

## **British India's Political Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper reveals that since the establishment of the British Residency, the Residents singularly influenced the socio-economic and predominantly political evolution of Nepal. Though Bhimsen Thapa ventured to prevent the influx of the Resident's influence in Nepalese politics, the process had already begun. The gradual intrusion of the British Residents in Nepalese politics could not be effectively resisted due to the political instability in Nepal after 1832. Moreover, the British hegemony in world politics and the disintegration of the Chinese power were the main considerations that substantiated the modification of the traditional policy of Nepal.

**Keywords:** *British Residency, Political instability, etc.*

### **Introduction:**

Jung Bahadur adjusted Nepalese attitude to the new balance of power in the Himalayan region and adopted a more realistic and practical approach marked by consistently friendly relations towards the British. The Nepal durbar's new approach changed.

The way the Nepalese court looked at the Resident. They were no more a grotesque picture hanged on a wall. The immense and decisive influence of the Residents in Nepalese politics moulded the pattern of the Anglo-Nepalese relations.

The Shamsheer rulers pursued a pro-British outlook not only in the diplomatic status but also in the practical application of the policy. A delicate balancing of interests was worked out between the Resident and the Rana administration which regulated the Anglo Nepalese relations.

Despite The Resident's manifesto of non-interference and neutrality in the internal affairs of Nepal, they could never remain indifferent to the Nepalese politics. There is enough evidence to suggest that they were not merely the silent spectators of all the great political events in Nepal, but were, in a way or the other accountable for them. Of course, the Nepalese politics which was in constant flux facilitated the Residents to fish in the troubled water.

The period under survey featured sustained efforts of Nepal to defend her independent status, which she attributed to her policy of seclusion of the British Residents. However, taking advantage of the self-interests of the Rana rulers, the Residents, could exert considerable influence in the Nepalese court which prejudicated the independence of Nepal especially after 1885. But the global political development at the beginning of twenty century encouraged Nepal to assert her independence more persistently, while the British Government felt it all the more essential to tighten their hold in Nepal. There were two methods for this first the method of encroachment in Nepal's sovereignty and secondly the method of confidence. The British Government opted for the first method. But the Residents suggested against such drastic steps, which could offend Nepal and damage not only the Ranarchy but also the British interest



in Nepal. They believed that the British desiderate could be best secured by the method of confidence. Nepal's wholehearted support to the British during the first world war justified their belief. Ultimately the British Government was obliged to formally recognize Nepal's independent status unequivocally by the treaty of 1923. It further strengthened the Anglo-Nepalese bond of mutual alliance.

## Analysis of the Study

The need for impartial and practical research work to provide full explanation of the tremendous impact of the Resident in the history of Nepal is imperative. Without thorough research on the subject the process of the evolution of diplomatic as well as the political history of Nepal cannot be understood in the true perspective. Up to now the available publications on the subject are not complete and impartial.

Notwithstanding the extensive publication on the Anglo-Nepalese relations, the references about the Residents are very little and do not cover the impact of the Resident on the political and mainly diplomatic evolution of the Nepalese history. Nevertheless, these valuable research publications have significantly contributed to the present work. It is not possible to honour all those literatures here. However, tribute to some scholarly work is humbly ventured here. Among others, mention may be made of the following books:

(Majumdar, Kanchanmoy; Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973) – the work is based on the original materials from the India office Library, London, and The National Archives of India, New Delhi. It gives very good account of the role played by the Residents in the negotiation of transportation of arms and making of treaty of 1923. The trans-Himalayan politics of the British during the beginning of twenty century politics behind Gorkha recruitment and the position of the British Resident are well accounted; British India's relation with the kingdom of Nepal 1857-1947 (Ashad: Hussain London, George Allen and Unwin, 1970)- the learned author has used abundant materials from the India office Library, London, and the National Archives of India. The Chapters dealing with Jung Bahadur and mutiny, Ranodip and the Resident, Chandra shamsheer and first world war make valuable references about the Resident. Indo-Nepalese relations (Ramakant, New Delhi, S. Chand and Co. 1968)- the work is mainly based on the materials from the National Archives of India. Recount of the Resident's impact in the political and diplomatic history during the most critical phase of Jung Bahadur is estimable, but sometimes they are protective towards the Residents; Nepal; Strategy for Survival British attitude to Nepal's relation with Tibet and China 1814 (Ravuri Dhanalaxmi, New Delhi, Bahri publications, 1981); Indo Nepalese relations 1858-1914 Shushila Tyagi, Delhi, D.K. Publishing house); Nepal and East India Company B.D; Sanwal, New Delhi, Asia Publishing House. 1965); British relations with the frontier states Mridula; Abrol New Delhi, S. Chand and Co. 1974), Anglo Nepalese relations from the earliest time of the British rule in India till Gorkha war (Chaudhari, K.C; Calcutta, Modern book Agencies, 1960) Nepal: strategy for Survival (Leo, E.Roso, Delhi, Oxford University Press first Indian impression (first Published in 1971-1973) Nepal's relation with Tibet and China on Original sources are indeed valuable, but the Anglo-Nepalese relations are comparatively neglected. Lack of the references about the role played by the Resident is conspicuous.



Besides these research books on the Anglo-Nepalese relations there are numerous treasured books on History of Nepal. But complete and impartial analysis about the impact of the Residents covering the period 1816 to 1923 is still wanting. Some historians are prejudiced to have such provocative hypotheses that all the political problems in Nepal had been created by the British Residents while the others tend to defend the Residents. Nonetheless the present work has tremendously benefited from these books. The most important among them are the followings:

Nepal (2 vols, Perceval Landon; Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar)- mainly deals with Chandra Shamsheer. Apart from the references about Hodgson (though protective) the list of the Resident and the index of Hodgson's papers are appreciable; History of Nepal (Daniel Wright; Calcutta, Ranjan Gupta, third Indian edition 1966- the book is based on the personal observation and, inquiry during the writer's residence of ten years in Nepal. His compilation of genealogical history of Nepal based on Nepali; Sanskrit and Newari materials is the pioneer work on the History of Nepal, Kings, soldiers and priests; the politics of Nepal 1830-1857 (John Whelpton; Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1992) has identified the basic structure of Nepalese politics of the period. Real politics of Hodgson and its aftermath are well dealt with. Modern Nepal, 2 vols 1969-1955 (Rishikesh Shah; New Delhi, Manohar, 1990), Work is based on the materials from National Archives of India. It fulfills the need for a complete history of Nepal. But the analysis of the impact of the Resident on the political and diplomatic history of Nepal has been overlooked; Nepal: the years of troubles 1877-1885 (Tri Ratna Manandhar; Kathmandu, Purna Devi, 1986) This excellent research book is based on the thesis of the writer for his Ph. D. degree. The author has made a comparative study of both foreign and Nepal original documents to analyse the political chaos in Nepal following the death of Jung Bahadur till the rise of Shamsheer Rana. The author's approach to the impact of political chaos upon the Anglo-Nepalese relations and the role played by the Residents to promote British interests in Nepal provide analytical explanations of the events; History of Nepal: as told by its own and contemporary chronicles (Bikramjit; Hasrat; Punjab, Devdatta Shastri, 1970) contemporary narratives on Nepal based on the original documents preserved in National Archives of India, New Delhi, provide the valuable account of the period between 1767-1834. The first of the series of the narrative is "Campbell's sketches" which deals with the political relations from 1767-1934, decennial official narrative recounted by Tickell, account of the political events in Nepal. But the "Narratives" edited by Hasrat deprives the reader from the pleasure of the original text Silent cry; the people of Nepal 1816-1839 (Ludwig F. Stiller Kathmandu, Sahayoji Prakashan, 1976) the chapters on Bhimsen Thapa of the Resident provide interesting and practical explanations of the Anglo- Nepalese relation and the role played by the Resident, but sometimes he appears protective toward the Resident. The book is based on the materials from the National Archives of India. Extensive and interesting work of Hodgson appears to be prejudicial against the Resident to find all the political events in Nepal to the result of Resident's interference only deluding the political forces at work in Nepal.

Kot Massacre: letters from Kathmandu (edited by Ludwig Stiller Kiritpur C.N.A.S., 1981)- it is an excellent documentary history based on the correspondence between the British Government and the Resident during May 1840 to October 1847, preserved in National Archives of India. The documents themselves describe the event. The editor in his notes and explanations is impartial and analytical. While editing, the editor has preserved the flavour of original text and retained the critical passages in original form as far as possible, Sketches from



Nepal, 2 vols. H. Ambrose Oldfield (Delhi, cosmo, publication, 1981)- Description of Nepalese religion, architecture, early history is interesting. Modern history is superfluous. The Anglo Nepalese relations is tragically neglected by the author who himself served as Residency Surgeon and sometime is acting Resident at the court Of Nepal; Bhim Sen Thapa ra tatkalin Nepal (Chittaranjan; Nepali Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition BS. 2022- based on the original Nepali documents preserved in the foreign ministry Library) It grossly overlooks the analytical approach and it totally biased.

## Conclusion:

For the comparative study of events, the accounts of the contemporary foreign writers, though biased, are of great values especially of those who themselves were the spectators of the historical events of Nepal., among, they include:-

Narratives of five years of Residents, (Thomas Captain, Smith London, Cloburn and Company publishers; 1852) The writer Assistant political Resident at Nepal from 1840-45. some very interesting accounts divulge the political chaos of the time. The account is very protective towards the Resident (Gimlette, G.H.D; London, Witherby, 1950)- The author served as Acting Resident during the coup 'detate of 1885. his recount, though prejudicial, is valuables; Fredrick O" Corner has contributed two valuables books- On the frontier and beyond or A record of thirty years (London, John Murrey) and Things mortal (London Hoddn Stoughton limited 1940)

Apart from these books, some contemporary foreign writings having reference to the Resident and the Anglo-Nepalese relations, are given below. The references however, are very little-

The story of Gurkhas of Nepal (Sir Prancis tucker; London constable and co. ltd. 1957)- Protective towards Hodgson; The Land of the Gurkhas (Northey W. Brook; Cambridge, Wheffer and sons ltd.) "Nepal land of Mystery (Davis Hassoldt, London, Robert Hale ltd, 1942).

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