

THE FIRST DECADE OF DEMOCRACY IN NEPAL: CHALLENGES, EXPERIMENTS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

Dr.Dhaka Ram Sapkota

Lecturer, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Dr. Dol Raj Kafle

Associate Professor, Central Department of History, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Corresponding Author: - Dr. Dol Raj Kafle

ABSTRACT

The abolition of the oligarchic Rana regime in 1951 marked a significant turning point in Nepal's history, ushering in a decade of democratic experimentation. This study examines the socio-political developments during Nepal's first democratic decade (1951–1960), focusing on the challenges, governance issues, and internal dynamics that defined this transformative period. The research explores key events, such as the revolutionary movement against the Rana regime, the Delhi Agreement, and the establishment of democracy by King Tribhuvan. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study utilizes descriptive and analytical methods, relying on secondary data sourced from historical archives, libraries, and personal collections. Analysis reveals that the lack of governance experience among political leaders and internal conflicts within the leading political party of the time undermined the stability and effectiveness of the nascent democratic system. Despite aspirations for progress, the democratic experiment faced significant setbacks, culminating in King Mahendra's coup and the establishment of the partyless Panchayat system. By critically evaluating the successes and failures of Nepal's first democratic decade, this study provides insights into the complexities of transitioning from autocracy to democracy and highlights the enduring lessons for Nepal's political evolution.

KEYWORDS

Rana Regime, Democratic Experiment, Nepali Congress, Delhi Agreement, King Tribhuvan

INTRODUCTION

The oligarchic Rana rule, established in Nepal on September 14, 1846, came to an end 104 years later in 1951. This conclusion was brought about by a revolutionary movement, in which hundreds of people sacrificed their lives to overthrow the Rana regime and pave the way for democracy. However, Nepal experienced only a decade of democratic experimentation following this historic upheaval. During this period, individuals with limited political experience attempted to practice democracy (Dangol, 2006). This fragile phase came to an

abrupt end when King Mahendra staged a coup, dismantling the nascent democratic system and imposing a partyless Panchayat system of governance in Nepal. The Rana regime began with a violent event known as the Kot Parva (Kot Massacre). In this incident, 55 senior political figures were brutally killed, allowing Junga Bahadur Rana to consolidate power and establish himself as the ruler of Nepal (Nepali, 2000). Shortly afterwards, another massacre occurred, called the Bhandar Khal Parva, during which Jang Bahadur eliminated 23 remaining senior political figures who had survived the Kot Parva. These events firmly established Jang Bahadur as the most powerful Prime Minister in Nepal's history.

Following the Bhandar Khal Parva, King Rajendra Bikram Shah, who had been exiled to India along with Queen Laxmi Devi, attempted to reclaim his throne. He launched an attack on Alau, a border region between Nepal and India, with the help of allies. However, his efforts were unsuccessful; he was captured by the Nepali army, brought back to Kathmandu, and imprisoned. These three pivotal incidents the Kot Parva, the Bhandar Khal Parva, and the failed Alau attack enabled Junga Bahadur Rana and his descendants to establish a 104-year-long autocratic rule in Nepal (Adhikari, 2014). The final decade of this period marked a brief and fragile experiment with democratic governance.

After King Rajendra Bikram Shah abdicated the throne and sought refuge in India with Queen Laxmi Devi, Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana placed Crown Prince Surendra Bikram Shah on the throne and began ruling the country himself. Over time, Jung Bahadur consolidated his power, effectively sidelining King Surendra. Using the authority granted through the Lal Mohar at various times, he strengthened his legal position, eventually assuming the title of Shree 3 Maharaj along with special privileges in governing the nation. Despite his dominance, opposition to Jung Bahadur's rule began to emerge. One significant attempt to overthrow him and establish democracy was led by Lakhan Thapa of Gorkha, along with six other individuals. However, Jung Bahadur foiled their plan, captured them, and had them executed (Pradhan, 1990). He successfully suppressed such early efforts to challenge the Rana regime.

To ensure that political power remained within his family, Jung Bahadur established a hereditary system that restricted governance to the Rana lineage. Although the specific rules and arrangements he created evolved, the central principle of maintaining power within the Rana family remained intact (Nepali, 2000). While dissent against the Rana government existed from the beginning, it was limited and easily subdued. Yet, as history demonstrates, no regime is immune to the passage of time and the inevitability of change.

The global changes following the First and Second World Wars also influenced Nepal, leading to growing public awareness among the Nepali people. Various organizations and political parties, such as Prachanda Gorkha, Praja Parishad, Raktapat Mandali, and the Mahabir Institute, organized protests against the Rana regime. In January 1941, during one such movement, four Nepali mothers were executed and became martyrs. Although the Rana rulers believed they could suppress dissent through harsh punishments, including those following the 1941 uprising, a strong wave of political awakening continued to rise among the Nepali population (Pradhan, 1990). Political parties escalated their activities against the Rana regime, and even the powerless king supported the revolution initiated by these parties. This is evident from the king's decision to leave the palace and seek refuge with his family in the Indian embassy. Despite repeated attempts by the Rana rulers to persuade the king to return, he refused and left for India on November 10, 1950 (Subedi, 2021).

In an attempt to maintain international support and prolong their rule, the Rana rulers declared the minor Prince Gyanendra as king and sought international recognition for his ascension (Basnet, 2019). Given the historically good relationship between Nepal and Britain, the Rana rulers hoped for international endorsement of their decision. However, on November 22, 1950, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru unequivocally stated that India would not recognize Gyanendra as king. The Indian government also communicated its position to other nations (Sharma, 1976). On November 27, 1950, Bijaya Shamsher and Keshar Shamsher,

acting as special representatives of the Nepalese government, travelled to Delhi to seek recognition for Gyanendra's kingship. Their efforts, however, were unsuccessful. On the contrary, King Tribhuvan's escape to India further galvanized the people's movement. The long-suppressed voices of Nepali citizens, who had endured centuries of exploitation, reached their peak during this time (Dangol, 2006). Protests erupted across the country, with people joining the movement from various regions.

While, the Nepali Congress, the political party continued its armed rebellion against the Rana regime, an agreement was reached in Delhi under the mediation of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The agreement, negotiated between representatives of the Ranas, King Tribhuvan, and the Nepali Congress, is known as the Delhi Agreement. Following this, Nepali Congress President Matrika Prasad Koirala appealed for a ceasefire through All India Radio (Gautam, 1998). In response to this appeal, the movement against the Rana regime was halted. The agreement, intended to address the grievances and aspirations of those opposing a century of autocratic family rule, was not widely welcomed. A major reason for the dissatisfaction was that the Rana regime retained some level of power despite the sacrifices made during the movement. Consequently, many prominent leaders expressed dissatisfaction with the terms of the Delhi Agreement (K.C., 2002).

Nevertheless, following the agreement, King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu on February 15, 1951. In anticipation of his arrival, widespread publicity over the preceding days had called upon citizens to gather at Gaucharan to welcome the king and political leaders. On the day of his return, a large crowd enthusiastically greeted him at the airport (Gautam, 2020). Just days later, on February 18, 1951, King Tribhuvan formally declared the establishment of democracy from Narayanhiti Palace, marking the end of the centuries-old autocratic Rana rule and the dawn of a new democratic era in Nepal.

The purpose of this study is to conduct an analytical investigation into the political developments during the first decade following the establishment of democracy in Nepal. It examines the events of the 1951 movement against the Rana regime, the early practice of democracy in the country, and its positive and negative aspects, including its strengths and weaknesses.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the democratic experiment in Nepal during its first decade following the abolition of Rana rule. Qualitative methods were chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of the socio-political context, challenges, and outcomes of this period, focusing on the leadership dynamics and governance issues.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employs descriptive and analytical methods to present a comprehensive account of the early democratic experience in Nepal. The descriptive approach is used to narrate the events, policies, and key developments of the era, while the analytical approach examines the factors contributing to the successes and failures of the democratic experiment.

DATA COLLECTION

The study is based entirely on secondary data. Relevant data were sourced from various libraries, personal collections, and archives. These sources included historical documents, books, and other reliable materials that provide insights into Nepal's political landscape during this period.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were critically analyzed to identify patterns and draw conclusions about the challenges faced by Nepal's democratic leaders and the governance system. Special emphasis was placed on

understanding the leadership experience of the Nepali Congress, which played a pivotal role during this time. The analysis highlights the internal conflicts within the party, the leaders' struggle to transition from anti-government movements to governance, and the implications for Nepal's political stability.

Scope of the Study

The study specifically focuses on the period between 1951 and 1960, examining how the lack of governance experience among leaders, internal conflicts within the leading political party, and the broader socio-political environment shaped the democratic experience in Nepal.

RESULT FROM AND DISCUSSION

The return of exiled King Tribhuvan to Nepal inspired the people and strengthened the movement against the Rana regime. King Tribhuvan had promised to establish a democratic system in the country, including holding elections for a Constituent Assembly based on adult suffrage to draft a constitution within two years. Additionally, it was announced that all individuals imprisoned or exiled as political criminals during the Rana regime would be granted amnesty, and their confiscated property would be returned if they resumed peaceful activities within a specified period (Devkota, 2001). Under the Delhi Agreement, a joint government was formed on February 18, 1951, under the Prime Ministership of Mohan Shumsher. The cabinet included five members each from the two opposing factions the Nepali Congress and the Rana family. However, tensions persisted as the Ranas attempted to regain their lost power, while Nepali Congress leaders believed that full democracy could not be realized until the Ranas were removed from the cabinet (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996). Consequently, the coalition government faced irreconcilable differences from the outset.

Amid these tensions, some young revolutionaries continued the struggle for full democracy. On January 16, 1951, leaders of the Nepali Congress were pressured to honour the terms agreed upon in discussions between the Ranas and the Congress and to order an immediate cessation of the armed revolution (Basnet, 2019). However, certain factions within the same party continued the revolution despite the agreement, necessitating the intervention of foreign troops to control the situation (Devkota, 2001). The post-democracy government faced a dual challenge: suppressing ongoing revolutionary movements while contending with internal conflicts within the cabinet. The joint government, formed through royal proclamation, was an uneasy coalition of ideologically opposing factions. This fundamental discord, coupled with divergent strategies and perspectives, created a persistently conflict-ridden atmosphere within the government from the very beginning.

Politics After the Establishment of Democracy

The ministers of the coalition government, formed by the Ranas and the Nepali Congress in response to political changes, began experiencing differences of opinion from the very outset. At the swearing-in ceremony, Bisheswar Prasad Koirala (B.P. Koirala), as the leader of the Nepali Congress, insisted on being granted the position immediately after the Prime Minister. Disputes also arose over ceremonial matters, such as the use of the supreme seal, sword, and insignia (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996). Furthermore, both the Nepali Congress and the Rana factions displayed their respective flags during executive meetings, symbolizing their persistent division (Gautam, 1986). In the subsequent days, disagreements emerged even over minor issues among the ministers in the coalition government. Meanwhile, the broader impact of the post-revolutionary changes against the autocratic Rana regime, which had been achieved without significant loss of life, failed to resonate equally across all social classes and sectors. As a result, external tensions and unrest continued to prevail.

On behalf of the Nepali Congress, the party chairman issued a statement declaring a ceasefire and ordering members to lay down their arms. However, without adhering to the party's directive, Dr. Kumar Indrajit Singh

also known as K.I. Singh, Bhimdatta Pant, and others continued the armed movement in protest. Dr. K.I. Singh, feeling wronged by the Congress party leadership, refused to comply with party discipline (Bhandari, 1989). Meanwhile, Bharat Shamsheer of the Rana family formed a faction of his supporters and named it the Bir Gorkha Dal. The Rana-Congress conflict intensified over several issues, including the arrest of Dr. K.I. Singh, the rebellion in Nepalgunj and the eastern districts led by the Khukuri Dal, the formation of the Consultative Assembly, the shooting at a student rally, and the death of a Chiniya Kazi. These events strained the joint cabinet, creating significant operational challenges.

Those genuinely inspired by democratic ideals and committed to ending Rana rule were dissatisfied with the Delhi Accord, which allowed Mohan Shamsheer to retain the position of Prime Minister. Even before the agreement, Dr. K.I. Singh had argued that any treaty or agreement related to the democratic movement should be negotiated on Nepalese soil with the participation of all movement leaders. He asserted that any agreement reached otherwise would lack legitimacy (Pangeni, 1996). Commanders leading various fronts echoed these sentiments and opposed the Delhi Accord. Even senior leaders who had initially accepted the agreement, hoping to secure ministerial positions, grew increasingly disillusioned. On November 11, 1951, during a speech on Revolution Day, Home Minister B.P. Koirala declared on the radio that the revolution's true goal of achieving peace and democracy would remain unfulfilled as long as the Ranas retained power (Devkota, 2001). Consequently, all ministers from the Nepali Congress resigned en masse. This mass resignation forced Mohan Shamsheer to step down as Prime Minister, marking the end of his tenure.

Political leadership must be farsighted, and capable of analyzing the long-term consequences of immediate decisions. Leadership with this vision is considered truly effective. The Nepali Congress (NC), which had led a political and armed struggle against the Rana regime, agreed to accept Mohan Shamsheer as Prime Minister and held five ministerial positions in the government formed under his leadership. This decision led to perceptions that the people's movement had not achieved a decisive outcome. Following the collapse of the coalition government, the formation of a single-party government by the NC seemed inevitable. However, internal disputes over leadership within the NC complicated matters. At the Nepali Congress working committee meeting held in Naxal on November 14, 1951, clear divisions emerged between supporters of B.P. Koirala and Matrika Prasad Koirala (Basnet, 2019). These developments suggested that the pursuit of power had started taking precedence over efforts to strengthen the democratic governance system.

Furthermore, the NC's acceptance of the Delhi Accord and its participation in the Mohan Shamsheer-led government led some to view the party as moderate in its approach to democracy. Consequently, voices emerged opposing the formation of a single-party government by the Nepali Congress, arguing that such a move might undermine broader democratic principles. The Nepali Congress, the leading contender to form the government, faced an internal conflict between its leaders, B.P. Koirala and Matrika Prasad Koirala. Party members who had actively fought for democracy were caught in this struggle. Both leaders sought the position of Prime Minister, creating divisions within the party. Indian Ambassador Chandreshwor Prasad Singh advised King Tribhuvan to appoint Matrika Prasad as Prime Minister (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996), as he was considered one of the King's closest confidants.

Following this advice, on November 16, 1951, a cabinet led by Matrika Prasad was formed through a royal proclamation. Meanwhile, various parties representing the public in the effort to form a government shifted their focus away from the conspiratorial actions of the Ranas and the atrocities of the 104-year autocratic family-based regime. Instead, they began solely opposing the NC (Bhandari, 1989). However, these developments appeared to undermine public trust in the NC, as the party increasingly seemed vulnerable to the temptations and conspiracies of the Ranas.

Although it was natural and democratic for opposition parties to challenge the government, the Nepali

Congress (NC) lacked a cooperative spirit from the very beginning of the government's formation under Matrika Prasad Koirala's leadership. B.P. Koirala, who aspired to become the Prime Minister himself, was displeased with Matrika Prasad's appointment. He viewed Matrika Prasad's rise to power as an unfortunate necessity (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996). The internal struggle between the two brothers not only overshadowed the party's principles and the sacrifices made by those who had joined the revolution against the Rana regime but also created divisions within the party. However, efforts to reconcile this situation were made through the mediation of Indian socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996).

Despite this reconciliation, the relationship between the two brothers did not last long. The party's working committee pushed for the formation of a smaller cabinet to remove supporters of the Prime Minister from the government. While Matrika Prasad accepted this suggestion, he asserted that he had full authority to choose his allies. When the working committee ordered the Prime Minister and his allies to resign, they refused. As a result, the working committee passed a proposal to expel Matrika Prasad and the ministers supporting him from the party's regular membership (Gupta, 1964). In response to this, Matrika Prasad declared that the party had lost its democratic standing (Sharma, 1994). The government's efforts to create a conducive environment for elections were being undermined by the internal conflicts within the party.

The Nepali Congress (NC) hoped to lead the government after the dissolution of the government led by Matrika Prasad Koirala. However, the power and influence it had gained during the revolution were gradually diminishing. Lacking momentum, the NC initiated a Satyagraha with various demands. There were clashes of personalities within the cabinet, and the party itself was divided, leading to Matrika Prasad Koirala's resignation from the government on August 6, 1952. Following Matrika Prasad's resignation, political parties and independent individuals became active in efforts to form a new government and participate in it. However, on August 14, 1952, King Tribhuvan, acting on the advice of his advisors, formed an advisory government intending to rule directly. Independent individuals were appointed to this new government, and those previously affiliated with political parties were instructed to resign and take on roles as independents (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996).

By this time, the Nepali Congress had already split into four factions. These factions strongly protested King Mahendra's direct rule, arguing it was a step toward undermining democracy and re-establishing the feudal system (Devkota, 2001). The NC launched protests in various regions, accusing the king of attempting to restore feudalism. After several protest programs nationwide, the advisory government was dissolved on June 15, 1953.

King Tribhuvan had initiated discussions to form a joint cabinet, but the leaders of the political parties could not reach an agreement. On April 28, 1953, Matrika Prasad Koirala left the Nepali Congress and formed the Rastriya Praja Party, which he led. After failing to agree on how and under whose leadership the government should be formed, a new government was established in June 1953, led by Matrika Prasad, who had founded the Rastriya Praja Party only a month and a half earlier. The key objectives of the government were outlined, including a directive that the primary responsibility of the cabinet would be to hold elections for the Legislative Council as soon as possible (Bhandari, 1989).

The Nepali Congress opposed the government led by Matrika Prasad from the beginning. During their protests, they issued a six-point demand letter on January 10, 1955, and announced a Satyagraha. The NC also sought to strengthen ties with the Gorkha Council to ensure the success of the Satyagraha (Bhandari, 1989). By this time, Matrika Prasad and BP Koirala, who had once fought together for democracy within the same party, had become rivals.

As events unfolded, the issue of holding elections to the Constituent Assembly gradually faded into the

background. King Tribhuvan's health also deteriorated, requiring him to travel abroad for treatment several times. Although Prime Minister Matrika Prasad had initially prioritized preserving the government, his objective was ultimately unfulfilled. As a result, Matrika Prasad Koirala resigned as Prime Minister in April 1955, citing disruptions to peace and security, economic difficulties, opposition from rival parties, and internal divisions within the cabinet.

After Matrika Prasad's resignation, discussions took place regarding the type of government to be formed. Around the same time, King Tribhuvan passed away, which further delayed the formation of the new government. Following the end of the mourning period, political parties began presenting their proposals for the structure of the new government. Smaller parties supported the idea of an all-party government, while the Nepali Congress (NC) demanded the formation of a government under its leadership. However, on April 14, 1955, King Mahendra formed a five-member Royal Advisory Committee, led by Gunjaman Singh, as an interim government. This move was strongly opposed by leaders of various political parties. Although King Mahendra had invited representatives of political parties and organizations to discuss future political arrangements, the Nepali Congress, Praja Parishad, Nepali Rasrtiya Congress, and Rastriya Praja Parishad chose not to participate in the discussions (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996).

As the issue of leadership within political parties became more complicated, the king's power automatically increased. The king began to favour individuals over parties, aiming to make decisions that were favourable to him. As smaller parties sought to gain the king's favour to come to power, there was a competition to accept every decision he made. As a result, a cabinet was formed on January 27, 1956, under the leadership of Tanka Prasad Acharya. Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya distorted the facts at the Praja Parishad conference held in Birgunj in June 1956, by stating that it was uncertain whether the upcoming elections would be for the Constituent Assembly (Sharma, 1994). Although all political parties criticized him for attempting to make the indisputable issue of 1950 controversial, they did not deem it necessary to address King Mahendra's deviation from democracy. It was clear that the role of the king in the constitution, created by the people, would be limited to that of a constitutional head. However, the king was avoiding holding elections for the Constituent Assembly, even though elections were a topic of discussion and necessity at that time. To gauge public opinion, he announced that elections would be held in September 1957, without clarifying what the elections would be for.

The king, who was backing away from his earlier commitment to hold elections for the Constituent Assembly, and the parties that sought to please him, indirectly fueled the protest activities. Internal strife and division within the ruling party, coupled with opposition from other parties, led to the dissolution of the cabinet led by Tanka Prasad Acharya on July 14, 1957. Gradually, the king stopped giving importance to the larger political parties, though the criteria for determining which parties were considered large or small remained unclear.

Dr. K.I. Singh was exiled to China following the Singha Durbar Rebellion. After his exile, prominent leaders, including BP Koirala, Tanka Prasad Acharya, Dilli Raman Regmi, and others, delivered speeches and statements, describing him as a patriotic hero, a renegade, and a selfless soldier (Bhandari, 1989: 584). Dr. Singh, who had spent 3 years and 7 months in China, returned to Nepal after receiving a royal pardon. His primary aspiration was to strengthen the monarchy and protect traditional social values (Sharma, 1994). Known as Dr. Singh, he was appointed to lead the government on July 26, 1957. With his appointment, the political situation took a new turn. Political parties protested against his appointment as the leader of the government. Dr. Singh himself opposed elections to the Constituent Assembly, making it clear that the provisions of the interim constitution regarding the constitution should be discarded, and supporting Tanka Prasad's view that parliamentary elections should be held instead (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996). As the rift between the parties favouring and opposing the Constituent Assembly elections deepened due to short-term

interests, the king was able to exploit the situation to his advantage.

King Mahendra had not yet received any indication from the political parties that the general election would be held on the full moon day of September 1957. However, by that time, the dispute over the election date was still unresolved, and the Election Commission was only established the following month. In this context, on October 6, 1957, the Prime Minister stated that the election could not be held on the scheduled date. Two days later, the King confirmed the Prime Minister's statement through a royal proclamation (Devkota, 2001). Political parties opposed the postponement of the election. After differences arose between the King and the Prime Minister regarding administrative reforms, the Prime Minister dissolved the existing cabinet on November 14, 1957, and announced that the King would assume full responsibility for governance until further notice.

After King Mahendra postponed the elections indefinitely, protests began to erupt, demanding that a new election date be set rather than continuing the postponement. After dissolving Dr. Singh's cabinet, the King organized a conference of all parties to determine the objectives and dates for the elections. Small parties called for the elections to be held later, while larger parties insisted that they be held within six months. There were rumours that the Congress would lose the elections for the king and parliament in the Constituent Assembly. As a result, the King stated that special arrangements should be made regarding this issue and delegated the authority to decide on the objectives of the elections to himself (Manandhar & Sharma, 1996). Exercising this authority, the King announced that elections would be held on February 18, 1959, without clarifying their objectives. Forty-five days later, the dispute was settled when it was formally announced that the upcoming elections would be for parliament and not the Constituent Assembly (Khanal, 1960). The parties interpreted the King's announcement differently.

The Nepali Congress General Committee meeting, held in Birgunj on February 1, 1958, decided to participate in the upcoming elections (Thapa, 2015). The Central Committee meeting of the Nepal Communist Party, held in Kathmandu from September 21 to 28, 1958, described the general election as a significant event for the country. The party accepted the election, emphasizing that it should dedicate all its efforts to this task of national importance (K.C., 2008). It also highlighted the need for a political conference to form a credible government with broad support and to foster an atmosphere of mutual harmony leading up to the election.

King Mahendra, in consultation with political parties, formed a six-member cabinet without a prime minister until the elections. Four members were from different political parties, and two were independents. The government was primarily tasked with organizing general elections and assisting the drafting committee in preparing the constitution. The five-member Constitution Drafting Committee, chaired by Bhagwati Prasad Singh and including British constitutional scholar Sir Ivor Jennings, was formed on March 16, 1958. The committee completed its responsibilities within 10 months and presented the draft to King Mahendra (Devkota, 2001). The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 2015, was promulgated on February 12, 1959 (Government of Nepal, 2021: 120). The election for the House of Representatives organized for a five-year term under a bicameral legislature, began on February 18, 1959, and was completed in several phases for 45 days. The final results were announced on May 11, 1959 (Yadav, 2016). In the election, the Nepali Congress won 74 seats, securing a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives. The Nationalist Gorkha Council came in second place, winning 19 seats (Devkota, 2001: 599). Based on the election results, the first elected cabinet in Nepal's history was formed on May 27, 1959.

After the formation of Nepal's first elected government, the general public was hopeful that political instability would finally come to an end, leading to greater stability and development. The new government inspired optimism, as people looked forward to reforms and progress. While it faced challenges, including criticism from opposition parties and internal disagreements within the ruling party, the government represented a

new era of democratic governance. Despite difficulties in maintaining peace and security in certain regions, the government's efforts were an important step in the country's political evolution (Sharma, 1994). The Nepali Congress, which had been in power for eighteen months, played a pivotal role in shaping the early stages of democratic leadership. Even though the government faced significant obstacles, it was an important milestone in Nepal's journey towards democratic governance. The political transition, despite its challenges, led to significant changes. When King Mahendra dissolved the elected government on December 15, 1960, the public's support for democratic values remained strong. The opposition, including the Nepali Congress and Communist Party, made their voices heard, but the period marked a critical point in Nepal's evolving political landscape (Devkota, 2001). The introduction of the Panchayat system by the king represented a turning point in Nepal's political history, concluding a decade of instability and paving the way for future change.

CONCLUSION

The rise of the Rana regime was a direct consequence of the political instability of the time. Once in power, the Ranas consolidated state authority entirely within their family. With the majority of the population being illiterate, the general public lacked the means to organize a significant protest. However, a few brave individuals did voice their dissent, but those who attempted to challenge the regime were harshly punished. The Rana government sought to suppress any form of opposition through its autocratic measures, ensuring that no future movements could threaten its power. Consequently, the Rana regime maintained its dominance for a long period without serious challenges. However, change is inevitable. As global political shifts occurred, opposition to the Rana regime grew louder. Political parties began to form and call for revolution. Ultimately, the people's collective struggle led to the downfall of the Rana regime in 1951, and democracy was established through the combined efforts of the king and the people. Despite this achievement, the early years of democracy, from 1951 to 1960, were marked by instability. Political forces, both within the monarchy and the newly formed political parties, sought to shape the democratic system according to their agendas, reducing democracy to a mere concept rather than a functioning system. Although a government was formed with a two-thirds majority following the general election, political instability persisted. To restore stability, the king resorted to ruling by decree, dissolving the political party's government and limiting democracy to the confines of the palace.

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