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The Hydro-political History of the first Indo-Nepal Koshi River Agreement (1954)



Souvik Dasgupta

Junior Research Fellow (PhD Research Scholar) of History
[Presidency University], Email Id : souvik.jio29@gmail.com

ABSTRACT :

The cordial bilateral relation between India & Nepal dates from time immemorial. In recent times, a formal Treaty of Peace & Friendship was signed between Nepal & the then British India back in 1815. It was subsequently revised after Independence in 1950. Being two inherent neighbors, India & Nepal shares a large number of things between each other, not only in socio-political sphere but also in Geographical & Natural context. One such is the Hydrological resources particularly, the Himalayan River system. In this context we come across the Sapta Koshi River system. The Koshi, is the largest River of Nepal which originates in Tibet, then drain across Nepal and enters India near the Hanumangarh district in Bihar. 20 kms farther downstream, it joins River Ganga. It drains an area of 41,333 sq Km. in Nepal & that of about 20,400 sq. Km in India. The river is noted for its devastating effects of flood & soil erosion. Almost each & every year it used to cause massive destruction & loss of life & property, particularly in Bihar. Due to such devastating effects, it was sometimes called the "Sorrow of

Bihar". Considering such devastative nature, a scheme to check the river, to build a barrage on its course, became an utmost necessity. Here begins the Indo-Nepal Hydro-political negotiations centering the Koshi River System. In fact, historically the idea of controlling the Koshi was in discussion as early as 1897 in British India. The idea was repeatedly put forward many a times since then. However, due to various bilateral & political reasons it couldn't be materialized. But then in the 1950s with some new changes in the political spectrum, the idea suddenly gained momentum & finally the first Indo-Nepal Koshi Agreement was signed in 1954. So, what made it possible ? & why did it happened first of all ? In this context, our following article would briefly attempt to evaluate & analyze about the possible factors that led to the formulation of the long pending Koshi Agreement between India & Nepal back in 1954.

KEYWORDS : Sapta Koshi, catchment area, River basin, Upper Riparian, Lower Riparian, barrage, irrigation, flood control, Glacial Lake outburst flood, river basin, Rana Oligarchy.