

BP's 102nd Birth Anniversary
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Today, September 9, 2016, the democratic-minded Nepalese are marking the 102nd birth anniversary of Bisheswore Prasad (BP) Koirala: one of the prominent political figures in Nepal. BP was a politically failed person but a successful literary figure. He started off the political career setting up a Nepalese political party in Benares, India. He was fortunate to be the first elected prime minister of democratic Nepal but he lost it to the despotic former King Mahendra in 1960. He remained in the political obscurity for the rest of life because of his wrong political approach he had followed with his jealous political mindset. However, he became a successful literary figure using the jail time for writing a number of short novels in 1960s.

BP was born in Benares because his father was in exile at that time for engaging in the political activities the then autocratic Rana family rulers did not like. He grew up and educated in Benares. He set up a Nepalese political party in Benares following the political activities some brave Nepalese had started off in Kathmandu, Nepal.

In 1942, the then Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher Rana with the seal of assent of the former King Tribhuvan gave the death sentence to the four extraordinarily courageous political activists such as Sukra Raj Shastri (Joshi), Dasharath Chand, Dharma Bhakta Mathema and Ganga Lal Shrestha. Other two prominent also very courageous figures such as Tanka Prasad Acharya and Ram Hari Sharma got the life imprisonment by virtue of being Brahmins. They were pioneers of the political movement for democracy in Nepal.

Some Rana rebels also set up a political party in Calcutta, India in 1940s. Suvarna Shumsher Rana and his brothers were the first Rana rebels that came out openly against their sibling rulers after seeing that they had no opportunity of getting even above the position of the captain in the army not to mention the by-birth position of army general some Rana brothers enjoyed. They set up a political party.

Chandra Shumsher Rana (matriculate): one of the most educated prime ministers devised a system for creating a first class exclusive Rana clan for running the autocratic Rana family administration. He divided Ranas into three classes depending on the mothers belonging to different castes, and how they got wedded.

The 'A' class Rana family members were the offspring of the mothers duly wedded following the Hindu sashtra and of the same caste of the Ranas. The 'B' class Ranas were the progeny of the mothers of the same caste of Ranas but not religiously wedded. The last but not the least 'C' class Ranas were the children of the mothers neither religiously wedded nor were of the same caste.

The 'C' class Ranas had to start with the position of the captain in the army whereas the 'A' class Ranas got the position of general at birth if he were the son of the then prime minister. Suvarna Shumsher was a 'C' class Rana but he was rich because of the generosity of his father Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher. Even being the son of the prime minister, Suvarna had no opportunity of being a general not to mention the prime minister.

The political activists in Kathmandu, Benares, and Calcutta had been running the movement against the Rana rulers independently in 1940s. Then, the two independent political parties in Benares and Calcutta merged into a single large party called Nepali Congress (NC).

With the financial support of Suvarna, this party launched an armed rebellion against the Rana rule in Nepal. The army was called "Mukti Sena" means the Freedom Army. BP and

Ganeshman had asked Suvarna for NPR 2.5 million for running the "Mukti Sena" but Suvarna gave them NPR 25 million. Obviously, Suvarna knew the cost of running an army.

The "Mukti Sena" was close to the military victory over the Rana army. The non-violence political activity continued in Kathmandu. Seeing the sure fall of the Rana regime, the then King Tribhuvan who had been virtually prisoner of the Rana prime minister took an opportunity to take a shelter at the Indian embassy in Kathmandu in December 1950.

The Indian military planes flew Tribhuvan and his family including the sons and grandsons except for Gyanendra to New Delhi in India. Thus, for the first time, King Tribhuvan became a free man thanks to the courageous Nepalese fighters for freedom from the autocratic Rana family rule.

The then Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher declared that Tribhuvan had abdicated the throne. Mohan Shumsher crowned the four-year old Gyanendra as the king and continued his rule but Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not recognize Gyanendra as the king.

BP accepted the tripartite talks among the representatives of the NC, Mohan Shumsher, and Tribhuvan at New Delhi despite the vehement opposition of his colleagues including Ganeshman Singh. KI (Kuber Indrajit) Singh continued his military campaign against Rana opposing the BP's acceptance of the tripartite meeting.

Ganeshman Singh was in a jail in Kathmandu second time. First time, he broke up the jail and escaped to India but BP did not like to keep him, as he was the strong rival. So, BP sent him back to Nepal perfectly knowing that Ganeshman would land in a jail. That was the political jealousy BP had.

Accepting the tripartite meeting, BP committed the first grave political mistake. At that time, NC could have a decisive victory over the Ranas but BP lost it to Tribhuvan who came out to be a victorious out of the blue.

In Kathmandu, the people gave Ganeshman Singh the spontaneous heroic reception when he came out of the jail. It was the victory of the people. It was the victory of democracy but triumphant Tribhuvan flew back to Kathmandu from New Delhi on February 18, 1951 only to be called the father of democracy. Tribhuvan got every possible credit for doing nothing thanks to the BP's acceptance of the tripartite meeting where BP simply surrendered all political rights the NC had won to Tribhuvan.

In Kathmandu, in an official ceremony in presence of political leaders, the then Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher surrendered his three-star crown to Tribhuvan thus he officially transferred the power from the Ranas to the king not to the NC leaders. Thus, NC lost everything to Tribhuvan despite winning the war against the Ranas.

Instead of keeping the crown safely in the museum, Tribhuvan sent one of the Ranas worthy of trust with the crown Mohan Shumsher surrendered him to America to sell it there. He brought home NPR nine million selling the crown. Tribhuvan used the money for his medical treatment in Switzerland where he died in 1955.

The irony is that immediately after declaring Nepal a democratic country, and its government as the government of Nepal, retiring from his previous official title of '*Shree tin sakar*' means three star majesty, Mohan Shumsher became the first prime minister of democratic Nepal following the tripartite meeting held in New Delhi. That was what BP accepted at the tripartite meeting in New Delhi disregarding the opposition of other leaders and colleagues.

Then, BP was the home minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher that had advised BP to hold elections to a constituent assembly for crafting a constitution rather than engaging in the political maneuvers. BP could hold the elections and could easily win the elections with an overwhelmingly majority but he simply ignored it causing his second political mistake. Thus, BP sabotaged the crafting of a people's constitution.

The third serious mistake BP committed was the acceptance of the constitution the then King Mahendra gave in 1958 than holding the elections to a Constituent Assembly for crafting a new constitution. It was the Mahendra's constitution. He could revoke it at any time. He did so within two years.

BP became the first overwhelmingly democratically elected prime minister following the elections held under the Mahendra's constitution in 1959. His administration suffered the worst corruption. Ganeshman Singh was the Minister for Physical Works and Transport. One day, he complained to Prime Minister BP that some contractors did not work according to the contracts but BP remained muted. Consequently, Prime Minister BP could not keep with him the supporters of NC not to mention the sympathizers.

Diplomatically, BP could not keep both northern and southern neighbors happy. Consequently, neither India nor China came out strongly against Mahendra toppling the democratically elected Prime Minister BP on December 15, 1960 rather they quietly accepted the Mahendra's accession to the power.

BP and Ganeshman Singh landed in the military jail in Sundarjal in Kathmandu. Many NC young leaders found themselves in jail. Some of them even lost their lives thanks to the BP's not-visionary-political actions. As a result, the 'government of Nepal' became the 'his majesty's government' of Mahendra.

BP managed to write several short novels in jail. Ganeshman spent most of his time on sitting in the bathroom. He had had a long bathroom-sitting habit. Outside the jail, panchas had good time to enjoy everything. They took the places of the Rana brothers and sisters whereas the NC cadres that had dreamed of taking over everything from Ranas had lost everything to the panchas. Most of them were either in jail or on the run.

Believing these guys would not do any harm to his despotic panchayat rule, Mahendra released BP and Ganeshman from the prison but he sent them directly to India in 1968. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi welcomed them, and provided them with any necessary comfort any head of government needed to enjoy.

During a state of emergency Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed in the mid 1970s, BP engaged in the political activities adversely affecting the political interest of Indira Gandhi. She gave BP and Ganeshman two options: either to stay in India without indulging in the political activities or go back home to Nepal.

BP and Ganeshman opted to come back to Nepal in 1976. By the time, strong undercurrent political activities have been going on. The communists have been growing up very fast whereas NC leaders and cadres have been on the run without their supreme leaders: BP and Ganeshman. Even when BP and Ganeshman came back to Nepal, their political activities were limited to the room talks.

In 1979 the military junta in Pakistan hanged Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: former prime minister to neutralize his political influence despite the worldwide opposition to the hanging of one of the prominent political leaders. Some Nepalese students wanted to lodge a protest

statement at the Pakistani embassy in Kathmandu but the police of the panchas stopped them at Lainchaur in Kathmandu from further moving to the Pakistani embassy.

That simple but the challenging police barricade triggered the students' movement. Originally, a few students wanting to lodge a protest note at the Pakistani embassy turned into the nationwide students' movement. Soon the movement went out of the control of the then super pancha King Birendra.

Birendra threw the political dice giving the option of choosing the improved panchayat system and a multi-party political system. It was as always the shrewd political move only to cool down the temper of the common folks but it worked as BP erroneously accepted it despite the people were for ending the panchayat and the monarchy once for all.

BP knew that if he were to let the movement go then the communists would win it. His party and his position have not improved from the disastrous damages Mahendra had done. So, BP opted to keep the monarchy rather than commanding the protest movement. This was the fourth mistake BP committed.

The next fifth mistake BP committed was he did nothing to stop the then panchas and their leader King Birendra rigging the referendum on the choice between the improved panchayat and a multi-party system.

Millions of Nepalese stood on the sizzling sun to vote for the multi-party system but only to get the result in favor of the same rotten panchayat thanks to BP doing nothing to stop the rigging of the votes. Probably, by then BP had no courage and enthusiasm to actively engage in the politics but he forgot that he simply needed to command the dissenting people to challenge the panchayat system. He missed it very badly. Thus, finally, BP entirely failed in his political life.

Then, BP had nothing left to do except waiting for the death to come. BP could have been a great victorious statesman but he did not take even a single opportunity rather he wasted such opportunities a number of times starting from 1951 to until his death in 1982.

In summary, the BP's grand mistake was to grant an amnesty for the Rana rulers that had committed nothing but crimes over a century. He would have been a successful politician had he continued the fight against the Ranas and then ending the monarchy but he did not do so believing Tribhuvan would absolutely honor holding the elections to a constituent assembly for crafting a constitution, and the democracy he had committed at the tripartite meeting in 1951. Surely, BP was so generous to say his worst enemy Mahendra and he was conjoined at the neck.

Then, the political leaders committed the similar mistake again in 1990 pardoning the pancha criminals and keeping their leader King Birendra who had immediately tried to recoup his lost power and glory setting aside the constitution prepared by the constitutional experts and giving his own constitution.

Even today, after the end of the monarchy, some political parties particularly the CPN-UML have been encouraging the regressive forces such as the monarchists and anti-federalists but their chance of making a comeback has been minimal, as the Nepalese have been far more smarter than used to be.

September 10, 2016

References:

1. Mera Katha ka pana haru (Pages of My Story): Ganeshman Singh
2. Mero Britanta (My Story): BP Koirala



From left to right: Mohan Shumsher, Tribhuvan, Mahendra, Himalay, Basundhara
(Source: ekantipur.com: Nepal)

Mohan Shumsher was the last 'Shree tin sarkar' means three-star majesty. He looks like a king than a king Tribhuvan. It must be the last ceremony in which Mohan turned over his crown to Tribhuvan.