

REVIEWS

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Uprety, Prem R, *Nepal-Tibet Relations (1850-1930)*, *Years of Hopes, Challenges and Frustrations*, Kathmandu : Puga Nara, 1980, Appendices, Bibliography, Index, PP. 250, Rs. 125/-

Up to the 1940's Nepal's foreign relations were limited only to the British on the south and Tibet and China on the north. Despite a long history of Indo-Nepali relations, it was only after the despatch of the Kinloch mission (1767) and subsequent activities of the English East India Company that the relations between the two countries entered into a new dimension. Similar is the case of Nepal's relations with her northern neighbour, Tibet. Though the Nepal-Tibet relations can be recorded from the seventh century A. D., it was only in the seventeenth century that a commercial treaty was signed by the two countries, formalising their mutual relations. The Nepal-Tibet hostilities during the last quarter of the eighteenth century opened a new phase on Nepal's relations with Tibet, and during the Rana regime they formed an integral part of Nepal's foreign relations, determining plans and policies to be adopted by Nepal towards the British and vice-versa.

A few eminent writers like K. C. Chaudhary, Ramakant, Kanchanmoy Mojumdar and Asad Husain have brought some research works into light analyzing the different aspects of Indo-Nepali relations from 1768 to 1945. But it's not the case with Nepal-Tibet relations. With the single exception of a research work by Leo E. Rose, covering Nepal's foreign relations in the last 200 years (main emphasis being given to the Nepal-Tibet relations with the help of Chinese and Tibetan sources), no serious book on Nepal-Tibet relations is yet published.

In this context, the present work by Dr. Uprety is highly commendable. The author has explored plenty of valuable documents in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu and Royal Nepali Army Headquarter, Kathmandu; along with those preserved in the Indian National Archives, New Delhi and India Office Library, London (the reference of India Office Library, however, is quite negligible), and thus could give a most comprehensive and original outlook to the topic along with his scholarly comments and analyses.

The book is divided into seven parts with a separate conclusion chapter, appendices, bibliography and an index. The first part of the book is introductory, presenting the objectives and organisation of the study along with the geographical and cultural background of Nepal as a country. The second part presents an interesting picture of Nepal-Tibet relations up to the mid-nineteenth century. This part of the book, which may be termed as the background part, is little a bit lengthy. Nevertheless, it is useful for readers interested to understand the Nepal-Tibet relation from the beginning period. But there are some "unexcusable" factual errors in this part of the book. For example, Songtsen-Gampo has been identified with Gocha (P. 17). Actually, it is Amsuvarma, who is identified with Gocha in the Tibetan and Ladakh Chronicles. Similarly, Bahadur Shah is referred as the uncle of the "minor King Pratap Singh" (P. 33). In fact, the minor king mentioned here is Rana Bahadur Shah. Moreover, it would have been better if the author has analysed the 1793-1853 period (on Nepal-Tibet relations) with some original documents, for, so far as my knowledge goes, that period is still untouched by writers and historians "due to the paucity of materials".

The third part of the book is wholly devoted to the third Nepal-Tibet War (1855-56). Based primarily on the Indian archival records, this part presents a critical analysis of the causes of the war, Nepal's war aims, contents of the war, peace negotiations and finally a critical appraisal of the Thapathali Treaty (1856) which formally ended the war. Most of the writers view this war as a great success of Nepal in her dealings with Tibet. But Dr. Uprety has a different view. He writes ".... Nepal had little reason to be so jubilant, for her principal war objective, the annexation of Kuti and Kerung, was not realized,

Neither were the Nepalese trading rights and border disputes permanently settled. In reality, the close of the war brought more a sense of relief than material, territorial and psychological benefits that follow a triumphant war" (P. 81). It is, however, to be noted here that such a success or failure cannot be measured only with material or territorial benefits. No one can, perhaps, deny that it was due to his success in the Nepal-Tibet war that Jang Bahadur could assume the Maharajaship, a post superior to the Prime-Minister, within a few months.

The fourth part explains the various crises between Nepal and Tibet during the post war decades i. e. 1862-1896. Mainly based on Foreign Ministry Archives and Military Archives, Kathmandu, the author has critically analysed Nepal's role in the Tibetan civil war (1862-63), crisis of 1871-73 the massive loot of 1883 and the border disputes. Dr. Uprety rightly calls this period "the test of the treaty of 1856" and antly concludes that the said treaty "far from cementing the traditional friendship between the two countries brought only fear, jealousy and malaise to the surface" (P. 108). This part of the book is also not free from errors. The author has misinterpreted some documents relating to the "massive loot of 1883". Specially Ratna Man's *byan* of the incident, the so-called plundering of Nepali *Vakil's* property, donation by the Prime-Minister and other high officials to the war fund and compensation figure in the 1884 treaty have been slightly misrepresented (for details see "Nepal-Bhot Bibad", a project report submitted to the CNAS, 1982).

The fifth part, perhaps, is the most original chapter of the book. This period i. e. 1900-30, which the author calls the period of challenges, hopes and frustrations, is still untouched by the scholars. With the help of original documents, the author has brought into light several new episodes (Nepal's mediatory role in the Tibet-China conflict, the Gyalpo affair and the Khachehera problem) to the readers and researchers. However, at some places a reader is slightly confused by the date errors (?). One may cite the following example:- "On April 19, 1912 both the Chinese and the Tibetan sought mediation from the Nepalese and the British officers for a peaceful solution of Tibet-China crisis The negotiation was finally concluded with an agreement between Tibet and China on April 2, 1912 (by which the Chinese

soldiers promised to give up all their rifles to the Tibetans & Tibet decided to pay for the Chinese rifles)..... On April 1, 1912 the Chinese handed over 144 rifles and 11,600 round of ammunitions in return for the payment of 9,250 Chinese currency". (P. 134)

The sixth part, dealing with trade between the two countries, is the another original contribution of the author. Plenty of original documents have been explored to analyze the issues connected with trade. In the seventh part, the political status of Nepal through the Sino British eyes has been analyzed. As the book itself is on Nepal-Tibet relations, the discussion on the status of Nepal through the British eyes has been slightly neglected.

It seems that the bibliography has been hurriedly prepared. The author failed to cite some *pokas* (Foreign Ministry Archives) and *books* (Military Archives) which he has heavily used in the book. The author's own book in English has been catagorised as a Nepali book. Similarly, the foot-note citation at the end of each part is little a bit inconvenient at least to the serious readers.

On the whole, the book may be cited as a contribution to the modern Nepali historiography. The work is original, comprehensive, and critical; and the language is most attractive, lucid and literary. The only drawback of the book, perhaps, is the almost absence of the Chinese and Tibetan language sources (there are thousands of unpublished papers in Tibetan language in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu) which would have made the work much more valuable. The printing is fine but with numerous mistakes. The cover design is very attractive and Eye Yen Manandhar deserves thanks for that. As to the price of the book, it is moderately high.

It would not be out of place to mention here that the readers might expect a separate volume by Dr. Uprety on Nepal's relations with Tibet in the post 1930 period, which is still untouched by writers and historians.