

Restoration of Nepal's Monarchy: A Purposeless Call

Puspa Sharma

Summary

The restoration of the monarchy is not a solution to Nepal's current problems. The solution lies in the older leaders making way for the next generation and the country undertaking significant governance reforms.

After Gyanendra Shah, the last Shah king of Nepal, was forced to [abdicate his throne](#) on 11 June 2008 upon the people's verdict expressed through their political representatives, Nepal entered into a new political era. The country's political transformation from a Hindu kingdom to a secular republic was one of the greatest political transformations of recent times in South Asia.

Lately, efforts are being made to reverse this change and restore the monarchy. Pro-monarchy intentions had not dissipated completely in the years after the regime change. An agenda of the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and its factions has been the restoration of the monarchy. However, they have lacked strong public support as [evidenced by their poor performance](#) in the country's general elections. They have [formed alliances](#) with the major parties that abolished the monarchy and have won a few seats. They have also secured ministerial berths in different governments. Their pro-monarchy agenda have been given short shrifts in Nepal.

On 19 February 2025, on the occasion of Democracy Day, which was observed to commemorate the end of the 104-year-long autocratic Rana rule in Nepal in 1950, Gyanendra Shah made an implicit call for the restoration of the country's monarchy. This move of the former king encouraged the pro-monarchy supporters and raised the intensity for pro-monarchy activities. The former king made the appeal from Pokhara, another city in Nepal, where he was on a holiday. Upon his return to Kathmandu, he was given [a warm welcome](#) by a crowd that was not considered huge but not seen on that scale in pro-monarchy events before. This drew the attention of not only domestic stakeholders but also the international community.

Then, on 28 March 2025, a pro-monarchy demonstration was organised in Kathmandu. The coordinator of the event was Navaraj Subedi, an octogenarian who is a staunch royalist, and had held ministerial positions during the party-less *Panchayat* system in Nepal. However, he is also the one who, in his [autobiography published years earlier](#), had detailed Gyanendra Shah's greed and selfishness for personal gains at the cost of the country's economic betterment when he was a prince.

The commander of the pro-monarchy demonstration on 28 March 2025 was Durga Prasai, a [controversial businessman](#). He was once with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and

later joined the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist and Leninist) [CPN(UML)]. He was a central committee member of the CPN(UML). The influence that he held with both the leaders of the Maoist party and the CPN(UML) was in public display when he brought them together for a [lunch meeting at his residence](#) to broker a deal for the unification of the two parties in 2018. Later, perhaps because of his personal ambitions not being fulfilled by these parties, Prasai saw an opportunity in being a royalist.

The demonstration on 28 March 2025 turned [extremely violent](#). It claimed two lives, including that of a journalist. He was burnt alive in a house that was set on fire while he was reporting the event. A public company that produced herbal medicines and several public vehicles that were far away from the demonstration site were also burned by the demonstrators. Several individual properties, media houses and political parties' offices also suffered damages.

Amidst the demonstrations, Prasai, despite being the commander of the event, absconded. Later, he was found in Assam, India, and was [arrested](#). The RPP and other pro-monarchy political parties were dissatisfied with the former king for choosing people such as Subedi and Prasai to lead the pro-monarchy movement. They did not officially take part in the demonstrations. But two of RPP's senior office bearers were in the movement mobilisation committee. They participated actively in the demonstrations and were [arrested](#) for their alleged roles in instigating the violence.

The violence put a dent in the pro-monarchy activities for some time. On 18 April 2025, the former king invited seven senior leaders of the RPP for a lunch meeting at his residence. It was reported that he [tried to clarify](#) with the RPP leaders that he had not chosen Subedi and Prasai to lead the pro-monarchy movement. He also told them that he had not met Prasai before the earlier demonstration although [Prasai's car was seen](#) leaving the former king's residence a day before the event. Gyanendra Shah's meeting with the RPP leaders suggested a change in his plan to advance the pro-monarchy movement.

The RPP and other royalist parties [had not accepted](#) Subedi's leadership earlier for the movement. However, after their meeting with the former king, they have come together under Subedi's leadership to advance the movement. The former king has been successful in gaining some strength by diffusing the animosity among the royalists. They have [jointly announced](#) an indefinite people's movement starting on 29 May 2025 until the restoration of Nepal as a Hindu kingdom.

[Political analysts](#) view that the current strength gained by the pro-monarchy movement, although still limited, is not due to the people's keenness to bring back the king. Rather, it is an outrage against the governance failures of the current political dispensation. The Nepali public, at large, is mainly frustrated by seeing the same old faces in leadership positions for decades.

The royalists are making their case for the monarchy's return to solve the current problems. They are making the pitch for a ceremonial monarch, not an active one. Perhaps they are aware that making a pitch for active monarchy will backfire rather than strengthen their agenda. However, in making the case for a ceremonial monarch, they are unable to answer

a fundamental question – how will a ceremonial monarch make a difference with the rest of the constitutional arrangements remaining intact? It will still be the same political parties and their leaders that will be at the helm unless the constitutional monarch’s instincts are of turning into an absolute one like before are alive.

The restoration of the monarchy is, therefore, not a solution to Nepal’s current challenges. Meaningful progress requires the older generation of leaders to step aside and make space for new leadership, alongside the implementation of substantial governance reforms.

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Dr Puspa Sharma is a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute in the National University of Singapore (NUS). He can be contacted at puspa.sh@nus.edu.sg. The author bears full responsibility for the facts cited and opinions expressed in this paper.