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Discursive Analysis of ‘Yam Theory’: Mapping King Prithvi Narayan Shah’s Essence to Contemporary Geopolitics

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Abstract

In the light of Nepal’s geostrategic location between India and China, its physical geography has been described through several discourses and rhetoric. The discourses produce meanings, and they directly affect the political behaviour of a state. One of the persistent discourses explaining Nepal’s geopolitical situation is “Nepal as a ‘yam’ between two boulders” by King Prithvi Narayan Shah. In that sense, the ‘yam’ theory postulates the geopolitical circumstances of Nepal. The research is guided by the primary question of whether the yam theory is still relevant for Nepal in the present context. Examining the importance of ‘yam theory’ in the geopolitical circumstances of Nepal, the study aims at discursively analysing the origin and development of the yam discourse, its importance for understanding and comprehending the geopolitical nature of Nepal, and its essence present in the contemporary and evolving geopolitics. Methodologically, the study adheres to the practices in the discourse analysis process, focusing on the origin and development of the ‘yam’ theory. Adhering to the constructive and linguistic turn in IR regarding the conceptual

framework of the study, the research takes the help of historical documents, journal articles, geopolitical review reports, and commentaries to analyse the yam theory’s geopolitical relevance and relate it to the present geopolitical situation of Nepal. This paper first introduces the scope and the rationale of the topic. Notably, the following section examines the origin of ‘yam’ rhetoric as a ‘discourse’ and development as a ‘theory’. Following the arguments from the discursive analysis of ‘yam’, the article then traces its essence in the present geopolitical context for Nepal. In conclusion, this research article identifies the relevance of ‘yam’ for Nepal as the strategy for accommodation, balancing, neutrality and equiproximity.

Keywords: yam theory, Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepal, geopolitics, discourse analysis.

Introduction

The narratives of the survival and sustenance for Nepal originates with the nation-building phase against all possible improbable odds. Taking such oddities, King Prithvi Narayan Shah initiated the unification campaign, primarily conquering the eastern hills of Nepal near the Arun River and took around twenty-five years to conquer Kathmandu Valley

(Acharya, 1966). The rise of Nepal as a nation-state emerged in specific circumstances in the Indian sub-continent. There was the decline of the Mughal Empire in India, unleashing the violent forces; the Marathas from Pune were moving to the plains; thus, creating a state of chaos, turmoil and full of conspiracy (Stiller, 1999). This situation in the Indian sub-continent was analysed and mastered by Clive and the East India Company to rule most of the sub-continent for several years (Stiller, 1999). Similarly, the present geopolitical circumstances developing in the neighbourhood characterised by major power politics have presented Nepal with narrow alternatives to deal with this critical situation.

In Prithvi Narayan Shah's twenty-five years of conquest, his foreign policy directives dealt with China and East India Company in a peaceful and friendly manner (Bhattarai M. K., 2019). However, conflict with the neighbours did not mean the open borders as today. His ideas of foreigners and foreign rulers differed from those of his successors. His friendly and peaceful stance with the neighbours included remaining cautious and alert. He successfully made structural provisions for conducting foreign policy and war diplomacy (Baral, 2020). Before his death in 1775, he delivered some pragmatic instructions, which we today refer to as *Dibya Upadesh* (Baral, 2020). In his instructions, he has mentioned Nepal as a "gourd (*yam*) between the two rocks", analysing Nepal's geostrategic position, and cautioned accordingly for Nepal's survival and sustenance (Baral, 2020). This 'yam theory' has incorporated significant prominence in explaining Nepal's geostrategic position and illuminating the country regarding political, economic, strategic, military, and other aspects of national life (Baral, 2020).

The 'yam' discourse in Nepal's geostrategic positioning plays an essential role. This discourse is the indigenous geostrategic identity and has complemented the formation of the other geostrategic identity for Nepal. Similarly, the 'yam theory' gets reiterated today to explain Nepal's geostrategic and geopolitical vulnerabilities. By depicting Nepal as 'yam' by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, he has also counselled to keep friendship with the northern and southern neighbour (Adhikari, 2015). According to 'yam theory', the notion of 'friendship' by King Prithvi Narayan Shah has a different meaning when analysed discursively. The study of the development of 'yam' as a theory and discourse is similarly essential. Thus, it becomes crucial to investigate the origin of 'yam theory', the circumstances in which this theory has been formulated, and accordingly relate this theory to the contemporary times, identifying the pattern of continuity and change in the elements regarding the vulnerability of geopolitics or major power politics in the South Asian region for Nepal.

The research identifies the research gap focuses on the discursive analysis of the 'yam theory' and its relevance in the modern days for Nepal under geopolitical significances and identity politics. Analysing the 'yam' theory through discursive methods, the study concludes the relevancy of the theory in dealing with the contemporary geopolitical situations for Nepal. The theory provides Nepal with different avenues to deal with the major power politics, including the accommodation strategy for the interests of the major powers and the strategy to balance and remain neutral in the ongoing conflicts, rivalries, and clashes. The 'yam' theory is observed as a strategy of equiproximity to

capitalise on a more meaningful relationship between the two Asian giants as our immediate neighbours.

The structure of the study has been organised into different correlated themes where the methodological and conceptual framework follows the next section. Then, it is organised to discursively examine the origin of ‘yam’ as a ‘discourse’ and ‘theory’. The discussion section analyses the relevance of the theory in accordance with the contemporary geopolitics encircling Nepal. Further, it presents, the relevance of the theory as the strategy of accommodation, balance, neutrality, and equiproximity.

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

As qualitative research and the discursive analysis of ‘yam theory’ regarding its relevance in the contemporary geopolitical and geostrategic situation of Nepal, this study has focused chiefly on the analysis of texts of *Dibya Upadesh*. The research has attempted to investigate the linguistic construction of Nepal’s geopolitical and geostrategic approaches provided by King Prithvi Narayan Shah’s yam theory. The discursive analysis is focused on analysing the ‘sense’ provided by the ‘yam theory’ according to different conversations and storylines. The paper aims to extend the essence of ‘yam theory’ by analysing the texts of *Dibya Upadesh*, considering the language as the tool to construct and reconstruct identities. The aspects of content analysis have been employed to investigate into meanings provided by ‘yam’ under the historical circumstances and extracted to parallelise the essence in the contemporary scenario. As the study deals with the relevance of ‘yam theory’ in the present geopolitical circumstances for Nepal, the components such as collective

memories, history, experiences, and geography have been examined (Checkel, 1998). The importance of history in creating cognitive biases and perception has been crucial in the study of discourses (Kroskrity, 1999), which has been taken into consideration while dealing with the texts of the divine counsel by King Prithvi Narayan Shah. this paper proceeds with an assumption that the experiences and interactions in the past create and mould the recent actions between the actors in the state (Jain, 2021). As the study deals with the speech acts and ‘yam’ discourse, it has adhered to the constructivist and linguistic turn in IR discipline examining the “metaphor of position and positioning” (McVee, Silvestri, Barrett, & Haq, 2018, p. 381).

In analysing the ‘yam theory’, secondary resources such as academic books and journals have been used. The books of the prominent historians have been considered regarding the historiography of ‘yam theory’. The reports from the think tanks and research centres and the online media platform have been referenced for the contemporary geopolitical analysis. The data was collated according to themes and aims of collected paper and analysed accordingly.

Origin of ‘yam’ as a discourse and ‘yam’ as a theory

Understanding the concept of ‘yam’ as a theory and discourse is very important for tracing its relevancy in today’s geopolitical context. Although its emergence is associated with King Prithvi Narayan Shah, it is also essential to analyse under what circumstances this theory originated. Why Nepal was depicted as the “yam between the two rocks”? Which international actors were portrayed as the rocks? Furthermore, under

what circumstances Nepal was considered a ‘yam’?

The setting in which ‘yam’ as a discourse and theory originated is essential. The origin of ‘yam’ as a discourse emerged amidst the turmoil in the Indian sub-continent and Nepal under the Himalayan belt. The problematic situation in which Nepal developed as a nation-state in the Indian sub-continent under the Himalayas has also led Nepal to be portrayed as a ‘yam’. As Nepal was being unified by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Indian sub-continent was in turmoil (Stiller, 2017). The great Mughal Empire declined due to dynastic warfare, factional rivalries, and the Iranian conqueror Nadir Shah’s brief but disruptive invasion of northern India in 1739 (Phillips, 2021). The Marathas, similarly, were aggressively moving towards the plains of India; and the British were stretching and growing influence at Kalighat (Calcutta) (Stiller, 1999). Likewise, in Nepal, the political and geopolitical situations were in ferment. Under the ridges of high Himalayas, to the west, were the petty kingdoms. In the Karnali region, there were *Baise Rajyas*, and in the Gandaki area were the *Chaubise Rajyas* (Acharya, 1966). The feuds between the kingdoms, the splintering of Sen kingdoms, the tensions among the three kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley, and a hardship attempt to unify all those kingdoms into one contributed as the source of ‘yam’ as an identity discourse for King Prithvi Narayan Shah which he later employed for Nepal. The problematic situation or circumstances inside and outside Nepal led to the introduction of ‘yam’ discourse into the geopolitical identity, which King Prithvi Narayan Shah rightly pointed out. His personal experience of all the turmoil and difficulties in the unification campaign of Nepal might have also contributed to the

portrayal of Nepal as a yam in his death bed. Later, this particular yam discourse turned out to be the theory in defining the geopolitical situation of Nepal.

Regarding the construction of ‘yam’ discourse between the ‘two boulders’, it is equally important to investigate the evolution of the boulders as well. The two neighbours that King Prithvi Narayan Shah cautioned and recommended maintaining peaceful and friendly relations were China and the East India Company. The East India Company first arrived at the shores of the Indian sub-continent and set up a factory in the river banks of Hugli in 1651 (Phillips, 2021). They became very influential traders in the Bengal region, persuading the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (Phillips, 2021). However, after the death of Aurangzeb and the decline of the Mughal Empire, the early eighteenth century was followed by the conflicts between the Company and Nawabs of Bengal and finally culminated in the famous Battle of Plassey (Sutherland, 1947). It was a significant victory for the Company in India. Finally, in 1765 the Mughal emperor appointed the Company as the Diwan of the provinces of Bengal (Sutherland, 1947). The Company did not have direct military confrontation but used various political, economic and diplomatic methods to extend its influence (Phillips, 2021). After the Battle of Buxar (1764), the Company appointed Residents in Indian states (Phillips, 2021). They were political or commercial agents, and their job was to serve and further the interests of the Company. Through the Residents, the Company officials began interfering in the internal affairs of Indian states (Phillips, 2021). During the rule and unification campaign of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, he had witnessed the increasing paramount of

the Company.

Similarly, the rise of the Qing dynasty in the north of Nepal was a matter of concern, and King Prithvi Narayan Shah was aware of the growing power of the Qing Empire. Tibet came under the rule of the Qing dynasty in 1720 as a vassal state characterised by a 'patron-priest' relationship (Upadhyaya, 2012). The Qing Empire gradually increased its influence in Tibet, making it a protectorate (Upadhyaya, 2012). King Prithvi Narayan Shah realised the growing influence of the Qing Empire, as they successfully quelled a civil war in Tibet in 1728 and the establishment of the *ambans* by the Qing Emperor to safeguard the interest of the Qing Dynasty (Bhattarai, 2015).

Therefore, the origin of 'yam' as a discourse in the geopolitical identity of Nepal initiated with the rise of the British East India Company in the Indian sub-continent and the increasing influence of the Qing dynasty along the unification process of Nepal. Also, the construction of 'yam' as a geopolitical narrative not only depends upon the rise of its neighbours but also the experience and realisation of difficulty in the unification of *rajyas* have also complemented the process initiated by King Prithvi Narayan Shah.

Later on, this origination of 'yam' as a geopolitical narrative developed as a geopolitical theory for Nepal. King Prithvi Narayan Shah said, "This country is like a gourd between two rocks. Maintain a treaty of friendship with the emperor of China. Keep also a treaty of friendship with the emperor of the southern sea (the Company)" (Stiller, 1968, p. 42). This particular counsel of King Prithvi Narayan Shah is presently known as the 'yam theory'. He provides his successors and counsellors with the way for survival

and sustenance of Nepal by maintaining peaceful and friendly relations with both the neighbours (Baral, 2020). This survival strategy given for Nepal by the King became the geostrategic and geopolitical theory.

Similarly, the East India Company had commercial interest with the Qing Empire ruling Tibet and also was sceptical at that time about the growing influence and power of them; thus, making Nepal a strategic place between these two powers in the region (Upadhyaya, 2012). Also, the notion of 'friendship' that King Prithvi Narayan Shah wants to depict is different; however, his economic and internal policies in the *Dibya Upadesh* focuses on a more cautious and nationalistic foreign policy for Nepal. Enlightening the 'yam theory' based on the whole text, it emphasises caution from the foreigners and their interest in Nepal. In the *Dibya Upadesh*, there is also the mention of "If he takes these, the four emperors will come" (Stiller, 1968, p. 42) which indicates the theory focusing on the other major powers and the need for the far-sightedness for the Nepalese statesmen towards the major power politics as well.

Thus, 'yam' as a theory comprises the elements of cautiousness, gradualism, peaceful co-existence, and friendliness in foreign policy. The theory incorporates the strategies for the major power politics in the region and outside the region. It also provides Nepal with the diplomatic and foreign policy strategy for the survival and sustenance in the geopolitical sphere with competition, antagonism, and cooperation. This theory also provides in light of the *Dibya Upadesh* about the military, strategic, economic and internal policies of Nepal.

Mapping King Prithvi Narayan Shah's Essence to Contemporary Geopolitics

Contemporary Geopolitics Encircling Nepal

The rise of India and China simultaneously in the neighbourhood of Nepal has increased the geopolitical vulnerabilities for the latter. The advent of China, along with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) reviving the traditional Silk route, have raised many geopolitical and geoeconomic repercussions and also opportunities for infrastructural development and economic prosperity (Ranjan, 2021). The stretch of the BRI from East Asia to Europe and Africa through its land and sea corridors has leveraged China's rise as a major power in the Nepalese neighbourhood. China's geopolitical and economic aspiration through BRI opened up different avenues for investment, markets, and geopolitical clouds into South Asia through its land corridors (Chakradeo, 2020). With the aim of development, economic integration and interconnectedness have aided China in its rise by re-establishing the relationships, rerouting economic activities, and primarily shifting the power towards itself (Chakradeo, 2020). The rise of China and the geopolitical implications of BRI, at the same time, have put Nepal into a difficult position. Similarly, after the election win in 2014 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his active foreign policy with the expansion of the Indian soft power through cultural diplomacy by reaching to the Indian diaspora, efficient engagement with the regional blocs at regional and multilateral levels, and role towards the non-traditional security threats such as climate change has enhanced the rise of India (Gokhale, 2021). The multi-aligned and pragmatic foreign policy of India and the failure of India's neighbourhood policy towards Nepal because of the border disputes

in the Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura-Kalapani region between the two have put Nepal into a dilemma (Bhattarai G. , 2021).

Furthermore, with the rise of China and India, the growing antagonism between the two have severe geopolitical challenges for Nepal. The declaration of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir and the Chinese assertion of power in the South China Sea fuelled concerns for India (Gokhale, 2021). The Doklam standoff in 2017 cannot be forgotten regarding the conflicts between the two neighbours (Joseph, 2018). Similarly, India's aspiration of dominance on the small states in South Asia through India's "neighbourhood first policy", perception of China's involvement in South Asia as a zero-sum game, active engagement in the Indian Ocean region through India-led maritime defence chain, and shift from Look East to Act East policies primarily concerned China (Krishnan, 2020). The development of "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR) and the "Indo-Pacific Vision" by India shows the true intentions of India towards China (Krishnan, 2020). In 2020, the border standoff between India and China in the Galwan Valley of Ladakh between Indian and Chinese armies amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the banning of the fifty-nine Chinese apps by India, has worsened the situations for India and China, and Nepal as well (Gokhale, 2021). These antagonistic developments between the two neighbours have invited several challenges to Nepal.

Moreover, the deepening India-US relations spurred by China rivalry is enhancing the Sino-India rivalry significantly (Bhattacharya, et al., 2019). The US-India cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region to contain China is one of

the reasons for the contemporary India-China resentments (Haider, 2021). As China has tried to increase its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, the maritime policy of India, in line with the support of the USA's Indo-Pacific Strategy, has challenged China's position (Mehra, 2020). The Indo-Pacific strategy is a more interconnected security network that includes India than the Asia-Pacific alliance system (Haider, 2021). Furthermore, the participation of India in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)- between the USA, Australia, Japan and India have made clear to China about India's participation in the containment initiatives (Mehra, 2020).

These major power politics have increased the geopolitical vulnerabilities for Nepal. China has been hugely investing in the infrastructural development of Nepal. Under the BRI project, the Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network was proposed to transform Nepal from a landlocked to a land-linked country (Bhattarai & Pulami, 2021). However, this connectivity has brought several geopolitical challenges for Nepal, inviting the extra-regional actors into the competition (Bhattarai & Pulami, 2021). Nepal is considered the 'gateway' to South Asia by China (Tao, 2017), and consideration of South Asia as a traditional sphere of influence by India has added geopolitical repercussions for Nepal (Ranjan, 2021). The USA's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has been an enormous debate in Nepalese politics. The huge grant of USD 500 million by the USA has been serious discussions regarding whether it is a part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy or not. Some have even pointed out the danger for Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence (Bhattarai, 2020). Thus, in the present day, Nepal has been under

severe geopolitical repercussions from the geopolitical strategies by the major powers in the region (Nepali Times, 2021). The diverse interests of the major regional powers- India and China for Nepal, extra-regional actors like the USA have changed the geopolitical scenario for the country.

Tracing Yam Theory's Relevance

Today, the essence of King Prithvi Narayan Shah's 'yam theory' can be very reliable for Nepal to deal with the geopolitical vulnerabilities encircling the country. Similar to the times of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, contemporarily, Nepal has been a 'yam' between the two boulders- India and China. The rise of China and India in the neighbourhood and the geopolitical and geoeconomic ambitions of both the countries have revoked the aspects and elements of the 'yam theory'. The increase in the extra-regional actors getting involved in Nepal to counter the perceived adversaries has called for Nepal to focus on the classics of its foreign policy. In order to accommodate the interests of the major powers in the country, Nepal needs to realise the geopolitical realities arising due to the Sino-India or US-China rivalries to alter the situation of misunderstanding, misperception and discomposure.

In the following ways, the crux of King Prithvi Narayan Shah's 'yam theory' can be employed to deal with the contemporary geopolitical repercussions:

a. Yam Theory as a Strategy for Accommodation

As there has been a dramatic upsurge and renewal of antagonism between the major powers and neighbours of Nepal- India and China, and also the competition can

be observed between the USA and China in Nepal, there is a high chance of hostility or confrontation due to their divergent interest and resentment towards each other (Wagner, 2020). Nepal should realise these geopolitical realities to eliminate the substantial risk because of the conflicts and competition between the neighbours. As suggested by King Prithvi Narayan Shah through the 'yam theory' to maintain friendly and peaceful relations with the neighbours, Nepal can accommodate the geopolitical risk induced due to antagonism between the neighbours and the extra-regional actors. Accommodation in international relations means the elimination or the substantial reduction of hostility between major power actors (Paul, 2016). The friendly but cautious foreign policy stance with the element of gradualism in dealing with each international actor like India, China and the USA or the BRI and Indo-Pacific strategy, 'yam theory' can be still relevant for Nepal to sustain in this major power politics. Through the facets of 'yam theory', Nepal can accommodate or create sustained peace among major power actors, overcome the geopolitical challenges, and create opportunities to realise its economic and developmental aspirations. Though India, China and the US have divergent interests, no state should be non-accommodated establishing resentment between any country and Nepal. The elements of 'yam theory' can be relevant in accommodating both BRI and Indo-Pacific strategy and Indian policies to establish a sustainable peace for development and sustenance.

b. *Yam Theory as a Strategy for Balancing*

Another relevancy of the 'yam theory' in contemporary times for Nepal is that the theory serves as an act of balancing. King Prithvi Narayan Shah, by portraying Nepal

as a yam between the two boulders, provides the country with the strategy of balancing. The essence of 'yam theory' provides the elements of gradualism, cautiousness, friendliness, and peaceful co-existence. Amidst the major power politics and diverse interests of those powers in Nepal, the elements of 'yam theory' can be employed by balancing the China-India rivalry and China-US rivalry and their growing interest in Nepal. The 'yam' spirit can be used by Nepal to avert the odds originating from power politics. The suggestion to maintain friendly relations with the neighbours by King Prithvi Narayan Shah is equally pertinent for Nepal as a tool of soft-balancing where Nepal can balance the neighbours amidst their rivalries to capitalise the geoeconomic vulnerabilities into the economic opportunities (Adhikari., 2015). Rather than forming an alliance with one of the major powers (India and China) as the traditional notion of balancing suggests, the issue-based mutual cooperation by Nepal with the neighbours can provide Nepal with a novel avenue to further the national interest with economic aspirations and development ambitions.

c. *Yam Theory as a Strategy for Neutrality*

For the small powers like Nepal, which is situated between the two major powers- India and China who are antagonistic with each other, it is essential for Nepal to stay neutral in the conflicts between the two (Jha, 2017). In the Doklam standoff between India and China in 2017, Nepal posed a neutral stance (Pant, 2017); and similarly, in the recent Galwan Valley clashes between the two, Nepal did not get involved in any sides (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Identifying the pattern of conflict between India and China, there is a high chance that the conflicts between the two will escalate in the borders or some other

theatre like Indo-Pacific. Therefore, tracing the essence of ‘yam theory’, staying neutral for Nepal in future conflicts seems to be very viable (Adhikari, 2015). The essence of risk that the theory poses depicts Nepal as a yam when the two boulders- India and China- collide in the future. Hence, the theory is a strategy for sustenance for Nepal and the symbolic depiction of the fate of the country between the two antagonistic powers where the statesman is supposed to look for the answers in theory according to the situations. The importance of a neutral stance for Nepal is being portrayed by the theory, and the significance for Nepal lies in staying neutral in any disputes in the future. Providing Nepal with the strategy of neutrality amidst the major power politics, the essence of King Prithvi Narayan’s ‘yam theory’ can be traced to contemporary geopolitics.

d. *Yam Theory as Strategy for Equiproximity*

As the notion of equiproximity is related to maintaining balanced relations with the neighbours, keeping the idea of sovereignty as the central proposition, this specific foreign policy for Nepal aims to maintain meaningful and balanced relations between the two neighbours (Adhikari, 2018). King Prithvi Narayan Shah’s suggestion to keep friendly relations with both neighbours get reflected in the policy of equiproximity. His idea of being cautious of other powers if the defence of the country is not strong also resembles the yam theory. Amidst the geopolitical vulnerabilities encircling Nepal, the essence of equiproximity in the yam theory is relevant in contemporary times. The element of friendliness in King Prithvi Narayan Shah’s recommendation to his statesmen pushes the essence of ‘yam theory’ closer to equiproximity than equidistance. It may be arguable that the

element of cautiousness would relate the yam theory to the policy of equidistance, but yam theory importantly focused on cautiously engaging with the neighbours rather than maintaining a distance. Therefore, as the yam theory provides Nepal with this essence of equiproximity to the present geopolitics of Nepal, it makes the theory relevant for Nepal in contemporary geopolitics.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that the theory is still relevant for Nepal in dealing with geopolitical challenges. Today, the increasing antagonism between India and China characterised by conflict and competition, and also the US-China rivalry in the globe has critically determined the geopolitics not only for Nepal but for all. China’s BRI projects and growing influence in South Asia, India’s deepening relations with the USA and shift from non-alignment to multi-alignment, the USA’s Indo-Pacific strategy, the diverse interest of the major powers in Nepal, and major power politics in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, in this geopolitical development encircling Nepal, the elements of the ‘yam theory’ can be employed as the strategies of accommodation, balancing, neutrality and equiproximity. Hence, the realisation of different facets of ‘yam’ theory and the geopolitical realities of Nepal is essential.

Therefore, the divine counsel provided by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, in his death bed, to his courtiers, family, priests, and households, suggesting to them the geopolitical situation and geostrategic location of Nepal and the conduct of foreign policy and internal policies is relevant. Most importantly, his reiteration that “This country is like a gourd between two rocks. Maintain a treaty of friendship with the emperor of China. Keep treaty of

friendship with the emperor of the southern sea (the Company). He has taken the plains. [...] If he takes these, the four emperors will come” (Stiller, 1968, p. 42) have accommodated the essence of contemporary geopolitics in totality. Thus, the ‘yam theory’ explaining the geopolitical circumstances of Nepal is beyond inevitability. However, before origination of ‘yam theory’, it is vital to comprehend that Nepal as a ‘yam’ first developed as a discourse through the experience of hardship in Nepal’s nation-building and unification process. Later, with the rise and dominance of the East India Company in the Indian sub-continent and the Qing Empire in China ruling over Tibet, the sense of the growing antagonism between the two led to the emergence of the ‘yam theory’. The ‘yam theory’ consists of friendliness, peaceful co-existence, cautiousness and gradualism in foreign policy and diplomacy. This ‘yam theory’ indicated the geostrategic location and geopolitical vulnerabilities for Nepal and provided the strategies for survival and sustenance for the country and Nepalese statesmen/rulers.

As the ‘yam theory’ provides Nepal with many foreign policies and diplomatic alternatives in the contemporary geopolitical vulnerabilities, the theory is very pertinent for Nepal and employed accordingly with continuity and change. King Prithvi Narayan Shah and his approaches to diplomacy, foreign, security, strategic, military and internal policies are yet to be reanalysed according to the contemporary situations. Hence, King Prithvi Narayan Shah as an individual ruler and his strategies, can provide Nepal with a critical outlook on different issues and be employed accordingly to get a more comprehensive strategy for sustenance in future.

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