to be used by both the factions for about three years. Consequently, the financial support of Subarna Shumsher, a 'C' class Rana, based in Calcutta, was withdrawn, B.P. Koirala was accused of being agent of the Congress Socialist Party of India and not of Nepalese

29. Gupta, Anirudha, op.cit, p.168.

30. Uprety, Prem, R., Political Awakening in Nepal, p.97.

31. Gupta op.cit., p.168.

Nationalism.³²

The Turning of the Tide in Nepal

Shortly after Padma Shumsher left Kathmandu for Ranchi on 21 February 1948³³ Mohan Shumsher, the no.2 and the leader of the reactionary Ranas moved into the official residence of the Prime Minister. He sent some senior officers to Ranchi to bring the resignation letter of Rana Padma Shumsher.³⁴ The resignation reached Kathmandu by 30th April, 1948.³⁵ Mohan Shumsher took over formally and banned the Nepali Rashtriya Congress in the same month.³⁶ A few days earlier the N.N.C. had offered co-operation on the reforms on two conditions.³⁷

- i) Immediate release of all political prisoners
- ii) unequivocal declaration of full civil freedom.

32. Gupta, op.cit., p.167 and Gautam Keshav Chandra, Nepal Ko Rajnaitik Darpan, p.13.

33. Shaha op.cit., p.188.

34. Shaha, op.cit., p.189.

35. Ibid.

36. Letter from Balchandra Sharma to Jayaprakash Narayan dated 1.5.48 (J.P.file).
see also Shaha, op.cit., p.192.

37. B.C. Sharma's letter. op.cit.

Actually the reform was promulgated on January 26, 1948, as the Government of Nepal Act 2004, V.S. (A.D.1948). It came into force on 14th April, 1948 (the new year's day of 2005 V.S.). Mohan Shumsher proclaimed the ban a day earlier.³⁸

Mohan Shamsher's government came down heavily on the Nepali National Congress. Many important political leaders were exiled and their property attached. Many other were detained without trial while fresh arrests were made. Aj (a periodical from Banaras) Sansar (Banaras) National Herald (Lucknow) and Yugabani (a Nepali weekly of NNC) were banned inside Nepal.³⁹

However, according to Shaha, in his speech as the Maharaja Prime Minister on 13th April 1948 Mohan Shumsher did not completely back down from his predecessor's commitment to the people. While addressing a gathering in the ground of his official residence he made a reference to the recently promulgated constitutional reforms and expressed his Government's intention to implement them smoothly with the good will of the people."⁴⁰

38. For details see Gupta op.cit., pp.32-35.

39. A letter on B.C. Sharma, op.cit., J.P.'s file.

40. Shah, Rishikesh, op.cit. P-192.

A "smooth" constitutional reform to the exclusion of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, can be viewed as nothing but a cruel joke. Balchandra Sharma, the NNC Secretary, described the new scheme of reforms as a big fraud. The PM's authority remained intact. Elections were reduced to a farce. Under the new scheme official candidates would be set up on whom general opinion would be taken.

Rishikesh Shaha writes:- "Both Mohan Shumsher who became Prime Minister at the age of 63, and his younger brother Bahar Shumsher, 61, whom he promoted to the rank of Minister and Commander-in-Chief on 3 July 1948,⁴¹ were completely lacking in the political vision needed to cope with the challenges of the time. They were unable to realise the significance of the new forces of nationalism, anti-imperialism and communism that were already at war in the post-war period."⁴²

Regrouping of the democratic forces

When, on April 2-4, 1948, the Nepali National Congress working committee gave a conditional support to Padma

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

Shumsher's reform plan, it probably had an apprehension about the immediate political future of Nepal as Mohan Shumsher's reactionary character was well known. The working committee, therefore, decided to seek to fulfil their aspirations through non violent mass politics in the event of the reforms being not implemented.⁴³ After 14th April most of the NNC leaders were exiled. They started re-grouping their forces in India.

Subarna Shumsher and Mahabir Shumsher, two rich 'C' class Ranas living in Calcutta, blessed the formation of another organisation in Calcutta in August 1948, Nepal Prajatantrik (Democratic) Congress.⁴⁴ Its composition appears to be a little aristocratic. Mahendra Bikram Shaha, son of Colonel Raja Birendra Bahadur Shaha, of Jumla, became its secretary general. Rishikesh Shah, also a member of the Nepal Aristocracy, teaching in Trichandra College, Kathmandu, was a founder member. Surya Prasad Upadhaya who had acted as a via media between Padma Shumsher and B.P. Koirala joined them. The party "looked to Soumendra Nath Tagore, the leader of the Revolutionary Communist Party of

43. B.C. Sharma's letter, op.cit.

44. Shaha, op.cit. 205. The party was, subsequently, in April 1949, reorganised with Mahendra Bikram Shaha as its president and Surya Prasad Upadhaya as a Secretary General. The Office was shifted to Patna.

India, for inspiration and guidance."⁴⁵

Though the Nepal Democratic Congress accused B.P. Koirala and his party, as well as the socialist party of India, of splitting the Nepalese democratic movement, it shared with the NNC the goal of establishment of a responsible government in Nepal under a constitutional monarchy.⁴⁶ Unlike the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, the Nepal democratic Congress advocated violence for realising its aims.

It may be noted here that there was political violence in the air of 1948. Under a programme of the Cominform, revolutionary activities in several parts of Asia, including India, were spreading. Not only did the Communist Party of India adopt this Programme. Several smaller parties like the R.C.P.I.⁴⁷ and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India followed the policy.

A third political group came into existence in Kathmandu in September 1948 - Nepal Praja Panchayat.⁴⁸ It

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Revolutionary Communist Party of India.

48. Shaha op.cit., p.204. Gupta wrote Nepal Praja Panchayat was formed in October, 1948, p.38.

adopted the most moderate tone and offered a full co-operation to the implementation of ^{the} 1948 constitution. By the same token they demanded the immediate implementation of the constitution. They began open air meeting and popular demonstrations in the Kathmandu Valley towns. The names of the founders of this party - Tripubar Singh, Gopal Prasad Raimal and Bijoy Bahadur Malla appear for the first time in the Nepalese political history except for the fact that Gopal Prasad Raimal was arrested in 1947 in connection with the agitation for the ab^otion of untouchability in Nepal.⁴⁹

There could be two explanations of this third force.

(1) It was an humble, grass-roots movement originating out of a Gandhian tradition long in existence in the Nepalese politics.

(2) It could be an extension of Nepali Rashtriya Congress operating mainly from India. Of course both these explanations simultaneously could hold good. For we find B.P. Koirala traveling incognito from India to Kathmandu in 1948 to establish contact with the party.

This brief picture of the regrouping of the political forces in the Nepalese democratic movement, thus, presents

49. Shah, op.cit., p-204, Gupta, op.cit. 38.

two major organisational foci: (1) The Nepali Rashtriya Congress (a divided house in itself and (ii) Nepal Prajatantrik Congress.

There was a bit of competition between the two groups. As we have noted, Koirala was accused of being the agent of the Socialist Party of India. The Koirala group, in turn, accused Nepal Prajatantrik Congress of being the "Generals' Party" with a "self-made central authority from which all directions for action would flow." with the common members only following instructions.⁵⁰ About D.R. Regmi Koirala alleged that he had no following. But Koirala was not averse to accommodating him.⁵¹

Rishikesh Shaha claims to have persuaded Jiv Raj Sharma, one of the founder members of the Nepal Praja Parishad, to join the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress and sent him to India. Another long time political worker, Shankar Prasad Sharma, joined him and the two started looking after the official organ of the Party, Nepal Pukar which was published from Patna with Babulal Muktan as its editor, before being banned by the Nepal Government."

50. B.P. Koirala, "Report on Nepal", (Non dated) , of this period. J.P.file.

51. B.P. Koirala's report, op.cit.

According to Shaha, further, the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress was in touch with some of the Nepali Communists in India like Ratna Lal Bahun⁵² (Ratan Lal Brahman), a communist leader of Darjeeling. After Surya Prasad Upadhyaya became the secretary general of the Party, it began to turn to the Indian national Congress leaders like Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Keshav Dev Malavia for advice and guidance.⁵³

However, there was not much success of the Democratic Congress. In April 1949 negotiation was started for uniting of the two factions of NNC and N.D.C.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Mahendra Bikram Shah was adventurous enough to set up a cell of some Nepali officers who had served the Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra Bose for organising armed revolution in Nepal.⁵⁵

Koirala's Arrest

In the middle of April, 1948, ^{Koirala's} assessment was that the

52. Shaha, op.cit.p

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid. NNC, Nepali National Congress and NDC, Nepal Democratic Congress.

55. Shah op.cit., p.206.

Nepali National Congress was the most popular organisation in Nepal," though inside Nepal it has not been able to do much work after the last Satyagraha movement. It has confined itself so long to propaganda work, with its base in India. It publishes pamphlets, turns out a weekly and runs an organisational chain of offices on the border and inside Nepal too. It holds public meetings on the Indian side and secret meetings of members on the Nepal side."⁵⁶

According to Koirala, the N.N.C. was handicapped by the following factors:-

1. Deterioration in the condition of Kashmir and Hyderabad. The Government of India felt obliged to the Rana Government of Nepal as they had lent ten battalions of Nepalese army to India.
2. Internal Dissension in the N.N.C. with D.R. Regmi trying to play honest broker between Koirala and Nepali Prajatantrik Congress.
3. Financial difficulties with the withdrawal of financial support by the generals.

Koirala's arrival in Kathmandu, one assumes, was aimed at broadening the base of the functioning of the N.N.C., for -----

56. J.P. file, P.99.

there was no situation that would favour another mass movement immediately. In a way, his arrest on December 13, 1948, along with his two associates K.P. Bhattari and Kedarman Byathit, gave him the opportunity.

The news of his arrest was immediately circulated.⁵⁷ The inhuman treatment meted out to him and his colleagues was widely publicized. B.P. started hunger strike on 1st May (Akshay Tritiya)⁵⁸ 1949 in protest against the arrest and inhuman treatment.⁵⁹

B.P.'s statement of 15th March, from the dungeon that was Nepalese prison, created a political opinion strongly favouring the unity of the different political groups engaged in the democratic movement in Nepal.⁶⁰

B.P.'s Arrest and its aftermath

B.P.Koirala, was arrested on December 13, 1948 at Kathmandu on two charges: (1) Defiance of the order of

57. Nepal Today, 3rd issue. May 1949.

58. Ibid.

59. Letter from B.P. Koralā to Pattabhi Sitaramayya dated 20th April, 1949 (J.P.file) and see also "Ending Nepal?" editorial in Search Light, May 17, 1949.

60. B.P. statement in Nepal Today, dated 15.3.49.

exile, and (ii) Instigation of political agitation.⁶¹ On March 1-3, 1949 the Nepali National Congress held its third annual session at Darbhanga taking crucial decisions towards unity and renewal of agitation. The conference set up a 'council of action'. The council met at Raxual, Bihar and submitted an ultimatum to the Nepalese Prime Minister in the form of a letter, from the N.N.C. President, M.P. Koirala. The time limit was May 21, 1949, failing which the N.N.C. would organise a fresh agitation from 1st June 1949.⁶²

As if coinciding with the N.N.C. Programme, a letter from B.P. Koirala (undated) arrived at Raxual in early March 1949. This letter did not bear any address but was intended to be handed over to Ganeshman Singh. He was not at Raxual. At the time of the arrival of the letter, a Banaras Hindu University student, Iswar Baral, received the courier of the letter, copied it and sent it to Devendra Singh. This letter gave a frightening description of the condition of the jail in which B.P. was detained in an inhuman state.⁶³

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61. Iswar Baral's letter to Devendra Prasad forwarding a copy of the letter from B.P. Koirala at Kathmandu J.P.file.
 62. Letter of invitation to the Third Annual Conference dated 10th February, 1949. J.P.file.
 63. Iswar Baral's letter to Debendra Prasad forwarding a copy of the letter from B.P. Koirala at Kathmandu. J.P. file.

It is possible that the timing of the letter had a correspondence with the annual general conference of the Socialist Party at Patna on March 6-10, 1949. IN any case, the Socialist Party Conference passed a resolution expressing its solidarity with the people of Nepal and the N.N.C. in their struggle for representative government, civil rights and social well-being. Not only as a part of Asia but more so as a neighbour whose history, economy, hills and river systems and traditional memories are interwoven with those of India, Nepal must necessarily rouse the deepest attention of the Indian people and India that of the people of Nepal' The conference noted with indignation and sorrow the continuation of the oligarchic and hierarchical political system that did not allow the people to assemble and organise, controlled their thought, made the running of primary schools or holding of mass prayers a criminal offence, did nothing to improve their agriculture, industry, education and health or to lift the many burdens of rent and taxes and stop forcible procurement of farm produces at cheap price.⁶⁴

On April 13, 1949, all over India "Nepal Day" was celebrated by the Indian socialists. In east Punjab seven

64. Lohia, R., India China and Northern Frontier, pp.107-108.

socialist workers were arrested on that day while observing the "Nepal Day".⁶⁵ Sometime during this period, Jayprakash Narayan sent a telephonic message⁶⁶ to the Nepalese Prime Minister protesting against the arrest of B.P. Koirala and his colleagues and the inhuman condition in which they were kept. J.P. Narayan stressed the fact that the charges against B.P. Koirala and his colleagues were of political nature. Therefore, they should be treated as political prisoners. J.P. Narayan asked the Maharaja to immediately accept the demand of political prisoners, "The Indian people can not brook the tyranny in Nepal or Indonesia or any where else You should take a lesson from end of British tyranny in India." said Jayaprakash.⁶⁷

On May 1, 1949 started B.P. Koirala's historic fast for three weeks. The duration of the hunger strike was calculated keeping in view the date of the ultimatum of the N.N.C., that is, May 21, 1949.

In the midst of wide-spread anxiety over Koirala's detention and fast came the rumour of BP's death as B.P.

65. Letter from B.C. Sharma dated 3rd May, 1949 to General Secretary Socialist Party Bomaby. J.P.File.
66. J.P.'s message to operator, telephone exchange, Raxual (undated) J.P.file, p.86.
67. Ibid.

Koirala was in poor health. Jayaprakash immediately sent a telegram to Nehru asking him to enquire about the rumour.⁶⁸ The Patna newspaper, Searchlight, dated 17th May, 1949, carried an editorial expressing great concern and indignation:-"Should the report prove true that Mr. B.P. Koirala has died in a Nepal jail as the result of his fast unto death, there will be no restraining the tidal wave of indignation that will sweep the country and will surely submerge the petty principality, lovingly described as a kind of Nehru by his people who idolise him, this young leader commands the largest and most powerful of the political parties in the state struggling for freedom and enjoying the widest measure of support from the advanced political parties of India. In fact the Nepalese struggle for freedom is only a logical inevitable offshoot of our own major struggle which has reached a successful conclusion. If we have succeeded, so the Nepalis must. This business we must see through even if all the wings of the Ranas are to fall on the grass."⁶⁹

On May 21 the last day of the ultimatum of N.N.C. passed off. No announcement was made by the Maharaja Prime Minister. In the last week of May 1949 the Socialist Party

68. Jayaprakash's telegram to Jawaharlal Nehru, dated 15.5.49, (J.P.file).

69. "Ending Nepal?", the Search Light, May 17, 1949.

of India, under the Leadership of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia observed Nepal Day all over India. B.P. Koirala continued his hunger strike. On May 25, 1949,⁷⁰ Lohia organised a demonstration in front of the Nepalese embassy, on the Barakhamba road. As the procession reached the front of the Sapru House, the police stopped it and made a mild lathi charge. Lohia, along with 50 of his colleagues, were arrested, brought to the Parliament Street police station, and then shifted to the Delhi Jail. Some of the demonstrators who were arrested were Prem Bhasin, Rajendra Sachchar, Som Prakash Saheda, Onkar Sharma, Padam Singh, Chand Sak^sena, S.K. Sak^sena, and Romesh Dutt Tewari.⁷¹

The report of B.P.'s fast-failing health disturbed many Indians and Jawaharlal Nehru was persuaded to press Mohan Shamsher for the release of Koirala and concession of reforms. On May 28, 1949, B.P. was released with an assurance of reforms from Mohan Shumsher.⁷²

There was no sign of reforms, however, On the other hand, the arrest and the hunger strike raised the status of B.P. Koirala to the level of a national hero. The Nepali

70. Shaha, op.cit., pp.204-205.

71. Interview with Prem Bhasin, dated 23.5.95.

72. Shaha, op.cit. pp.204-205.

Democratic Congress realised the new situation and decided to merge with the N.N.C. which now came to be completely dominated by B.P.Koirala.

The clouds that had gathered around the B.P. episode dispersed after the release. The agitation was called off. But a new alignment started in preparation of the final assault on the Rana power.

B.P. Koirala - A critical assessment

A somewhat critical view of B.P. Koirala's political role, during the Satyagraha in 1949, is available from two letters written by the veteran Praja Parishad leader, Tanka Prasad Acharya, who had been in jail since 1940, one written to Jayaprakash Narayan and the other to B.P. Koirala in November 1949.⁷³ According to Acharya, B.P. had given up his fast without consulting his colleagues who had undertaken fast at the behest of B.P. Koirala. Infact, Koirala met Mohan Shumsher immediately before his release. There was a hint in the letter that Koirala had bought his freedom by sacrificing his colleagues.

There was a dark hint that Koirala had come to

73. Shrivastava, Kashiprasad, Nepal Ki Kahani, pp.136-146.

Kathmandu when he had heard of the forthcoming Satyagraha by the Praja Panchayat. Koirala wanted either to win the movement over to his side in his factional conflict with D.R. Regmi's group or to sabotage the movement.⁷⁴

Achariya, even, challenged the socialist credential of B.P. Koirala who was reported to have said that socialism was not applicable to Nepal. Achariya, on the other hand, argued in the letter that, like the Central Asian Republics Nepal could also make a short-cut to socialism.

But the most important thing in Achariya's letter to J.P. was the claim that "Praja Parishad" was a socialist Party. Achariya did not know J.P. or any other Indian socialist in 1936 when the Party was born. Acharya had to introduce himself to J.P. in his letter.⁷⁵

Formation of Nepali Congress

The move for the merger of Koirala's N.N.C. and Shumsher's Nepal Prajatantrik Congress was initiated by B.P. Koirala through a statement issued in India, early in 1950.

74. Letter from Tanka Prasad Acharya to Jayaprakash Narayan in Srivastava, Kashiprasad, Nepal Ki Khani, pp.136-146.

75. Ibid.

There was a meeting at Patna between the two groups.⁷⁶ On March 27, M.P. Koirala, President of N.N.C. and Mahendra Bikram Shah, President of Nepal Prajatantrik Congress issued a joint press statement emphasizing the need for the merger.⁷⁷ A joint conference of delegates of the two parties was held at the Tiger Cinema in Calcutta on April 9, 1950, to formalise the union of the two groups into a new party - The Nepali Congress. The Nepali Congress adopted the flag and the mouthpiece, Nepal Pukar, of the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress and elected M.P. Koirala of N.N.C. as its president.⁷⁸

In September, 1950, Nepali Congress, held a conference at Bairgania, a border town of Bihar, and adopted a revolutionary programme of armed struggle against Rana autocracy.⁷⁹ The programme of the new party included the demand of fundamental rights, democratic system of Government, economic welfare and immediate intensification of the struggle. According to Rishikesh Shaha, the revolutionary plan of the Nepali Congress was to abduct king Tribhuvan Bikram Shah and take him to western Nepal,

76. Misra, Kiran, B.P. Koirala life and time, p.32.

77. Shaha, Rishikesh, Modern Nepal, vol.II, p.206.

78. Ibid, pp.206-207.

79. Misra, Shashi, P. op.cit.p.58.

probably to Palpa, and set up a parallel Government under him. This move was to be followed by a revolt of the disaffected section of the Nepalese army against the Rana-regime. It was planned to abduct the king during the week-long 'Indra Jatra' festival in September.⁸⁰

The Communist Party of Nepal

It was a part of the understanding between the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India in the thirties that the Communist Party would not set up its unit in Bihar.⁸¹ It was Jayaprakash Narayan's first romance with Marxism that marked the C.S.P. politics in the thirties. On the other hand, most of the communist workers were active participants in the 1942 Quit India Movement in Bihar as Congress Socialists. A few such Quit India activists who had joined the Communist Party were Bhogendra Jha. Indradeep Sinha and Manmohan Adhikari. The last mentioned activist was a Nepali who had ancestral property at Biratnagar (Jogbani) Darbhanga and was a student of Banaras Hindu University. He was not extradited to Nepal or

80. Shaha, op.cit., p.207.

81. Whereas Bhogendra Jha, a veteran communist of Bihar, said that until after 1942 there was no separate Communist party in Bihar, Abani Lahiri, another veteran communist, spoke of "an understanding".

formally implicated in the anti-Rana conspiracy case.⁸²

Manmohan Adhikari, after two and half years of his imprisonment in the British Indian jail, became a member of the Communist Party of India which had by now parted company with the C.S.P. He became the Secretary of the town Cell Committee of Darbhanga while Bhogendra Jha was the District Secretary of Darbhanga.⁸³ IN 1947, he seems to have been working in the Biratnagar Jute mill and was the main organiser of the 1947 Jute mill strike.⁸⁴ Of course, the leadership of the strike was later handed over to the Nepali National Congress.

Manmohan Adhikari, was arrested in connection with this strike along with his comrades and jailed for two and half years. Adhikari, was, perhaps still in jail when, on April 22, 1949, five Nepalese activists met some leaders of the Communist Party of India at a house of an Indian Communist at Shyambazar, Calcutta.⁸⁵

82. Personal Communication from Bhogendra Jha, dated 27.3.95.

83. Personal Communication from Bhogendra Jha on 27.3.95.

84. Shahā, op.cit. p.174.
Gupta Anirudha, Politics in Nepal

85. Shaha, op.cit., p.239.

The Communist Party of Nepal, thus, sprang from the same anti-imperialist tradition as the Nepali Congress had. In a way Manmohan Adhikari was the counterpart of B.P. Koirala because his political initiations took place on the Indian side. Both of them were participants in the Quit India movement too.⁸⁶

Two other leading personalities - Puspallal Shrestha and Tulsilal Amatya - had been involved in the democratic movement within Nepal. Puspallal, was a brother of the martyr Gangallal Shrestha and was a leading figure in the Satyagraha movement of 1947.

Tulsilal Amatya was arrested in August 1947 at Patan while leading a procession for celebrating the Indian Independence, along with Tulsi Mehar Shrestha, the famous Gandhian who had popularised Charkha in Nepal. Amatya and Mehar were released after six months, by the order of the departing Prime Minister, Padma Shumsher.⁸⁷ In 1948 Amatya organised the Praja Panchayat alongwith others (some 400 hundred members). The Nepalese members present there were Puspallal Shrestha, a 1947 Satyagraha activist, Narabahadur Karmacharya, Narayan Bilas Joshi, Niranjana Govind Baidya and

86. Personal communication from Bhogendra Jha.

87. Biodata of Tulsilal Amatya, personally supplied.

Durga Devi.⁸⁸ A central organising Committee, consisting of Manmohan Adhikari, Tulsilal Amatya, D.P. Adhikari, Shailendra Kumar Upahdyaya, Hikmat Singh Bhandari and a representative of the Communist Party of India, Ayodhya Singh, was set up under the leadership of Puspallal Shrestha, at the first conference of the Communist Party of Nepal held from September 27 to October 2, 1949. Meanwhile, on September 15, 1949, the manifesto of the Communist Party of Nepal was released. In 1951 Puspallal Shrestha was replaced by Manmohan Adhikari as the Secretary General of C.P.N.⁸⁹ Members were arrested in connection with the movement for implementation of Padma's reforms. After the movement subsided, Amatya went down to Raxaul and joined the N.N.C. He visited Gandhi (at Ashrama Wardha. ^aAm_atya fell out with the N.N.C. leadership when he prepared a draft programme stressing the land reform and tried to organise the working class in Nepal. So he went to Calcutta and came in touch with Puspallal who brought him into the communist movement.⁹⁰

88. Shaha, Rishikesh, op.cit. p.239, also see Gupta, op.cit. p.200. There is a slight discrepancy between the narrations of Shaha and Gupta. In Gupta's account the date of the 1st meeting was September 15, 1949 and the woman participant was Durga Devi instead of Moti Devi. The CPN regards September 15, 1949 as its foundation day.

89. Shaha, op.cit., p.239.

90. Tulsilal Amatya, Biodata personally supplied.