

Nepal's Royal Mystery: A Prince's Love, A Nation's Loss (1945-2001)



The Dark Day of Nepal, a political mystery linked to King Birendra, the last king of Nepal, is a subject of intrigue. In 2001, tensions flared between 29-year-old Crown Prince Dipendra of Nepal and his parents, Queen Aiswarya and King Birendra. The root cause of the family conflict lay in Queen Aiswarya's disapproval of the woman Dipendra had chosen to marry, Devyani Rana. The queen vehemently opposed the young woman and even threatened Dipendra with disinheritance if he disregarded her wishes.

On a summer's night in Nepal, a drunken Crown Prince, Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah ambushed a royal family gathering, opening fire and killing nine people, including his father, the King. Tragically, he later turned the gun on himself.

It's perhaps one of the most dramatic royal events to have ever occurred in our lifetimes, but it doesn't involve the British monarchy.

In a single night, Nepal's royal family was almost entirely wiped out. Their killer lay in a hospital bed in a coma, having been proclaimed King the moment his father died.

The massacre allegedly occurred after an argument between Dipendra and his parents, who disapproved of his plans to marry the local aristocrat Devyani Rana.

It is believed Dipendra was threatened with being disinherited if he continued with the match and this may have been what drove him to murder on June 1, 2001.

While we may never know his real intentions, Dipendra wasn't a ruler for long. Hours after the massacre, he was declared brain dead and his uncle Gyanendra became Nepal's third King in three days.

The events that unfolded shocked the nation, leading to a grieving public taking to the streets and rioting for several days. Many were astounded that the beloved prince could be responsible for such heinous violence. These events marked the beginning of a tumultuous period in Nepal, which culminated in the abolition of the country's

monarchy seven years after the massacre. Fueled by public resentment towards King Gyanendra, fiercely republican Maoist politicians capitalized on the sentiment and secured a majority in the constitutional assembly. The country that had once revered its royals as living Hindu gods abruptly ordered the surviving family members to vacate the palace within 15 days.

The public's divorce-related thoughts lead this case to a mystery and provide a new perspective on the prince's death.

WHY AND WHO?

Crown Prince Dipendra, the eldest son of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, was cherished by the Nepali people, who affectionately called him Dippy.

But according to Lieutenant General Vivek Kumar Shah, an aide-de-camp at the royal palace for 26 years who knew the Crown Prince since childhood, there was another side to him.

"From the beginning, he likely didn't receive the love he deserved as a child," he shared with The World on the 10th anniversary of the massacre.



Prince Dipendra, educated at the esteemed Eton College, a British institution that nurtures future kings and prime ministers, reportedly met his beloved, Ms. Rana, who was also studying in England.

Ms. Rana, the daughter of a prominent Nepalese politician and a descendant of an Indian maharajah, seemed like the ideal match for a prince.

However, Queen Aishwarya was resolute in her desire to break up the relationship and insisted that her son marry a distant relative of the House of Shah.

Ms. Rana's family was also skeptical. While the marriage would have elevated her to the position of future queen of Nepal, her mother cautioned her that she would have to adapt to a significantly less lavish lifestyle.

"Devyani had grown accustomed to extreme comfort and wealth," the Nepali Times reported after the massacre.

"Her mother further emphasized that Nepali royalty was relatively impoverished, and she had to seriously consider whether her daughter could survive in a poor household."

Despite the challenges, Dipendra and Devyani continued to meet in secret for years, while the Crown Prince fervently pleaded with his parents to allow them to wed.

By 2001, the relationship between the King, Queen, and their first-born son had reached a critical juncture.

Newspaper clippings from that time reveal the Prince's decision to remain unmarried as he approached his thirties, which was jeopardizing his status as the heir to the throne.

One article dated May 27, 2001, posed the question, "Why is the Crown Prince unmarried at this age? Is his future as the heir to the throne in danger?"

"It is high time His Royal Highness got married. The Nepali people eagerly anticipate his wedding, hoping for a grand celebration," the statement concluded.

However, no one could have predicted that a dinner held at the palace dining hall just days later would turn into a scene of bloodshed.

The Royal Catastrophe: What Happened in Narayanhiti Palace?



According to a government report investigating the massacre, Prince Dipendra arrived at a dinner party at the palace intoxicated by whiskey and high on a special kind of cigarette prepared with a combination of hashish and another unidentified black substance.

After a heated argument with another guest, Dipendra was escorted back to his chambers by his brother Nirajan and a cousin. From his bedroom, he repeatedly called Ms. Rana, claiming that she was mistreating him. However, she informed the authorities that he was

slurring his speech and that the Prince had informed her during their last conversation that he intended to go to bed.

Instead of emerging from his bedroom in his usual attire, the prince made a shocking appearance, dressed in army fatigues and carrying three guns, including an M16 assault rifle.

A palace aide, who had spotted him at the top of the stairs, initially dismissed any concerns, considering the prince's well-known interest in firearms.

The dinner party in the billiard room was an exclusive event reserved for royals, and as a result, no guards were present to provide security.

As the Prince unleashed a barrage of gunfire, palace aides sprang into action, attempting to break through a glass door to rescue the other members of the royal family.

After killing several individuals in the billiard room, the prince reportedly made his way to the garden in search of his mother.

"Please don't do this. Kill me if you must," his younger brother, Nirajan, reportedly pleaded while shielding the Queen.

Dipendra, the prince, murdered his parents and younger siblings, leaving nine of his relatives dead. After the heinous act, his uncle finally stepped forward and demanded that Dipendra hand over the

gun. However, instead of obeying, Dipendra shot and wounded his uncle before turning the gun on himself.

Nepal's Royal Mystery: Conspiracies Behind the Palace Massacre.



The timing of the shootings and the immediate shutdown of communications within the palace left reporters scrambling for information in the ensuing hours. Official reports of the incident were scarce, leaving many to wonder who held power.

The event itself seemed almost impossible, like something out of a Shakespearean tragedy. A family feud over a forbidden romance had escalated into violence and death in a matter of hours.

However, as the shock wore off, questions and doubts began to surface. How could the Crown Prince turn against his family in such a violent manner? Were there other forces behind the attack? And why did the investigation into the night only last a week?

The rumors were further fueled by the Prime Minister's early insistence that it was an accident.

"According to the information we have, the incident occurred due to an accidental firing of an automatic weapon, resulting in serious injuries to the King, Queen, Crown Prince, and other members of the royal family," Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala stated.

The incident was dubbed Nepal's "Kennedy assassination," and reports suggested that June 1, 2001, would become one of those events where people would forever be "forever diagramming the scene on pieces of paper, graphing the trajectory of bullets, and speculating about other gunmen."

Following the massacre, an article by Baburam Bhattarai, an underground Maoist leader, suggested that the royal murders were the result of a "political conspiracy."

Two directors of Nepal's largest newspaper, Kantipur, were arrested for treason after the article was published. However, the government later dropped the charges due to intense public backlash.

Other conspiracies focused closer to home, with suspicion falling on Prince Dipendra's unpopular uncle and successor, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who was not present at the palace on the night of the massacre.

Wild rumors spread that Gyanendra had colluded with his son, Paras, to carry out the murders and frame Dipendra so that they could seize the throne for themselves.

Both men vehemently denied any involvement. A former Nepalese foreign minister even made unsubstantiated claims that India and the US were conspiring to eliminate the royal family. However, some view the massacre at the palace as an inevitable consequence of fate.