

BEGINNING OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN NEPAL (FEBRUARY - 1951)

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INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the historic *Krishi Sudhar Sangh* (The Agricultural Reforms Association) in 1951 marked an epoch in the study of peasant activities and history of Nepal. This event has profound impact in the expression of peasant discontents against the existing feudal and semi-feudal practices. In addition to it, the formation of this organization also marked the beginning of the peasant movements in Nepal.

In contemporary Nepal, the cultivating peasants faced problems of different kinds. It is obvious to note that the peasants in Nepal remained under pressure of the landed aristocracy since the ancient times. The problems they faced were primarily related to the land holding, rights of cultivation, occupancy rights, payment of rents and taxes and so on. The absence of land laws further led to the deteriorated conditions of the peasantry. The land acts 1957 and 1964 are considered very important in the history of agriculture in Nepal.

But it, too could not bring about total reforms and changes on behalf of the cultivators. Before 1964, the landlords were given excessive rights in land. They could extract higher percentage of product of land as rent and customary levies. The peasant cultivators were exploited through various means. Thus, the financial status of the peasants were in vulnerable conditions. The owners of privileged land tenures squeezed the peasants to the extreme points. So, the status of the Nepali peasants during the Rana regime was similar to that of the serfs. They were not given any kind of rights in land. They were evicted at the will of the owners. The overall situation was determined by the interests of the land owners and the intermediaries. Infact, almost 2/3 of gross product was extracted as rent and levies. But on the contrary, the landowning community had no any obligation and responsibility to fulfil as part of the production process. Even at the present times, it is the duty of the cultivating peasant to initiate entire process of agricultural production. So, inspite of payment of the *Kut* rent as prescribed by the Land law or contracted by the share croppers, the entire expenses for manuring and seeds is paid by the cultivating tenant. The owners of land do not participate in any form in the production activities. Before promulgation of the Land Reforms Act in 1964, the landowners or the intermediaries were entitled to collect various kinds of customary levies. The common types of such levies were the *Chardamtheke*, *Sauneyfagu*,

Ghiukhaney and others. (Banstola; 1985: 275-76) The Rana Rulers were more concerned with exaction of as much revenue as possible. (Thapa; 1994: 121-183) This situation primarily determined the agrarian relations in the country.

The years of 1823 and 1868 keeps greater importance in the study of peasant's rights in land. In these years, they were given rights of cultivation. So, the peasants in the hills and the tarai were given such rights for the first time in history of Nepal. (Acharya; n.d.: 8-4) Later on, they were given tenancy rights too. During the Rana regime, tenancy rights was permitted for transaction in Kathmandu valley and other some other parts of the country. This practice proved to be infavour of the peasants. Usually, such transactions were made without giving prior notice to the land owners. (Land Reforms; 1967: 17-18) In such a situation, both the owners and cultivators did not know each other. The changes of cultivating tenants created problems of different kinds to the land owners. Even they could not identify tenants to collect rents. In some cases the cultivators were benefited but in general they were in loss. Infact, the stringent financial condition compelled them to sell occupancy rights. In many cases where there were resident land owners, the cultivators sold their rights in land to the owner and at the same time contracted the same plot of land for cultivation at higher rates of rent and levies than the existing rates. The rural unemployment and inavailability of the means of production led to such situations. (Acharya; n.d.: 11) The peasant in general lived in must vulnerable conditions. In *Jagir* and *Birta* tenures, the tenant cultivators were compelled to pay rent even at the failure of crops. In addition to the rent paid in kinds, the cultivators used to pay straw, fuelwood, ghee, vegetables and other things as mentioned in the contract. Thus, a major portion of the produce channeled to the owners. The *Jagirdars* and the *Birtaowners* used forces and detain them if rent and levies were not paid. They never considered relative situation responsible for non payment of rent. It was recognized as the privilege of the owners until promulgation of the *Bhumidari Adhikar Prapti Ain 1953*. (Kisan Kolagi; n.d.: 9) On the other hand, the rates of rent was also exorbitant. The prevailing rate during 1951 was:

Khet per Ropani:

1. Semi milled rice 1 to 1.5 Muri
2. Wheat 5 to 30 Pathi
3. Government tax and other levies, and
4. *Begar* to be provided to the local land owners and landlords.

The intermediary tenants existed in those places where absenteeism prevailed. They were very powerful. They worked on behalf of the landlords, collect rent and levies and retain a significant amount with them. The intermediaries as such were considered an extra burden for the peasants. Similarly, the moneylenders also exploited them.

They charged high rates of interest on loans extended to them. (Regmi; 1978: 123-38) They were most unsatisfied with the existing system. This types of discontents bring them to unite. Consequently, movements were organized in different places to take action against the usurious landlords and moneylenders. They movements erupted in the entire tarai, Kathmandu valley and other hill districts keep greater historical importance. (Jyapu; n.d.: 150/Akhil; 047:12-16) But it is noteworthy that most of the movements were poor managed and lacked adequate leadership. Some of those movements were politically motivated and organized basically to assist political interests of the parent organization.

KRISHI SUDHAR SANGH AND PEASANT MOVEMENTS

The activities of peasant leader Padma Bahadur Budhathoki can not be omitted while discussing peasant movements in Nepal. The movement organized by him in Somlingtar/Bhaktapur is the first peasant movement of Nepal. The local peasants participated very actively in the movement. He led them almost for four decades. The description of the leadership provided by him to bring about changes in the existing conditions of the peasant community particularly in tenurial conditions and of the slogan *Land to the tillers* is by no means to minimize the valuable contributions rendered by other individual leaders and institutions.

The organized movements during 1951 to 1957-58 led by Padma Bahadur Budhathoki, in fact, marked the beginning of the peasant movements in the country. His attempt is important not only because he began the peasant movement for the first time the country but because he had created consciousness among the Nepali peasants against the prevailing situation. In later years, Nepal experienced with a large number of peasant movements in different parts of the country.

The *Nepal Kisan Sangh* (NKS) led by Tulsi Lal Amatya was also established during this time which opened its branches in different places. It was established in December 1951 but formally transformed into the *Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh* (ANKS) on April 29, 1951. (Human; 1996: 149-156) Padma Bahadur Budhathoki was also affiliated in this *Sangh* too. The other two prominent leaders were Tulsi Lal and Sambhu Ram Shrestha. This association primarily aimed at: (Kisan Jagaran; 1990:107/Manifesto; 1987: 2-3/Programme; 1981: 11-14)

1. To eradicate feudal landholdings
2. To confiscate land and other means of production controlled by the feudal lords; and then distribute it to the cultivating tenants or the landless person who need it.
3. Socio-economic and cultural upliftment of peasants.

4. **To abolish exploitation**

Later on, some of the objectives were added in the list in 1954 A.D. It include:

1. Land must be given to those who tilled it.
2. To provide land to the landless people.
3. To abolish *Koshelee* and the *Beth-Begar* systems.
4. To regulate 1/3 *Kut* systems in all kinds of holdings.
5. To fix wages, and
6. Complete civil liberty must be granted to the people.

In Falgun 2007 (1950), a historic organization to work on behalf of the peasants was formally opened in Somlingtar village of Bhaktapur. It was known as the *Krishi Sudhar Sangh* (KSS). This *Sangh* was established before the *Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh* was formally inaugurated. During the preliminary stage, the local youths Padma Bahadur (an Jnsine in the military), Ram Rajthala (a farmer) and Gopal Raj Gautam (a local Brahmin) met together and discussed on existing agrarian condition in the district and real situation of the peasant cultivators and finally they agreed upon devoting themselves for the cause of the peasant community. Later on a mass meeting was organized in Lubhu inwhich it was decided that there should be an organization to acquire peasant's rights in land. This historic meeting brought about significant impact in the local peasant community. It pushed them to active participation in the activities of the *Krishi Sudhar Sangh* (KSS). The pressure created by the peasant community finally compelled the government to think on possible reforms in land. It has significant place in history. The *Krishi Sudhar Sangh* established in February 1951 by Padma Bahadur Budhathoki and his fellow activists is considered a revolutionary action which aimed at rescuing the toiling peasantry from the grip of the Nepalese gentry. The image of the privileged group in the agrarian hierarchy was that of the exploiter with fearful personality. Therefore, the leadership of the KSS leaders particularly that of Padma Bahadur Budhathoki is very much celebrated in the Nepalese peasant community. The KSS firmly believed on following fundamental factors. (Budhathoki; 1988: 7-8)

1. The rights of collecting land tax and rents do not lie on the *Birta* owners but it belong to the government.
2. The rates which regulates collection of rent must be uniform.
3. The rights of land ownership belongs to the government.
4. Land must belong to those who cultivate it.
3. The actual beneficiaries of agrarian production must be the state but not an individual owner, and
6. The entire responsibility born by the peasants in the production process must duely be credited.

The contemporary agrarian structure did not favour the interest of the peasant community. So, it was not beneficial for them. They were exorbitantly exploited by the land owners and the intermediaries. Therefore, a total change in the existing landholding practice, ownership rights and the agrarian social structure became necessary for the development of agriculture and improving the conditions of the cultivating tenants. In addition to the role played by the land owners, the village money lenders also collected exorbitant rates of interest on loans extended so far. Usually, in such a condition, almost nothing was left with the poor peasants. So, they lived in bare subsistence. This situation contributed to establish the *Krishi Sudhar Sangh*. It is the first active organization of its kind. It distributed pamphlets dealing with the conditions of peasants. The KSS immediately put forward some demands on behalf of the peasants popularly known as the six demands: (Budhathoki; 1988:8)

1. Land must be given to those who cultivate it. So, give all land to the actual cultivators.
2. Inkind payment of rents must be transformed into cash rent assessment system.
3. The *Rakams* related to the payment of rent must be abolished.
4. The excessive land acquired from the big landlords must be given to the poor peasants.
5. The basic needs such as the foodstuffs must be given to those whosoever desire it, and
6. The cultivable land must be given to those who had no land of their own.

At this moment when the KSS was actively working for the peasant community, the *Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh* (ANKS) proposed for working unity. Some of the liberal peasant leaders such as Basu Pasa were also affiliated with the *Kisan Sangh* (ANKS). But the *Sangh* as such was guided by the communist ideology. The proposal of working unity was submitted in written. Then a combine mass meeting was arranged in 1952 B.S. They jointly put forward following demands:

1. Abolish all kinds of exploitations against the peasants.
2. The share of land owners in agrarian produce must be fixed on the basis of existing laws which should not vary to the rates prevailed in the *Mal* lands.
3. To abolish *Rakams* like *Bhatti*, *Charsa* etc. levied on *Birta* holdings, and
4. To provide irrigation facilities to increase production.

These demands were very important and time bound in the contemporary society. Those demands were submitted to the government. The growing pressure from the people compelled the government to think on programmes such as abolishing the *Birta* tenure. The land tenure system in Nepal was based on the feudalistic

characteristics. At the same time the production relations itself became an obstacle in the development of productive forces. (NCP's Programme; 1912:5) It is noteworthy that, inspite of various attempts fundamental changes were not noticed in the peasant economy until the promulgation of the Land Reforms Act of 1964. Although, there were various attempts, no changes occurred in the structure of landownership, distribution of landed property and agrarian class structure. Similarly, the rights of the groups involved in agriculture also created different problems. The peasant cultivators gradually began to express their dissatisfaction against the existing situation through movements organized both in the hills and the tarai. (Jyapu; n.d.: 3-4) But it too could not bring about changes in the fundamental structure of the agrarian relations although the activists demanded for total reforms in the land holding practice. (NCP's Programme; 1992:5) Before 1964, three interests were involved in a Particular piece of land. The interests of the landowner (State or an individual), intermediaries and tenant cultivators varied to each other. In this situation, a cultivator usually retained 20 to 40% of the gross produce as his share. (Land Reforms; 1966: 46)

The Panchayat regime in the country introduced the long waited Land Reforms Act in 1964. It introduced various changes and provided security of tenancy rights against arbitrary eviction. It permitted eviction of tenants on specific conditions only. The grants of tenancy rights, fixation of the *Kut* rent, abolition of all kinds of customary levies etc. brought changes in the peasant economy. It also brought about changes in the traditional land holding and existing agrarian structure. But it did not eliminate involvement of the same groups of people in the land. (Programs; 1981: 5-6) The involvement of different groups of people in land ultimately led to low productivity and other problems in creating full fledged tenancy rights. When the KSS put forward various demands in 1952, the *Birta* owners became alert. They along with the *Jagirdars* sensed that such activities went against their interests. So, they wanted to suppress the activities of the KSS. At the right moment, the *Birtawals* of Thimi petitioned that Padma Bahadur must be arrested on charges of instigating *Birta* tenants against paying *Kut*. The elected governments until 1960 adopted the suppressive policy against the peasant's voices. But they publicly assured the activists to introduce reforms. In the beginning, the government favoured the landowners and attempted to protect their interests. There were two reasons:

1. There was nobody in the government to plead interests of the peasant community, and
2. The rulers needed support of the land aristocracy.

Finally, the rulers sent a troop in Somlingtar to suppress the movement of the KSS. The troops were despatched to Dadhikot and Lubhu too. The Rakshyadal terror was expanded in other villages in the vicinity beyond Somlingtar. The peasants resisted the

suppression. But finally the peasant activists withdrew. Then many peasants and their leaders were arrested. So, Padma Bahadur petitioned to the King, the Premier and the Home Minister against such arrests. The government in general tried to suppress but it was not easy to do so when movements were actively supported by the ordinary people. (Rajbandari; 1981: 69-70) The peasant leaders arranged a mass meeting at Ghantaghar to denounce the government policy. Padma Bahadur was warranted. So, her remained under ground. The police looted everything from his house including documents relating to the KSS activities. It was the general attitude of the governments towards the peasants after 1951. However, the activities of the KSS in such a condition can not be minimized because some of their achievements keep greater importance in the history of Nepal. Some of such achievements gained so far include:

1. Converting inkind cash into cash assessment, and
2. Facility to deposit *Kut* in the *Mal Adda* incase if land owners refused to take *Kut* and issue receipt.

The demands put forward jointly by the KSS and the ANKS intended to abolish economic exploitation and improve their conditions. But the government did not decide on it. So, a protest rally was arranged on March 1953. The leaders agreed on thirteen points slogans to pronounce during protest demonstration. The KSS local village committee in Lubhu and Katunje further discussed on problems of the peasants. They agreed on: (Bassupasa; 1987: 92)

1. To prohibit the landowners from entering the KSS because it was the organization of the peasants.
2. The representation of the political parties in the *Sangha* is harmful to develop professionalism, and
3. To prevent politics of any kind in the *Sangha*.

The confrontation with the *Birta* owners was not yet solved. They insisted the government to take action against the peasant activists. But Keshar Shumsher- the Royal advisor repealed all such demands and replied them to suit petition in the court of law if they were not satisfied with his decision. On the other hand, the inkind rent system was ordered convert into cash assessment system as demanded by the peasants. The rate was fixed at Rs. 8 to 13 per *Muri* or paddy. The peasants in Bhaktapur were very much satisfied with this change. it encouraged the KSS as well. They further demanded to convert the semi milled rice *Kut* rent payable in privileged land tenures into cash payment system according to the government rates. This demand was so effective that it was decided to accept deposits of *Kut* in semi-milled rice into paddy in equal amount until issuance of next decision. It directly benefited to the poor peasants.

On certain conditions, the *Mal Adda* auctioned land in different village. The *Mal Adda* rejected to the government that such auctioned did not create any financial loss to the government. But in fact it was against the interest of the peasants because it ended their rights in land. The KSS further demanded to reform this practice. Consequently, the *Mal Adda* in Bhaktapur was ordered to cancel all such auctions and refund amount deposited so far. The local peasants became very much satisfied with this change.

THE ELABORATION OF PEASANT POLITICS: ANKS/ANSKS IN PEASANT WELFARE

The agrarian structure in contemporary Nepal was traditional in nature. It was dominated by the privileged classes. They procured a large portion of agrarian produce as their share. The landowners and other privileged groups in the hierarchy controlled the peasants through various means. (Thapa; 1994: 121-183) The agrarian structure itself was not favourable for them. As a general rule, agrarian social structure itself is not favourable for the cultivating class in the traditional societies. (Beteille; 1974: 117-21)

This is particularly true in the Nepalese agrarian set up. In this connection, the peasant activists fought with the usurers and tried to persuade the government to improve conditions of the peasants. In fact, the existing agrarian relations was responsible for originating entire movements in the country. Later on, the peasant movements was more or less motivated by political interests. The major problems of tenant cultivators was their rights on land, (Regmi; 1992: 31-32) payment of *Kut*, share cropping and eviction.

There was some kind of confrontation inside the ANKS. Consequently, a mass meeting was arranged at Jaisi Deval. It agreed for purification in the *Sangh*. Finally, Padma Bahadur and Basu Pasa opened *Akhil Nepal Suddhikaran Kisan Sangh* (ANSKS). (Budhathoki; 1988: 8-11) Later on, it is said that its branches extended up to Panchthar and Taplejung in the east. The ANSKS put forward various demands: (Human Rights; 1995: 149-56)

1. The rent on Guthi must be payable in equal ratio in kinds and cash instead of 3/4 in kinds and 1/4 cash.
2. The time limitation of Chaitra to pay rent must be extended from it to onwards.
3. To distribute land to landless people.
4. To abolish the *Khangī* system.
5. To manage and provide facilities in education, health, water and transportation.

There was basic difference between these two organizations. The ANKS was said to be under influence of the communists. They wanted to make an end of the feudal practices in the landholding and provide land to all landless people for subsistence. They also gave a slogan- *Land to the tiller*. But the ANKS supported the policy of the communist part that land rent should be paid to the owners of land because they also belong to the middle class dependent on agrarian income. But it radically differed to the philosophy of the ANSKS. The later believed and adopted a resolution that only the government has right to collect land tax but not an individual landowner.

The ANKS leaders were very much angry with the ASKS activists. The differences on basic principles led them to make severe criticism of each other. The ANKS distributed pamphlets and notified that Padma and Basu were expelled from the *Sangh*. (Basu; 1987: 91) It was just a political game. It neither could harass nor influence to Padma as they expected. He remained most successful in leading the Nepali peasant community almost for decades. It effected not only to the ANKS activities but also to the Nepali Congress. Therefore, the Nepali Congress was compelled to attempt to work in this field. So, it also secretly opened an organization under the name of the *Suddhikaran Kisan Sangh*. It was not professional but completely motivated by political purposes. At the same time it lacked popular base to work.

The ANSKS arranged a mass meeting at Bhugol Park to justify its establishment against the ANKS. There was severe clash between them and denounced each other. On the other hand, the government also realised to solve some of the problems of peasants otherwise it would grow larger. The government immediately proclaimed to fulfil following demands submitted earlier:

1. The date for payment of rent was extended from Chaitra.
2. Rent payable in semi milled rice was converted into paddy and later it too was converted into cash in *Mal* land.
3. The *Kut* in *Guthi* was made payable both in cash and kinds.
4. The rate of *Kut* in *Guthi* which varied in adjoining *Raikar* holdings was fixed at the rate prevailed in the *Raikar*. It was fixed to bring about uniformity in the land rent.

The government further notified to set up a land reforms commission which will prepare a report on the demands. The cabinet would decide on its recommendations. (HMG; 1953: 18-20/Devkota; 1983: 917-47) The commission prepared a report of existing landholding system. Its major recommendations include: (HMG; 1953: 20/Lohani; 1988: 18-19)

1. Prepare records of cultivating tenants.
2. To fix *Guthi* rent on the basis of government rates (both cash and Kinds).

3. To allow tenants to mortgage land
4. To fix *Kut* rent
5. To grant tenancy rights.
6. To appoint *Patwaris* in all areas and authorize them to prepare report on landowners, tenantscultivators, plot of land, gradation and crops.
7. To arrange changes of name in survey, *Khasara* and *Jamabandi* (tax records).
8. To abolish the *Jimidari* and register *Seer* and *Jirayat* in the names of tenants.
9. To maintain records by the *Patuwaris* including tenants's name, land, tenurial conditions etc.
10. To grant tenancy rights to tenants.
11. To permit owners to retain 16 Acre and 4 acres of land for cultivation in tarai and hills respectively.
12. To permit transfer of tenancy rights.
13. To facilitate tenants to purchase land.
14. Not to grant tenancy on lands belonged to an army man.
15. To permit mortgage of tenancy right.
16. Not to exact *Kut* rent exceeding 1/4 of the production and assess in cash if so desired by the tenants.
17. To fix land ceiling.
18. To abolish *Birta* without paying compensation.
19. To assess *Guthi* rent in cash if not in kinds rent would not exceed 1/3 of the production.
20. To add Rs. 1 per Bigha revenue to provide to the peasant welfare fund.
21. To set up Banks and cooperative credit committees to accept mortgage of land.
22. To extend agricultural loan by the government, and
23. To fix *Birta* rent in cash according to the *Mal* rates where rate of *Kut* exceeded prevailing rates in *Raikar*.

The ANSKS discussed on the existing situation and prepared six demands to submit to the minister of agriculture. Those demands were: (Budhathoki; 1988: 11-12)

1. To stop payment of 4 percent in kinds rent collected by the *Mal Adda* in the Kathmandu valley.
2. To abolish all kinds of *Rakams*.
3. To regulate rent In *Rajguthi* and *Duniya Guthi* in cash corresponding to the rates prevailing in the *Mal* land.
4. To abolish *Zamindari* and *Talukdari* systems because the Panchayats were already set up to look after the matter.
5. To abolish the *Birta* system.
6. To bring about uniformity in rent and taxes.

These demands were considered very important for the peasants. The contemporary agrarian society was such that these demands were necessarily required to improve conditions of the peasant cultivators. Finally, the representatives from the Land Reforms Commission, the department of revenue, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance and peasant leaders including Padma Bahadur Budhathoki Bhim Bahadur Sijapati, Pasupati Mishra, Basupasa and Ram Rajthala participated in a meeting. There was unanimity to fulfil first two demands but there were differences of opinion on other demands among the representatives. (HMG; 1953: 21-24) Their interests collided with each other. The government representative did not realize to provide benefits to the peasant community neither they agreed upon the role of the peasants in the production process. The second meeting was schedule at the residence of Premier M.P. Koirala. He assured to fulfil demands gradually. Consequently, two demands were fulfilled after two months. (Basu; 1987: 95) But no attention was paid on other demands. As the result, Padma Bahadur decided to protest it and demonstrate against government's anti-peasant policy. A series of mass demonstrations were arranged. The land owners tried to suppress it. A large number of peasants were arrested. The ANSKS criticized it and submitted a petition at the *Pradhan Nyayalaya*. The local peasants, on the other hand came to know that there won't be any reform and exploitation remains in growing condition if they remained silent. At the same time, the ANSKS also appealed the local ordinary peasants to be united to fight against the enemies. The government also did not pay attention to the already submitted six demands. The ANSKS considered it a very delicate matter. Consequently, a general mass meeting was organized at Somlingtar. It decided to stage *Satyagraha* which finally started on February 26, 1955. The popular demands during the *Satyagrah* were:

1. Provide work , food and cloth to the poor peasants.
2. Not to pay *Kut* to the *Guthi Tahasil*.

The *Satyagraha* leaders distributed pamphlets to make it successful. (Budhathoki: 1988: 7-8) A large number of demonstrators were arrested along with secretary Netra Nath Sharma and Vice President Bishnu Bahadur Khadkha. Premier Matrika Prasad Koirala took suppressive policy towards the peasants. His reign marked ruthless suppression of the peasants from 1952 to 1955. M.P. Koirala delayed in solving peasant's problems. (Tuladhar; 1989: 35) But on contrary to his thinking, he did not hesitate to say- if the problems pertaining to land ownership and other rights were not solved there was a chance to manipulate or attract peasant force by the reactionaries. (Gorkhapatra; 1953)

The district magistrate threatened to *Birta* and *Guthi* cultivators to shoot if they did not pay *Kut* rent. Such kinds of suppression resulted in further expansion of the movement. Ram Rajthala and Bhagirath Upadhyaya sat on hunger strike in the prison.

It was done to protest against government's anti peasant policy. At that time people believed that the Premier had no courage to move against the interests of the landed aristocracy. It was obvious that the rule needed their support. On the other hand, many big landlords were influential in the government. The premier's activities proved that he was against the welfare of the peasant community. Tanka Prasad Acharya succeeded M.P. Koirala. He was also a peasant activist and colleague of Padma Bahadur. The Praja Parishad adopted the idea of neo-socialism and issued slogans for revolutionary changes. But Premier Acharya also replied to the peasant leaders that land reforms in Nepal was not easy to introduce as the peasant activists demanded. The suppression of the peasants movements continued. Then Nepalese women gave a petition to the king in which they demanded to stop all kinds of suppressive actions. The ANSKS also submitted a memorandum to the king. Thenafter, a royal decree was issued to reforms existing land and other related practices. (Devkota; 1983: 316-18) They thought that it would be beneficial for them. So, the ANSKS decided to stop all kinds of Movements and protest activities. The government further declared that: "The exaction of the *Kut* exceeding the prevailing government rate was prohibited."

So the *Sangh* (ANSKS) accepted the royal declaration and ordered its followers to follow. (Budhathoki; 1988: 42) The peasant cultivators were also instructed to pay only according to the legal rates but not on the basis of market price. The changes or fluctuations in the market prices usually need to pay more grains than the prescribed rates. In 1955, the *Kut* was reassessed. Consequently, new rates were fixed as follows:

1. Rs. 11.00 and Rs. 15.00 in lieu of Rs. 4.50 and 6.50 respectively. (Budhathoki; 1988: 47-49)

This Increasement in the rates of *Kut* and revenue brought reversed impact among the people. Then they began to believe that the democracy itself was not beneficial for them. At the right moment, the ANSKS has convinced the local peasants that it was not democracy but the feudal elements in the land holding has caused troubles. They also attempted to units peasants for their welfare.

The activities of ANSKS is very important in the history of Nepal. It regarded the Birta system as the major obstacle in the development of peasant economy. Therefore, they demanded to abolish it. It further demanded to keep such land under the government control. And fix *Kut* in cash according to the government rates.

In 1957, the government also opened a peasant organization in which Padma Bahadur and Biku Lal Bhaila of Bhaktapur also became the members to work on behalf of the peasant community. But they resigned from it after two months.

The growing pressure from the ANSKS led to regulate taxes on privileged land tenure. So, Birta was declared taxable and the rate was declared on the basis of

prevailing rates in adjoining *Raikar* holdings. But unfortunately, the critical attitude of the *Birta* owners against the decision compelled the government to withdraw the decision. In the same year an act was promulgated which declared the end of all kinds of *Rakams* such as the *Bhatti*, *Charsa* etc. levied in *Birta* cultivation. (Lohani; 1988: 22) It has been the greater achievement of the peasant movements in the country.

Until this time, the ANSKS was greatly influenced by Marxist ideology in one way or another. So, it transformed from merely a peasant organization to a full fledged political party. A general meeting of the ANSKS at Somlingtar adopted a resolution to convert it into a political party. Consequently, Nepal Socialist Peasant's Party (NSPP) was formally established. When, the government of the Nepali Congress did not work in favour of the Nepali peasants, the NSPP gave an ultimatum and asked the government to fulfil six popular demands within fifteen days otherwise they would arrange demonstration throughout the country.

CONCLUSION

The movements originated from Somlingtar in Bhaktapur since the inauguration of the KSS in 1951 contributed to great extent to improve conditions of peasantry. So, the KSS has greater historical significance. It was active almost for a decade. It was very popular among the Nepali peasants. Their contribution to introduce reforms in the traditional agriculture is very significant. The activities of the KSS and Padma Bahadur became guidelines for the peasant activists in later years. The contemporary statesmen held two views on welfare of peasants popularly known as the reformist and revolutionary views. The first group of statesmen thought that it was sufficient for the peasants to grant tenancy rights and not more than this. But on the contrary, the second group of politicians favoured transfer of the rights of ownership to the cultivators. Therefore they put forward the popular slogan of: "Land to the tiller". (Tamang; 1982: 85-91/Tuladhar; 1989: 35-36)

The royal takeover in 1960 very much influenced the peasant movements as it did to other political parties. The NSPP was also banned. Even in such a critical situation, Padma Bahadur Budhathoki dedicated himself to work for peasants until his death in 1994. His most remarkable contribution, in addition to other reforms in landholding practice, is his philosophy that: "Land must belong to the cultivators but to the owners". His activities attempted to transform the traditional feudal structure of the society. It was his attempt which compelled the rulers to recognize rights of cultivators in land. So, various decisions were taken to introduce reforms in landholding.

Therefore, the activities of the KSS, ANKS and the ANSKS brought about

consciousness in the peasant community. This situation ultimately led to reform defective practices in agriculture in Nepal. At the same, it also prepared the background of land reforms in the country.

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GLOSSARY OF VERNACULAR TERMS USED IN THE PAPER

Beth-begar	- Unpaid labour
Bhatti	- A kind of tax
Birta	- Tax free land grant
Birtawar	- Owner of <i>Birta</i> land
Chardamtheke	- A cash levy in wet land
Charsa	- Tax levied in terai levied after abolishing hide and skin tax

- Duniya Guthi - Charitable land donated and managed by the ordinary people
- Ghiukhaney - Cash levy in paddy land
- Guthi - Charitable land
- Jagir - Land given to the government employee in lieu of cash salary
- Jamabandi - Tax records
- Jimidari - Jurisdiction of a tax collecting functionary
- Khet - Irrigated land
- Koshelee - Tributes paid in kinds
- Kut - Land rent in kinds
- Mal land - Government land
- Muri - Measurement of grains approximately 80 kg.
- Patwari - Village level functionary
- Pradhan Nayayalaya - The supreme court
- Raikar - Government land
- Raj Guthi - Guthi land managed by the government
- Rakam - Obligation imposed on peasants
- Ropani - A system of land measurement equivalent to 5476 sq.ft.
- Sangh - Association
- Sauneyfagu - Homestead tax
- Seer-Jirayat - Taxable land of the *Jimidars* given as remuneration which adjoins the *Jimidari* holdings
- Talukdari - Village revenue functionary
- Zamindar - Intermediary class of landowners