

FROM SUBJECTS TO CITIZENS: THE FORMATIVE STAGE OF POLITICAL FORMATIONS IN POKHARA

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The “revolution” of 1950–51, which led to the downfall of more-than-a-century-old family autocracy of the Ranas (1846–1951), is perhaps the most written about event of Nepal’s history. And it continues to attract attention of the academics and amateurs alike. The focus of the historiography of this epochal movement, for the most part, has been on Nepali Congress-Tribhuvan combination and the regime change, and not on other actors and their own transformations. Kathmandu – Delhi axis has also been in focus, but the regional centres and towns have largely been left out by the researchers. Studies are few and far between when it comes to the efforts to mobilize public in various fronts in the wake of the movement, or when it comes to the detailed description and analysis of relative success/failure of the movement in various places across the country.¹ Given the prevalence of top-down mode of history writing in Nepal (see Onta 1994) this however is not very surprising.

Failure of the authors to incorporate the activities organised at the local level, or what they call “to do justice” to the struggles of the local public and the activists seems to have propelled many local actors to pen their own hi/stories (autobiographies, memoirs, articles), and fill the gap to an extent. For, these activists-authored contents show that they are not only discontented with the space rendered to their roles, activities, and “contributions,” but they also see the published accounts as biased, and distorted.

1 There however are a few exceptions such as Bhaveshwar Pangeni’s work on Palpa (Pangeni 2049 v.s.) as well as on the western region (Pangeni 2053 v.s.), and Narendra Nath Banstola’s work on the eastern region (Banstola 2053 v.s.). Himself a participant of the movement, Banstola was miffed at the scant (and also often distorted) attention paid to the struggles of the people of eastern region, or better say the then Jhapa district, which pushed him to write the “true history.” Likewise, the book by Bhuvan Lal Pradhan, an erstwhile activist, also provides a fairly good detail of the movement in Kathmandu valley, but the space it renders to describe the movement in other parts of Nepal is very scant, and unsatisfying (see Pradhan 2047 v.s.).

Take, for example, the case of Pokhara.² The Pokhareli struggle prior and during the momentous movement has found mention in a number of books, varying though in details (see, for instance, Adhikari and Seddon 2002, Basnet 2066 v.s., Joshi 2048 v.s., Pangenī 2053 v.s., Pradhan 2047 v.s., Sharma 2033 v.s., Subedi 2060 v.s. etc.). Four influential actors of the movement, namely, Mukti Nath Timisina, Min Bahadur Gurung, Rishi Keshav Parajuli, and Amrit Prasad Sherchan too have penned their autobiographies. We also have a brief biography of another important figure, Buddhist nun Dharma Shila (Gubhaju 2046 v.s.). Timisina was the first to write, and publish his biography titled *Mukti Nāth Timisinā*, and Gurung, who went on to become deputy minister in the first elected government, followed with his autobiographical book *Saṅgharśa Tuṅgiyeko Chaina* (The struggle is not [yet] over). Parajuli's autobiography *Janajāgarāṅko Satya Tathya: Pokharāko Euṭā Itihās* (True Facts of Janajāgarāṅ: A History of Pokhara) was published posthumously, whereas Sherchan's (incomplete) autobiography was serialized after his death in a local daily *Janamat*. Likewise, there are a number of other articles, mostly memoir pieces, of other actors scattered over various places.

In their accounts, the Pokhareli actors highlight their roles and detail the incidents on the one hand, and criticize some other authors for not being fair, for trying to distort history, or attempting to omit other peoples' history, on the other. For instance, in his autobiography, Mukti Nath Timisina, an important figure of early Pokhareli public life, criticises historian Bal Chandra Sharma (2033 v.s.) for not writing the truth, and also criticizes Shri Kant Adhikari for distorting the facts (Timisina 2040 v.s.: 11).³ Whereas Shri Kant Adhikari, another key figure during the movement, in an article, rebuked historians such as Bal Chandra Sharma (2033 v.s.), Bhaveshwor Pangenī (2053 v.s.), and Raja Ram Subedi (2060

2 Though this is the case all across Nepal, the case I deal here is related to the Pokhara region only.

3 Referring to the initial political formation and the subsequent movement of 1950–51 in Pokhara, Timisina writes, “In Bal Chandra's *Nepālko Aitihāsik Rūprekhā* Min Bahadur's name is mentioned and in *Rāṣṭriya Cāritra Aitihāsik Mahākāvya Śrī Kantjī* elevates himself and his friends from Lamjung in Pokhara. But to do so is opportunism, and is to kill people's *tapasyā*. Min Bahadurjī has contributed nothing to Pokhara's social and political sector before Magh 2007[v.s.]. He was a staunch supporter (param pujārī) of the autocratic Rana regime” (Timisina 2040 v.s.: 11).

v.s.) for distorting the history (see Adhikari 2061 v.s.).⁴ Interestingly however, the problem of “truth” also lingers on the local activists’ accounts, for they too are blamed by others, by their own former comrades, as being dishonest, and distorting the “truth.”⁵

Without falling into the trap of true/false binary,⁶ in this article I aim to provide an account of the formative stage of political formations in the Pokhara region leading up to the first popular movement of 1950–51. Based on published accounts as well as unpublished documents, and

4 I also had the chance to look at the books *Paścim Nepālmā Prajātāntrik Āndolan* written by Bhaveshwor Pangenī (2053 v.s.), and *Kāskī Rājyako Itihās* by Raja Ram Subedi (2060 v.s.) under Adhikari’s possession, in which he had marked “false,” “utterly false” by red ink on several paragraphs that dealt with political developments around Pokhara region.

5 In his autobiography Timisina also mentions other actors—some in positive, a few others in negative light. In it he accuses his arch rival Gurung for being an opportunist, for not opposing the Rana regime, but ripping the benefit by just hopping on after the success of the movement (Timisina 2040 v.s.: 11, 18). Gurung settles the score, so to say, with his own biography, in which he cites Timisina’s old ties with the Ranas (which Timisina also acknowledges) and accuses him of collaborating with them (Gurung 2043 v.s.: 37–38). Parajuli (2057 v.s.) and Sherchan (n.d.) though are not directly involved at throwing brickbats, yet they also stake claims (re: contributions and/or involvement in various local social initiatives), which do not always fit well with the narratives of other actors—scattered over various *smārikās* (souvenirs), articles and books.

Shri Bhadra Sharma, one of the key political figures, held grudges against researchers or journalists, for they even after listening to the “truth,” publish a “distorted” account. Yet, he too is criticized by his fellow comrades (of the past, such as Shri Kant Adhikari or Bhoj Raj Subedi) for not telling the “complete truth,” for never mentioning certain incidents. During my interview with Adhikari he repeatedly reminded me to write the “truth” because, he said, “nobody’s history should be omitted.” Bhoj Raj Subedi also echoed similar arguments several times during the interview. Subedi also criticized his fellow comrades Tara Nath Ranabhat, Mitra Lal Sapkota and Shri Bhadra Sharma either for making tall claims or for not telling the complete story.

6 Contrary to the incidents that are associated with shame, disgrace, or shock, in which people are found unable to express themselves for various reasons (some however try to put the issue under the carpet or invent cover stories for the explanation), the incidents that fetch social capital (not to mention economic capital) are fraught with various claims and counter claims (see Parajuli forthcoming, Rosenthal 1991, 2002). This makes it difficult for one to say anything conclusively or to be “objective.” And more importantly, in trying to be “accurate,” one might well lose the big picture, the process.

personal biographical interviews that I conducted with the activists involved in the early public life of Pokhara, I chart the individual and collective efforts to challenge the existing practices and norms as well as to bring changes in the polity, and elucidate the transformation process that was taking place at the local level. I argue that the entire process needs to be viewed as the struggle on the part of the local people to transform themselves from subjects to citizens.

In this article, I first describe how external efforts and internal interests converged to sow the seeds of political activism in Pokhara. In the next couple of sections I basically look at the various activities performed by the local actors, which are intertwined, and analyse the meanings of such acts, expressions and their impacts. I demonstrate that such activities as sporting particular dress, ploughing the field collectively, etc. performed by the members of the clandestinely formed political association(s) showcase the subtle but conscious resistance that was taking place. In the following section, I detail the process of establishing a “modern” school and argue that it was a politically motivated act to expand access and influence of the subjects in the state affair. The subsequent section covers what the locals have called the “revolution” and “counter-revolution,” as it occurred in Pokhara, and demonstrates how the activists following the developments elsewhere organised themselves, mobilised the public, and sought to challenge the regime. The “revolution” and “counter-revolution” also created cleavages among the public along “ideological lines” and concomitantly broke the caste-ethnic and class boundaries to an extent. All these incidents not only bear testimony to the growing political consciousness of the activists, but they also show that the activities were both explicitly and implicitly geared towards bringing in the polity that would recognize them as rights bearing citizens.

Prelude to Political Formation(s)

The waves of the Indian independence movement—from the British colonizers, which slowly took momentum after Mohandas K. Gandhi’s arrival in India from South Africa in the late 1920s, but was at its peak in the 1940s—had started to create ripples in Nepal, too. Influenced by the social reformers like Gandhi, Binobha Bhabhe, Gangadhar Tilak and others, social reform groups, like Arya Samaj, Paropakar Sangathan, Nagarik Adhikar Samiti, etc. began to take shape in Nepal in the 1920s (Upreti 1992). And, as in India, underground groups/organizations having political aim of overthrowing the regime also started to be formed. One

such organization was Praja Parishad, established in 1938, which had waged the “war,” be it only of words, against the Ranas (Fisher 1998; Gautam 1989).⁷ The party not only secretly disseminated pamphlets against the Ranas, but also published articles in Indian papers like *Janatā* exposing the Rana tyranny and ruthless exploitation.⁸ Given the repressive nature of the regime, the deed was indeed of bravery. But soon (in 1940) the Ranas cracked down the organization and its members were arrested; four of whom were ultimately sentenced to death on the charges of treason whereas some others were imprisoned for life (Gautam 1989; Rimal 2062 v.s.; Uprety 1992).⁹

Though all these events were centred in the Kathmandu valley, the information was circulating in many parts of Nepal. One such handwritten, lithographed Praja Parishad pamphlet also reached Pokhara, and perhaps beyond too. And the news of the killing of the activists also spread around via word to mouth; rumours spread faster than anything else. Besides, by executing the activists publicly, and dishonouring the dead ones, the Ranas wanted to give a clear message to would-be detractors, dissidents—nothing but death awaits. This definitely dissuaded some, but there were murmurs, subtle display of dissatisfaction or resistance, if not outright resentments (cf. Scott 1985). Rishi Keshav Parajuli as well as Min Bahadur Gurung in their autobiographies recollect the uneasiness in the air even in Pokhara after the public execution of Praja Parishad activists (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.).

However, things had begun to change rapidly after the Second World War. The British empire which once controlled a vast territory of the world had incurred heavy loss in the war, and was on the decline. The Indian independence movement was gearing up, and the British India government was facing uphill task containing the “revolutionaries.” Swayed by the Gandhian and the “nationalist” wave, a significant number of Nepalis were also participating in this independence movement (Chatterji 1967; Gupta 1993; Koirala 2008). The increasing possibility of the British, the closest Rana ally, quitting the India, and the growing

7 Prior to Praja Parishad, a group of four-five people had formed a group called Prachanda Gorkha with the aim of assassinating the high ranking Rana rulers (see Pradhan 2047 v.s., Singh 2040 v.s., Uprety 1992).

8 In the pamphlets they challenged the Ranas either to give up the tyrannical rule or be prepared to face the consequences. For the contents of these pamphlets see Gautam (1989), Fisher (1998).

9 Of the four, Shukra Raj Shastri was however not a member of the Parishad; he was an *Ārya Samājī* (Pradhan 2055 v.s.; Rimal 2062 v.s.).

participations of Nepalis in the movement brought worries in the Rana camp. Despite having no access to any technical means of communication—radio, telephone—and other sources like newspapers, etc., people of the hilly settlements like Pokhara also got to know about these political developments via pilgrims, students, *lāhures* (army men working in British India), traders, etc. (Pangeni 2053 v.s.).¹⁰ The Indian revolutionaries in run coming to Nepal in disguise as *sādhus* (sage/hermit) were the other major sources of information for Pokharelis (Parajuli 2057 v.s.).¹¹

When India was on the verge of becoming an independent nation state, efforts to organize Nepalis for political ends began to take roots in India. Prior to that it was only the idea of *unnati* (progress) of *jāti* (nation) and *bhāṣā* (language) which was the major driving force for the Nepalis to unite (see Chalmers 2003, Onta 1996). Now one more factor was in play.¹² And the objective was to change the regime, to establish democracy or *prajātantra* (lit. rule of subjects) in place of the rule of the Ranas. Those participating in these initiatives were the ones who were in exile for various reasons, including those who worked in the British

10 From 1949 onwards Pokhara too had a telephone network linked with Kathmandu and Palpa (Lamsal 2005). On the eve of the war, the Rana rulers had prohibited general people from listening to radio and had even confiscated radios from the public (Onta 2004).

11 Those charged of serious crimes or on wanted lists for political reasons would often escape to Nepal. These political activists would disguise themselves as *sādhus* or *bābās* (sage/hermit) to evade the suspect eyes of the police and informers as well as to escape from the hassles of obtaining visas, and visit many religious shrines. Muktinath in north central Nepal was one of the popular destination which one had to go via Pokhara. And, in Pokhara Narayansthan was one of the few places where such *sādhus* stayed. This was also a place where religious congregation or *satsaṅgas* held. Not only people came here to listen religious preaching or for spiritual talks but also to get themselves informed of outside world, to have discourse with the learned travelling *sādhus*, *santas*, and occasional revolutionaries, reformers. Rishi Keshav Parajuli recollects, how some of the *sādhus*, who apparently were political activists in run, would speak against the British government, and they would also be critical of the Rana government, a close ally of the British rulers (Pangeni 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; also Adhikari and Seddon 2002).

12 Prominent among the organizations set up by the Nepalis in Indian cities are All India Gorkha League, Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Rastriya Congress, Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha Congress, etc. The League also published papers like *Gorkhā Sansār* and *Taruṅ Gorkhā*.

Indian army but settled in India, as well as the students who went to various Indian universities from across the country to study (see Chauhan 1970; Joshi and Rose 1966; cf. Mikesell 1999).

Emulating the Indian National Congress, of which many Nepalis were already members, Nepali National Congress was established in 1947. This formation was highly publicized, and the party soon launched a labour strike in Biratnagar Jute Mill, in south eastern city of Biratnagar (Gautam 2055 v.s.; Gupta 1993; Joshi 2048 v.s.; Koirala 2055 v.s.). The Rana government was temporarily successful in quelling the agitation and arresting the participants. But soon the party initiated a *satyāgraha* (peaceful civil disobedience movement) demanding political reform and release of the detainees. The unprecedented participation in the *satyāgraha* in Kathmandu and in some cities of the Tarai as well as growing pressure from the leadership of the Indian National Congress—which after the withdrawal of the British was to run the government—made the somewhat liberal Rana prime minister Padma Shamsher give in. Many political prisoners were released, and the program of gradual reform, including preparation of the constitution was laid out (Adhikari 2059 v.s.; Joshi 2048 v.s.; Paramanand 1982).

But soon the conservative Rana camp forced Padma Shamsher to quit. Not only the promises (made by the predecessor) were not kept, the new ruler Mohan Shamsher (son of Chandra Shamsher) also quenched any sign of dissent. When it became evident that the country is reverting back to the old position, and there was no room for reform, the Nepali National Congress (NNC) reacted to the situation. They emphasized in organizational expansion, and at the same time made plans and preparations to launch a movement to overthrow the regime (Devkota 2036 v.s.; Gupta 1993; Koirala 2055 v.s.). Likewise, the ousted liberal Ranas and their supporters formed another political party, Nepal Democratic Congress (NDC), to topple the ruling Ranas by any means. Both the parties, NNC and NDC, sought to expand their base inside Nepal as well (Chatterji 1977; Gupta 1993; Paramanand 1982).

Whereas the Indian nationalist movement, and the Kathmandu-centric oppositional activities raised the curiosity, the political party formation with the specific aim of overthrowing the family oligarchy, and the (near certain) eviction of foreign rulers from India increased the interest among local actors to participate in the movement against Rana autocracy. These actors from inside Nepal, who had some knowledge of what was going on across the border, were also eager to make contacts with the political activists. Both sides thus were in a way vying to reach out to each other. It

is against this backdrop that “politics” made inroads into Pokhara. In the following section, I’ll explain the efforts of the parties’ to expand their base in Pokhara and subsequent Pokhareli reaction to such exercises.

Convergence of External Efforts and Internal Interests

When hard-liner Mohan Shamsher came to power in 1948 he revoked most of the decisions made by his predecessor Padma Shamsher. Reform seeking people were arrested, entities like libraries were seized (Parajuli 2007), and ruthless suppression followed. This increased the influx of social activists in north Indian cities who eventually joined the NNC or the NDC (Adhikari 2059 v.s.; Paramanand 1982). Reacting to the new political developments, both the parties not only initiated recruitment drive within India but also sent their emissaries to expand their party bases in major settlements all across Nepal (Koirala 2055 v.s.; Sharma 2056 v.s.). Pokhara was one such settlement where Shri Bhadra Sharma of the NNC and Hari Prasad Sharma of the NDC visited in different times, and worked towards expanding the organizational bases of their respective parties. It is imperative for us here to look at the strategies as well as the networks employed by the two political workers in order to understand the shaping up of the political formations in Pokhara.

Shri Bhadra Sharma was a student of Tindhārā Saṁskṛit Pāṭhśālā (school) in Kathmandu before he came into contact with the Congress party. When, in 2003 v.s. (c. 1947), he went to Banaras to take part in the *madhyamā* examination (equivalent to the intermediate level) he came under the influence of the newly established NNC.¹³ And, in 2004 v.s., when the students of Tindhara school commenced the agitation with their four-point demand, Sharma was one of the architects.¹⁴ This agitation, popularly known as *Jayatu Saṁskṛitam* (hail to Saṁskṛit) movement, caused a stir in Kathmandu as it was the first time that students, that too of a government run Saṁskṛit school, came out openly “against the

13 Nepal did not have any university of its own and the Saṁskṛit students had to go to Banaras to take part in the formal examinations. However for the “modern” education system, an examination centre was set up in Kathmandu after the establishment of Trichandra College in 1918. This college was affiliated to Patna University which set the curricula and conducted examinations (Sharma 2005/06).

14 One of which was the demand for establishing an examination centre in Kathmandu itself (Sharma 2054 v.s.).

regime.”¹⁵ When the student leaders who had participated in the movement, including Sharma, were expelled and banished from Kathmandu, most of them went to Banaras only to later join the oppositional parties (Sharma 2054 v.s.).¹⁶ As the political situation in Nepal worsened, and the party felt the need to expand its support base, Sharma was asked to work in the west no. 3 region which included today’s Lamjung, Tanahu (Sharma’s home district) and Kaski/Pokhara district. A young student that he was, when he first arrived in Pokhara from Banaras with some pamphlets and Congress documents, he did not have any contacts in Pokhara. He did not know who to approach and how to. After secretly disseminating some pamphlets he headed to his area, Bandipur, where he had acquaintances who would help in his mission.¹⁷

Situated some 60 kilometers east of Pokhara, Bandipur was another important settlement of the region. Hailing from a nearby village, Sharma had acquaintances in Bandipur and the NNC had already made some presence there. Sharma was looking for a person who could help him connect to prospective Congress members in Pokhara. Kadam Kumar Piya, a merchant of Bandipur, knew Prem Raj Mulmi, the son of a Pokhareli trader who had studied in the JP High School in Kathmandu (Sharma 2056 v.s.). Piya came all the way to Pokhara and introduced Sharma to Mulmi, a young lad in his twenties.¹⁸ Though young, because of his educational status, and also because of his awareness of the happenings within and outside of the country, Mulmi had already found a place in a loose network of seniors like Rishi Keshav Parajuli, Dharma Shila, Mukti Nath Timisina, Sundar Prasad Marsani, Daya Shankar Palikhe, Shri Kant Adhikari, etc.¹⁹ These people were in their thirties. They were educated to an extent, had some knowledge of the outside world, and were eager to do something for the society they were in. They met regularly either at Mulmi’s shop/residence or at the *Bihār* at Nadipur where the Buddhist nun Dharma Shila resided. When Shri Bhadra Sharma explained the rationale of his coming, and sought support, the first person Mulmi turned to was Rishi Keshav Parajuli, a young man in his early

15 It was not apparently against the regime per se, but some have explained it that way (see, e.g., Sharma 2054 v.s.).

16 Altogether 38 students were expelled, of which a few hailed from Pokhara.

17 Interview with Shri Bhadra Sharma. See also Sharma (2056 v.s.).

18 Interview with Shri Bhadra Sharma.

19 At that time Mulmi was among the very few to study up to 10th grade in a “modern” school, i.e., a school where English was taught.

thirties, who, influenced by Gandhi, wore homespun clothes (Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Sharma 2056 v.s.).²⁰

As Rishi Keshav Parajuli and friends were themselves eager to make contact with the political parties in India, Sharma's job was not that difficult; he had found the appropriate person. Within a few days some ten locals—friends of Parajuli and Mulmi—were ready to be part of this underground initiative, to be part of the Congress. They gathered in front of the Bindhyabasini temple at midnight and took a vow, and signed the membership card with their blood to become members of the party.²¹ Sharma returned after handing over the responsibilities to the newly formed group to augment party activities in the region (Sharma 2056 v.s.).

This was thus the first association of its kind to be formed in Pokhara. It was different from all other types of organizations that existed prior to it. It was organized secretly, had an "ideology," however ill-defined that may have been, and had specific aims—of overthrowing a political regime and establishing *prajātantra*, a new concept used as the equivalent of the English word democracy. Not only was the member selection procedure different, but also the members came from different caste groups—from Brahman *purohit* (priest) to Newar and Thakali youths from trading families. In this new social formation aimed for modern system of governance, old symbols were used, but they were raised to a higher level by invoking god, and the contract, in the form of membership, was signed by their own blood.

Around the same time, Hari Prasad Sharma of the second Congress party (NDC) also arrived in Pokhara in order to expand the party organization.²² He was not from the region, and not much is known about him, but the strategy that he employed was different than what Shri Bhadra Sharma had used. During those days travelling across the border/checkpoints was not easy, but since the latter (Shri Bhadra) was a student he could easily justify his travel. However it was not the case for

20 Parajuli was educated up to Samskrit *madhyamā* and was a family *purohit* (priest—one who performed life-cycle rites) in a number of traders' families of the town, and was a well known and respected figure.

21 Present that day in this secret meeting, according to Shri Bhadra Sharma, were Rishi Keshav Parajuli, Bhakta Raj Mulmi, Mathura Prasad Bajimaya, Dil Bahadur Bhari, Govinda Bahadur Vaidya, Jhapat Bahadur Bhattachan, Ram or Chin Bahadur Badgami (one of the two), and probably Daya Shankar Palikhe (Sharma 2056 v.s.: 12).

22 Adhikari and Seddon (2002: 32) incorrectly identify Hari Prasad with Prem Chaitanya Brahmachari.

others like Hari Prasad. Moreover, carrying materials that apparently were against the regime was not that easy. So, Hari Prasad entered Pokhara with the party documents (pamphlets, etc.) in the disguise of a *sādhu*.²³ As I mentioned above, *sādhus* or *bābās* had special position in Hindu society, and perhaps even more so in Pokhara because two sages (celibates, *Brahmacāris*) from outside had been running two *brahmacaryāśrams* (hermitage or *gurukul* type schools) in Pokhara and were heartily embraced by the locals.

A few days after his arrival in Pokhara, two youths of Masbar in southern Pokhara, namely Tek Nath Baral and Hom Nath Baral spotted this one-eyed *sādhu* or *kānā-bābā*, as he is popularly known in Pokhara, and greeted him. They were returning home from their *aḍḍā* (hang out place), i.e., Prem Raj Mulmi's shop.²⁴ Hari Prasad Sharma was looking for an opportune moment, so when he saw two "educated-sounding" young men he did not waste time. After a brief conversation, the two took *bābā* along to their house, and later they even built him a thatched hut in a nearby hill, a kilometre away from their residences.

After a few days' intermingling Hari Prasad confided them his real identity and the purpose of his visit to Pokhara. He also gave them the materials that he had brought with him. Since Tek Nath Baral was also among the students expelled during the *Jayatu Saṃskṛitam* movement, and was already in contact with the Congress during his stay at Banaras, it was no surprise that they followed *kānā-bābā*'s line. Initially local youths like Purna Bhadra Adhikari, Hom Nath Baral, Tek Nath Baral, Agni Prasad Baral, etc., became members, and under Hari Prasad's guidance, they put efforts to bring new members into the fold. Unlike Shri Bhadra Sharma who left it into the hands of local youths, Hari Prasad himself coordinated the recruitment drive. But, after some time the rumour of his involvement in underground political activities reached the governor (baḍāhākim) Dhan Shamsher Rana's office. Subsequently, an order was issued to raid his *kuṭī* (hut), and arrest the *bābā*. However, the information was leaked. The local youths managed to send the *bābā* to Mukti Nath Timisina's house at Batulechaur in the north of Pokhara in the wee hours,

23 There are differences of opinion regarding the name of the *bābā* as well as how he came into contact with these two locals and his subsequent activism (see Adhikari and Seddon 2002; Gurung 2043 v.s.; Pangen 2053 v.s.; PN Baral 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Saraswoti 2053 v.s.; Tika Ram 2053 v.s.; TN Baral 2053 v.s. etc.).

24 It is general practice to greet a sage and receive his blessings.

before the raid took place. After a few days, Timisina managed to send him secretly out of Pokhara (Adhikari and Seddon 2002; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Saraswoti 2053 v.s.; Timisina 2040 v.s.).

These two different initiatives of expanding the party organizations in Pokhara gave rise to new social formations which were different from the organizations that existed until then. Till then what Pokharelis had in terms of associational lives were a few *guthis* (trusts), especially amongst the Newar community. These were basically kinship based, and were organized for some specific purposes, e.g., to conduct religious rites of specific gods/deities, or to provide help in carrying out death rites (called *sī guthī*).²⁵ In such *guthis* leadership was based on seniority by birth, and in fact they often reproduced the social hierarchy. Other community works, for the public benefit, such as conserving water resources (wells, etc.) or forest resources, or making canals, bridges, etc., came under the domain of the village leadership, called *mukhiyās* and *jimmāwāls*.²⁶ In the case of such village organizations under traditional leadership, the idea of membership at one's volition or free entry and exit virtually did not exist, for those entities were united more by coercive measures than by choice of an individual. The newly set up associations that came into existence in the late 1940s, in the form of political parties, were thus very different from the traditional organizations. And, when the seeds of political parties were sown, they slowly started to take roots and grow. But in the absence of fundamental civil liberties, political activities took off slowly and subtly in various shapes and forms, which I detail in the following sections.

Various Modes of Expression

Let us now turn our attention to post-recruitment stage, and to some of the activities performed by these “modernizing elites”²⁷ which at the outset may look trivial, but are important as they showcase the subtle but conscious resistance that took place (cf. Scott 1985). After the arrival of

25 The mourning period is usually 13 days; should there be no support, it becomes difficult to perform such rites. Interviews with Tanka Man Napit and Tirtha Shrestha.

26 *Mukhiyā* was generally a traditional village leader whereas *jimmāwāl* was a contractor who would collect land related and other revenues. A person could also hold both positions (see also Regmi 1976, 1978).

27 I borrow the term “modernizing elites” from LS Baral (1977). Baral uses this term to refer to those activists who were committed to the modernization of polity and politics in general.

the Congress, a change in sartorial style was observed. It does not seem to be a strategically planned affair, but there was a gradual increase in the number of people who wore homespun cloth (*khādi* or *khaddar* in Nepali). And, instead of traditional *lavedā-suruwāl*, new *kurthā-suruwāl* or *kurthā-paijāmā* became popular.²⁸ People were also seen sporting what is called *Jawāhar koṭi*.²⁹ These attires were associated with the Congress party of India, or basically with the activists of the independence movement there. Since most of those who founded the NNC had also participated in the Indian nationalist movement, these clothes remained as the sartorial choice of the Nepali activists. Following the leaders, members of the two Nepali Congress parties too began to wear them which showed their symbolic allegiance to the oppositional group.³⁰

In his memoir, Rishi Keshav Parajuli sees the connection between his attire and his removal from the post of secretary of the school managing committee of Pokhara Public Middle School:

The school was running smoothly. [I] think it was the summer of 2007 [v.s.]. I used to sport clean white *kurthā-suruwāl*, and also used to carry some social-political books with me. Maybe because of the suspicion [of my political involvement], a conspiracy was hatched secretly to oust me from the post of secretary. I was forced to call the meeting of the managing committee ... and was forced to resign. My request to allow me to continue to serve in the school either in the capacity of a member or of an adviser went unheard. Freed of responsibilities, I got further immersed in politics (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 9).

The following account of Netra Pani Gautam further explicates the meaning associated with the dress:

28 *Lavedā* is different from *kurthā* and even the *suruwāl* or pajamas of both set differ. The pajamas which are parallel all through instead of the traditional pajamas which are tight at the lower end, became popular.

29 Also pronounced *juwārikoṭi*, sleeveless/waistcoat named after Jawaharlal Nehru of India.

30 Giriya Prasad Koirala in his serialised memoir published in *Nepal* weekly talks of the incident in which he was barred by the director Mrigendra Shamsher Rana of Trichandra College from wearing *kurthā-paijāmā* in the college, and how he with the help of his friends defied the order (Koirala 2007: 8). According to MP Koirala, “a commoner could never dare to don a Western hat or dress; he could not even dress in the Indian Sherwani and Churidars.” Those who did were “followed by the police which tried to implicate them in political offences” (Koirala 2008: 31).

I was a young *nausindā* (low level worker) in the local court. Some people used to wear *kurthā-suruwāl*, which was distinct from what others in general wore. Following the ‘fashion,’ I also got my tailor to make similar outfit for the Dashain of 2007 v.s. (1950). As all the workers were required to receive *ṭikā* from their respective senior officers, and also from the *baḍāhākim*, I first went to see my senior putting my new clothes on. But the officer got enraged when he saw me in such a dress; and he not only slapped me but also made me remove my clothes and walk back home naked.... Later only did I know from my father that such an attire was associated with certain political faith.³¹

At another incident, when the Rana governor visited the Basic school (ādhār school) at Batulechaur, students as well as the local dalits greeted the *baḍāhākim* with *namaste* as against the usual practice of *swasti* for the Rana rulers.³² *Swasti*, mostly used for the rulers, connoted more of subjecthood and required one to stoop a bit whereas *namaste* is more of a neutral greeting used for welcoming and also for paying respect. Afterwards, when the governor gave a speech, the students clapped. All this was concocted by Mukti Nath Timisina, a teacher at the school who also was an influential socio-political activist of Pokhara. Though a former *cākaridār*³³ in the Rana court for a decade, Timisina had stood up against the practice of *swasti*.³⁴ Both acts (namaste as well as clapping) were unacceptable as per the existing norms. This act was criticized by the members of the governor’s entourage, and later an “order” arrived in which it was stated that the students should not do *namaste*. However, no additional action was taken against Mukti Nath Timisina (Timisina 2040 v.s.: 15–16). This was yet another symbolic act of unbecoming of subject on the part of the social activists.

31 Interview with Netra Pani Gautam.

32 *Swasti* is the Nepali version or imitation of the Muslim greetings, *ādāb*. We see many practices, words, etc. imitated from the ruling elites of India, or of Nawabs by Nepali ruling elites. In his *Ātmavrittānta* BP Koirala talks about an incident when the Rana ruler Mohan Shamsher chastised him for not doing *swasti* (Koirala 2055 v.s.: 107).

33 *Cākaridār* is the one who visits the rulers’/authorities’ office/residence in order to show his subservience and also to seek jobs or favours.

34 Mukti Nath Timisina held a translator’s job at the Nepali Bhasha Prakashini Samiti, which earned him the pandit title, but was later jailed for a brief period (see Timisina 2040 v.s.).

If the changes in the sartorial style was an implicit act of showing allegiance, or even following the fad (as in the case of the low level government worker, Netra Pani Gautam), the other act (of Timisina) was a well thought out symbolic but subversive action against the Rana authority by an individual. There were also collective, concerted actions; some again of not much importance in face value, but others with far reaching impact, and for the larger good. Let me explicate a few.

After becoming member of the political party, the activists decided to break the practice of not sharing the *hukkā* (tobacco, with water pipe) amongst themselves (Timisina 2040 v.s.).³⁵ It was the first step by this political formation in breaking the caste hierarchy. On another occasion, the activists decided to plough the field. Some one and half dozen of these activists went to a paddy field near Fewa Lake and ploughed there (Timisina 2040 v.s.; see also Pangenī 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Subedi 2002).³⁶ Though the “upper castes” did work in the field, ploughing used to be the job exclusively of the so called “lower castes.” If the sharing of *hukkā* broke barriers within the group, the ploughing event sent a message to the wider public of such a breaking. This again was a symbolic move, for the activists did not seem to continue working in the field afterwards. The act is all the more important because the activists collectively went on to stage this act knowing the fact that the same authority (governor) had arrested some Brahmins who some months ago had similarly broken the “tradition” collectively in a village called Duradada—now in Lamjung district (see Adhikari 2002; Subedi 2002; Timisina 2040 v.s.).³⁷ The news of their throwing away the caste (*jāt phāleko*) spread fast, and the activists had to face problems in the family itself; a few were reprimanded in the neighbourhood. For example, when Dil Bahdur Bhari, son of a merchant, reached home he was beaten up by his father publicly and was thrown out of his house. In their memoirs, Rishi Keshav Parajuli and Mukti Nath Timisina write about the difficulties that their family members had to face in the neighbourhood because of their deed. They were considered defiled, and were barred from using the common water source, as they

35 Brahmins and Newars were not supposed to use the same pipe.

36 In the same meeting Mukti Nath Timisina shared the manuscript of his book *Māritwa ra Dharma Pustak*, published later in 1950 from Banaras. This important book voices against women’s subjugation and also challenges the holy scriptures. I have discussed it elsewhere (Parajuli forthcoming).

37 Mukti Nath Timisina claims that he had ploughed in his field during the Second World War when there was shortage of labour as most able-bodied persons were drafted in the army (Timisina 2040 v.s.: 10).

might pollute other peoples' water (Adhikari 2002; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Timisina 2040 v.s.). Though nobody was arrested, this event created ripples in the whole society.

Apart from these small events, two major incidents, one of construction and the other of destruction, occurred in Pokhara prior to the commencement of the movement in 1950. These two events, in which the activists had important roles to play, significantly impacted the socio-political landscape of Pokhara. In the following sections I describe them in some length.

“Modern” School as a Political Arena

Most of the Pokhareli activists, who in some way had come together over a period of time, had slowly and subtly been casting their individual and collective influence in the society by the late 1940s. With the establishment of contacts with the newly set up Nepali political parties in India, they were also connected to the outside world. These activists were not fully immersed or guided by some distinct political ideology. Yet, there was some common thread—that of the desire to “emancipate Nepalis from the tyrannical regime” and achieve general welfare for the public at large—that was binding them together, as their memoirs illustrate (see, e.g., Adhikari 2056 v.s.a; 2056 v.s.b; 2061 v.s.; Gurung 2043 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Sherchan n.d.; Timisina 2040 v.s.). The activists were working in two fronts: one, they were clandestinely working to expand the party base, and two, they were involved in addressing various social issues pertaining to the society they lived in. And education was at the core of their social activism. Since about 1948 several activists had been involved in an exercise to establish a “modern” school, which came to fruition in late 1949. Why were they running after this alien, so called “modern” education, also derogatorily referred to as “cow-eating” education?³⁸ What was the politics behind all this? Or were they just following the bandwagon? In order for us to understand this phenomenon we have to take a closer look at different dynamics, and at the local discourses centred on the school.

On Mangsir 20, 2006 v.s. (December 1949) Pokhara finally saw its first “modern” school—Pokhara Public Middle School

38 English are beef-eaters and hence their education was dubbed as ‘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 Hindus as they worship cows.

(PPMS)³⁹—established in a few *pauwās* (resting place for pilgrims/travellers) of Narayansthan. This school was perceived as Pokharelis’ formal entry into what was called “civilized society” (*savya samāj*) (Marsani 2022 v.s.). How exactly the school came into being is debatable for there are a number of personal accounts available that do not match—everyone seems busy highlighting one’s own contribution.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, what is clear from these accounts is that it was a collective effort on the part of the activists; some were more active than others.

After discussing among themselves for more than a year, the activists finally decided to push the idea of establishing the English/modern school further. When, on one occasion, the regional education director Ram Singh Thakuri, based in Tansen, came to Pokhara to inspect the Basic school, the activists—Mukti Nath Timisina, Rishi Keshav Parajuli, Dharma Shila, Sundar Prasad Marsani, and the likes—voiced their concern (Marsani 2022 v.s.; Parajuli 2056 v.s.). Thakuri agreed to write a supportive report on their petition to the Rana prime minister. He also advised them to collect five to seven thousand rupees for the purpose, and to mention this fact in the letter, which, according to him, would help their bid (Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Timisina 2040 v.s.). Elated by the encouraging discussion, they began to collect signatures for the petition as well as seek donations to finance the school (because if the government were to be asked for finances, it was more likely that they wouldn’t receive the permission). Collecting consent (signatures), and donations for the school however was by no means an easy task.

If we look at the profile of the activists involved in the opening the PPMS, we find that they had been separately involved in propagating different types of education—from voluntarily teaching children in their neighbourhood to running a *Bihār*, or *Brahmacaryāśram*, as well as the Basic school.⁴¹ But their collective activism was centred on promoting

39 Note the English name, written in Devnagari or Nepali script.

40 Mukti Nath Timisina, Rishi Keshav Parajuli, Min Bahadur Gurung, Sundar Prasad Marsani, and Birendra Kumar Bataju all claim primacy of their roles in establishing the PPM School (see, e.g., Gurung 2043 v.s.; Marsani 2022 v.s.; Pant 2065 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Timisina 2040 v.s. etc.).

41 There were at least two *Brahmacaryāśrams* in Pokhara, and in one of them the involvement of local activists is evident. The *Bihār* was managed by Dharma Shila, an activist, who taught girl children from her neighbourhood. It was Mukti Nath Timisina, another local leader, who was responsible for setting up the Basic school in Pokhara. While establishing the school Timisina met with some opposition from the “conservative” section (Timisina 2040 v.s., see also

what they called *ādhunik* (modern) education. The focus on the “modern,” the primacy of English, and the group involvement distinguishes the opening of PPMS from other previous educational endeavours. Despite being themselves involved in Saṁskrit and *bhāṣā* (language, i.e., Nepali) schools, and despite the government’s policy to financially promote basic schools, the actors chose to establish a school, which they themselves had to fund and manage.

One simple argument for such a crave for modern school 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 to deviate from the government policies, if not defy them outright. The justification for such education furnished by an activist in trying to convince one of the riches (also the *faujdār*⁴²) who had declined, even after repeated requests, to sign the petition, also illustrates this:

Uncle, see, this type of school will ultimately benefit people like you. Being a businessman, you have to go abroad to buy goods. When you know English it is easier to communicate, otherwise you’ll be like a dumb person. Time has changed. The countries with such education have progressed tremendously, they have opened a lot of industries and have prospered. We [our generation] couldn’t do anything, but when a school is established, our children will also be *jānne-sunne* (knowledgeable);

Adhikari 2061 v.s.; Baniya 2061 v.s.) because of his attempts to bring the children of every resident, including girls and dalits, in the school. It is not clear if he was able to bring dalit children in the school immediately, but a girl’s name, Lok Kumari Chhetrini, appears in the list of top students in the primary level (see the result of the examination of Bindhyabasini Aadhar School published in *Nepāl Śikṣā* 4(3): 223). The school became an “eye shore” for the local conservatives and they sent complaint letters to the district and central authorities (Timisina 2040 v.s.). This opposition did not deter Timisina from what he was doing, instead it pushed him closer towards other like-minded activists and helped cement their camaraderie. One year later, another teacher Shri Kant Adhikari of Lamjung—who also had come into contact with the Congress Party (NNC) when he was in Banaras—joined him at the school (Adhikari 2061 v.s.). After the school-hours, Adhikari recalls, they usually travelled to the bazaar where they met Rishi Keshav Parajuli, Prem Raj Mulmi, Sundar Prasad Marsani, Dharma Shila, Daya Shankar Palikhe and others, and spent hours discussing various issues, some times petty, but other times issues pertaining to the society, especially, politics, and education. Interview with Shri Kant Adhikari.

42 A *faujdār* is a district level legal officer who also doubled as a land revenue officer.

industries will be established, goods will be produced in our country too, and we will no have to rely on others (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 8).

The wealthy businessman retorted to religion and reminded the Brahman activist his caste and his *dharma*. According to him, a Brahman's son promoting the cow-eaters' education was a shameful and sinful act:

You're a son of a Brahman and [still] telling [us] that you're opening a *gāi-khāne* [i.e. English, lit. cow-eating] school; [if you] say you want to open a Samskrit school, [we] will provide required support, but definitely not to *gāi-khāne vidyā* [cow-eating education]; go (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 8).

The activist responded calmly, "If that is the case, you shouldn't drink water from the tap, you shouldn't be involved in the cloth-business, and you shouldn't also travel in train or in motor-car while in a pilgrimage" (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 8). Here we see the modernity discourse permeating the minds of Pokhara-based activists, and because of this even the religious card was not effective against them any more. Modern education thus was the answer to all what they lacked compared to the outside world; it was panacea for all the modern amenities that was not available in Pokhara.

English education was required not only for material progress or technological advancement, but also because it was the emancipatory path to a "civilized society," and path to enlightenment. Another activist Mukti Nath Timisina writes in his memoir:

In a city like Pokhara, there was not even a single matriculated person, but there was an increasing interest towards education. Some elderly men would say why do we need English; general book-keeping and some legal knowledge would be enough. But the demand of the time was to become a civilized society (*yugle savya samājsaṅga sambandha rākhna khojeko thiyō*) (Timisina 2040 v.s.: 19).

According to these activists, the only way to transform the "savages" into the "civilized" ones was to give them a dose of English, modern education. So pressing were the demands, and so overwhelming was the justification that even the die-hard opponents like the businessman quoted above finally yielded. The Samskrit or *bhāṣā* school did not quite fulfil the demands of the time, writes the joint secretary Sundar Prasad Marsani of the PPMS, "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 suhāudo*)" (Marsani 2022 v.s.: 2). Rishi Keshav Parajuli, the founding secretary, in his speech during the inaugural ceremony of the

school echoes the similar theme of “time” and “prestige,” and moves a step further to invoke patriotism:

It may seem that there is no immediate benefit from the school, except pouring money into it.... But, in this 20th century, only to think of a few rupees and not establish the school would have been the big sin of ours, a disregard to motherland, as well as shame for our Pokhara district. All that is over now (Parajuli 2006 v.s.: 170).

Embracing “cow-eating” education thus was not against the religion, rather it was just the opposite. It was “sin” not to have embraced the “timely” education. In addition, there was this wave of competition amongst the regions to establish modern schools. As all neighboring market centers of the region like Baglung or Bandipur—not to mention Tansen, the regional headquarters—had already had *ādhunik* schools, the Pokhareli activists sped up their effort to establish a similar school in their district. A school (and not *pāṭhśālā*) was a marker of *ādhunikatā* (modernization/modernity) and they did not want to be lagging behind (*pichaḍiyeko* or backward). Writes, Rishi Keshav Parajuli in his memoir:

English schools have already been opened in major cities across Nepal, including Palpa but nobody was coming forward [to do so] in such an important city like Pokhara. This made me uncomfortable. I began discussing the issue with the rich and noblemen of Pokhara; some said they would help, but none agreed to take a lead, so I myself decided to step in (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 7).

Ultimately, the central government granted permission to open the school. But other challenges lied ahead. Foremost among them was the unavailability of the teachers who could teach English, because except the *baḍāhākīm* (district governor), his son, and a couple of others, nobody knew English (Gurung 2043 v.s.). Students were available but teaching materials, school building, furnitures, etc. were not. Collecting the promised donation was another problem. And besides, there was continuing opposition to the idea. The *baḍāhākīm*, 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 20th century. Ultimately the school side won” (Parajuli 2057 v.s.: 14). The chair later banned the morning prayer just because it was a “Gandhian prayer, propounded by the [Indian] Congress,” as Min Bahadur Gurung puts it (Gurung 2043 v.s.: 23), and also sacked the secretary Rishi Keshav Parajuli on the suspicion of being a Congress member, as Parajuli claims.

It would however be erroneous if we view the setting up of the PPMS as mere lure for *ādhunikatā* (modernization) or simply as the decision to join the school-opening regional bandwagon. We have to move a step further to analyse how the term *vidyā* (knowledge/education) was appropriated by both the state and by the social actors. If the late Rana regime was appropriating education to further its interests, the actors, too, were involved in a similar effort, i.e., to meet their own ends. More than anything else, the activists coming together to establish the so-called “modern school” was a “politically motivated subversive act,” as Tej Nath Ghimire puts it.⁴³ Shri Kant Adhikari writes, “The middle school was not only a school, it was also a special institution to fight against the autocratic Rana regime” (Adhikari 2056 v.s.b: 17).

The social activists who in some way had been active in the early Congress-related political formations required an avenue where they could meet, organize themselves openly but still not attract the attention of the spies of the local Rana functionaries. PPMS in that sense fitted very well in their scheme of things. They could always argue that the school was just for knowledge’s sake, i.e., apolitical/value neutral institution, even though it was not. In the past the Rana government could outright obstruct such initiatives, but in the late 1940s they needed an excuse. They needed some sort of evidence to indict the actors due to the then recent changes in national and international political scenario. And, increasingly, hardcore political actors were using schools as covert means to expand their base across the country.⁴⁴

The effort to set up the school not only brought like-minded activists together—some of them were already united under the banner of the political party—it also provided them an opportunity to understand each other better. It was also a means to keep abreast of the views of the public, and to identify possible allies. But since the school-initiative required participation of the whole society, and even a slight indication of political actors’ involvement in it could jeopardize the entire effort, the actors kept the school out of politics. And they tried to incorporate all the stakeholders including the most conservative section of Pokhareli society since the latter were the ones with money to finance the school.

43 Interview with Tej Nath Ghimire.

44 Indeed, this practice continued, and even flourished during the Panchayat period when most of the social sphere was under the grip of the state, which I have discussed elsewhere (Parajuli forthcoming).

The selection of English school 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 state affair. 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 exclusivity of the Ranas’ access to the corpus of knowledge available only in English. The Ranas were against imparting English education to the general populace because it would elevate the social position of the subjects thereby eliminating the differences between the rulers and the ruled.⁴⁵ Whereas the activists wanted to promote the English education for the same reason, i.e., to level the gulf that existed between the two groups. The activists wanted to be equals. Neither side however would openly say so. The establishment of the PPMS thus needs to be viewed as the process of unbecoming of the subject. Because prior to that (and also in Panchayat days), anything of public concern was state affair, and by getting involved in such activities, the activists were also expanding their boundaries, their rights as citizens, and making claims that they should have some say in shaping their destiny.

The establishment of the PPMS is also significant for it necessitated an organization/association in the form of the school managing committee. Though the political parties (NNC and NDC) had already set up their organizational base, there was no such committee formed. Only after the end of the movement of 1950–51 do we see a local committee of the party formed in Pokhara. The school committee was headed by the governor (sabhāpati or the chair) whereas Rishi Keshav Parajuli was appointed its “secretary” (no Nepali equivalent used) and Mukti Nath Timisina was appointed its advisor. Except for one member, Shyam Prasad Karmacharya, and the chair, all other positions were held by the political activists—Prem Raj Mulmi, Sundar Prasad Marsani, Daya Shankar Palikhe (Marsani 2022 v.s.). This placed the local activists and the ruler in the same committee—an act that can also be seen as eliminating the hierarchy that existed between the erstwhile subjects and the Rana rulers.

45 Ram Bahadur Badgami explained how the governor abused him when he saw him learning English with a mendicant. But a few, who were children of the *cākarīdār*, told that they were taught some English by the son of the governor. Interviews with Badgami, Birendra Kumar Bataju and Tek Lal KC. Also see Liechty (1997).

Destruction and Debacle

At the end of 2006 v.s. (April 1950) a fire broke out in Pokhara. The fire—which claimed around 300 houses and no less than two dozen human lives in an area of about two square kilometres—was spread from a *yajna* ceremony at the Bindhyabasini temple. The temple is situated at the northern part of Pokhara and near the old market centre. Much of the damage was done because most houses had a thatched roof and the weather was dry and windy. This incident was the bane of their lives for the victims. However, it turned out to be an opportunity for the political workers to expand their role and reach into the public.⁴⁶ The social actors did capitalize the moment by spending their time and energy in helping the victims in various ways (Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Timisina 2040 v.s.). Besides, a *julus* (demonstration) was organised, handwritten pamphlets were distributed demanding compensation and support from the government. Had it been only a natural calamity, the people would not perhaps have planned to come out in the street. But the locals tied it up with a particular act during the *yajna* ceremony and viewed it as the wrath of god.

Organising *yajna* was a regular feat during that period of the year, but this time there was a slight change in the offering or *pūjā* procedure. For the first time, an animal, a black goat, was sacrificed in the *yajna* because of the insistence of the governor Dhan Shamsher Rana, who himself was a scholar of *tantra*.⁴⁷ There already was some resentment against the idea but nobody could dare openly oppose Rana. On the last day of the rite, incidentally the fire broke, and that too from the *yajna* itself, engulfing many lives and properties. People were angry with the Brahmins who performed the *yajna*, but more than that their anger was geared towards the governor because idea of sacrificing a goat was his.

The collective wrath in the form of a demonstration was very significant not only because it was the first of its kind or it was directed against the Rana governor, but also because it exemplified the process of transformation from the subject to the citizen. For years (centuries) the people had been paying taxes of various types, but it was seldom that they received anything in return. Subjects that they were, they could plead to their masters but not demand. But now, by organizing a procession, they

46 Though the earthquake of 1934 caused severe damage to Kathmandu, it also led to the emergence of quite a number of volunteer (support) groups and associations there (see Uprety 1992).

47 In *tantra* sacrifices are normal.

were demanding relief packages, and at the same time were opposing the act of the ruler. They were not merely pleading; they were asserting their right collectively, though it was “illegal” to do so as per the existing law (cf. Chatterjee 2004). The central government did provide some support, but sensing the subversive undercurrent amongst the Pokhareli public it also sent a new contingent of army to Pokhara with two confidantes as its leaders (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Adhikari 2002). These small but important incidents not only helped cement the camaraderie of the activists, they also elucidate the transformation process that was taking place in this part of Nepal.

In the meanwhile, the two Congress parties (NNC and NDC) formally united to become Nepali Congress (NC) in April 1950. Enthused by the news of this unification and of the prospect of a major movement against the Rana regime, the local activists sent two of its member, Ram Bahadur Badgami and Bhakta Raj Mulmi, to Banaras. So far, the local group was doing what they deemed right rather than following any guidelines or circular from the party headquarters. Now they wanted to further their communication and coordination with the central leadership and act in synergy. In Banaras Badgami began to work at the party secretariat, and he regularly sent party documents, circulars, pamphlets, etc. A rubber stamp of the party as well as the party flag too reached Pokhara (Badgami 2056 v.s.).⁴⁸

The gradually expanding social formation however received a serious blow when Hari Prasad Sharma got arrested. The authorities found a notebook with him in which he had noted down names of the persons he met during his stay in Pokhara. Based on this information some one and half dozen people, including Dharma Shila, the Buddhist nun, were rounded up, and imprisoned (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Pangen 2053 v.s.; Saraswoti 2053 v.s.).⁴⁹ However, interestingly, some “big fishes” like Rishi Keshav Parajuli, Mukti Nath Timisina, and Prem Raj Mulmi were spared. Though Timisina was not locally arrested he was asked to report to the centre, Kathmandu. When he reached Kathmandu he learned from his sources that he would immediately be arrested, so he chose to flee to India (Timisina 2040 v.s.). Later when the government learned this, it asked the local authority to confiscate the belongings of Timisina, but

48 Interviews with Ram Bahadur Badgami and Shri Kant Adhikari

49 Those arrested included Sundar Prasad Marsani, Shri Kant Adhikari, Min Bahadur Gurung, Hom Nath Baral, Bishnu Hari Baral, Madhav Prasad Ghimire, Shri Prasad Upadhyaya and Khadananda.

since Rishi Keshav Parajuli and Prem Raj Mulmi also got to learn this, they shifted “important things” from Timisina’s house (Parajuli 2057 v.s.). Even though Parajuli was not arrested, he was stripped of his post as the PPM School secretary.⁵⁰ It seems that the government did not want to annoy the traders for no business person was arrested. The arrest and subsequent incidents led to gradual dismantling of the group and the slackening of its activities. Even though some of the activists were later released on parole they had to report regularly to the government office.

“Revolution” and “Counter-revolution”⁵¹

After the merger of the two Congress parties to form the Nepali Congress (NC), it decided to overthrow the Rana regime by any means. This was a major shift in the policy, for especially the NNC had earlier vowed to adopt non violent means (Koirala 2008; Paramanand 1982). The party began to recruit new members in its “liberation army,” and to collect arms and ammunitions in order to wage an armed struggle (Chhaterji 1967; Koirala 2055 v.s.). The preparations were afoot, but when on 6 November 1950 the then King Tribhuvan along with his entire family (except second grandson Gyanendra) took refuge at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, the party saw it as opportune moment to commence its armed struggle (Adhikari 2059 v.s.; Gautam 2055 v.s.; Koirala 2008).⁵² When it became evident that Tribhuvan and his family would flee to India, the NC mobilized its volunteers, and armed forces across the southern border of Nepal. On 10 November 1950 the royal family fled to India, and on the wee hours of 11 November, the “liberation army” of the NC attacked Birgunj, one of the biggest cities of the Tarai, and took control of it. Enthused by the news of this success, the NC activists launched insurrectionary activities all along the border and gradually marched further towards the hill districts (Chatterji 1967; Joshi 2048 v.s.; Paramanand 1982; see also Renu 2061 v.s.).

50 Parajuli only met Hari Prasad during the very last days of latter’s stay in Pokhara.

51 My account of the “revolution” and the aftermath is based on different versions of the stories available in print and the interviews I conducted with many people during field research. There are a few discrepancies on “what” happened, on actual occurrences of the events but when it comes to “who” was responsible or “who did what,” the picture becomes all the more blurry.

52 In fact the NC had a plan to kidnap the king, take him to Palpa, and to run the government from there, but the plan couldn’t materialize (see Koirala 2055 v.s., Pangenji 2053 v.s.).

The Rana rulers found themselves at odds for they had to face two blows simultaneously. Not only did they fail to stop Tribhuvan from leaving the country, but they also had to face an armed struggle in which the NC rebels seized an important city relatively easily (Adhikari 2059 v.s.). Adding insult to injury, their hasty crowning of the four-year-old Gyanendra as king was not recognized by any foreign government—not even by the oldest and closest ally Great Britain. And as for the NC rebels, within a week, they were able to take control of a few more district headquarters (Chatterji 1967). Deploring the acts of both Tribhuvan and the rebels, the last Rana prime minister Mohan Shamsher even concocted a *bhārdārī sabhā* (council of lords), and announced that he would gradually implement the reforms initiated by his predecessor Padma Shamsher, which he had scrapped after ousting Padma in 1948. But it was too little too late for such an announcement to have any impact on either King Tribhuvan or the NC rebels, neither of whom had been addressed properly in it (Chatterji 1967; Gautam 2055 v.s.; Joshi and Rose 1966; Koirala 2055 v.s.).

By early January 1951, the NC rebels had captured a number of districts where they were running their own governments, or “people’s government,” as they used to call them. But many hill settlements and towns including Pokhara were not keeping pace with the political developments in the southern districts. Pokhara’s case was worse because of the recent arrest of the chief local actors, three among whom were still languishing in prison. Others had been released on parole but they had to report regularly at the governor’s office. However, subsequently, Pokhara too awoke from the slumber.

The decision of executing an armed revolution against the Rana regime was taken at a conference of the NC party at Bairgania, a small town in north India. Two Pokharelis, namely Mukti Nath Timisina and Ram Bahadur Badgami, also attended this conference. Timisina, who had fled after the *kānā-bābā* incident, was given the responsibility to prepare for the uprising in Pokhara. When the NC decided to immediately launch an armed attack after Tribhuvan flew to India, Timisina was asked to go to Pokhara. But he did not do that citing personal reasons.⁵³ Because of

53 According to Timisina, he received a letter in which it was stated that a widow—who also was his close relative—was alleging Timisina for fathering the baby in her womb. This would have been an incestuous relationship for which he would have been imprisoned (Timisina 2040 v.s.). Min Bahadur Gurung, political arch rival of Timisina, however does not buy this

his absence, there wasn't anybody who would convey the decisions of the party and act accordingly in Pokhara.

Thus, in Pokhara, neither did the local activists have arms nor were there any other militant groups. Whatever organization the local activists had built had been dismantled to a large extent because of their arrests. Besides, communicating with the party leadership was a problem, too. Initially, the revolutionaries had used aircrafts to distribute pamphlets informing people about the commencement of the armed struggle. They could not further use this means when the Indian government objected.⁵⁴ Prior to the beginning of the struggle, a few Pokharelis also had radio sets; however, it is not very clear if they had been the source of information (see Ghimire 2005; Parajuli 2005). Lately, telephone service (connected to Kathmandu and Palpa) had been established (Lamsal 2005), but it too was under the control of the authorities.⁵⁵

Even without proper means for the free flow of information, the news of the revolution, of Nepali Congress, of attacks, of captures of district headquarters was reaching Pokhara via various sources—word of mouth, rumours, etc. The government's prohibitory notices—the criminal elements are engaged in disturbing peace and tranquillity, but the government is determined to book them to justice and bring peace and harmony back; do not participate in any such activities that is against the law; inform the government of any criminal activities and get rewarded, etc.—also would give the people indication of the graveness of the situation. And the activists would have been able to read between the lines. Not many people however had any idea of what *kāṅgres* (Congress) was, or what it was up to, but they seemed to be aware of the imminent threat. Some in Pokhara even had sent their children to other places for their safety. Tej Nath Ghimire was one of them. He, along with his sister, was sent to a nearby village, Bhalam. When he returned after some days, he was again sent to his maternal uncle's house at Ghachok, a village to the north of Pokhara.⁵⁶

justification, and accuses Timisina for being a Rana stooge (Gurung 2043 v.s.).

54 Such pamphlets were also disseminated in Pokhara from air in abundance (Gurung 2043 v.s.: 35).

55 One of the assistants at this office, Sapta Bahadur Thapa, had connections with Rishi Keshav Parajuli who would leak some information which he occasionally obtained by eavesdropping the governor talking over the phone (Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Thapa 2056 v.s.). Interview with Sapta Bahadur Thapa.

56 Interview with Tej Nath Ghimire.

In such a scenario, launching the movement was not easy. But it was already more than a month since the armed struggle had started, and mostly the “success/good” news was reaching Pokhara. It thrilled activists like Rishi Keshav Parajuli and friends. And some of them were frustrated for not being able to do anything on their part. Parajuli called for the launching of a peaceful movement as there was no cache of arms available. Yet, there still were not many takers, for there was genuine fear of a severe repression (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.). Nevertheless, a secret meeting was called at Parajuli’s residence on 22 Push 2007 v.s. (early January 1951) to take a collective decision on the matter. Some 50–60 people participated; many of whom, by then, had already been members of the party. In the meeting Parajuli proposed the idea of organizing continuous peaceful demonstrations against the Rana regime in Pokhara. Though most agreed with the idea, not many were enthused to take part in them, especially on the first day (Parajuli 2057 v.s.). Prem Bahadur Pradhan (Haran), an India returnee, was not invited to the meeting but had found about it and he became the first person to volunteer for the job (Pradhan 2056 v.s.).⁵⁷ After some cajoling eight more were ready to demonstrate on the first day, which was scheduled for the same day in the afternoon. But by the time the meeting ended, three individuals had changed their mind (Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Pradhan 2056 v.s.).

The demonstration was to commence from the southern end of the market, Simalchaur. But at the last minute, another three changed their mind and backed out. Only three—namely, Haran, Uttar Kumar Shrestha, and Khem Raj Bharati—were left to take up the task. As decided, Rishi Keshav Parajuli, along with two other friends, arrived on the scene with the party flag, which he handed over to the participants and taught them the slogans as well as the “way” of chanting them. Afterwards Parajuli and his friends dispersed from the scene and placed themselves at different corners to observe the reactions—both of the common people and of the authority—depending on which they were later to improvise their strategies (Pangeni 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.). Seeing three men carrying a flag, which was never seen before, and chanting slogans which was unheard of (and also incomprehensible), common people were both frightened and at the same time curious. Congress was an enigma—many had heard (negative) rumours about the *kāngres*, but none had actually

57 Rishi Keshav Parajuli was his family priest so it was not that difficult for him to get in.

seen its members. Even though people were frightened, they were peeping from behind the doors. They were surprised to see familiar faces in the Congress. The three demonstrators walked around the main market without any intervention. When they reached near Ranipauwa, a constable approached and told them that they were called by the governor and tried to snatch the flag. In the scuffle the flag got torn up. On their way to the *badāhākīm*'s office, they kept on chanting slogans (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Pangenī 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Pradhan 2056 v.s.; Timisina 2040 v.s.).

Contrary to their expectations, governor Dhan Shamsher Rana appeared not enraged, and was in conciliatory mood; rather than chastising the demonstrators, he “suggested” to them not to get involved in such activities.⁵⁸ In the meantime, while governor Dhan Shamsher Rana was speaking, Haran lit a cigarette in front of him, which already was a crime to put him behind the bars. The bodyguard of the governor Rana snatched the cigarette and scolded him for smoking in front of the “General.” Unfazed, Haran shouted back, “Does only your *Jersāheb* (general sahib) have mouth, don’t I have one?” and even pulled the mat that the governor was standing on (Pradhan 2056 v.s.: 21–22). This act alone, unimaginable prior to the movement, illustrates the transformation that would be seen in the entire country in the coming days. It was the same authority which earlier was so much feared that no one could even dare look at the eyes of the rulers. Forget the raising of one’s voice, one would land in prison for not properly greeting a Rana authority. Haran was taken into custody, and the other two were released. In the evening, the authorities issued a notice asking the public not to participate in any demonstration or organize any such programs that create problem in maintaining peace and tranquillity in the city.

Encouraged by the day’s accomplishments, Rishi Keshav Parajuli and friends sat together to plan for the next day. None of the nine

58 By this day, the governor of Palpa, Rudra Shamsher, who also happened to be the father of Dhan Shamsher (governor of Pokhara), had already sided with the Congress. Dhan Shamsher’s two brothers had also become Congress activists. And the Ranās at the centre were parleying with Tribhuvan/India to reach a compromise (Pangenī 2053 v.s.; Rana 2061 v.s.). The conciliatory gesture of Dhan Shamsher thus is understandable. His position was ambivalent at best: his loyalty towards the Rana prime minister was suspect and that’s why the PM had sent his confidantes to oversee the matters or spy on him. As he was also not very sure of the outcome of the movement, he could not openly side with the rebels either.

demonstrators selected for the next day's program backed out. New flags were made and the demonstration began from the same place and took the same route. The difference this time was that there were some more people, some more flags, and the onlookers who initially were frightened and had even closed their shops, did not do so. The agitators were arrested and the governor again assuaged them to not get involved, but later released them all. Among the demonstrators was also a sixteen year old Jagannath Sigdel, who would a decade later (in 1960) become the editor/publisher of the first newspaper *Himdūt* of Pokhara. When asked, he said he was there because of his own choice.⁵⁹ And he was there to protest the arrest of his *māmā* (maternal uncle) Shri Kant Adhikari. Adhikari was a teacher at the Basic school that Mukti Nath Timisina had established and was arrested from the school itself.⁶⁰

When the second day's demonstration too went well, they decided to take out a huge demonstration by mobilising more people. Those who were reluctant were now enthusiastic when they saw that the immediate risk of participating was minimal. Parajuli and friends now started to talk to "other people" and asked them to join in the demonstrations. If Parajuli and the likes (or the seniors) were to lead, the others also expressed their willingness to participate (Parajuli 2057 v.s.). Preparations were afoot to make a big show. The shopkeepers donated clothes and the tailors worked overnight and prepared party flags in large numbers. People flocked in great numbers—around five hundred flags that they had prepared were all gone. But there was another alternative, *lālupāte*—a flowering plant with long stem and red leafy flower—that those without flags could carry. Red was the signifier, everyone wanted to take one, be one. And they were chanting slogans, which most had heard for the first time—*Rāṇāsāhī Murdābād* (down with Ranaarchy), Nepali Congress *Jindābād* (long live NC), *Inquilab Jindābād* (long live/hail to revolution). *Inquilab*, *Jindābād*, *Murdābād* were all Urdu words so not many understood the actual meaning, but perhaps that did not matter much for they knew that they

59 Interview with Chitrangad Sigdel, cousin of Jagannath Sigdel.

60 Shri Kant Adhikari arrived a year later after the school was set up. He was also previously arrested for a few days for his involvement in the ploughing activities in Lamjung. Interview with Shri Kant Adhikari.

were protesting against the Rana regime (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Pangeni 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Timisina 2040 v.s.).⁶¹

The first thing the demonstrators did on that day was to take control of the telephone office, which was just a few hundred meters away. It was not difficult at all, for the chief of the office had already sneaked out sensing the situation. Afterwards, the demonstrators moved towards the (militia) barrack which was also nearby. The officer at the barrack did try to stop them for a while but gave up after some time without much fuss. Parajuli hoisted the party flag there, and released the three political prisoners, namely, Shri Kant Adhikari, Shri Prasad Ghimire (another prominent political figure of the area) and Khadananda Sharma. They then proceeded towards Nalakomukh where three other major offices—the post office, court and jail—were located. On the way, the number of demonstrators swelled to a great extent. They easily took control of these offices as there was no significant resistance, if at all (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Pangeni 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.).

Now only two but very important offices were left. One was the general administration office (*gośwārā*) or governor's office, and the other was land revenue office. Besides, the major obstacle was the army contingent stationed at Bindhyabasini temple premises with more than a hundred army personnel. This contingent was sent from Kathmandu a few months after the infamous fire to quell any possible insurrection. By the time the jubilant crowd reached the governor's residence cum office it was becoming dark, and cold, as it was winter. The establishment had the arms but the crowd was too big to be fired upon.⁶² The "rebels" kept on chanting slogans and asked the authorities to give up, but they did not budge. When it became dark, only the core group of fifty-sixty people remained outside the governor's office whereas others were sent back home. The authorities' plan to arrest the group in the wee hours was leaked and the rebels sent words and called back the people, thus foiling the plan (Pangeni 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.).

61 To some young participant *jindābād* sounded *jhinuwā-bhāt*, rice of the best quality found in Pokhara. Interviews with Pan Maya Praju and Tej Nath Ghimire.

62 This was the day when the Ranas made a compromise with Tribhuvan in Delhi with India playing an instrumental role, but we cannot say at this time whether the local authority was fully aware of this pact and hence chose not to use arms. But on the part of the demonstrators it perhaps can be said that they were not aware of any such pact.

It was not a surprise that the next day people flocked in even greater numbers given the previous day's victory. When the crowd swelled, the rebels pressed the governor to surrender but he was unrelenting. In the afternoon a few demonstrators forcibly entered the governor's residence and took him out; there was not much of a resistance. The governor was forced to tender his resignation, and to chant the same slogans that the agitators were chanting. The governor wept, pledged loyalty to the Congress and chanted "Nepali Congress Jindābād."⁶³ After taking control of the office, the activists turned their attention to the land revenue office which was at the temple premises, where the army contingent was also stationed. Here also the activists succeeded in pursuing the army to give up. By the evening the Congress activists had total control over Pokhara—all the offices and arms were locked and the keys were in the rebels' hand (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.).⁶⁴ This, then, was the "revolution" as it occurred in Pokhara.

But the victory or the "revolution" as the local actors fondly called it, lasted less than 24 hours.⁶⁵ Even before they could organize the victory rally, a "counter-revolution" occurred. The next day some Chhetris from the suburbs, and the army of the erstwhile government under the aegis of the Rana lieutenants attacked the NC activists who were busy making preparations for the victory rally. Though none died, they got a severe beating.⁶⁶ The old regime again took control of the town and the treasury (Gurung 2043 v.s.; Pangenji 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.).

Most of the able-bodied men who participated in the demonstrations fled, and the "reactionaries" created mayhem in the town. The main actors regrouped in the southern part of the city and from there they went to the

63 He however pleaded not to be forced to chant *Rāṅśāhī Murdābād*, for he reasoned it would be doing sin to his forefathers (Parajuli 2057 v.s.; see also Lamichhane 2056 v.s.).

64 There are conflicting claims made by the actors regarding the leadership of the district authority after taking over of the district from the hands of the Rana governor.

65 The main political actors and the general participants, too, fondly remember the event as the world coming upside down. The king (Rana) was kneeling down and pleading mercy with his subjects.

66 Amrit Prasad Sherchan nearly died; he was saved because he was completely embraced by Rishi Keshav Parajuli. To kill Sherchan, the assailants had to first kill Parajuli which they didn't want to do as he was a Brahman. Killing a Brahman was considered the severest sin (Parajuli 2057 v.s.; Sherchan 2056 v.s.).

neighbouring district Syangja, which was already under the control of the “revolutionaries.” With the help of the “liberation army” of Syangja and of Palpa, the NC activists encircled Pokhara and asked the people not to recognize the old regime. Many of the local people came forward in helping the army contingent by providing food and logistics, some however sided with the old regime. This “counter revolution” thus led to a polarization between the groups which supported the old regime, and which backed the progressive forces or the rebels. And because of the participation of dalits, women and others in the movement, the traditional caste-ethnic boundaries were also weakened to an extent, for the movement brought them together in a single platform. This became more evident in the immediate post-Rana period, during which we observed somewhat conscious efforts to break the traditional hierarchical caste boundaries.

In the meantime a compromise was reached between the Rana rulers and the king in exile, orchestrated by the India government, and later the NC leadership too was coaxed to call off the armed struggle (Koirala 2055 v.s.; Koirala 2008). The news and the order for ceasefire also reached Pokhara. A sort of compromise was also reached locally thus ending the stand-off (Pangeni 2053 v.s.; Parajuli 2057 v.s.). Even after the formation of a coalition government in Kathmandu, Dhan Shamsher Rana remained the governor of the region for some time, and the old elites controlled the state administration. However, their authority (to wield power) had largely deteriorated. Since there existed a parallel sort of government, the governor or the authorities were no more feared as in the past. In fact, the governor became an object of fun and mockery, for the people got to see his vulnerability, his helplessness, and his moist eyes at the time of the rebels’ takeover. This coming of world upside down brought a sea-change in the peoples’ worldview and attitude, as would become clear during the post-Rana years.

Conclusion

In this article I elucidated the formative stage of political formations in Pokhara. I detailed how Pokharelis became abreast of the political developments elsewhere, and subsequently became part of the local political formations. The efforts of the newly established political parties to expand their base and the local actors’ eagerness to fight against the tyranny converged to give rise to early political formations in Pokhara.

The activities performed by the “modernizing elites” or members of the clandestinely formed political association(s) may at the outset look

trivial. However, as I demonstrated, these activities are important for they showcase the subtle but conscious resistance that took place. Be it sporting a particular attire or ploughing the field collectively or helping the fire-affected people, these activities were in some way efforts to challenge the existing system. Though not envisaged as an arena to directly confront the rulers, the establishment of the “modern” English school was deliberate: in order to expand access and influence of the subjects in the state affairs. On the one hand it provided an excuse to form a group, and reach out to larger section of the society, and on the other hand it challenged the exclusivity of the ruling elite’s access to the corpus of knowledge available only in English.

When the time came to fight directly against the regime, the local activists rose up to the occasion and attained victory—however ephemeral that be. Even though the movement itself was very short in Pokhara because of the “counter-revolution,” the impact it cast on the societal life of the region was significant. It created vertical division between those who showed allegiance to the erstwhile regime and those who lent their support to the “revolutionaries” at the hour of need by providing food and logistics to the combatants. Such polarization along ideological lines also contributed, to an extent, in breaking the traditional caste-ethnicity and class boundaries. The modes of expressions—subtle, symbolic, subversive—and the concerted efforts thus were part and parcel of the process of the transformation of local people from subjects to rights bearing citizens.

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