

# An Introduction of Gorkha Museum: A Collection of Ancient Treasure

Mr. Ram Sharan Baniya  
Lecturer

Tribhuvan Universtiy, Gorkha Campus, Gorkha  
ramsharan.baniya@gc.tu.edu.np

Artical History

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## Abstract

This article gives a detailed introduction to Gorkha Museum. It has been developed based on the Museum's monumental and historical treasures stored and exhibited. The narratives from the Chief and the staff of Gorkha Museum helped the author give the Museum's details. Secondary sources of information have been utilized to develop this write-up. The main aim of this article is to shed light on Gorkha Museum. The readers can get detailed information on the treasures exhibited at the Museum. Gorkha Museum has a collection of historical documents, colophons, oil portraits, traditional musical instruments, weapons, Chaityas, utensils and other sources immensely valuable for providing information and knowledge required in the field of politics, religion, culture, art, literature and architecture of Gorkha from ancient to the modern. Moreover, documents exhibited at the Museum reflect both internal and foreign relations during the Shah rulers (from Dravya Shah to Prithvi Narayan Shah). The Museum, thus, is worth visiting for research scholars, academics and politicians too for enhancing their knowledge of the then Gorkha as a whole.

**Keywords :** Gorkha Museum, Treasure, Traditional Weapons, Shah Dynesty

## Introduction

Gorkha, the symbol of unity among Nepalese, has a long and glorious history within the country and abroad. For example, this is the place from where the movement of unification was launched, which eventually resulted in the completion of unifying more than 50 tiny states into a big nation. Before the unification of a petty state itself, Gorkha is the very foundation of modern Nepal.

Gorkha town, situated in the west of River Budhigandaki, is fifty-two miles (26 kosa) far from Hunuman Dhoka, the then palace of Kantipur. The proper Gorkha town is located on the banks of two rivers: Marsyandi and Budhigandaki (Adhikari, 2017).

The Gorkha Palace, artistically constructed by Ram Shah, stands between two old sione-walled forts known as Tallo Kota (down fort) and Upallo Kota (upper fort). These forts (Kotas) are said to have belonged to Khadka and Ghale Chiefs, the predecessors of Dravya Shah (Panta, 2041). The local voices also maintain the same version. Just at the foot of the palace, there was a market known as Hathiya Bazar, which is now almost in ruins, and the then main market has been shifted downwards. The then market seems to have shifted from Hathiya to downwards after the Gorkha rulers settled in Kathmandu after its conquest. Around the old site of the town, one can still see some remnants of buildings belonging to the then courtiers known as Tharghar that comprising Pandey, Panth, Arjyal, and Khas (Bohara) Magar, Khanal (Sharma, 2071).

The main aim of this article is to shed light on Gorkha Museum. Having felt it most essential to conserve and protect the Gorkha Durbar Kshetra, the government developed a Master Plan. It launched a Gorkha Palace Area Conservation Project under the financial support of ADB in 2041/42 B.S (Adhikari, 2076). This project renovated the historical palaces, i.e., Upallo Durbar (Upper Palace) and Tallo Durbar (Lower Palace). It also occupied some land around the Tallo Durbar Kshetra and developed it into a park. Tallo Durbar (lower palace) was, as per the master plan, converted into a historical museum in the name of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Accordingly, the project collected objects (materials) important from the historical, cultural and archival points of view and displayed (exhibited) them within the palace. The reality to mention here is that even after completing the collection of materials before 2064 B.S., the Museum could not be inaugurated till 2065 Jetha 19 B.S (Lamichhane, 2074).

The Museum, eventually, got an opportunity to be inaugurated at the hand of Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Chairman of Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), on 19/02/2065 B.S. Thus, with the political change brought about by the historic election of the Constituent Assembly and thereby the abolition of the monarchical system in Nepal, the Prithvi Museum also got its name converted into Gorkha Museum.

### **Description of the Treasures inside the Museum**

The documents of the Museum start with a brief introduction of Gorkha Durbar (Tallo Durbar). Having gone through the available written documents, it is found that King Rajendra Bir Bikram Shah constructed the Tallo Durbar in 1896 B.S. This square palace stands as one of the excellent models or crafts of woodwork constructed during the reign of Shah Dynasty; carved with various Gods and Goddesses, auspicious swastika, heron and doorkeeper depicted in the windows, doors and struts supporting the roof of the palace.

The three staired palaces have a big courtyard in the middle except for the southern portion, which is four staired consisting of the main entrance and is built with a roof-top. The palace is 30 x 30 m<sup>2</sup> in the area and consists of 35 big and small rooms, 105 windows, 62 doors, and five halls, of which four are inside and the rest outside the building.

Classified into tenth sections, the Museum introduces the Gallery of Gorkha State Section, which deals with a brief history of Gorkha before the establishment of Shah Dynasty. The written document placed in the Museum reveals that Gorkha was under the Lichhavi Rule; for some time, it belonged to Khasa Malla Rule, and after the division of Khasa Kingdom it remained under Doti Kingdom for some time. With time, it also seems to have been under Yakshya Malla Mukunda Sen also seems to have been able for some time to take Gorkha under his control. The then local rulers also had established their rule over Gorkha before Dravya Shah occupied it in 1559 (1616 B.S.).

Another written document throws light on the fact that Gorkhali people were not satisfied with the local rulers. This was the reason that they wanted a capable person to be their ruler. On the other hand, Dravya Shah, an ambitious person, was seeking an opportunity to occupy a certain position for himself. He eventually proved himself to be a lucky ruler in the sense that the people of Gorkha, with the help of Ganesh Pandey and Narayan Aryal, accepted him as the king of Gorkha. Dravya Shah had actually attacked Ligligkot and eventually had defeated the local ruler. Then he established the Shah rule in Gorkha in 1559 (1616 B.S.)

The same section acquaints us with a brief history of Shah Dynasty dealing with Dravya Shah to Pratap Singh Shah, the eldest son of Prithvi Narayan Shah.

The same section also gives the genealogy of the Shah Dynasty from Dravya Shah to Prithvi Narayan Shah. The same section of the Museum acquaints the visitors and research scholars with the expansion of Gorkha up to Chepe river in the west and Budhigandaki in the east along with the occupation of Siranchowk and Ajirgarh during the reign of Dravya Shah (1616-1627 B.S.). The section further states about 6 Thars, i.e. Pandey, Panth, Aryal, Khanal, Rana and Bohara, mentioning the vital role of Ganesh Pandey and Narayan Aryal to occupy Gorkha and its expansion in favour of Dravya Shah.

Purna Shah, who was enthroned after Dravya Shah in 1627 B.S., also seems to have expanded Gorkha up to Trishuli, annexing the areas of Salyan, Khari, Maidi and Dhading into Gorkha. The written document kept in this section states that Chhatra Shah, the then King of Gorkha after Purna Shah, also had a keen desire to occupy Kathmandu Valley. Still, his dream could not be materialized because of his untimely demise (Adhikari, 2047).

The same section of the Museum acquaints us with the heroic and reformist deeds of Ram Shah, the grandson of Dravya Shah. Ram Shah could establish himself as an effective and constructive ruler. His system of law and order in the country proved to be much effective and popular among the common people. Having realized that land-lords and moneylenders much exploited the common people, Ram Shah fixed the rate of interest, i.e. 10% in cash and 20% in kind. The king also maintained the system of not charging the interest more than double the loan given to the customers.

He issued a clear order to the moneylenders to carry out the royal order and warned them to be punished in case anyone was found to have denied this order. Ram Shah, for the economic prosperity of Gorkha, had a cordial relationship with Patan (Kathmandu) and invited businessmen to Gorkha. Up to this time, there was no uniformity of weight and measurement. Ram Shah, therefore, introduced a system of Mana, Pathi, Dhak, Taraju, etc. which eventually protected the common people from being exploited. In other words, having fixed a uniformity in weight and measurement, Ram Shah brought relief to all the people in his kingdom.

Ram Shah seems to have been much aware of the environment, which is clearly reflected in his strong order prohibiting the unwise cutting of trees near the street and the destruction of the jungle. Ram Shah made Pokharithok a prosperous place, having constructed many artistic temples around it. Ram Shah, on the whole, having a well-organized administration, economy and society, earned a good name. Later on, reminding his rule and administration, a famous proverb was made: "If justice is denied, then better go to Gorkha (Khanal, 2061).

This section of the Museum has exhibited two Nagaras, one of which has an inscription of Chhatra Shah. A brief description of Dambar Shah can be viewed in the same section. There, it is found that one room of Gorkha Durbar was built by Dambar Shah who is still known as Dambar Kotha. He also seems to have made a special attempt to conserve Bana-Jungle (Forest).

King Krishna Shah, the then king of Gorkha after Dambar Shah, is mentioned as a peace-loving personality (ruler). Rudra Shah is stated to have protected Gorkha from the attack of Lamjung. Also, he is mentioned to have constructed Sindhi (staircase) towards Hanuman

## Bhanjyang Gorkha.

The document exhibited in this section states that Prithvi Pati Shah became the king of Gorkha after the death of Rudra Shah in 1734 B/S. His reign was longer than those of other kings of Gorkha. His life also seems to have been spent in the struggle, for he had to face much hardship to protect Gorkha from the attack of Lamjung. Prithvi Pati Shah is mentioned to have visited Kathmandu Valley in 1735 and 1742 B.S. He had maintained a cordial relationship with the kings of the valley. He erected his own statue in front of Rameshwor temple at Pokharithok Gorkha in 1737 B.S. An inscription has been engraved on the middle part of a long stone pillar Heroused the martial spirit of the people and extended his patronage to the sphere of art, architecture, sculpture and literature.

This section exhibits an inscription of Chadrarup Shah inscribed during the time of Prithvi Pati Shah.

The same section of the Museum has exhibited a red seal (Lalmohar) of Prithvi Pati- Shah issued in the name of Byas Upadhyaya in 1772 B.S. . A stone inscription of Queen Ratnawati inscribed in 1736 B.S. also is placed in this section of the Museum. The inscription clearly mentions that Ratnawati, wife of Pradhuma Sen and granddaughter of Ram Shah, had inscribed this inscription, having constructed a Rest House with a drinking water facility and donated it to please Lord Narayan.

The second section of the Museum starts with the oil painting Gallery of Gorkha Kings, which are as follows.

1. King Dravya Shah attacked Ligligkot.
2. King Purna Shah exchanged the dead of the treaty with the representative of Tibet, a neighbouring state, to establish cordial and bilateral relations.
3. King Chhatra Shah, along with Big Kettle-drum marched during the Victory Campaign.
4. King Ram Shah, introduced all types of measurement scales and units and the villagers at Nyaya Chautara (platform of justice).
5. King Dambar Shah led the battle riding on the elephant.
6. Krishna Shah with his queens.
7. Inspection of the army from King Rudra Shah.
8. King Prithvi Pati Shah erecting his own statue on the pillar.
9. King Bhupatindra Malla of Bhaktapur receives Crown Prince Birbhadra Shah in front of his palace.
10. King Narabhupal Shah shows Nuwakot to his courtiers.
11. King Prithvi Narayan Shah, showed the valley of Kathmandu to his courtiers.

The third section of the Museum consists of the Horoscope Gallery. This Gallery exhibits the 52 hands long horoscope of Prithvi Narayan Shah. It is kept inside the glass.

The second last of this section is the exhibition of a brief description of Prithvi Narayan Shah's rule and his victory. This document deals with the date of birth of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nuwakot victory, victory over Kathmandu, death of Kalu Pandey on the first attack of Kirtipur, loss of an eye of Surpratap Shah, younger brother of Prithvi Narayan Shah, and victory over Makawanpur, Kathmandu, Patan, Bhadgaon, Chaudandi and Vijayapur during the 32 years of the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah including the Divyopadesh and death of Prithvi Narayan Shah on 1 Magh 1831 B.S. at Nuwakot.

The fourth section of the Museum exhibits the weapons. This section starts with a written

document that deals with a short briefing (history) of Kazi Kalu Pandey. Kazi Kalu Pandey, son of Kazi Bhimraj, is mentioned to have assisted Gorkha Durbar as a Bhardar since P.N. Shah was the Crown Prince. The document mentions Kazi Kalu Pandey's role in having a friendship relation with Ripumardan Shah, the king of Lamjung, in 1798-99 B.S. And also, this document mentions the role played by him as a chief advisor of Queen Chandra Pravawoti during P.N. Shah's visit to Vanaras. The document also throws light on the diplomatic vision and its achievement for the country, conferring the award 'Kazi' on Kalu Pandey and on the role of Kalu Pandey in the victory of Nuwakot, Belkot Naldum, Tadi, Siranchowk, etc., and this document ends mentioning the demise of Kalu Pandey. This section has also exhibited a metal statue of Kalu Pandey.

The fifth section of the Museum exhibits Traditional Nepalese Weapons. A written document deals with weapons along with their short briefing. Traditional Nepali weapons have earned a worldwide prestige for bravery, courage and security. These weapons have become a token of Nepali culture and are thus revered and worshipped especially in the biggest Nepali festival of Dashain.

**Khukuri:** A type of curved knife originally used by Gorkhas. The end of its shaft is shaped like a cow's hoof. The Khukuris are made of quality iron. There are other small weapons in its sheath, which are called "Karda" (small open knife) and "Chakmak" (flintstone). Khukuri symbolizes bravery in the Royal Nepal Army.

**Khunda (Scimitar):** A flat-end and a bit curved sword with one sharp edge. It is made of iron and is heavier than a Khukuri. Its haft is usually made of iron but is trapped with leather at times. This weapon is especially used for chopping off heads.

**Dhal:** A piece of armour (usually metal or rhino's leather) formerly carried on the arm to protect the body during combat.

**Tarwar:** Weapon with a long thin metal blade with a protected handle.

**Khadga:** It's a type of scimitar but is double-edged and straight. It is regarded as an emblem of the Hindu Goddess and a royal insignia.

**Katari (dagger):** It is a short pointed, both-edged knife with gems usually embedded in its hilt. It is used as a secret weapon and is usually kept hidden in the waist.

**This section also exhibits the personal weapons of Prithvi Narayan Shah. They are as follows:**

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Blade Gun      | 2. Katuwa Pestol |
| 3. Bharuwa Banduk | 4. Dhal          |
| 5. Khunda         | 6. Khukuri       |
| 7. Tarwar         | 8. Chhuri        |
| 9. Omcosy         | 10. Chuppi       |
| 11. Katari        | 12. Bhala.       |

Moreover, the personal weapons, this section has also exhibited the Nishans such as:

- Sri Srinathko Nishan (Nishan of sri sri nath)
- Sri Kalibaksa Ko Nishan (Nishan of Srikalibaksa)
- Sri Barda Bahadurko Nishan (Nishan of Sri barda Bahadur)

- Sri Sabujko Nishan (Nishan of Sri Sabuj)
- Sri Purano Gorakhko Nishan (Nishan of Purano Gorkha)
- The royal throne at Gorkha Palace (replica)

Besides, the Museum has incorporated other valuable information related to the attempts to extend the relations of the Gorkha state with the other conditions and the orders, memorandum and policies of the time. The followings are the notable records seen over there:

Letter to Gindun Pambar Lama from King Prithvi Narayan Shah.

Memorandum of understanding between King Prithvi Narayan Shah with (Bhotiya) Tibetan official.

Memorandum of understanding between King Prithvi Narayan Shah and King Jaya Prakash Malla of Kantipur.

Letter of Royal order of emblem to Parashuram Thapa from King Prithvi Narayan Shah.

The sixth section of Gorkha Museum exhibits colophone and seal Gallery. The colophons deal with Ram Shah, Dambar Shah, Narabhupal Shah and Prithvi Narayan Shah, shedding light on various aspects of their rule.

The seventh section of the Museum is named Religious Gallery. This gallery section consists of seven staves Nuwakot Palace constructed during the reign of P.N. Shah.

Pathi	Silver coins of P.N. Shah.
Postal stamp of king Ram Shah	Postal stamp of king P.N. Shah
Salyan Kot	Manakamana temple
Gorakhkali temple	Gorakhnath temple
Kathmandu valley	Hanumandhoka palace kshetra
Daha Chowk	Lalitpur Durbar Kshetra
Kirtipur	Bhaktapur Durbar Kshetra

The eighth Section of the museum is fixed for traditional utensil gallery which consists of:

Tamako Rocha	Pathi	Charmane
Charmane	Mano	Panch muthi
Chauthai	Mana (Chule)	Arati
Mayur Batti	Teeka Dani	Teldani (oil pot)
Bukuwadani	Masidani (ink pot)	Rocha

The ninth section of the Museum is fixed for Chaitya, Architectural Gallery. This Gallery exhibits the:

- Lichchavi Chaitya -Panghare, Salyantar
- Lichchhavi Chaitya - Kathmandu valley
- Lichchhavi Chaitya - Argauta-Salyantar
- Lichchhavi Chaitya - Taribesi Salyantar

The tenth section of the Museum is fixed for Traditional Musical Instruments Gallery,

which exhibits:

1. Dholaki 2. Narsinga 3. Sanahi 4. Bijuli baja 5. Jhyali 6. Karnal baja 7. Bheri 8. Sikar 9. Tyamko 10. Damaha

## Conclusion

The Museum represents the history of Gorkha and its glorious history of modern Nepal. As it has a noteworthy collection of materials that shed light on history, art and architecture, culture, society, weapons and documents related to the establishment of Shah rule in Gorkha and its achievements. Having gone through the documents exhibited in the Museum, it is clear that the expansion of Gorkha seems to have been started since the time of Dravya Shah, the founder of Shah's rule in Gorkha that continued until the completion of the unification of Nepal.

Gorkha itself has been the symbol of unity among the Nepalese. P.N. Shah has made a great contribution to shaping a greater Nepal. Modern Nepal is the sole product of the mental vision and dedication of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Great King of Nepal. So Prithvi Narayan Shah will remain immortal in Nepalese soil till the age it keeps its own history. If his contribution is ignored, that will not do justice to him. Having studied some of the written documents exhibited at the Museum, one can easily dig out that the language used by the Shah rulers is twisted here and there. It could have remained as it was. This change of language destroys the history of the language itself. As a historian, I strongly suggest the authority concerned and the state itself to maintain the original language of the time of Shah rulers. Everything of the past should be preserved in its original form, reflecting the then language, history, society, polity, culture, and civilization.

If Gorkha Museum is maintained well, it attracts native and foreign visitors. It will remain a great historical heritage of Nepal.

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