A: That is not the design, that is purely accidental... If you look at the table in my book, (Problems of Governance), the Brahmins are represented in large numbers. In the previous system the Chetris were dominant. The Panchayat-system was a Chetri-dominated system. It takes some time to correct.

Q: One last question concerning your own interests as a political scientist. What are your main research interests at the moment? What do you focus on?
A: Did you read my book on Migration, Ethnicity and Security? It was published in 1990 by Sterling, in New Delhi. I visited all six SAARC countries, except Maldives. I studied refugee movements, migrations, and their links with national security. After that, Problems of Governance just came out in 1993. But my basic interest now is in migration, refugees, security of South Asian countries, particularly smaller countries, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh. Right now, I am interested in doing work on South Asian refugees, particularly Bhutanese refugees, and on the danger of the disintegration of nations, including India, to the south of the Himalayas. People are talking about Gorkhaland, Greater Nepal. You might have heard that. And the Bhutanese are always playing that card. You know that this whole belt, the southern Himalayas, is a Nepali speaking belt? Starting from Assam, Meghalaya, Bhutan, Darjeeling, Sikkim, Nepal, if you cross the border in the western sector, western Nepal-India border, Kumaon, Garhwal have also language links because of migration. In Assam Nepalese constitute a huge population. Now Darjeeling is a Nepali speaking area. 80% of Sikkimese are Nepalese. Also in Bhutan, about 55-60% are Nepalese. If the refugees go back, altogether it will be about 55-60% in Bhutan. But the government says only 25-30%, that is the official figure. Thus the whole belt is a Nepali-speaking area which gives rise to doubt for the authorities.

Q: Is there a strong separatist movement?
A: ...That is a kind of fear psychology created by some people and the government in Bhutan. The Nepalese are accused of expansionist designs. We cannot afford to do such things. We cannot become an expansionist power. We cannot go against the will of India. We are India-locked, and are dependent on India in many respects. It is very difficult for us to think beyond India. We are having some problems with the Bhutanese because of the refugees. The Bhutanese government wants to arouse the sensitivity of India, pointing out that the Nepalese will be a threat to Indian security and Indian territorial integrity. The Bhutanese want to impress on India that now the Nepalese are interested not in democracy in Bhutan but in expanding their territories, Sikkim, Darjeeling and other areas....

Q: Did it work out that way?
A: ...India cannot put pressure on Bhutan to democratize the system or to take all these refugees back home. It may try to persuade quietly but India cannot help Nepal at the cost of Bhutanese friendship. Both Bhutan and Nepal are India's good neighbours.

Q: Are you also involved in teaching at TU?
A: Yes.

Q: How big is your department? Is it a very popular subject to study? For example I know that in anthropology there are quite a lot of students...
A: Now we don't have that problem. Our department was one of the biggest. Since the department of Sociology and Anthropology started, many young students joined it. But still Political Science is one of the popular departments.

Q: Being a political scientist, have you ever been tempted to enter politics yourself?
A: No. Now I have come to the conclusion that I will not join politics on my own initiative. If my government wants my service, if tomorrow the government nominates me and gives me some role to play, perhaps I may do that. But I will not go and fight elections, join a party. I don't like that. My freedom will be totally curtailed if I become the member of a party.

Notes:
1 On 17.8.93 the two parties agreed on ten points (mainly by establishing a number of committees and task forces to look into the disputed problems, e.g. the circumstances of fatal accident of UML leader Bhandari, treatment of recent movement victims, inflation etc., and by extending the time limit for solving the Tanakpur issue, s. The Independent 25-31.8.1993). With this the movement, which was going on since spring, was called off, but the most crucial point, the demand for the Prime Minister's resignation was not mentioned.

NEWS

Symposia

Adapted Technologies and Environmental Education as Possibilities of Inter-Cultural Communication in the Himalayan Region
Ittenbach, August 13-14, 1993

On the occasion of the exhibition in honour of Toni Hagen (see EBHR No. 5) the German committee of the King Mahendra Trust of Nature Conservation (Nepal) organised a symposium on the problems relating to the introduction and sustainability of environmental projects in the Himalayan region. Papers related to the following topics:

- New strategies in nature conservation projects in Nepal (C.P. Gurung, Bikash Pandey, Dibya Gurung, Manjushree Thapa)
- Income generating projects (biogas, microhydropower, medical plants) (Toni Hagen, Klaus Rudolph, Klaus Duerbeck)
- Solid waste (management, hygienic education) and waste water (Eckhard Spreen, Verena v. Hatzfeld, Oskar Werner Pawel)
Joint ventures in the transfer of know-how and technologies (Klaus Dieter Schätte)
-Water-management (Wolf Donner)
-Traditional forest use (Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt)

The symposium was convened by Susanne von der Heide.

Oral Tradition Study Group-Himalaya

As a follow-up of the French-German Conference on the History and Anthropology of Nepal held in Arc-et-Senans, June 1990, a study group on "Comparative Study of Oral Tradition in Nepal" was constituted.1

Researchers interested in oral traditions met in Heidelberg on January 30th 1993 at the invitation of the Seminar für Ethnologie, South Asian Institute of the University of Heidelberg.

Reports about ongoing research were presented as follows:

C.P. Zoller: "A regional version of the Mahābhārata." Field research was done in the upper Tons Valley, H.P., India, among Dewal singers (language: West Pahari). It is urgent to collect such epic songs as the tradition seems to be vanishing.

A. de Sales: "The grotesque in a shamanic song." Anne de Sales is currently studying Magar shamanism in Nepal and analyses the different poetic styles which are expressed.

A. Malik: "The oral epic of Devanārayān." The study deals with oral narratives associated with the Gujars, a semi-pastoral group of Rajasthan. The itinerant bards (Bhopa) use visual representations for their performances.

A. Höfer: "Hyperpragmatic patterns in Tamang shamanic texts." His contribution discussed the phonic-prosodic richness of these recitations.

M. Gaenszle: "The ritual of "Raising the Vital Soul" - a ritual text of the Mewahang Rai in East Nepal." The paper discussed the problems of translation and interpretation of such texts.

The next meeting of the study group is planned for 25 February 1994 in Meudon. Venue: CNRS UPR 299, 1 Place Aristide Briand, 92195 MEUDON, France.

Topics suggested for presentation and discussion:
- the interrelationship between myths and rituals (performance, text/context etc.)
- the methodological problems of presentation, translation and interpretation of oral texts (e.g. systems of transcription, poetics, comparative analysis etc.)
- the interpenetration of oral and written traditions (the process of "textualization", cultural hegemony etc.)

We plan to invite two or three French colleagues interested in oral tradition to exchange views and share our experiences in oral tradition.

Note:
1The papers presented during the Arc et Senans Conference have been published:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Publications


Ramble, Charles & Martin Brauen (eds.) Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalayas. Zürich: Ethnological Museum of the University of Zurich 1993. (Price: SFr. 28)

The book contains the proceedings of the international conference with the same title which was held September 21-28, 1990 in Zürich. It includes altogether 39 contributions concerning aspects of Tibetan culture and its context in the Himalayan region. A wide range of topics is dealt with, such as kinship and caste, material culture, myth, ritual, and the performing arts.