

## Durbar High School's Contribution to the Educational History of Nepal

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### Abstract

*This study provides a compressive historical significance and status of Durbar High School, in the educational history of Nepal. Nepal's first formal modern educational institution, established in 1854 AD by Janga Bahadur Rana. Initially founded by the Rana regime to provided English education to their children, Durbar High School played a pioneering role in introducing modern education on the country. Over time it became a symbol of educational reform opening its doors to the broader public and producing numerous distinguished personalities, including administrator, politicians, intellectuals and professionals who contributed significantly to the nation's development. The school's historical importance is underscored by its role in the early propagation of education during a time when much of Nepal remained isolated from formal learning. It paved the way for the development of the education system in Nepal, contributing to the emergence of a modern state. Despite its remarkable contributions, the school has experienced significant challenges throughout its history. The curriculum during the Rana period, which was designed and imported from India, was not well-suited to the local context and the school's exclusivity limited its brooded impact. In recent decades, Durbar High School has faced further challenge, including a decline in academic standards, infrastural decay and competition from emerging private schools. The 2015 AD earthquake severely damaged the school's facilities, but its subsequent reconstruction, with support from the Chinese government, has revitalized it's in fracture. This restoration has led to increased student enrollment and renewed interest in the school, giving it a new opportunity to regain its prominence. Durbar High School is the first formal educational institution in the country to spread the light of modern education among the general public for decades, peacefully and steadily even during the Rana regime.*

**Keywords:** Devkul, Rajakul, Gurukul, Pitrikul, Cornerstone, Social Customs, Isolated, Contribution-acclivity, Infrastructural decay.

### Introduction

The term education originated from the Latin words educates, meaning “to bring up and educate meaning “to bring forth” (Archer, 2013). The definition of education has

been explored by theories from various fields. Many agree that education is a purposeful activity aimed at achieving goals like that transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits (Briggs, 2012). However, extensive debate surrounds its precise nature beyond these general features. One approach views education as a process occurring during events such as schooling, teachings, and learning (Biesta, 2015). The light of modern education in Nepal had dawned on 1853 AD with the establishment of the first formal school, Durbar High School as a symbol of growing gratitude for knowledge and learning where people started to flock themselves from all across over there, looking upon it as harbinger hope and prosperity. As well regarded as the Rana rule school and education never was for anyone except members of their ruling families, including in those circles around them. But after 2007 B.S. when democracy advent in Nepal to end the lifelong Rana's ruling duration and then light of education is spreading all over in many areas with awareness (Regmi, 2007).

Educational system in Nepal is overseen by the Ministry of Education, knowledge and technology. To help the scholar student applying certain process as facilitated by government of Nepal, foreign aid etc (MOE, 2009).

Durbar High School is an epitome in the modern educational history of Nepal. It is the first formal school that started to teach English language as well as modern education in Nepal. There are many educational institutions in Nepal now. And they have a separate identity, but the historical significance of this school is cannot be generalized. With the change in the political system and the change in educational policy of Nepal, Durbar High School has gone through many ups and downs. Now days this school is known by another name Bhanu Mavi.

Before the beginning of formal education system in Nepal, at that time there was a tradition of providing education in Temples, monasteries and homes through educational systems such as Devkul, Gurukul, Rajkul and Pitrikul. With the unification of modern Nepal, Durbar High School can be considered a living cornerstone of the impact it has had on Nepal's educational system (Sharma, 2068).

Although much has been written about Durbar High School but little has been researched about contribution of the school's in Nepal's educational history from past to present. Now a day it seems that, the state does not show much interested in preserving and safeguarding the historical importance of Durbar High School. Therefore, today's generations are not well informed about the glorious history of this school. The lack of the study of the historical importance and contribution of this school is a gap in its study, so this study has been done as an attempt to try to fill that gap.

## Methods and Materials

This study has been prepared based on qualitative research methods. It has been supported by both primary and secondary sources of data. The present study has been prepared by analyzing the overall aspects of the contribution made by Durbar High School to the educational history of Nepal.

In this study interviews were taken with former students, teachers and currently studying students and teachers at Durbar High School. Former students of the school who studied at the school at different times and are now who contributing to the country in various fields are also participated in interview. Former teachers of the school's board of directors and staffs who have contributed to the operation of the school have been used as primary sources of data. The published books, Journal articles related to Durbar High School is use as for secondary source. Regarding this research samples were taken as purposive sampling method. The analytical method was used for preparation of the article.

## Findings and Discussion

Nepal has long recognized as a religious and sacred place nestled in the lap of the Himalayas. Since ancient times, ashrams of sages and Maharishis have existed in Nepal, where the Gurukul, Rajakul, Devkul, Pritikul education system was uphold (Bhattra, 2020).

**Gurukul education system:** in this education system, where students lived with their Guru (teacher) in an ashram (hermitage) to receive education. The Guru imparted knowledge not only in academic subjects but also in life skills, moral values, spirituality as well as astrophysics, traditional medicine, Grammar, History, ethics, war craft, archery, riding and swordsman, tales, feeble and anecdotes. This system emphasized personalized attention and a close teacher-student relationship (Sharma, 2068).

**Rajakul education system:** in this education system, royalty and nobility received education within the palace premises. They were tutored by scholars and mentors hired by the royal family. Education for elite focused on governance, administration, warfare, diplomacy, arts and literature. Especially this type of education was given to the child of royal family. Law, ethics, fighting were major subject area of study (Ojha & Bhandari, 2023).

**Pitrikul education system:** in this education system craftsmen, artisans, and trade, people passed on their skills and knowledge to apprentices through hands-on training and observation were taught to new generation's family members. This informal education

system was crucial for passing down traditional crafts and skills from one generation to the next. In this system elders passed on knowledge, customs and traditions to their younger generations. Education was not limited to formal settings but was integrated into everyday life (Khatri & Dahal, 2053).

**Devkul education system:** this type of education system was totally based religion and offered idealistic education. The goal of education was to get salvation and provide method of making god happy. Religious places were taken as best place for providing education (Sharma, 2068).

Before the introduction of modern education, there is system of imparting Sanskrit education, the education based on religion in Nepal. The education was for the Brahmins and Chhetris only. The Brahmins studied Vedas, Upanishada, Jyotish (Astronomy) and Science of rituals (Karma- Kanda) and the Chhetris learnt about administration and art of warfare. Education was necessary for those also who helped the king in administration and kept the records in the courts. Other casts people were far away from the Sanskrit education. Buddhist monks also imparted education based on their religion (Dixit, 2076). Overall education in ancient Nepal was deeply rooted in the cultural, religious, and social fabric of the society. It was holistic, emphasizing not only intellectual development but also spiritual, moral and practical aspects of life (Gyawali, 2005).

The origin of Nepal's modern formal education is started from the time of Rana regime. In the history of modern Nepalese education, the great contribution goes to Janga Bahadur Rana, who established the formal English School for the first time in Nepal. The motive behind the opener of school is not beneficiary for all, but later on the decision of starting formal English education in Nepal as the name of Durbar High School became the historic milestone on the field of Nepal's education.

The rise of Janga Bahadur in Nepal's politics as well as ruling power is the result of Nepal's feeble and unstable political system. At that time, the rulers seemed to be weak in the aspects of making strong decision related to country development as well as country's safety on the behalf of foreign affairs. When Janga Bahadur took over the all power of ruler, he rose as an autocratic ruler. However, he had strong desire as well as willing power to learn new things. That is why he decided to go Europe visit, to learn some new ideas for holding power strongly for operating country on the behalf of own desire. At that time Britain rulers were ruling in India. Nepal and India share open borders therefore so many British officers were come to Nepal.

Janga Bahadur had great desire to become a powerful ruler that's why he visit Europe to learn new ideas about ruling system, politics, culture of Europeans and their society. When he faced trouble during his trip mostly related about English language, he decided to open school to teach English for his future generation. During his visit to the European countries, he saw the achievements of that countries and he was highly impressed. He realized that the success of European countries is the results of modern education. He realized the need for English education. That is why he decided to open English medium school to teach his future generation (Adhikari, 2075).

When Janga Bahadur returned from Europe visit, he bringing teachers from Europe and edtablished an English school in his Thapathali palace on 7<sup>th</sup> Ashoj 1910 B.S. After Janga Bahadur returned from his visit to Britain, he appointed Mr. Kenning as the first principal of Durbar High School. This same school is the first historic school in Nepal to provide modern English education. In the early days, all the students were kept together in this school and only primary level education was given in this school. From the time of Janga Bahadur to prime ministership of Bir Shumsher, Durbar High School did not get its permanent address. From the year 1910 B.S. to the year 1948 B.S this school was sometimes moved to Thapathali Palace, sometimes the Narayanhiti palace, and sometimes to the near the gate of Jamal palace ( D. Shrestha, personal communication on 9<sup>th</sup> Sep, 2024).

When the prime minister changed, he used to move the school to his palace to suit himself. In the year 1946 B.S., Bir Shumsher decided to build a suitable building for Durbar High School. The construction work was completed in the year 1948 B.S., taking the time duration of two years. Then finally this school got to stay in its own permanent building. Since that time, this school has been located in this building till date. This school is located outside Asan Bazar of Kathmandu near the Tundikhel, and Ranipokhari in an open, elegant, and important style (B., Tuladhar, personal communication on 8<sup>th</sup> Sep, 2024).

Experts say that this school was started inside the palace and it was run inside the palace for 38 years and only the palace related students studied, so its name may have been called the Durbar School. After the establishment of the Education Department in 1915 B.S., Janga Bahadur's son Babarjung was appointed as the director of education, at that time this school was converted from primary school to middle school (N., Joshi, personal communication on 25<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

During Dhir Shumsher's time Durbar School was made into a high school by conducting education from middle school to class 10. After spending nearly two decades

from the initial days, Durbar School gradually became a primary to middle school and became a high school. Only the children of the Rana family could study in this school, which was started by Janga Bahadur with the aim of making them able to speak English properly. But after Ranodeep Singh became the prime minister on Falgun 15, 1933 B.S., he arranged for the sons of his close relatives to be educated (H. Joshi, personal communication on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

In the year of 1957 B.S. Dev Shumsher became the commander in chief as well as prime minister then he opened the door of this school for the general public. Even though education up to class 10 started in this school long ago, since this school is not affiliated with any university, the certificate provided by this school is not recognized anywhere else. In A.D 1880 this school became affiliated with Calcutta University. At that time, the principal of this school was Kedarnath Chatterjee. He contributed significantly to this work. Students who passed the test exam from this school could go to Calcutta and take part in the entrance examination of the university there (S., Shrestha, personal communication on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

In 1880 AD, candidates from Nepal went to Calcutta to take the entrance exam for the first time. Dhir Shumsher's 3<sup>rd</sup> number's son, Khadga Shumsher was also in that team. At that exam Khadga Shumsher did not pass the exam, but as he was a student of the Rana family who was part of the first Nepali team to participate in the entrance exam. He was awarded by a Medal (Takma) from Vice Roy Lord Ripan. The first Rana family student who passes the entrance exam is Chandra Shumsher. In this way, the of giving entrance exam in Calcutta university continued till AD 1917, i.e for 37 years (G.,Tuladhar, personal communication on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

Every year increasing number of examinees to reach Calcutta for examination was on the one hand a hassle and on the other hand an increase in government expenditure, so the government of Nepal requested the University of Calcutta to open an entrance in Kathmandu itself, but university of Calcutta did not agree to do so. After that, Durbar High School broke its relationship with Calcutta University and from the year 1957 B.S. onwards students started going to Patna to take the entrance exam. At that time, the students had to travel far to take the exam and the government had to arrange the necessary expenses for the students. As the number of students increased year by year, the government felt that the financial burden was increasing and it was difficult to conduct the matriculation examination under the Department of Education in Nepal since 1990 B.S. during the time of Juddha Sumsher. But the entire management of the examination was conducted by Patna University. This sequence continued until 2003 B.S. In 2004 B.S.

S.L.C. Board was established and it was arranged to give the exam in Nepal (S.B., Shrestha, personal communication on 15<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

Since the school was government-owned from the beginning, it's all expenses were borne by the government. But after the Bir Sumsher became the prime minister, he arranged to cover the entire expenses of the school from the income of Guthi. In 1957 B.S. Dev Shumsher made arrangements for the general public to be able to study, and again made arrangements for the government to bear all the expenses of the school. During this time, this school provided completely free education. From the beginning till 2030 B.S., the students of this school were only boys (J. Bajracharya, personal communication on 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug, 2024).

In the year 2030 B.S., the National Education Plan was also implemented in Kathmandu. And this school and arranged for female students to study as well. The government informed that all expenses of this school, which has been providing free education to students for more than a century, were stopped under the new education scheme and this school will also have to be like other non-government schools. Then this school started charging fees from the students (U.K., Tibdewala, personal communication on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

Accordingly, the class textbooks of this school were printed in English language and teaching was done through English medium. Except Nepali and Sanskrit, all the subjects were taught through English medium. All the textbooks of that time were brought from India by the headmaster of the school. Textbooks were rarely changed. The textbooks of that time did not include subjects that would awaken the feeling of Nepali nationality and patriotism (K., Bajracharya, personal communication on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug, 2024).

Durbar High School had only two foreign teachers during its establishment. Then after Bengali teachers drawn from Calcutta to teach students in this school. In 1982 B.S. Sardar Rudraraj Pandey passed MA from Ilahabad University and he return to Nepal and he selected as the principal of this school. After only then Nepali teachers started teaching in this school. The teachers of Durbar High School were given salary in Indian rupees and the teachers were also provided accommodation facilities. At that time the salaries of teachers were determined on the basis of their academic qualifications. At that time, those who passed MA got Rs.1800 IC, those who passed BA got Rs.1200 IC, and those who passed IA got Rs. 900 IC, those who passed Matric got Rs.600 IC annually (Pandey, 2061).

The teachers of Durbar High School also contributed during the World War. During that time the teachers also had to work with the army as second lieutenants of

supplies and civil officers. If the teacher who was in the army did not go with the army, his job would be lost. The arrangement of lunch for students with poor financial condition as well as the arrangement of student growth and scholarship was also available in Durbar High School since its inception (Sharma, 2070).

After the revolution of 2007 B.S., there was a big political change in Nepal. The era of educational awakening has begun. The Ministry of Education was established to expand and develop education in an accessible manner throughout the country. The National Board of Education was formed in the year 2009 B.S. Nepal National Education Commission was established on Chaitra 9, 2010 B.S. During this, College of Education was established on 14<sup>th</sup> Bhadra, 2014 B.S. Tribhuvan University was established in 2016 B.S. (Pandey, 2061). After that, the door was opened for all Nepalese people's children to study up to higher education in Nepal. In the year 2017 B.S., after King Mahendra broke the parliamentary system, independent panchayat system started. In accordance with the panchayat system, a comprehensive National Education Commission was formed in the year 2018 B.S. (Souvenir, 2080).

In the year 2028 B.S. the plan of National education system was implemented. Royal Higher Education Commission was formed in the year 2039 B.S. The National Education Commission was formed in the year 2047 B.S. to implement multi-party democratic system-friendly education due to the people's movement of 2046 B.S. A high-level working committee on education was formed in the year 2058 B.S. Thus, along with the political changes in Nepal, it can be seen that the education policy has also changed. It can be seen that the education policy of Nepal has changed and Durbar High School is providing education to its students (S., Mainali, personal communication on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sep, 2024).

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Durbar High School is also associated with most of the events in the country's political history. It can be seen that Durbar High School has contributed to the political history from the Rana period to the advent of democracy in Nepal. Rana Prime ministers Bir Shumsher, Dev Shumsher, Chandra Shumsher, Bhim Shumsher, Judda Shumsher, and Gehendra Shumsher is a student of Durbar High School. Also the martyrs Shukraraj Shastri, Gangalal Shrestha, Bal Bahadur Pandey, Chiniyalal Singh, Thir Bam Malla who

sacrificed their lives fighting against the Rana regime (M. Bashnet, personal communication on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

Since the political change of 2007 B.S., students like Prime mimister Tanka Prasad Acharya, Prime mimister Kritinidhi Bista, Finance Minister Bhes Bahadur Thapa have contributed to the political and administrative personalities of Nepal. The students of Durbar High School have made valuable. The students of have made valuable contributions in every field of politics, art, literature, education and science and technology of Nepal. Sanskrit scholar and centenarian Satya Mohan Joshi, the first governer of Nepal Rastra Bank, Himalayan Shumsher Jabara, the first scientist and engineer of Nepal, Gehendra Shumsher Jabara, the designer of Nepal's national flag, Shankarnath Rimal, and many other famous and distinguished people of Nepal are products of this school (J. M., Bajracharya, personal communication on 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug, 2024).

Science its inception, this school has faced many natural disasters at different times. The permanent building of this school was built in 1948 B.S., this building was damaged through the earthquake of 1990 B. S. Then it was renovated and made as before. During the renovation, this school was operated from the building of Trichandra College. Another eqrthquake of 2045 B.S., did not cause any damage to this school's building, but the earthquake that occurred on Baishakha 12, 2072 B.S. completely damaged the building of this school. But this school is rebuilt in Falgun, 2076 B.S. after four years with the help of China (S. K., Poudel, personal communication on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2024).

This school has been sheltering various educational institutions in its building at different times. It includes National college is now Shankar Dev Campus), Tribhuvan Proud Sikchhya Niketan, Bishwo Bhasha Campus, Adarsha Vidyapitha, Nepali Siksha Parishad and Sanskrit Mavi. Out of which, even today a school named Sanskrit Mavi is still operating in this school's building (R., Kuwar, personal communication on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2024).

Durbar High School has been conduction various extracurricular activities since its inception. Along with the school curriculum in accordance with the national education policy implemented in the year 2030 B.S., this school has been making students participate in sports, cultural programs, literature, and other many extracurricular activities. Such extra activities as educational tours and sightseeing are also included in the historical, cultural and industrial areas. In this school, so many clubs being operated like as Red- Cross, Scout, e.t.c, so the students have been able to develop their personality more (S., Khadgi, personal communication on 29<sup>th</sup> July).

## Conclusion

Janga Bahadur Rana emerged from the chaotic conditions prevailing in the country. While he did much to stabilize his condition, the education of the masses received no attention for him. The subject of schools and colleges in Nepal may be treated as the snakes in Ireland. Before the establishment of Durbar High School, there was an education system based upon traditional, cultural and religion and also community based.

Durbar High School has played an indispensable role in shaping the modern educational history of Nepal. Founded during the Rana regime to educate the ruling elite, it quickly became the birthplace of modern education in the country. The school has produced numerous distinguished personalities, including political leaders, intellectuals, and professionals who have contributed to the nation's development. Even though it is not possible to account fully how much students produced from this school have contributed to the upliftment or development of the nation since then, it can be seen that their contribution is unique and incomparable.

Being the first modern education school in Nepal is one of the characteristics of Durbar High School. It has taken a leading position in the educational history of the country. In terms of educational level and achievement, it can be seen that this school has given its numerically and qualitatively as well. As the leading educational institution of the country, the role played by this school in spreading education to the common people, especially in bringing contemporary awareness to the youth during the dark ages in Nepal through its medium, is unforgettable.

However, Durbar High School's journey has not been without challenges. Over time, the school faced difficulties, including the decline of its academic reputation and infrastructure degradation, particularly after several natural disasters. The school's curriculum and teaching methods in the early years were not well-adapted to the Nepali context, and only elite students had access to its resources. Political changes, especially after the end of Rana regime, opened the doors of the school to a broader population, but it also marked a gradual decline in discipline and quality.

The reconstruction of Durbar High School after the devastating 2015 AD earthquake has revitalized the institution, offering a modernized facility that has attracted more students in recent years. Despite ongoing challenges, such as limited space due to the operation of two schools within the same building, Durbar High School is on a path of resurgence, poised to regain its historical significance as a leading educational institution in Nepal.

With its rich legacy and recent improvements, Durbar High School stands as a testament to Nepal's educational evolution and remains a symbol of hope for future generations. Continued efforts in maintaining the school's infrastructure, streamlining its academic program, and focusing on quality education will ensure that it can reclaim its former prestige and continue to contribute to Nepal's educational landscape.

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