

Administrative Role of Malla Kings of Later Medieval Period

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Abstract

In Nepali society, king used to be respected by people. Kings had role not only in political and administrative landscape but also in the cultural and social scenario. In Medieval Nepal, the king would enact law, enforce law and also impart justice. Justice was a well-established virtue in the polity of Nepal since the remote past. Nepal had been ruled by some royal dynasties, i.e., Gopals, Mahispalas, Kirants, Lichhchavi, Malla and Shah. The medieval history of Nepal begins with the Malla dynasty. The first Malla king is Ari Malla (1207-1216). The later medieval period or the Malla dynasty of Kathmandu begins when King Jayasthiti Malla was in complete control in the valley. The study has aimed at finding out how the kings of the later medieval period had played role in the administrative system of the then Nepal. So, this research article is designed to find out the role of king in the entire administrative system of Nepal under the later medieval period. It has been known about the administration system of Malla from the various sources, that are inscriptions, manuscripts, and other literary sources, beside the foreign accounts. On the basis of these sources, it has been described about the administrative system of Malla. Malla kings ruled under the monarchical system. Kings were all in all countries, and they had all the authority of supreme power and controlled their countries by being the commanders in -chief in justices and chiefs of the administration of the countries. The king himself handled the leadership of war and used to go in far places for it. Kings liked to possess different royal titles, such as 'Nepaleswor', 'Nepal Mandalesor ', 'Nepal Pundya Bhumesor', 'Rajrajendra, 'Sakala Sastra Sangitadi Vaidhya Parangat', 'Kabindra 'etc. Until arrival of the powerful Gurkhas from Gurkhas kingdom, the Malla kings ruled the valley which was cut into four kingdoms – Bhadgaon, Kathmandu, Patan and Banepa. During the Malla period, the choice of who would be king rested with the tribes (Pradhans) who represented the nobility. Monarchy was limited and administration was decentralized. Public opinion played a vital in Malla administration. Nepal in that time remained politically disunited and weak because of the internal conflict between the Malla kings of the valley.

Keywords: Medieval, Malla, King, Valley, Administration, Pradhan

Introduction

The history of the Early Malla Period, A. D. 1200 to 1382, depends on records scarcely more abundant than those of the transitional period. Thereafter, the records become increasingly copious. From the closing years of the fourteenth century on, there are many inscriptions on stone, copper, gilt copper, and wood (Slusser, 1982, p. 72). The period of Nepalese history between A. D. 1200 and 1769 is usually referred to by the name Malla. This name has been widely understood to refer to a new dynasty, probably outsiders, who acceded to power in the Kathmandu Valley after the demise of the Thakuri. But we cannot establish any probable external source for a people, or a dynasty, by this name. As applied in medieval Nepal, malla, like thahiiri, was a title of honor (Slusser, 1982, p. 72).

The medieval history of Nepal begins with the Malla dynasty. The first Malla king is Ari Malla Deva (A. D. 1207-1216). He was succeeded by Abhaya Malla, Jaya Deva Malla and Jayasimha and Ananta Malla (1279-1307). The Kanaat (or Karnataka) dynasty Chief Haisimha Deva was ruling over Simroungadh in 1324. The kingdom was attacked by Ghias-ud-din Tughlak, the Sultan of Delhi, and the independence of the Terain kingdom was destroyed (Shrestha, 1984, p. 5). With marital relation king Jayasthiti Malla could completely control over the valley.

So far, many research works in the field of the Lichchhavi and the Malla period have been done but especially in the areas of the administrative role of king under later medieval period has not been done. About the administration of Malla, the information can be obtained from the then inscriptions, hand written scriptures and Thyasaphu. There is a research gap in the information and the researcher really seeks to get the information relevant to the topic. A few books on the history of ancient Nepal have been written by scholars like Jagadish Chandra Regmi and Dilli Raman Regmi. There is a research gap between these writers' books and the researcher has actually tried to find. The researcher has elaborated in this paper the actual role of the king in in the area of administration under the later medieval period. Therefore, the related journals and periodicals which provide more information that is nearby or very close to the topic and desired finding have reviewed. The literature review has been done on the basis of the Chronological order.

Khanal (B.S. 2059) has provided about the ancient justice system and the judicial system under the Lichchhavi and Malla period. It has provided some information about the justice system under the Malla period. It has also provided details about the judicial system of the Malla period.

Regmi (2007), has described about a history of the Kingdoms from 1520 A. D. to 1768 A. D. This part or part 2 of the medieval history of Nepal which deals with the history of Nepal as it was then politically divided into two or more sovereign kingdoms for nearly 250 years until 1768 A. D. The book has described about the kingdom of Kathmandu. He has

listed the name of kings of Kathmandu. The book briefly describes about the judicial reforms made by King Pratap Malla. The author has mentioned in the book about the kingdom of Patan and the influence of the powerful regents. The author has also described about the kingdom of Bhadgaon and its kings. The information remained therein has benefited to develop the thesis to the researcher specially in the question of cultural, political, administrative and religious role of kings of the later Medieval period of the Kathmandu valley.

Yadav (B.S. 2072) has focused about the political position of the Kathmandu valley before the rise of King Jayasthiti Malla. He, in this book, too has mentioned about the reforms made by King Jayasthiti Malla. The book mentions about different Sambats once used in Nepal and also Lichchhavi kings and Malla kings of later Medieval period that to accomplish the task of the research support to the research.

Khanal (B. S. 2073) provides some information about the justice system of the Malla period. The source remained in the book has supported to find out the political, religious, cultural and administrative role of kings in Ancient and later Medieval period.

Methodology

The research is primarily based on doctrinal method of research. Under the doctrinal research methodology, the researcher has adopted the historical, comparative, descriptive and analytical approaches while analyzing the data.

This research design is a qualitative study. It is a cultural and historical study. Malla dynasty of Nepal had been existed in medieval period of Nepal. This dynasty in Nepal is said to be the historical dynasty of Nepal because the rule of the Malla is verified by archeological source. Therefore, for the successful completion of the study, the researcher has conducted observational methodology too. The researcher has collected these archeological sources as primary data and the information obtained through using different libraries museums has been treated as the secondary data. In later medieval period, the institution of monarchy was in political acme, legal and constitutionally supreme. The researcher has used the methodology being concentrated in collecting, studying and interpreting contemporary literatures, accounts of various Vamshavalis relevant to the topic.

The field survey or field study to observe the inscriptions related to this topic will be made. As per the nature of the research, the researcher has used mainly secondary data. The existence of full-fledged institution of monarchy in the Malla period has. The researcher has made explanatory study too because the researcher has explained the data on the basis of description. Different royal palaces of the Kathmandu valley like the palace of Hanumandhoka of Kathmandu, palace of Bhaktapur and the palace of Patan are the source of observation to the researcher because these palaces reflect the architectural, cultural and

administrative system of medieval period. The period was dominated by the powerful roles of kings.

The primary data which have been obtained through the first-hand experience have been recorded with utmost importance; the data have been collected by field visit and observation also. As per the necessity secondary have been collected and taken their support in the research. The secondary data are mainly used to complete this study. The form tools of research have been determined on the basis of subject, area, objectives, theoretical framework etc. This study has categorized the data on the basis of records, historical and analytical study as primary and secondary data. In this study, primary data have played a direct role for the conclusion of the major subject of the researcher. The data obtained in field study, physical evidences, inscriptions observation and interview fall under the primary sources or data. The commentaries, writings, literatures and references have been treated as the secondary data.

Textual Analysis

The textual analysis has been done with the available literatures to explain the tittle to draw conclusion. This study has been competed for its textual analysis with following sub-heads.

The General Background of Malla Administration. After the death of Yakshya Malla his 6 sons and a daughter's son Dharma Malla altogether seven had conducted the co-rule. As there was no provision of diving the power it was virtually an impossible to continue the co-rule of seven persons. The son of Yakshya Malla, Ratna Malla was so a clever and ambitious he was not very happy of only the co-rule and he upon suppressing the Vaishya Feudal declared himself the king of Kantipur in 1484.

While opposing by his elder brother Raya Malla with the joint efforts of his younger brothers he separated Lalitpur from the central rule. Thus, due to the internal strife of the sons there maintained the three states in the valley. His eldest son Raya Malla was king in Bhaktapur, Ratna Malla was in Kantipur, in Lalitpur other brothers became the king. Later the Mahapatra of Lalitpur Bishnu Singh declared himself a king of Lalitpur there was end of the descents of Yakshya Malla in Lalitpur. Thus, the main responsible person for the division of the Valley were the sons of Yakshya Malla. The fault of Yakshya Malla is in this extent that he did not make an effort to end the co-reign. Due to the mutual dissention, ambitions, mutual interests and lack of foresight of the sons of Yakshya Malla the valley was divided into the three parts and these kingdoms became so weak. Later the kings of these kingdoms upon fighting to each other due to jealousy, hostility, internal conflict started and that caused Prithivi Narayan Shah to conquer the valley. Thus due to task of the lack of the

foresight of the sons of Yakshya Malla was the major cause for the end of the Malla rule in Nepal (Yadav, B. S. 2072, pp. 37-38).

We now come to describe the administration, As is natural to feudal conditions the king constituted the most important factors in the scheme of things (Regmi, 2007, p. 432). The ascent and beginning of a certain dynastic rule owed mainly to the decision of the swords. But the conquerors from whichever part of the country they happened to enter behaved as natives of the soil identifying themselves completely with the ruled. (Regmi, 2017, p. 432). There was not much administrative responsibility. Even law and order was a matter of convenience rather than one of necessity and was preserved not owing to the inherent strength of the strength but by a tacit acquiescence of the docile people in the divinity of the rulers who always traced their descent from the Sun God and Rama of the epics. But court intrigue was rampant, and fortune of the principality and its people rose and fell as the tide of the sea but in the most unexpected and inexplicable manner (Regmi, 2007, p. 260).

Although the position of the kings used to the supreme, the task of justice administration of the entire kingdom was not possible from a single king. So, to hear the case fallen within the various provinces and villages, various officers would be appointed in such reason. If anyone is not satisfied of the decision made by the local and provincial officers, the aggrieved party could upon making the appeal could shout before the king. To the complaints filed before him, the king himself or by the judicial assembly having royal preceptor and the Brahmins the decision would be done. Such decision would be made remaining under the laws like the religious scriptures and royal charters (Khanal, B. S. 2059, p. 82). Such decision would be final and unquestionable.

After being originated the divine power of kings, Malla kings had been omnipotent. In this connection, the matter over the ownership over his subjects and state had been vested to the king was universally accepted. Under this concept, the kings before the Malla period would be addressed with the most honorific addresses like Prabhubahe and Birudha. Kings would be the supreme authority on the administrative, judicial and legitimate matters. Some of the Malla kings had taken the title of ' Nepaleshowor'. The king was the symbol of justice. The kings were the final authority of the judicial and legislative authority. As per the necessity, upon taking the consultation of the learned men, the king would enact the law and cause to enact the law. The Royal Charter would be regarded as the fundamental or paramount law (Khanal, 2007, p. 82).

As said earlier, kings would hold the responsibility of administration. The kings would be omnipotent in the kingdom. They were the ultimate source of justice. The kings would appoint persons in high posts of the kingdom. The kings would hold the highest posts of army (Upadhyaya, B. S. 2078, p. 260). The monarch was assisted in administration by

his near relatives and favorites from amongst the nobility and one of whom always played the role of chief minister. About the end of the 17th century on account of the influence of the Chaubisis, the Chief Minister came also to be Chautara. There were more persons functioning as Ministers who came as Pramana, the title signified investiture of authority for the affairs of states (Regmi, 2007, p. 432).

The monopoly of six Pradhans was another main theme for the fall of the Malla dynasty. After the death of King Yognarendra Malla, the political disorders came up everywhere in Patan. He did not leave any rightful heirs for throne. Therefore, his daughter Yogmati came in front taking her son. But unfortunately, her son also could not live for long. And legitimate sons of Yog Narendra Malla were enthroned during this time by taking the power she became all in all. Meanwhile, other political disorders had already been out of control in administration. Taking advantage for this situation the six Pradhans arose their head in rule. Actually, they recognized themselves as kingmakers by taking the whole ruling powers. During their power many kings were replaced and enthroned. The king had to rule as per their desire. They appointed the kings such Jayaprakash Malla, Ranajeet Malla, and Dalamardan Shah etc. to fulfill their needs. This system made deep enmity between two parties: King and Pradhans. When King Jayaprakash Malla tried to make revenge on Pradhans they made friendship with Gorkha and directly invited king Prithivi Narayan Shah for the rule in Patan. But diplomatic king Prithivi Narayan Shah sent his brother his brother Prithivi Narayan Shah sent his brother Dalamardan Shah, giving full authority. Till the last moment many kings were being changed by Pradhans arbitrarily. These activities could not collect the power and forces, which was very essential for the country (Sapkota, 2004, p. 118).

The Role of Chautara and Mahamatya in the Administration of Malla Kingdoms. The Chautaras (Premiers) remained powerful in the time of Malla rule, could be appointed as the Chief Minister by any of the kings. In the perspective of obeying the virtuous deeds and prestige image if shown or proved to be an appropriate the persons would be appointed in the post of Chautaras or such higher post equivalent to Premiers as per the wishes of the king. In spite of saying so, in the post of Chautara generally the brothers or royal collaterals would be appointed. While certifying the appointment of the post of Chautara, in a huge ceremony the king upon giving the Tika or Tilak at the forehead as a token of best wishes in his head the turban would be worn. Only upon complying with this procedure, the person would hold the post of the Chautara lawfully (Khanal, 2017, p. 83).

When the king was a minor, all rights possessed by the king would be done by the Chautara (Regmi, 2017, p. 83). In such situation, the Chautara seems to have been competent to perform the judicial functions and duties of the king. In that situation, it would have been the duty of the Chautara to carry out judicial functions upon taking approval of the king. Primarily, from the administrative viewpoint, although the post of Chautara would have been arranged, he would have been directly related with the judicial administration. We do

not find any clear information about the power of the Chautara for hearing the cases (Khanal, 2017, p. 83).

To assist the king in the task of administration, there would be the ministers and the chief ministers. In some of the situation, the Chautara would be appointed as the Chief Minister (Mahamatya). Under the Mahamatya, there would be ministers and Praman. The Mahamatya would be the member of the State Council. In the fourteenth century, as one of the most important posts of the ruling system of the Malla period, the post of Mahat was arranged. For the first time in the post authority of Mahat was appointed by Jayadharma Malla. This post was just below the king. The Mahat would work as the Chief Minister. In this perspective, it is realized that the word to be called in Sanskrit word Mahamantri or Mahamatya eventually became Mahat and used in the parallel way.

Thus during the Malla administration, Chautara remained a very powerful person who would conduct the affairs of state in the name of the king. If the king was an infant he exercised real powers. Otherwise, he was just the chief executive carrying out the king's orders. The Chautara was not only the head of the civil administration, but he was to lead the armed force if circumstances required so (Regmi, 2007, p. 434).

Amatya, Praman and Gulmi. The Malla kings, for the support of the operation of the administration would organize a council of ministers having remained noblemen or courtiers. In the reference to giving the members of the council of the ministers by had given various naming by the various kings where it is available with that tasks they would be addressed. They would also be appointed by the procedure like the Chautara or Mahat. The members of the council of ministers would be called Praman whereas in this context as a member of the council of ministers eight Praman would be appointed (Khanal, 2017, p. 84). Only the powers delegated by the kings, they would exercise. The post of Amatya addressed in the beginning period of the Malla period on the basis of being as a dispenser of justice whereas they would be directly or indirectly deemed to have been relevant with justice administration.

Mahasamanta and Samanta. In the time of the Malla period, there would be two types of feudatories, chief feudatory and feudatory. Some were the feudatories who had taken control over some region or part of the geography of the country in the course of division of the state and feudatories appointed by the king to operate the administration remaining under the central government. Some were the feudatories to run the autonomous rule in the disintegrated states who had appeared as so powerful within their own autonomous region. They had been remained under the control of the central rule.

Although the feudatories appointed by the kings used to be the head of their regions would obey the direction of the center. In the perspective of the present federal government, they remained as the head of federal units would generally exercise all administrative power de facto way under their jurisdiction. In other sense, the feudatories appointed by the kings

would be the head of the provincial administrator. They had the duty to act in accordance with central instruction (Khanal, B.S. 2073, p. 86).

Patra and Mahapatra. In the time of the Malla Rule, as some of the administrative unit, we find that there would be appointed the authority of post like Patra, Maha Patra and Pradhan Patra. They would appear as the powerful administrator of then Nepal. In the beginning time they had got appointment as one of the governors of the any of the geographical region. Afterwards, such appointments were made as a head of the administrative unit remained under the subordination of the Malla rule. These persons were appointed because they had a wide influence and dignity in the local group of people. Somewhere they had used their sovereign power in their administrative units (Khanal, 2017, p. 87).

In the time of king of Patan King Jyotir Malla, the Maha Patras seemed to have appeared extremely powerful who had usurped the power of the kings also. The entire protection of the kingdoms of Lalitpur was done by them. The Maha Matra of Lalitpur were appointed from among the the feudatories (Sapta Kutumba), which was given leadership from the three persons who would run the state being like that of the king. Jayasthitir Malla too had acknowledged the direct rule of them. While attacking to Bhadgaon under the leadership of the Patras of Patan, the king of Bhadgaon upon attacking them had killed 53 Patras (Petech, 1958, p. 175) and under this perspective the Patra and Mahapatra of there were extremely powerful.

The Maha Patras was like that of the level of the ministers. Like that of the feudatories, they were also under the subordination of the central government. The Patras, Maha Patras had been authorized to hear the case of their jurisdiction. According to the Italian historian Luciano Petech these Maha Patra had been appointed as the judicial officers (Petech, 1958, p. 490). Some of the Malla Kings would have given the naming of the Maha Patra as the head of the Maha Patra.

There was the Council of Ministers as one of most important institutions of Malla regime. The number of the council of ministers would be generally four to five. From among the Pradhans would be appointed as the member of the council of ministers. After the death of King Yog Narendra Malla of Patan in B.S 1762, the six Pradhan became powerful. Sometimes these Chautara would even dismiss one king and put to the throne the next king. This existed till the time when King Prithivi Narayan Shah conquered Patan kingdom on Ashwin 24, 1825 B.S. There was district administration too. In pre-medieval time in the time of till the reign of king Yakshya Malla, Nepal was divided into many districts. The main center of the kingdom was Bhaktapur. The Malla kings would operate administration from Bhaktapur. The Samanta or feudatories would operate the administration places like Kantipur, Lalitpur, Pharping, Dolakha and Nuwakot. Such Samantas were called Maha Patra too (Upadhyaya, B. S. 2078, p. 261).

Discussion and Result

Since the very dawn of the civilization, Nepal had maintained monarchical system of governance. King had the supreme position in the governance. In spite of having so, for the operation of the day to administration, the king had to take counselling, assistance and advices of courtiers. In the time of Lichchhavi, the kingdom of Nepal was undivided but coming in time of the Malla, the kingdom of Nepal disintegrated after the demise of King Yakshya Malla.

The Malla period or Mallas were believed to be descendants of early civilization. Malla Means Wrestler (fighter man). They came into power through fighting. After the fall of Lichchhavi rule the Deva Dynasty and the Malla Dynasty ruled turn by turn. Ari Malla only after the rise of Jayasthiti Malla the Malla dynasty ruled continues in Nepal. This period is also called medieval period. After the Lichchhavi Period as just said the first Malla King Ari Malla established his reign in Kathmandu in 1140. So far as Malla period was started since 1140 to 1768 A. D. At this time, Malla kings continued the tradition established by Lichchhavi. Among later medieval period Malla Kings, Jayasthiti Malla's code was known as Manab Nyayashastra has been thought to be one of most important landmarks in the history of Nepalese Justice and Law. It was a codified law.

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The Malla kings had still all omnipotent position in judicial, political, cultural and administration of the said period. Among the Malla kings, the status of kings Jayasthiti Malla, Mahendra Malla, Siddinarsingh Malla, Pratap Malla, Bhupatindra Malla and Jayaprakash Malla was specially mentioned with a great illustration. In the nobles or courtiers of Patan who were powerful and virtually a kings' maker. The feudal had divided the kingdoms into the names of different administrative units, Bhungati, Bisaya and Gram. The king in center would appoint Patra, Mahapatra and Pradhan. In the time of King Ptatap Malla many administrative reforms were made. His administrative mechanism was simple, strong and

pure. So, in the kingdom of Kantipur so many creative works had been accomplished. The major object of the Malla administration was to do welfare acts in favor of subjects. In Nepal, no monarchy exists and the republican constitutional set up is working in Nepal. The system of governance has been changed and the administrative system too has been working in line with the federal republican set up. The administrative system of latter Malla period has special place in history. It should be widely and thoroughly researched that help to make a brief survey of administrative history of Nepal.

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