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From Controlling Access to Crafting Minds: An Experiment in Education in Late Rana Nepal

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INTRODUCTION

In the education history of Nepal, the Rana era (1846–1951) is almost always portrayed as an era in which citizens were denied access to (formal) education. The less than 2 percent literacy rate at the end of the Rana regime and the concomitant figures (related to schools/teachers/students) give credence to this line of argument.[1] There is no denying that the Ranas in general barred their "subjects" from having access to education, but this uni-linear narrative masks a number of experiments that the Ranas conducted over the years in this sector. More specifically, the introduction of the Basic Education System in the final years of Rana rule was, I argue, a radical policy turnaround. With it, the Rana era education policy moved from keeping the masses "ignorant" (by barring their access to education) to crafting the minds of the masses (by teaching them their "duties").

[1] In 1951 when Rana rule ended, there were 21 high schools, 311 primary schools, a college and altogether 10,000 students in the entire country (HMG 2018 v.s.).

During the Rana era, the formation of independent social or political associations was prohibited and dissent was ruthlessly suppressed. If anything, the Ranas with a few exceptions actively worked against public welfare. Whoever expressed liberal views, or talked of public welfare, risked death, the dungeon, or banishment. Somewhat "liberal" Rana prime ministers were forced to step down or flee because of their less rigid stance towards their "subjects." One such "liberal" Rana was Dev Shamsher (r. 118 days in 1901) who assumed power in the early twentieth century. During his brief tenure an attempt was made to provide education in the present day Nepali language. This effort was as short lived as the rule of Dev Shamsher himself, who was forced to abdicate. The conservative next ruler Chandra Shamsher (r. 1901–1929) who kept a total grip on the education system is credited with setting up a book/record-keeping school called *Shresta Pathshala* with the aim of producing low level clerks to man the expanding bureaucracy. The next two rulers also posed themselves as "progressive" but effectively worked to stymie the education sector.

Padma Shamsher (r. 1945–1948), another "liberal" Rana ruler who came to power towards the end of Rana era, turned his predecessors' policy around. He saw that the old policy of controlling access was not working and sought to redress the problem by providing "appropriate" education. For this Padma chose the Basic Education System over other existing systems—"modern," Sanskrit and *Bhasha*. Propounded by Gandhi, this system, adopted (partly) in India since 1937, opposed Western education and sought to make education self-sufficient. The selection of Basic Education, I argue, was a strategic decision aimed "to kill many birds at once." The Ranas appropriated the Gandhian education system to prolong their rule because they thought, among other things, it would strengthen their relationship with the new rulers of post independence India; show that they were not wary of, or against change. For the Ranas, this education system was also alluring because it was touted as "self-sustaining" (see Kumar 1993, 1995).

The focus of this chapter is on the politics of Basic Education. It has three main sections. The first of these sections tells the story of

the introduction of the Basic Education in Nepal and also analyzes the rationale behind the decision. The next section looks at the Nepali Basic Education discourse or how the idea was sold to the public. The subsequent section charts the downfall of Basic Education vis-à-vis "modern" education. The Basic Education System, this paper further argues, was bound to fail for as: one, the philosophy of Basic Education and the idea of "control" was a contradiction; two, there was a "trust deficit" such that citizens were wary of all government initiatives and the public favored "modern" education; and three, it lost its champion in Padma Shamsher who was forced to abdicate. When the Nepali state during Padma Shamsher's rule showed leniency towards public education, local actors became involved in establishing and running schools in significant numbers in Nepal—though not necessarily Basic Schools. These schools were also a means to expand political party bases, and especially "modern" schools were sought and opened to challenge the exclusivity of the ruling elites' access into the corpus of knowledge that they thought existed in the English language.

POLICY TURNAROUND: INTRODUCING THE BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

The state during the Rana era—except during the time of Dev Shamsher's reign—controlled public access to education (see, for details, introductory chapter). But the end of the Second World War and the independence movements that took momentum thereafter in the subcontinent greatly impacted the Rana administration in general, and education in particular. The second half of the 1940s was also the period when political activism amongst Nepalis (both residing in Nepal and India) began to take off. As Indian independence became imminent, the movement to overthrow the Rana regime also built up momentum, which was a double blow to the Ranas. Since the Rana's most trusted of allies (or sole ally) Great Britain was retreating, the regime sought to expand its tentacles to the outside world, and also tried to make peace with the new Indian leadership. When political activists launched their movement and demanded reforms, Prime Minister Padma Shamsher was forced to

make somewhat conciliatory gestures by offering gradual reforms. Addressing "countrymen" via the assembly of "noblemen," in 1947 he said:

> You all know that in most of the countries of the world today, the subjects are being associated with the Government as far as possible….[I]t would be greatly helpful to the welfare of the country and the people if similar arrangements were made in this country too….The cooperation of all countrymen is required for successfully running such a system of government. For this purpose it is essential that measures should be taken for propagating education among the people so that they may acquire knowledge about political matters as well as their *duties*. *Only* when this is done will the people be able to cooperate with the government and take part in the development work of the country by *properly exercising* the rights available to them. (Pandey 2039 v.s.: 233–234; italics added)

The speech is important for it acknowledges for the first time the necessity of "associating the subjects with the government." But since the countrymen were "ignorant" they must first be educated on "political matters and their duties," and only then could they "properly exercise" the rights. Referring to the agitators demanding political reforms, Padma Shamsher in the same speech said, "[A] handful of foolish persons recently attempted to behave in imitation and at the instigation of others, and interfered in matters which they did not know, nor understand even the meaning of the slogans they had raised…" (Pandey 2039 v.s.: 234). In order for the "subjects" to understand their duties, what is wrong and right, they needed education. Padma said:

> I have time and again drawn your attention to the importance of education. I am happy to note that all people, taking interest in education, are opening schools, one by one, as is evident from the opening, with governmental permission, of seven

> schools in the Kathmandu valley since the new session. The government alone cannot do everything. It has opened schools and colleges to the best of its capacity and has extended and will extend assistance to the people who have opened them…. Girl's schools too shall be opened, but they must be run in such a way that the *modesty* and *good character* of Nepali women are *not* affected. (Pandey 2039 v.s.: 236; italics added)

This is a radical shift in Rana education policy. Prior to Padma, access to education was restricted. But the latest movement (instigated by newly established political parties) which sought to change the polity, and its significant following even in Kathmandu demonstrated to the Ranas how easily "foolish subjects" could be "duped." When instigated they could "imitate romantic slogans that they did not understand," and even turn against their own masters. This was an eye opener. To tame these "subject-savages" they should be given "proper education" so that they know their duties and behave accordingly. The Ranas also thought that by granting permission to open schools, they could contain the discontent simmering among the youths of the country. Mrigendra Shamsher, the Director General of the Education Department in the inauguration ceremony of a school in Kathmandu spoke thus:

> In the last six months 20 schools were opened in the Kathmandu valley alone. While granting permissions, the government neither posed stricter conditions nor made much background inquiry. The government okayed all the requests with the expectation that the studying-teaching activities will mellow the new intense fervor (*naya umleko josh*) in youths. (Gorkhapatra 2004 v.s.: 2)

With the realization of the importance of education in controlling the public mind as well as discontent due mainly to growing pressure from the newly formed political parties, Padma Shamsher tried to make some changes in the polity by preparing a new constitution to

accommodate the political demands.[2] In the 1948 constitution, called the legitimate (legal) act of the Nepal government (*Nepal sarkarko vaidhanik kanun*), some cosmetic changes were made in the polity, and for the first time freedom of expression, press, etc. find mention. And more importantly, education (elementary education) finds a place among fundamental rights. Article 4 reads:

> Subject to the principles of public order and morality this Constitution guarantees to the citizens of Nepal freedom of person, freedom of speech, liberty of the press, freedom of assembly and discussion, freedom of worship, complete equality in the eye of the law, cheap and speedy justice, *universal free compulsory elementary education*, universal and equal suffrage for all adults, security of private property as defined by the laws of the State as at present existing and laws and rules to be made hereunder. (RRS 1970: 78; italics added)

Education gets further elaboration in the miscellaneous section (Part VI, Article 60) of the constitution:

> As soon after the commencement of *this* Act as expedient, the Government shall provide for universal, free, compulsory, elementary education, and technical and higher education will be provided by the State to the extent necessary to prepare candidates for wide opportunities of service of the people of Nepal. In addition, the State will provide as far as possible for the liquidation of adult illiteracy. The *aim* of educational institutions shall be *good moral training*, personal and vocational efficiency and the *development of the spirit of*

[2] Padma also sought the Indian government's help in devising the constitution. Upon his request, India sent Sri Prakash Gupta, Ram Ugra Singh and other assistants in June 1947 to assist the Nepal government in the process. There was conflict among the Rana *bhardar*s on the degree of liberalizing the polity, which also led to the resignation of Bahadur Shamsher as chairperson of the main Reforms Committee (Shaha 1996: 181).

> *nationality*, and international friendliness. (RRS 1970: 92; italics added)

The constitution thus also reflected the change in the education policy that was already afoot. Prior to this, Padma had sent Mrigendra Shamsher, the Director General of the Public Instruction department, to India in January of 1946 to study the education system there. He visited Lucknow, Agra, Delhi and Lahore and came back very much impressed by the prospect for the introduction of Gandhi's "Basic Education System" in Nepal (Shaha 1996: 168).[3] After much thinking, the Ranas, who to quote Mrigendra Shamsher, "have been minutely (*sukshma tarikale*) observing this education for last few years," decided that the moment was opportune to introduce the Basic Education System (NS 2005 v.s.e: 17).

The Basic Education System, also called *Nai Talim* or *Buniyadi Talim*, is the education system propounded by Gandhi. While Gandhi had long been airing his views on education, his critique of the existing education system and counter proposal spelt out in the July 1937 issue of *Harijan* formed the basis of this system.[4] Gandhi wrote,

[3] According to the editorial in the first issue of *Nepal Shiksha*, "The credit of initiating this [i.e., Basic] education system goes to the *suyogya* (competent) Director General of the Education Department…Mrigendra Shamsher." The editorial adds, "His excellency himself went to various cities of India to investigate the usefulness of this system and finding this system very appropriate for Nepal the foundation of this system was laid out" (NS 2005 v.s.a: 5). *Nepal Shiksha* is the mouthpiece of the Education Department of the government, with a primary focus on Basic Education. Established in 2005 v.s., along with the introduction of Basic Education System, *Nepal Shiksha* was initially a monthly publication. Published for nearly five years, *Nepal Shiksha* also became bimonthly at one time but was not very regular. Many of the notices and speeches that appear in *Nepal Shiksha* were also published in *Gorkhapatra* of that period. The Education Department also published another paper called *Jagriti* later.

[4] In 1937, a majority of the popularly elected provinces of British India were controlled by the Indian National Congress (INC). The INC was earlier pleading for free, compulsory and universal education. Now that the INC itself

> By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit.…Literacy itself is not education, I would, therefore, begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the state takes over the manufacture of these schools. (Sykes 1988)

In October 22–23 of that year a National Education Conference was organized in Wardha, Maharashtra (India) which drew participants from across the country, including Gandhi and ministers of the provincial governments. Gandhi presented a proposal in the conference which was an extended version of his *Harijan* article. The conference passed four resolutions[5] and also appointed a committee under Dr Zakir Hussain to prepare a detailed syllabus. In March 1938 the committee submitted a report which is also known as the Wardha Scheme of Education, which was approved by Gandhi and subsequently by the INC. The provincial governments under INC began implementing the Basic Education system but there were also people who severely criticized it.[6]

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was heading the governments in various provinces, Gandhi came up with the proposal (Sykes 1988).

[5] The resolutions were: 1) Free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale; 2) Medium of instruction be the mother-tongue; 3) The process of education throughout this period should center around some productive form of manual work, and that all other abilities to be developed or training given, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child; and 4) The system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers (Sykes 1988).

[6] According to Kumar (1993), the Muslim League saw it as a Hindu ploy. For others, the idea of using students' produce to financially sustain the schools amounted to child labor in schools. The INC's desire to industrialize and modernize the nation didn't match with Gandhian focus on handicrafts or village industries (see, Kumar 1993).

Perhaps also because of its spatial proximity, the Bihar experiment in Basic Education seems to have influenced the Nepal experiment. In 1947, the Nepal government invited a number of people involved in Basic Education in Bihar with whom the Ranas and the government officials held a series of meetings.[7] The invited Indian experts along with Nepal's educationists and concerned officials worked together to prepare a planning document for the implementation of the Basic Education System in Nepal. Soon six graduates from Nepal were sent to the Basic Training School in Patna so as to employ them to teach other "pupil-teachers" upon their return in Nepal (NS 2005 v.s.a: 5; NS 2011 v.s.: 18–20). Thus the experiment in "Basic Education" was finally launched in Nepal in 1947 with the returnees forming the core team of trainers at the newly opened Basic Education Training Centre in Kathmandu (Shaha 1996: 169).[8] In the first half of 1947 the government began the training program for prospective teachers who would then open/run Basic Education program in various schools across the country. Of the 141 applicants the department selected 54 "pupil-teachers" and trained them for nearly a year. By the end, 39 of them had successfully completed the program. The department then sent them to various schools across the country—some of them became involved in already established schools whereas a few others opened new schools and began teaching (NS 2005 v.s.f: 134–136).[9] For at least the next six years the government trained around 50 would be teachers each year.[10]

[7] Prominent among the invitees were former secretary Ram Sharan Upadhya, Shiv Kumar Lal and Tarakeshwor, who were all involved in the Basic Education system in Bihar (NS 2011 v.s.: 19).

[8] Bhavanath Upadhyay, BSc. Ag., who headed the Training Centre, was one of the trainers who went to India.

[9] For example, Muktinath Timisina opened a school at Batulechaur, Pokhara (Timisina 2040 v.s.) whereas Madhav Prasad Ghimire who later became a nationally recognized writer went to Lamjung and taught in the newly opened Basic School there (Prasad 2007 v.s.).

[10] According to a report published in the *Nepal Shiksha,* there were 250 Basic Education teachers in 1953 (NS 2011 v.s.: 19). After teaching for three years

But the "liberal minded" Padma Shamsher did not last long in power. He was forced to leave the country by his conservative cousins before the constitution that he commissioned came into force.[11] However, even after the more conservative Mohan Shamsher became the Prime Minister at the end of April 1948, the Basic Education program was not discontinued. Yet Mohan did not seem to be very enthused by it.[12] In the congratulatory message of the first issue of *Nepal Shiksha*, the Director General of the Education Department praises his master as one who loved education (*vidya premi*) and claims that under the order of Mohan Shamsher the department is beginning a Montessori school, Basic Schools, and also a university (Rana 2005 v.s.: 3).[13] The editorial of the first issue further highlights the wishes of the prime minister by including adult education and female education (NS 2005 v.s.a: 4–6). The Director General

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in the Basic Schools these teachers would again be called to Kathmandu and trained for one more year so as to equip them with the knowledge to teach in the higher classes.

[11] The first constitution of Nepal was proclaimed on 26 January 1948 and was to come into force on 14 April 1948. But before it came into force, Padma Shamsher was forced to leave the country in February.

[12] The government was fascinated by the Montessori system of learning for young kids, and for that the government also had brought some "professors" from India to teach children (NS 2005 v.s.a: 4).

[13] The government under Mohan Shamsher was, it seems, seriously thinking of establishing a university in Nepal, however, it was only in 1959 that we see the university established. There was some money set aside, and a powerful committee set up to translate the idea into reality. The committee and subcommittees held a series of meetings on various aspects—courses, language of instruction, land, etc. (see NS 2005 v.s.b; 2005 v.s.c; 2005 v.s.d; 2006 v.s.d; 2006 v.s.f; 2006 v.s.h). The Nepali authorities feared the vernacularization of Indian universities and the proposed phase out of English from them within five years. They took it as a threat to Nepal's national existence as it would pose a threat to the national language as Nepalis would have to rely on Hindi or other regional languages of India for education, which they thought would eventually lead to the extinction of Nepal's national language (NS 2005 v.s.d: 10). See, Parajuli (2019) for details on the university that did not become.

sends out the following "order" (*adesh patra*) to headmasters and secretaries of schools across the country.

> You all are aware of the government's aim and effort to publicize education across the country through Basic Education, and also about the provision of the 2004 v.s. legal act [i.e., constitution] of making education compulsory as far as possible (*sakesamma*). I am writing this order (*adesh patra*) to you all (*timiharu*) because this great task will attain success fast and with ease if you all cooperate….It is not appropriate to simultaneously run two education systems, but it is also no good to abruptly end the existing education system….All existing schools shall gradually be converted into Basic Schools. If we start now, all existing schools will be converted to the Basic ones by 2012 v.s.[14] (NS 2005 v.s.e: 17–18)

In the same "order" the Director General also asked the school teachers and secretaries to send a teacher each year from their schools to the Basic Education Training Centre so as to equip the teachers with the Basic Education methods.

Even though the education department iterates its intention of providing "compulsory" education—albeit with a qualifier "*sakesamma*"—the government does not consider opening schools to be its duty. The Director General of the department thus explains how schools come into being not only in Nepal but also all over the world:

> Schools are opened in two ways: some only seek permission to open a school whereas others also seek support from the government as per the rule. And the government has been

[14] Interestingly, the "order letter" also seeks their views (*raya*): "What is your (*timiharuko*) view on this? And if you see anything else that further develops education, send your views within a month of getting this letter" (NS 2005 v.s.e: 18).

> granting permission as per the petition (*jasto mageko testai bakseko*). This is how schools are opened across the globe. (NS 2006 v.s.a: 169)

The responsibility of setting up schools lies on the shoulders of the people themselves. But they cannot do so on their own. They have to first acquire permission by following the procedures/rules set up by the government. In the first issue (and also in later issues) of the *Nepal Shiksha*, a notice is published spelling out the rules or procedures to open new schools (NS 2005 v.s.e: 18–19; NS 2006 v.s.e: 301–303). As per the procedure, whenever a petition to open a school is filed, the government would through the district magistrate, assess (*sarjamin garne*) the public (*raiti/duniya*) interest on the school/education. If found satisfactory, the government would even provide financial support in running the school as well as in training the teachers (for Basic School) but the subjects must agree to do a list of things, and also answer a number of questions.[15] One of the major conditions was the number of students. As per the rules, the first grade must have at least 30 students and from the next class onwards (to be opened gradually every year) there must be no less than 25 students in each grade. Should the number of students be less than 25, the government will stop funding the school and the public has to run it on its own via donations (*chanda*).[16] The initiators must also agree to follow all the other conditions and get the signature of

[15] The initial notice on rules published in *Nepal Shiksha* (NS 2005 v.s.e: 18–19) does not include the questions, however the later notices do. The 12 additional questions are related to basic information such as population of the area, the number of school going children, primary language as well as business/occupation of the area, and so on (NS 2006 v.s.e: 301–303).

[16] The government seems to be monitoring the figures, for it liquidated one Bageshwori Basic School of Nepalganj for not having adequate students (NS 2006 v.s.g: 331), and reprimanded (*nasihat*) teachers of two schools for lying about the figures by including minors in the adult literacy classes so as to increase the class size (NS 2006 v.s.d: 293).

4–5 nobles of the area on the petition (see NS 2006 v.s.e: 301–303 for details).

By the end of Rana rule in 1951 there were "more than 38 Basic Schools" in Nepal; a number of schools had reached fifth grade of which 9–10 were within the valley and "a lot of English, middle and high schools" were converted into Basic Schools (Joshi 2007 v.s.: 173).

One wonders why the Ranas wanted to implement the education system propounded by Gandhi, who was not only waging war against the regime's closest ally the British-Indian government, but was also engulfing the whole subcontinent with his idea of passive resistance, *satyagraha*. Swept by the Gandhian wave, Nepali migrants and exiles were also participating in the Indian independence movement so much so that Gandhi was a source of inspiration for Nepali rebels fighting against the Rana regime. Gandhi, in essence, was as much an enemy of the Ranas as of the British. Nevertheless, when it became evident that the Indians would achieve their independence, the Ranas appropriated Gandhi, strategically, to prolong their rule. The Gandhian brand thus was, as the Nepali saying goes, "an arrow to kill many birds at once." The Ranas needed to improve their relationship with the new rulers of post independence India, which otherwise was not good. So by embracing the most respected of the leaders, Gandhi, and his education system, the Ranas were sending a message that they also adored the *Mahatma*, were ready to cooperate, and wanted to smooth and strengthen the relationship between themselves and India.[17] Besides, they also wanted to give an impression to the outside world and to Nepali activists that they were not wary of, or against, change.

Gandhi was also useful to the Ranas because he stood for *swadeshi* or nationalistic movement, and the Ranas wanted to appropriate that version of "nationalism" as they were branding Nepali agitators as

[17] The Ranas offered their troops to help the Indian government in their problems in Hyderabad and Kashmir. The Nepal government also signed a Treaty of Friendship with the new government in July 1950.

being instigated by "foreigners" (i.e., Indians) who were launching a movement from "foreign soil," i.e., India. The other reason for following the Gandhian model was his opposition towards Western education, and also the use of English as medium of instruction.[18] But the Ranas were opposed to providing English education to their "subjects" for entirely different reasons. The Ranas emulated the West, the English especially—from apparel to furniture to palaces—which made them distinct from their subjects (see Liechty 1997). Imparting English or Western education to the public was considered an act of elevating their social position and making them equal to the rulers. This the Ranas could not digest, so Basic Schools came in handy. Moreover, in the Basic Education system, schools were to be productive and self-sufficient (Kumar 1993, 1995), which meant there was not even the need for the Rana state to spend money in providing "appropriate" education to its subject.

THE NEPALI BASIC EDUCATION DISCOURSE

The Ranas began the new education system during the final years of their rule when their legitimacy was at its nadir. This clearly affected the acceptability of the idea which eventually was scrapped a few years after the downfall of the regime. Before looking at the demise of the Basic Education System, let us look at how the government under the Ranas marketed the concept, or how the discourse was created.

In the first issue (1948) of *Nepal Shiksha* the Director General Mrigendra Shamsher Rana writes thus about the root of the Basic Education System:

> Gandhiji initiated the Basic Education [System] in India and after 10 years of experience all the states of India are now

[18] Gandhi, already by his mid thirties, was so disenchanted with English education that he could write about "the rottenness of this education" and that "to give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them…that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation." Available at www.infed.org/thinkers/et-grand.htm; accessed November 2, 2012.

> implementing this (*apanaye*). Since our country's geographic and other conditions are no different from that of India, and as this education matches with our culture and tradition (*riti-thiti-anukul*), we are also going to implement (*apanaune*) it here. (NS 2005 v.s.e: 17)

The editorial of the first issue also gives credit to Gandhi for the new education system: "Mahatma Gandhi thought that the students will become self-reliant (*swavalambi*) if they also did physical work along with their study." It adds, "In this system, it is not only the brain that becomes active but the other parts of the body also become active, and because of this the closely interlinked brain and body flourish and advance." The editorial hopes that "the education system will turn out to be very appropriate for our country" (NS 2005 v.s.a: 5). But, as the editorial itself acknowledges, it was not what everybody believed. Despite being touted as suitable to native "*riti-thiti*," it was suspect in the eyes of the public.[19] The editorial adds, "Some people might also think that it will hurt the fundamental roots of the education. But if one thinks seriously about it, the suspicion will naturally wither away because such a farsighted person as Gandhi would never have propagated the system without thinking about it properly" (NS 2005 v.s.a: 5). Even Padma Shamsher himself came out publicly to defend the Basic Education System thus: "I've made arrangements for [the implementation of] Basic Education System to promote various kinds of *ilam* (jobs) in the country. Do not take it as an effort to suppress higher education" (Gorkhapatra 2003 v.s.: 1).

The imperative for the authorities to convince the skeptics seems to have not only continued but also grown. Director General Rana sees "no surprise if some are confused" about the principles of the new education system but hopes that "in 2–4 years, everyone will understand it" (NS 2006 v.s.a: 170). And the editorial comment

[19] The articles published to propagate Basic Education also give us an idea of the issues of public concern regarding Basic Education, for the articles labor to persuade the anonymous skeptics/critics.

(that precedes Rana's article) concedes: "Many [people] questioned and criticized (*tika-tippani*) the Basic Education idea. Gradually, the educated lot has understood the importance [of this education system] but amongst the semi-educated and uneducated, confusion still persists" (Rana 2006 v.s.a: 332). To clear "misconceptions about this system" *Nepal Shiksha* labors through its editorials and articles. The Director General, one of the architects of the Nepali version of the system, himself joins the fray to explain the rationale of choosing Basic Education against other existing education systems through various speeches (some reproduced verbatim in *Nepal Shiksha* and *Gorkhapatra*). He also starts writing a series of articles for the newly established mouthpiece *Nepal Shiksha* explaining the rationale for introducing Basic Education.

To begin with, the Director General looks at the history of education and terms the education prior to 1800 A.D. as *Puranic;* the purpose of which being gaining mental power, spiritual knowledge and making men virtuous (*sadguni banaune*). According to him, the "liberal education" that was practiced in the next two centuries focused on science and mathematics as well as in geography and history and made great progress (Rana 2006 v.s.a: 332–334). But people began to find faults in this education as well. The major defects of this system in the eyes of Rana and the solutions that he describes merit mention in some detail:[20]

> Educated young people forgot the simple life and thought of luxurious life as the only aim….When the supply of graduates began to outstrip the demands, the value of graduates started to diminish….And, when the lazy minds became the devils place, various incidents (*upadrav*) occurred; conflict (*ashanti*)

[20] The faults are given in the form of quotes with initials Aa. Shi. and are followed by numbers, which suggests they were drawn from existing documents. Aa. Shi. most likely stands for *Adhar Shiksha* or Basic Education, and the numbers refer to page numbers, but it is not clear if a book, booklet or pamphlet is being referred to.

> and discontent began to spread; the distressed youths started joining the deadly movements; and havoc spilled all over.… This small land of ours too had the bad effects in a short time period. India could withstand it for centuries but we cannot.… The education had to be linked to the industry and business to combat the ills of that education system. Experiments were carried out in various countries to fix the problem but none could resolve all the faults….Gandhiji, the founder of the non violence movement also ventured on it. The brain [of Gandhi] that was ripened with the mental fast (*tapasya*) created/ developed an *alaukik* education system for the complete development of humanity (Rana 2006 v.s.a: 333–334).

One recurrent argument against the existing (modern/English) education system that appears in the various issues of *Nepal Shiksha* over the years is that the system was introduced in India by the British to produce low level office workers to sustain their regime.[21] As this faulty education system was copied *in toto* in Nepal, it was only natural that the Nepalis too got the vices: it promoted selfishness and it drove the educated lot away from physical labor. All that the English educated persons knew was to talk; they didn't walk the talk, they just talked the talk (Rana 2006 v.s.a: 333; Joshi 2007 v.s.: 174; NS 2005 v.s.f: 134). They wore foreign hats, boots and suits, and there was no love for their own culture, and for the country in them (Y.P. Sharma 2009 v.s.: 295). They lacked the *rastriyatako bhavana* (patriotic/nationalistic feeling). Trailokya Nath Upraity sums up the sins of the existing education system:

> It is astonishing to see the students of Europe and America taking part in the development of their countries (*desh nirman*)—it is because their education system relates to the

[21] Almost every single article published in the magazine that dealt with the Basic Education System made this argument. Similar arguments continued even after the downfall of the Rana regime.

> country. But it hurts badly to find that lacking in our modern education. The lack of Nepaliness (*Nepaliyata*) in the activities (living, eating and talking) of students strikes our hearts. Our students are running after the illusion of Western civilization. What could we expect from the products [i.e., students] coming out of the schools, colleges and *pathshala*s that provide such education in nation building?…We have to awake/arouse their love for the country (*desh prem*) and *jatiyata* [by providing appropriate education].[22] (2006 v.s.: 311–312)

The Gandhian education system was the solution to the problem but it was also not foolproof; it needed some tweaking to make it suitable for Nepal. After some changes, the Wardha Scheme was converted into a Basic Education System in Nepal, claimed the Director General (Rana 2006 v.s.a: 334). An editorial in the *Nepal Shiksha,* though it acknowledges Gandhi's contribution, does not give full credit to him for the originality of the idea. It says, "If we were to search the roots, we reach more or less to Europe and America." It gives the main credit to the US "project method" propounded by American educationists, particularly Dewey. In Russia, the editorial claims, this system was called "complex method" which India implemented after tweaking it to suit their needs and called it "*buniyadi talim*" or basic training (NS 2005 v.s.f: 134; see also Navin 2009 v.s.: 332).

One reason for the linking up of the Basic Education system with that of the USA, Russia, and other European countries was to increase the saleability of the idea, for there were not many takers. While the Rana motive was already suspect, the de-emphasizing or elimination

[22] In the same article Upraity writes, "The so-called educated lot from both the non-governmental and governmental sectors are blinded by the glitter of Western civilization that they want to copy blindly without taking the country's situation into consideration. They want to reform the education in similar fashion. These people and the existing English education system are responsible for making our present children/youth unproductive, wealth-less, and powerless" (2006 v.s.: 310–311).

of English from the curricula made its acceptability even less among the public. The Director General's second article in the series titled "What is Basic Education?" focuses particularly on the language issue. "When one of my Indian friends described Basic Education curtly as education without English but with craft (*kalasita prachalit*)," writes Mrigendra Shamsher Rana, "he was severely criticized. I therefore want to provide a slightly longer answer." He refutes the allegation that English is not taught in the Basic Education as absolute rubbish, but clarifies that "English would not get the same importance as it gets in the existing education system." And it would not be imposed on all but "those who want and have the capacity to learn" will get a chance, he says. "This education will disprove the idea that people won't be educated without studying English," he adds (Rana 2006 v.s.b: 360–362).[23]

He further argues that it is both important and timely to diminish the role/influence of English for a number of reasons: 1) it puts tremendous pressure in a young child's mind and causes harm; 2) priority must be given to the mother tongue/national language—which is what non English speaking developed countries do or are doing;[24] and 3) English is no longer the language that would help us deal with our neighboring countries (which was not the case when India was under the British). He urges readers to be farsighted and invest as much in Hindi as in English as the former is going to be the national language of India. "But," he laments, "since our thought is colored by the existing education system we think that to have less knowledge of English is to have less capacity." He adds, "Especially those who studied English think this way but this is hollow pomp. Even though I myself fall in that category [of English educated] but the reality is always true" (Rana 2006 v.s.b: 360–362).

[23] For the rise of Nepali language to dominant status in the Rana era, see Onta (1997).

[24] To play down the importance of English, an editorial of the journal mentions Madras as a state with the highest English speaking population—where even the coolies chatter freely (*bhadbhadaune*) in English—turning full-fledged to Basic Education (NS 2005 v.s.f: 135).

The Basic Education System practiced in India put more emphasis on practical aspects and less on the textbooks—more so in the lower grades. It is not very clear how much more emphasis was given to textbooks in the Nepali Basic Schools, but some articles and reports suggest that the focus was more on textbooks than on practical aspects.[25] The government had prepared curricula for both primary and middle level Basic Schools as the notices published in the *Nepal Shiksha* suggest. One early notice claims that the textbooks are in the process of being printed (NS 2005 v.s.g) whereas a bookseller's advertisement published a couple of years later lists 30 titles for class one to five (NS 2007 v.s.a; 2007 v.s.b).[26] The draft (*motamoti*) curricula for the middle level schools also appear in the pages of *Nepal Shiksha* in which English appears as an optional subject (NS 2006 v.s.b: 171–172) but it doesn't appear that the textbooks for the middle and above level were ever produced (NS 2011 v.s.: 20). The notice that lays out the middle Basic School curricula first refutes the claim that English is not taught in the Basic Schools and then details the curricula.[27]

[25] However, for the grades above five local textbooks were not available. The Nepali representative's report in the All India Buniyadi Education Convention (1953) mentions three problems that the Basic Education program in Nepal at that time was facing: 1) people's preference for English education over Basic; 2) problems in the craft as cotton was not easily available in Nepal; and 3) unavailability of textbooks for grades above five (NS 2011 v.s.: 19–20). A couple of reports complained that the teachers in Basic Schools were not following the basic principle of teaching—i.e., teaching by what they called *samabaya* method or teaching holistically by paying more attention to the practice part.

[26] The following subjects were to be taught in the primary (1–5 grade) Basic Schools: practical lessons on the making of yarn from cotton using a spinning wheel (*katai*), practical agriculture, theoretical class on yarn making and agriculture, geography, history, mathematics, mother tongue or language, general science, and citizen/social studies (*nagarik shastra*). English, which had been taught in the existing schools, however, is missing from the curricula (NS 2005 v.s.f).

[27] The following subjects were to be taught in the middle Basic Schools: 1) basic craft (*shilpakala*)—a) agriculture and horticulture b) weaving and knitting

BASIC EDUCATIONS FADES INTO OBLIVION

Padma Shamsher, it seems, was enlightened enough to have a grasp of what loomed ahead in the regime's future. But the conservative camp led by Mohan Shamsher, son of Chandra Shamsher, was neither convinced nor satisfied with Padma. Hence Padma was forced to abdicate. When Mohan Shamsher came to power in 1948 April,[28] he followed his father's footsteps by suspending the limited concessions made by his predecessor. More than paying attention to simmering internal problems and implementing the rather conservative constitution, Mohan Shamsher tried to expand diplomatic relationships with the outside world. He also offered his troops to the Indian government when India faced problems in areas like Hyderabad and Kashmir so as to win its favor. During the first two years of his administration Mohan Shamsher "put into effect repressive laws drastically curtailing freedom of expression and association" and suspended the civil liberties (Shaha 1996: 203).[29] But, writes Aryal, "[i]n spite of his efforts to suppress the people, they began to fight for their political and other rights" (1970: 29).

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c) metal and wood work [one of the three to be selected]; 2) minor industry—a) agriculture and horticulture b) weaving and knitting c) working with paper board [one of the three to be selected]; 3) Nepali 4) Other language—English, Hindi and Sanskrit [one of the three]; 5) Mathematics; 6) Social science—a) history b) geography and c) citizenship/social studies; 7) General science; 8) Art 9) Health science and sanitation; and 10) Religious studies (NS 2006 v.s.b: 171–172). Another report published in 1953 confirms that the textbooks for middle and higher level were not published till the end of 1953 (NS 2011 v.s.: 20).

[28] With growing pressure from the conservative camp led by Mohan Shamsher, Padma Shamsher fled Kathmandu on 21 February 1948 and crossed the frontier into India a week later (Shaha 1996: 188). Mohan Shamsher officially took over the reign only on 30 April 1948, as the latter didn't send his resignation letter as promised.

[29] In 1950 when Mohan Shamsher came under real pressure, he tried to save face by concocting elections in some villages and also forming a so-called Parliament by hand picking his henchmen in September of that year. Mohan Shamsher had earlier (in 1948) banned the Nepali Congress party and also introduced a new press and publication law in 2005 v.s. to further curtail civil liberties (see Parajuli 2012).

On the education front, however, the Basic Education policy of the government continued. But, despite the Director General's effort to push the system, there was not much zeal on the part of the ruler himself in promoting it.[30] And the program was suspect in the public eye.[31] Rishikesh Shaha writes,

> [The Basic Education system] became suspect in the eyes of the Nepali educated elites who viewed it as Mrigendra's device to exploit Gandhi's name and programme to discourage and finally displace the western-style education system which the Ranas did not find conducive to their political interests.[32] (1996: 168)

Trailokya Nath Upraity, himself a teacher at the Basic Education Training Centre, later claimed that the Rana government in 1947 was more interested in the import of the label than the contents of Basic Education from India (Upraity 1962: 37).

While the government was pushing the Basic Education, the public was more interested in "modern" or English education.[33] And they began to "open schools against the will of the Ranas, and

[30] Madhav Prasad (2007 v.s.) laments the unavailability of the basic materials such as pens, pencils, slates, and notebooks in the hill areas whereas another report complains about the unavailability of textbooks as well as raw materials required to teach "craft" (NS 2011 v.s.).

[31] After Padma came to power and showed his "reformist" side to public, many people via the "letter to editor" in the official newspaper *Gorkhapatra* demanded schools in their areas. Only a handful of them, however, were demanding Basic Schools.

[32] At the time of the launch of this program Shaha was teaching at Tri-Chandra College and had written an article on Basic Education parroting the government's talking points and applauding the effort of the Rana authorities (Shaha 2003 v.s.: 3–4). He also contributed a poem in *Nepal Shiksha* praising the Rana system and Mohan Shamsher on the occasion of latter's accession to power (Shaha 2006 v.s.: 167–168).

[33] There were other parents who also were dissatisfied with the Basic Education because it didn't teach their children the know-how of performing

without getting sanction from them" (Aryal 1970: 29). However, there were exceptions and at least in the case of Pokhara it was the central government that okayed the proposal to establish a public (or modern) school, despite the District Governor's (*badahakim*; another Rana) reservations.[34] Despite the government's policy to promote Basic Schools and bear its financial burden, actors there chose to establish an English school, which they themselves had to fund and manage. Why were they running after this alien, so called "modern" education, also derogatorily referred to as "cow-eating" education?[35]

One simple argument for such a craze for modern schools could be that English epitomized prosperity and technological and other advancements made by the West; the lure of "modern education" was so powerful that they even dared deviate from government policies, if not defy them outright.[36] Modern education was the answer to all that they lacked compared to the outside world, it was a panacea for all the modern amenities that were not available in this part of the globe. English education was required not only for the material progress or technological advancement, it was also the emancipatory path to a "civilized society" or path to enlightenment.[37] Embracing

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rituals based on the Sanskrit texts (see, e.g., Prasad 2007 v.s.; Gautam 2007 v.s.; cf. Neupane 2010 v.s.: 20).

[34] The *badahakim,* who was also to be the chairperson of the school managing committee, was uncooperative. He reportedly said that he would not let the school run. "But it was the thing of the twentieth century. Ultimately the school side won" (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 14).

[35] In this logic English are beef-eaters and hence their education equaled cow-eaters' education. The argument was also that when people get such an education, they would imitate the foreigners and start eating beef, a sin for cow worshipping Hindus. It was interesting however that even religious teachers such as the ascetic Prem Chaitanya in Pokhara was spearheading the modern school drive, as chief of the school management committee (see Parajuli 2009).

[36] The justification for such education furnished by an activist in trying to convince one of the elites to sign the petition, also illustrates this. For details of the interaction between the activist and the elite, see Parajuli (2009).

[37] The modern school was opened, according to Mukti Nath Timisina, as "the demand of the time was to become a civilized society (*yugle sabhya samaj sanga sambandha rakhna khojeko thiyo*)" (Timisina 2040 v.s.: 19).

"cow-eating" education was thus not against the religion, rather it was just the opposite—it was a "sin" not to have embraced "timely" education.[38] A school—and not *Pathshala* or Basic School for that matter—was a marker of *adhunikata* (modernization/modernity) and they did not want to be lagging behind (*pichadiyeko* or backward) (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 7).

It would however be erroneous to view the setting up of schools as a mere lure for *adhunikata* or following of the modernization bandwagon. We have to move a step further to analyze how the term *vidya* (knowledge/education) was appropriated by both the state and by the social actors. More than anything else, the act of coming together to establish the so-called "modern school" was a "politically motivated subversive act," as Tej Nath Ghimire also puts it.[39] Another activist Shri Kant Adhikari claims that the English school was also a special institution to fight against the Ranas (Adhikari 2056 v.s.: 17).[40] And increasingly, hardcore political actors were using schools as covert means to expand their base across the country.[41] One of the activities outlined by the Nepali Congress party as part of the *satyagraha* (civil disobedience) movement launched in 1947 was to establish schools (Joshi 2048 v.s.: 17).

[38] The only way to transform "savages" into "civilized" was to give them a dose of English, modern education. So pressing were the demands, and overwhelming was the justification that even the diehard opponents finally yielded. The Sanskrit or *Bhasha* school did not quite fulfill the demands of the time, writes the joint secretary Sundar Prasad Marsani of the school, "It was a matter of shame for the people of the city like Pokhara to not have any provision of public education that suited the era (*yug suhaudo*)" (Marsani 2022 v.s.: 2).

[39] Interview with Tej Nath Ghimire, teacher-writer-social activist of Pokhara, who came of age during the 1950s. For an account of how these activists were involved in a new style of doing politics, see Parajuli (2008).

[40] Adhikari was a teacher at a Basic School in Pokhara during the Rana era. He went on to become a member of the first elected Parliament in 1959.

[41] One writer (editorial) however claims that the schools were opened due to economic reasons. Since educated people couldn't find jobs, they opened schools so as to earn their livelihood (NS 2010 v.s.a).

The selection of the English school model thus was deliberate. Though it was not envisaged as an arena to directly confront the rulers, it nevertheless was a subtle means to expand access and influence of the "subjects" in the affairs of the state. On the one hand it provided an excuse to form a group, and reach out to larger sections of the society. On the other hand it challenged the Ranas' exclusive access to the corpus of knowledge which was available only in English. The Ranas were against imparting English education to the general populace because it would elevate the social positioning of the subjects thereby eliminating the differences between the rulers and the ruled. For the same reason, i.e., to bridge the gap, the activists wanted to promote English education, they wanted to be equals (Parajuli 2009).

In the meanwhile, the banned Nepali Congress party launched an armed struggle against the consolidation of power by the new prime minister in 1950. This armed struggle against the Rana autocracy ended in a compromise, popularly known as the Delhi Compromise, which ultimately saw the end of the regime. With the downfall of the family oligarchy of the Ranas began the age of *janajagaran* (public awakening), as many write and say, and the country took a new direction. An interim act was introduced with clearly defined political, social, and economic rights for the people.

"The zeal of the government as well as the public created a genuine atmosphere for the proper development of education in the country," writes Aryal (1970: 34). People all across the country became excited, creating new avatars of themselves as individuals and as associations: political parties, schools, libraries, literary organizations, theatre groups, clubs, newspapers and so on (Parajuli 2009). Kamal P. Malla calls the 1950s a "decade of extroversion. For it was a decade of explosion of all manner of ideas, activities, and organized efforts" (1979: 192). Yet though there was new zeal, the new government did not seem to have a clear vision of where and how to move ahead. The old machinery had collapsed but the new set-up was yet to be structured or established (Shahi 2052 v.s.). With

the formation of an interim coalition government, a new education ministry was created and some changes were made.[42] However, no concrete national education policy was formed despite repeated calls for such a policy. The pages of *Nepal Shiksha* are filled with articles that demanded a "national" policy that is not a copycat of other countries but is suitable to the needs and requirements of the country (see, e.g., Pandey 2009 v.s.; Swar 2010 v.s.; Chhipa 2010 v.s.; Singh 2010 v.s.; Prasad 2010 v.s.; Neupane 2011 v.s.). One of the reasons for failing to devise such a policy was political instability. Within four years of political change there were five ministers who headed the education ministry.[43]

But the absence of a concrete policy did not matter much to education enthusiasts all across the country. They went ahead with what they wanted, which was definitely not Basic School. The Basic Education approach had already lost its shine or luster, if it ever existed in the first place.[44] The new Education Minister Nripa Jang

[42] On 22 April 1951 a meeting, *shiksha sabha,* was called to discuss various issues related to the future of Nepali education. The meeting recommended compulsory universal education, setting up a women's college, and a board comprised of *vidwan*s to formulate a national education policy (NS 2008 v.s.b: 250–254). The education ministry called another meeting on 26 July 1951 in which 200 people including high-ranking ministers B.P. Koirala, and Ganesh Man Singh participated (NS 2008 v.s.c). The education minister stated that the responsibility of managing the primary schools went to district *panchayat*s (NS 2008 v.s.d). A National Board of Education was also established in 1952 (Wood 1965; Sharma 2062 v.s.).

[43] Even after the political change, which ended in a compromise and a coalition ministry, a Rana by the name Nripa Jang Rana headed the education ministry. Another Rana Sharada Shamsher became the next education minister. There was also a change in the education department a few months before the political change. Mrigendra Shamsher, the Director General, left for India in November 1950 and his son Bharat Shamsher replaced him (NS 2007 v.s.c).

[44] The editorials and contributors in the *Nepal Shiksha* continued to deride the existing English education (and a few also derided Sanskrit) and defended the criticism targeted at Basic Education. "What's the use of the hand in the machine age?," ask people. "But, this is like asking why the child that is just born is not able to speak or earn," wrote one (Badrinath 2011 v.s.: 15–16). He added,

Rana was astounded by this public demand for English education. He noted that "there is only demand for English education in Nepal today" and asked, "why is it so?" (NS 2008 v.s.a: 200; see also NS 2011 v.s: 19). A writer lamented the gradual decline of Basic Education: "I'm telling you with great *lachari* (helplessness) that the parents have stopped sending their children to basic schools for they think that their kids will be spoiled if they go to a school where they only teach how to make yarn (*katai garne*)" (Bahadur 2008 v.s.: 218). Yet another tried to defend the Basic Education system thus:

> Many people think that Basic Education hinders higher education. They say this was introduced only to stop pupils from getting higher education. Other people think that this education only produces fishermen and farmers. This is not true. Basic Education is that education which is based on industry. In other words it is called Basic Education because its base is industry.…But, unfortunately, the Ranas initiated it and people were suspicious,…they began to say *dal me kuch kala hai* (something is fishy). (Joshi 2007 v.s.: 175)

A teacher at a Basic School looked nostalgically at the growth (and decline) of Basic Schools: "In the last six years of its existence it has spread all across the country.…People were talking about it all the time.…There was no English school where Basic Education was not initiated" (Swar 2009 v.s.: 339–340). "But," he lamented, "the growth of the Basic Education is now limited. The importance of this education in the last three years compared to the previous three years has diminished. It is slackening." And he concluded with an elegy: "The motion of the spinning wheels has stopped. The handlooms have lost their consciousness. The boat of Basic Education is overturned by the storm and is drowning" (Swar 2009 v.s.: 341).

"The existing English education hasn't injected the love of the country in the pupil. It just had made them passive and parasitic" (Badrinath 2011 v.s: 17).

Indeed, the elegy was prophetic. The state patronage once enjoyed by Basic Education was gradually declining even though there had been some efforts to make it attractive.[45] On 25 May 1952, the ministry of education called another grand meeting to "completely change the primary education system" in which the learned/erudite and the educators participated. The meeting decided unanimously to morph all primary education systems (English, *Bhasha*, Basic, Sanskrit) into one education system (P.N. Sharma 2009 v.s.: 223–227).[46] With this the foundation of the Basic Education system totally collapsed. However, Basic Education as such still continued. In the year 2009 v.s. (1952–1953), the sixth batch of teachers was trained, and from that year 10 women were also trained as teachers to meet the demand for female teachers (NS 2010 v.s.b). In 1953 there were 23 primary schools, 13 middle schools, and 14 high schools offering Basic Education in which a total of 250 teachers and around 12,000 students were engaged (NS 2011 v.s.: 19).

Finally, in 1954, the government constituted the National Educational Planning Commission for the "orderly development of education in Nepal" (Pandey, K.C. and Wood 1956; Wood 1965). It collected data on education for the first time and also sought suggestions from the public. "After the hard work of a year," the commission submitted a voluminous report on 1 March 1955,

[45] A notice of the Basic Education Center says that if a fifth grade Basic School graduate sits for additional law and book keeping exams then he will get a *madhyama* certificate, which is the same privilege that graduates of English schools enjoyed (NS 2007 v.s.d). Another report says, "The government has made a provision of providing 'Less-English' matriculation certificate to those students who have passed the eighth standard from the Basic high schools. By taking two additional English papers, they will get the matriculation certificate" (NS 2011 v.s.: 19).

[46] It was also decided in the meeting that primary education will be free and compulsory. English and Sanskrit would not be taught at the primary level. Primary education would be provided in the local language but the national language was also to be promoted alongside. Nepali language, general knowledge, maths, science, and health/physical training were to be part of the curricula (P.N. Sharma 2009 v.s.: 226).

"making recommendations on all aspects of education (Wood 1965)."[47] While it took time to get the report's recommendations implemented, it nevertheless formally heralded the end of the experiment that began nearly a decade earlier.[48]

CONCLUSION

The family oligarchy of the Ranas that lasted more than a century thus in general did not make any genuine effort to promote education. If anything the Ranas with a few exceptions actively worked against public welfare. For most of this period access to education was severely restricted and whatever growth there was was merely incidental. However, in public, the rulers more often than not posed as "promoters of education."

There was a policy turnaround especially after the assumption of power by Padma Shamsher Rana. From the existing policy of controlling public access to education, the new policy sought to control the minds of the masses by providing them "appropriate" knowledge. And, in the Basic Education system, Gandhi's brainchild, the Ranas saw salvation, which however was a contradiction. For the philosophy of Basic Education was emancipation and not control (see Sykes 1988; Kumar 1993). The Rana government formally introduced the Basic Education System in Nepal in 1947 and aimed to gradually replace the other existing education systems. The Basic Education policy and concomitant project of "controlling the mind" however didn't make much headway for a number of reasons. First,

[47] Hugh B. Wood, chief adviser to the commission, writes, "This commission of 56 members, widely representative of Nepalese leadership, worked intensively for a year (1954–1955) and drafted a long-range comprehensive plan of education for Nepal. Among its goals were: universal primary education by 1985, availability of adult education to all who desired by 1965, a national university by 1965, availability of multipurpose secondary education on the basis of one school for every 10 thousand population by 1975" (1965: 11).

[48] It is worth mentioning here that the Indian Basic Education experiment also did not make much headway and finally went into oblivion after 1960 (see Kumar 1993).

the champion of the idea, Padma Shamsher, couldn't focus on the project as he was embroiled in other matters of politics—he was facing opposition from his conservative fraternity as well as from the newly formed political parties aimed at overthrowing the Rana regime itself—and was eventually forced to abdicate. Second, the next ruler Mohan Shamsher Rana believed in the old way of ruling one's subjects (i.e., with an iron fist) and was thus skeptical of the idea of controlling their minds. The political situation didn't permit him to openly disavow the education system therefore it was continued but without much zeal. Third, the project was suspect in the public eye—there was a "trust deficit." Neither the "traditional" nor the "modern elites" believed that one had to study to be a farmer or a fisherman. This they had been doing for generations without going to school. The "traditional elites" were unhappy also because it was not imparting to their children any skills to perform rites and rituals. Conversely, the "modern elites" did not want to embrace it as it was passe in the "machine age" to be teaching handicrafts and farming but not English—the ticket to civilization and modernization. They also saw it as a Rana ploy to keep them in the "barbaric" or "dark age." As the elite group that became omnipresent after the political change of 1951 was awed by the discourses of modernity, the rustic Gandhian Basic Education system found few backers and was eventually replaced by "modern education." Thus the Truman Doctrine took over as the American professor Hugh B. Wood became Nepal's chief adviser on education and played a leading role in crafting Nepal's new education policy that sought a break from Rana-ruled Nepal.

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