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## **Mana Deva I: The First Recorded Unifier of Nepal**

**Kulmandan Subedi\***

### **Abstract**

This paper gives an insight into the efforts of King Mana Deva I as the first recorded Unifier of Nepal. The objective of this paper is to highlight various dimensions of the unification efforts of Mana Deva I. The writer has attempted to put forward the evidence and findings of historians and archeologists who have come to the common understanding that Mana Deva I was the first recorded unifier of ancient Nepal. Analytical approach has been used for the research of his life, leadership, and achievements. Studies of the inscriptions, important documents, books, journals, and articles have been made relating to Mana Deva. He provided the first authentic history of Nepal extending from Brahmaputra in the east to Kashmir in the west. When Mana Deva I was only 12 years old, his father Dharma Deva died. Instead of burning herself with her dead husband's corpse as Sati, Mana Deva's mother, Rajyawati, assisted her son in his reign. Mana Deva, with the assistance of his mother and maternal uncle, began a military unification effort both in the east and west. The success of the military unification effort provided an opportunity for the king to unify the nation in other aspects as well. Mananka- the coin introduced by the king led to economic unification; Managriha- his royal palace provided a center for administrative unification; and his religious synergetic activities led to cultural unification. The leadership of Mana Deva I greatly impacted and influenced the later Lichhavi kings and hence, Lichhavi's rule is considered the golden period of ancient Nepali history.

**Keywords:** Manuscripts, unification, inscription, Lichhavi

### **Introduction**

There may be some delusion amongst many readers and scholars about whether the history of unified Nepal is merely a few centuries old. They may start counting the history from the latest unification by Prithivi Narayan Shah. Accounts of western writers like Kirkpatrick and Hamilton had the least idea of the long history of this state. However, it is worth noting that the history of Nepal is not merely a few centuries old. This land of warriors and saints existed since the time unknown. Ancient scripts like Himavat Khanda, Manasa Khanda, and Kedar Khanda of Skanda Purana which were written at least circa 5000 years B.C.E describe

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\* Lieutenant Colonel, Nepali Army  
Email ID : kulmandan@mail.com

Nepal to be extended from Sikkim (Shatha Desh) to Mallapuri (bordering Kashmir) in the west. Mahabharata states the glory of Nepal and The Kirata King Yalambar or Barbarika who witnessed the whole war Mahabharata of Mahabharata at Kurukshetra (Swamy, 2001, p. 155). According to Gopal Raja Bamshawali, Gopals, a cowherder clan, were the first rulers of this land. Gopals were followed by Mahispalas, a buffalo herder clan. They were mainly settled near and around the Matatirtha and the Thankot area. Kirats, a martial tribe, thereafter, ruled this land (Vajracharya et. al, 1985). However, the recorded history of Nepal is not available in the case of Gopals, Mahishpalas and Kiratas. Hence, there lack of authentic historical written records to prove the rule of the above-mentioned dynasties. Bamshawalis had stated about the rule of Lichhavi rule and the glory of Lichhavi kings who ruled Nepal after Kirats, but no authentic evidence had been found. As the archeologists went on searching the oldest reign to rule and unify Nepal, there, they found an inscription on the western gate of Changunarayan temple. A long inscription in Bramhi inscribed on a long cylindrical stone slab of 10 ft high provided a new insight into the history of Nepal and its first unifier. Other inscriptions and Bhasa Bamshawalis followed to highlight the personality and performance of this ruler. This leader was none other than King Mana Deva I of Lichhavi dynasty. The inscriptions and coins found by archeological studies, hence, shed light on this long-lost emperor, King Mana Deva I. King Mana Deva I, indeed was a glorious leader who unified this nation at least 1600 years back. Born in 404 C.E and died in 505 C.E, King Mana Deva I made the first concrete remarks for the Nepal and Nepalese history. So far, till today, 20 inscriptions during Mana Deva's reign have been found. These inscriptions begin within 26 years of his reign. After his victory on both the Eastern and Western fronts, he donated a sculpture of Garuda and his inscription beside Changunarayan temple. His inscription of Changu Narayan Temple dated 464 C.E. is the earliest inscription from not only the Licchavi period but also from the ancient period of Nepal. However, the earliest translation was held only in 1880 by an Indian archeologist from Gujrat, Bhagwan Lal Indrajai in 1880 and the remaining portion by Sylvain Levi of France in 1899 with the permission of Rana Prime Minister Bhim Sumsher. The evidence and findings of historians and archeologists who have come to the common understanding that Mana Deva I was the first recorded unifier of ancient Nepal is put forward. This paper has focused on bringing light on various dimensions of the unification efforts of Mana Deva I.

### **Literature Review**

A thorough study of historical writings on Nepalese History has been undergone while preparing this paper. Kirkpatrick (1811) in his book 'An Account of Kingdom of Nepal' does not mention any facts of Mana Deva. Hamilton (1971), too had not mentioned of the Lichhavi period and the inscriptions in his book with the same title, 'An Account of Kingdom of Nepal'. Only when Bhagwan Lal of India and Levi Sylvain of France studied the manuscripts of Changu Narayan and other inscriptions, the historical facts of Nepalese history begin to be revealed. Before Bhagwan Lal, the historical writings by foreign writers were more of a hearsay rather than any study of historical evidence.

The contribution of Nepalese writers began with the work of Baburam Acharya. He, in his works, demonstrated his deep study of the role of Mana Deva and Lichhavi period. The collection of Babu Ram Acharya's works was undertaken by Naya Raj Panta among which some of them are published in Journal- *Purnima*. Rajvanshi, M.S has commented on Lichhavi

Sambat in many articles published by the Department of Archeology. Vajracharya, D (1973) in his book ‘ Lichhavi Kalka Abhilekh’ gives a thorough translation and interpretation of the inscriptions which enables the readers to understand the broader perspective of the political, cultural, and other aspects when the inscriptions were written. It helps the reader to analyze other evidences with the inscriptions. Mana Griha is still to be discovered and there are very few archeologists who can go through a firsthand study of the available inscriptions.

### **Methodology**

Analytical approach has been used for undergoing the research of the life of King Mana Deva I, his leadership, and achievements. Study of the inscriptions, important documents, books, journals, and articles have been made relating to Mana Deva I to prepare this paper. It is attempted to study the inscriptions firsthand with the assistance of experts and field visits of archaeological sites. Interviews of historians, cultural experts, and locals have been undertaken for analysis of the inscriptions.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

This section is focused on the discussion and analysis of four basic aspects of Mana Deva I: his biography, his unification efforts, and his leadership qualities. Firstly, a brief discussion of the biography of Mana Deva I is undertaken in this section. Then, a concise study of the outer world during the reign of Mana Deva is undertaken to get a broader view of the contemporary world. The main effort of this section is on his unification efforts including economic, social, military, cultural, and religious unification efforts. Military unification is highlighted with an analysis of his military organization, tactics, and the military campaign. Finally, his leadership qualities are analyzed and highlighted based on his biography and unification efforts.

### **Brief Biography of Mana Deva I**

According to the available sources, Lichhavis had entered Nepal after the Kiratas. Kiratas had feuds amongst each other which led to civil war. People were annoyed by the Kirata rulers and they supported the new invaders, the Lichchavis. According to Whelpton (2015), the Lichchavis were of Solar Lineage and advent from the east to Nepal. They had advanced to Nepal from Vaishali in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. Similarities in pottery found in Dumakhil and Vaishali suggest a link between them. Jaidev I was the first ruler of the dynasty and was valiant in the war, who conquered 12 kings (unknown). The grandfather of Mana Deva, Brisha Deva, was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and Buddha. He was popular among his subjects. Shanker Deva succeeded him and he was followed by Dharma Deva, father of Mana Deva I. According to Gopalraj Vamsavali, Mana Deva I was adopted (*pratipalita*) by King Dharma Deva. The Mandev's father died when he (Mana Deva I) was young and he was crowned as the king in his early age. His mother Rajyabati, chose to assist her son in ruling the kingdom upon her husband's death rather than going *Sati*.

Mana Deva, I was a proficient, wise, and brave king. He was ravenous for art and architecture, an educationist, and a profound administrator. 20 inscriptions from 41 years of his rule available so far suggest his efficiency (Nepal, 1983). The inscription at Changunarayan temple, the Mananka copper coins, the submerging of Santhas of the east, the conquest of Mallapuri with the help of his maternal uncle, and the literature are sufficient to evaluate Mana Deva I. He had four queens Bhogini, Ksema Sundari, Bijaya Swamini, and Gunavati. He was an

ardent worshipper of Lord Vishnu, Shakti, a devotee of Lord Shiva and Lord Buddha. Bhogini had a special place in King Mana Deva's heart. Her name was inscribed in the Mananka coins minted by the King. Before the discovery of Suryaghat Inscriptions, it was presumed that Bhogini was the other name of goddess Shakti. However, the Suryaghat inscription clarified the doubt stating Bhogini as the Virgin Queen of Mana Deva I. Inscriptions of Palanchowk state that Queen Bijaya Swamini, the last queen had built the temple (Nepal, 1998, p. 37).

The first queen, Bhogini, went Sati in the death of her husband in 505 C.E. Mana Deva I was succeeded by his son Mahideva, addressed as Bhattaraka- Maharaja. His son Basant Deva also was addressed as Parmdaivata bappabhatraka Maharaja Dhiraja Shree Padanudhyata. He was succeeded by Manu Deva, Bamana Deva, Rama Deva, Gana Deva, Ganga Deva, Shiva Deva, Udaya Deva, Gunakama Deva, Amar Deva and Mana Deva II. A total of 11 kings of his lineage ruled Nepal (Vajracharya, 1973, p. 19).

### **World Outside during Reign of Mana Deva I**

- a. **In the East.** In China, the Northern and Southern Dynasties lasted from 420- 589 C.E. It was a period of numerous civil wars but also a period of art, culture, and the spread of Buddhism and Taoism (Gascoigne, 2003, p. 55-85).
- b. **In the West:** In Rome, in 476 C.E, Romulus Augustulus was deposed by Odoacer which led to the fall of Rome in the West. (Jones et al, 1980, p. 950). In South America, Mayans established the city of Chichen in Mexico around 470 C.E.
- c. **In the North:** Tibet during the 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. had no significant state organization formed. The petty states were not unified until the rise of Schrong Cheng Gompo. Palas of Bengal had penetrated and ruled as petty princes in principalities.
- d. **In the South:** During the 5<sup>th</sup> Century C.E, the Gupta Dynasty in India was towards its downfall. Such a crumble of state must have prevented any attacks on Lichhavi Kings from the South and hence provided a ripe situation for Mana Deva I for his unification. The states in the west- Mallapuri was at its weakest. Guptas were ruling Northern India and some parts of Middle India. Kumara Gupta ruled India from 415-455 C.E. During his last years, his son Skanda Gupta fought against Huns and repelled Hun attacks around 455 C.E (Sharma, 1989, p.176). He was victorious against the Huns but his reign got weaker than ever before with drained resources. He died in 467 and was succeeded by his brother Puru Gupta. Puru Gupta was weaker than Skanda Gupta. He lost control over western India between 467-469. The following Kings were Kumara Gupta (473- 476), Buddha Gupta (476-495), and Narsingha Gupta (495-530). In the 480's, the Alchon Huns defeated the Guptas in much of the empire in the northwest but the Huns were overrun by 500 C.E (Bakker, Hans (2017). The Hun invader Toramana was defeated by Bhanu Gupta in 510 C.E. and driven out of India in 528 by Narsingha Gupta (Sen, S.N). Nepal was lucky in the sense that she escaped the destruction that Huns posed on the Guptas. These invasions brought an end to Classical Indian civilisation. Following the invasions, northern India was left in disarray, with numerous smaller Indian powers emerging after the fall of the Gupta. (Abraham, 2020, p. 48)

### Unification Efforts of Manadeva I

The earliest historical evidence available indicate the boundaries of Nepal. Atharva Parisista dated B.C.E 600-800 has stated the boundaries of Nepal to the Himalayas in the North. Yoginitantra has identified Kanchenjunga as the Northern boundary of Nepal while Barah Puran states Gauri Shanker as the highest peak of the world and the Northern boundary of Nepal. The western bank of Brahmaputra has been stated as the boundary in the east by Puranas (Bishnupuran, 2,3.14.17; KURMA Puran 1.46, 41.44 Brahma Puran, 25, 15-17); Videh (Bihar) in the southeast, Awanti (Madhya Pradesh of Modern India) Udumbar (present-day Punjab) in the west. Historical boundaries of Nepal have been further clarified by boundaries of Mouria Republic and Koliya Republic, Bajji Republic, Cheti State Koshal republic, Parbat State and Mithila state (Regmi, 1996, pp. 62-64).

a. **Social and literary Unification:** Mana Deva I eradicated theft, burglary, flattering disobedience in the state. The inscriptions depicted by later rulers also adored him as the successful ruler of the period. (Regmi, 1996, pp.32-36). The language used in the inscriptions of Mana Deva I is highly intellectual and grammatically perfect. The slokas used in the inscriptions demonstrate the highly developed language. The statement of prevention of going Sati of his mother Rajyawati in the pyre of his father Dharmadeva in Changu Narayan Inscription has special importance in social reform. It is the oldest inscription stating the prevention of the Sati system. The first such inscription found in India in Madhyapradesh was at least a century later after the rule of Mana Deva I in 510 C.E (Whelpton, 2015, p19). The inscription states the power of the Mother Queen Rajyawati who gave the royal order to his son to rule the land. Some inscriptions of the age state of provision of expenses to take of the newborn child by the state if a pregnant woman dies. Vijayawati, the daughter of Mana Deva I, was stated as 'the woman adept in all arts and skills- Vividhakalavichachhyanatwati . It clarifies the high status of education and training provided to women by Mana Deva I and his social unification efforts. (Regmi, 1965, p. 349)

b. **Religious and cultural Unification:** Mana Deva I was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. Changu Narayan Temple was built after his successful unification campaign. In devotion to Lord Buddha, he constructed the Mana Bihar monastery. He built Shakti temples like Palanchwok Bhagawati temple with the icons of goddess Durga and *Man Manesvory Devi* (deity). In the devotion of lord Shiva, he constructed *Dharamanesvor* and *Manesvor* temples and *Vishnu Vikranta* temple. It presented his personality as a religious synergic King as the Sanatana ideology of South Asia has been developing for ages. The religious activities of Mana Deva I were taken as the rulebook for later rulers. Women also enjoyed the freedom to choose whoever and as many Gods as they preferred. According to the inscriptions of Lazimpat and Pashupatinath, Mana Deva I and Mother Queen Rajadevi were great devotees of Vishnu whereas two of his queens Chhemasundari and Gunawati were more inclined to devotion of Lord Shiva. Vijayaswamini, on the other hand, preferred to worship Shakta greater than any other deities. However, all of them worshipped and believed in all the deities. (Joshi, 1973, p 19, 25). Hence, the concept of religious synchronization and synergy was more prevalent than mere tolerance as practiced amongst Abrahamic religions.

c. **Administrative Unification:** In the history of ancient Nepal, Mana Deva I, Amshu Verma, and Narendra Deva are considered as three leaders who put up magnificent buildings and infrastructures which served both as their personal residence and seats of their respective governments (Shaha, 1975, p. 245) Mana Deva I constructed the palace of Mana Griha which is believed to be in Gokarna. However, the exact location of Mana Griha has not yet been found. However, the inscriptions and Bamshawalis state that the palace was a heptagonal one with four layers of walls and a brook. It became the center of administration of the later Licchavi kings as well. No trace of Mana Griha is available and even the historians disagree on the site of the building. Some historians consider the site of Mana Griha somewhere near Deupatan close to Pashupatinath temple. The building must have undergone wear and tear but T'ang annals clearly state the Mangriha. (Shaha, 1975, p. 246). From the construction of the temples, especially of Changunarayan and the royal palace, it can be understood that he had a great love for architecture and sculpture.

Long interrupted reign of 41 years could endure only because of able administration. The inscriptions of Kelatole state him as a king who treated his subjects as children. Changunarayan inscriptions state him as a very decent caring king. He took the advice of his mother queen Rajyawati stopping her from going for Sati after the death of his father Dharmadev. The system of Shamantas to look after the remote parts was practiced (Whelpton, 2015, p. 21). The Changunarayan inscription unveils the highly developed administrative structure of the time. King had a decisive role in the administration of the state. The administration of the far land was in the hands of the Samantas. The royal power was transferred from the father to his son as heir. King had the absolute power and anyone who neglected the royal order was severely punished. The crime was divided into 5 major crimes-Panchaparadh. The worst amongst them was Rajdroha of crime against the reign. Prince had the second highest position after king who was stated as 'Dutak'. Antarasan (internal administration of the palace and royal family) and Paramasan (special administration) were practiced. 'Bhattarakapadiya' was the highest administrative position provided. According to Basak (1934, p. 248), it was the position of Privy Counsellor. Mana Deva I had put his maternal uncle as his commander in chief and his first son in law-Devalabh as an important administrator which was a very good decision for his military unification.

d. **Economic Unification:** Mana Deva I is credited for unifying the country in economic terms as well. Historically, he introduced the minted coins in Nepal as there had been no other authentic coin issued before him. The copper coin minted by Mana Deva I was called Mananka. He issued four types of Mananka coins. The terminology- Mana meant Mana Deva I and anka meant the mark. Hence Mananka meant the mark of Mana Deva I. On one side 'Mananka was written with a lion carrying a flag whereas on the other side 'Bhogini' was written with the figure of the queen. The marks of the Lion and women (queen) indicated two of the seven most important Ratnas (Saptaratnas). Minting of coins in the era indicated the power of the King as a great emperor (Regmi, 1969, p. 167). The tradition of including the respected animal of the diety was followed by the later kings including King Gunakamadev who inscribed the Elephant in respect

of Lord Buddha (Himawat Sanskriti, anka-1, p. 10). Women were kept economically independent. Construction of temples by Mandeva's daughter had independently installed Shivling which indicates the continuity of economic freedom for women in the Lichhavi reign even after the life of Mana Deva.

After every victory, Mana Deva I would grant alms and donations (Regmi 1965, p. 43). On one hand, he had set up Guthi system to run Shiv temples and on the other hand, he had sent traders to the farthest border of his empire (Vajracharya, 1973, pp. 52, 59). Bhasa Vamshawali even stated that he had a set up scientific land measurement system and tenure system to ensure good harvest and to ensure judicial resolution of disputes.

Iron mines were opened in many places which must have helped him in his military campaign and development of agricultural equipment. Descriptions of Industries of clothes of Lichhavi period in Khopasi have been stated in Jain scripture of BrihatkalpasutraBhasya as a center of garments (Chandra, p. 172). Blankets of Nepal had gained such a name even before Mana Deva I that even in Skanda Puran 'NepalKambal' has been reiterated times and again. Kasturi and White Chamar of Nepal were famous in every temple in Kashi to south Indian temples. Nepal was a pioneer in the paper Industry in South Asia. According to Ray (1956, p. 234), Indian states learned paper making from Nepal.

The inscriptions state that trade with India was a common practice developed by during or even before the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. However, trade with Tibet must have been a common practice only after the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. during the rule of Narendra Dev. The inscription of Tebahal dated 480 states of term 'Sarhabaha' which was a common family name of the traders used by Indian traders. The inscription hence clarifies the ties of trade in Nepal and India during Mana Dev I's rule.

#### e. **Military Unification by Mana Deva I:**

Through archeological studies, it is clear that Mandev's father died when he was young and he was crowned as the king in his early age. His mother Rajyabati, chose to assist her son in ruling the kingdom upon her husband's death rather than going to Sati. After he ascended the throne, the governors of the eastern provinces tried to revolt to gain independence from the Licchavi rule. Mana Deva's description in Changu Narayan, Keltol, and Pashupati inscriptions praise his military leadership. Especially in Changu Narayan's inscription from verses 14-19, there is description of the East- West Conquest. Many sources state about his maternal uncle who was his finest general and helped him quench all rebellions and succeeded in the campaigns of East and West. Manadev marched with a huge army and suppressed the rebellion forcefully. Mana Deva, I must have made a well-organized preparation for his campaign in terms of weapons, tactics, military organization, and military organization. The major aspects as follows are worth discussing.

- i. **Military Organization:** Contemporary archeological findings of military set up during the rule of Mana Deva I i.e. 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. suggest that the military organization was well set up. It can also be guessed that without a strong military, it would surely be very difficult for any leader to control such a vast empire

almost a thousand kilometers long. Mana Deva I had forces of elephants, cavalry, and infantry. Inscriptions state that he had used all three arms for the conquest of Mallapuri (Upadhyaya, p. 41). Kautilya's Arthashastra and the description of Mehasthanija state about the military setup in Hindu states. These descriptions can be used as a reference to what must have been the military organization of Mana Deva I as there are very few resources to dig into details ( Nepal Ko Sainik Itihas, p. 12). The outstretched borders used to be ruled by Samantas and even Kwathnayaks who had their private armies (Sharma et. al, p. 4). Due to the presence of private armies with the Samantas, Mana Deva I must have had state standing armies necessary for external defense as well to quell revolts by dissent Samantas. The historical comparisons verify that the military set up in ancient age of Lichhavis was stronger than that in the Middle Ages.

ii. **Weapons:** Weapons during the rule of Mana Deva I were almost like those used in ancient India and those stated in Scripts of Mahabharata and Ramayana. Those included swords, Dhal, knife, axe, bows, and arrow (Manandhar et. al, p. 36). Bow and arrow had a special place and the archers were regarded as the best arms among others.

iii. **Basic Tactics:** Since the Lichhavis had come from Vaishali and were well trained in military craft in the Hindu pattern, it can be guessed that the military tactics stated in Kautilya's Arthashastra must have been followed. The offensive tactics, tactics of Siege, frontal attack, ambush, and defensive tactics had been well set up. According to the inscription of Pashupatinath, Man Deva I had prepared a network of spies and intelligence enabling Sam, Dan, Danda, and Bhed to destroy his adversaries as stated in Kautilya's Artha sastra

iv. **Offensive Tactics:** As inscriptions suggest the use of cavalry, elephants, and infantry forces, the use of them must have been highly sophisticated. In the later Lichhavi period, inscriptions state that King Narendra Deva assisted in the Chinese campaign against Indian forces with more than 3000 yaks and a mighty force. With this description, it can be estimated that Mana Deva's tactics must have been at least based on Dharma Yuddha.

v. **Defensive Tactics:** The construction of Managriha with 7 layers of wall and 2 moots suggests the similarity with the Durg system stated in Kautilya's Arthashastra. Among the 4 types of Durg or fort stated by Kautilya in his *Arhta Sastra*, including Jaldurg, Parwat Durg, Dhanwan Durg (Desert fort), and Bandurg, Parwat Durg and Bandurg were most relevant for the Geography of Nepal. According to some historians the term 'Kot' used in the inscriptions of the Lichhavi dynasty meant military forts. In that sense, there were strong forts in and around Kathmandu valley (Regmi, 1969, p 378). Changu Kot of Changuarayan and Fereng Kot of Duwakot built by Mana Deva I were Giri Durg or Parwat Durg. For these Kots, Lichhavis had formed rules known as "Kott Maryada". Bajrayogini could be a Ban Durg built by Mana Deva. Mana Deva I must have made great contribution in forming the Mayadas and must have followed the rules (Nepal Ko Sainik Itihas, p. 44). From Ban-durg, timber and foliage transfer was prohibited.



It could be taken only if the royal family was in dire need. It was all because if the density of the trees were reduced, it would no more act as a Durg and would lose its significance. (Vajracharya, 1973, p. 238). Considering the strategic location of the valley and its likely vulnerability to attack, the formation of Durg and kots were very wise steps taken by our ancestors. Lichhavi inscriptions state two types of Gulmak. The meaning of the term comes to be a military post or a police setup. The establishment, in that perspective, gives a picture of military and security setup (Regmi, 1969, p. 369). These *gulmaks* were set up in Patan and Thankot. It can be estimated that the Gulmak could be the checkpoint for entry to the valley.

vi. **Military Leadership:** A well setup military leadership was prepared for the unification campaign by Mana Deva I. From the various inscriptions, it becomes clear that he had exploited the international situation both in the north and south. There was no strong state in Tibet in the North until the rise of Srong Chong Gompo, the first significant emperor of Tibet who was married to Bhrukuti a century after Mana Deva's reign. In the south, the Gupta dynasty had been weakened after a series of Hun attacks. Hence, Mana Deva, I did not face any big threat either from the North or South. Moreover, Huns did not pose any threat to Lichhavi Kings of Nepal. Hence, it can be guessed that he must have used the situation as an opportunity to strengthen the military power and territory. He had used all means to enrich the royal treasury imposing effective taxes. Mana Deva I, as a King had himself led the army for the unification. After the King, the prince had a great role in warfare. Further, Mana Deva I had used his mother as his adviser and his maternal uncle as his General or 'Mahabaladhyachha' who assisted him in his western campaign (Vajracharya, 1973, p. 215).

vii. **The Unification Campaign:** Changu Narayan inscriptions from 14 to 16 verse state about the unification campaign of Mana Deva I. After the sudden death of Dharmadev, Nepal as a state faced a perilous situation. Opportunist Samantas of the East and the weak bordering states of the West took it as an opportunity to seek independence or at least to add power as they saw this small young king take the reign. Samantas of East started a revolt against the new young King Mana Deva I caused instability and turned rebellious. The Malla Kings of Mallapuri also posed a great threat. Mana Deva, the young King had no other option but to quell the rebellion and restrengthen his power. From another perspective, it provided an opportunity for the new King to and further extend his borders and to rule the land as *Chakrawarti Maharaj* (Undisputed King) for long 41years. Though the exact dates of the campaign are still not discovered, it is clear that he first quelled the eastern rebellion and later unified the Western Mallapuri states. Both the campaigns were completed before 505 C.E.

viii. **The Eastern Campaign:** The eastern campaign of Mana Deva I was his initial campaign. Sources state that he extended his empire up to Kausikidesh, which many scholars consider to be up to Tista.

ix. **The Western Campaign:** The inscriptions on Mana Deva I state that he won over the Mallapuri. Though the exact borders of Mallapuri are still not clear, according to Acharya (2037, Ka 2), Kumaun could be Mallapuri bordering the Seti river of the west. Some other scholars debate that Mallapuri was Kashia and Pava district of Gorakhpur whereas some others believe Mallapuri on the west of River Gandaki. In any case, it can be seen that Mallapuri was at least west of River Gandaki. In this perspective, the borders of Nepal could be said to extend from Teesta in the east to the Seti river in the West, somewhat similar to the borders of present-day Nepal. After the victory over Samantas of the East and Mallapuri in the West, Mana Deva I constructed a big idol of Garuda.

### **Leadership Qualities of Mana Deva**

Based on the Changunarayan and Soyambhunath inscriptions, it can be clearly stated that Mana Deva I was a leader with multiple qualities. He is the only king in the history of Nepal who has ever been addressed as Bhattaraka Maharaj and 'Samrat' (Regmi, 1965, p 3). Before Mana Deva I, all other kings had been addressed as *Nripati*. The lucid Sanskrit verses on stone inscriptions of the Lichhavi period mark him as an emperor of noble qualities and ably highlight his ancestors' talents. Mana Deva, I had a deep respect for his ancestors and hence followed the tradition of mentioning the names of his great grandfather, Shankardev, grandfather Brikha Deva and father Dharma Dev in his inscriptions. He also had been able to keep an identical place for Nepal and Nepali identity distinct from the Indian minting system, architecture, and social system. The chronicles (Vamsavalis) also mention the name of Mana Dev I as a famous and pious king who followed the polity of religious synergy. His religious adherence is observed in Mananka as well. The inclusion of a pillar with fish indicates *Matsya Narayan*, the first incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

- a. **Decisiveness:** Mana Deva I was adept in making decisions and showed witfulness. Quelling the rebellion both in the East and the west was a decision by which Lichhavi's rule continued for many years even after his reign (Regmi, 1965, p 3). The decision to take action in both East and West must have been a difficult task when the Samantas had been notorious. Taking advice from his mother instead of letting her go Sati must have been his wisest decision. Without a good decision-making capability, no king could continue ruling as *Chakrawarti Maharaj*.
- b. **Judicious:** All the inscriptions available state the legal setup made by Lichhavi kings and in all inscriptions on Mana Deva I describe him as a justice-loving king. The inscription of Keltol states that he ruled as a father and cared for all his subjects as his children (Joshi, 1973, p. 28)
- c. **Intellectual Personality:** The inscriptions of Mana Deva I indicate the literary and practical knowledge of Mana Deva I. The sense of keeping inscriptions that the earlier rulers had never thought of must have struck him. The Sanskrit verses that have been used in the 20 inscriptions of Mana Deva demonstrate the king's knowledge and love for literature. Not only his inscriptions, but even the inscriptions of the later rulers and his beloved ones describe him as a very intellectual personality.

## Conclusion

The personality and contributions of Mana Deva I are the first pivotal landmark in the history of Nepal. Unifying the nation and ruling it unchallenged for 41 years and was indeed an odyssey. The system of inscriptions which he established is the most important boon for every Nepali which gives unambiguous evidence of the long history of Nepal as a state, the culture, and the religion of the country. It surely has great importance in unity and glory and a legacy for the coming days and future generations. The contribution of this first recorded unifier of our beloved mother country Nepal must be understood, respected, and reiterated by every Nepali citizen in every possible way.

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