

Courage & Conviction

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Koirala to summon House Loaded silence

■ nf correspondent

As the speculation about the number is over and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists fell far short of the simple majority mark, Prime Minister GP Koirala is quietly harbouring his ambition to continue in power.

"Nepal army, security agencies, bureaucracy and a section of the international community want me to continue," Koirala confided in a small group of loyalists. The issue is also being debated at different levels of the Congress party. Koirala gave his piece of mind recently after Prachanda made it clear that the CPN-M has not yet renounced their politics of violence.

Koirala has not yet conceded to Maoists' victory. "Koirala now needs to act as Head of the State and prepare to call the first meeting of the constituent

assembly which should be asked to explore the possibility of forming the government," Chakra Bastola, Congress Working Committee member told newsfront.

Sources in the Prime Minister's office said Koirala is going to issue an appeal soon to that effect. He is also expected to ask the political parties to make an objective assessment of the poll outcome without 'misinterpreting' it.

The CPN-M and the Congress are already engaged in a public debate, mostly from media, with each side staking claim to lead the new government. While the Maoists have said their emergence as the single largest party in the house is a mandate for them to lead the future government, the Congress is still harping on its larger acceptability, as the government has to run on the spirit of unity and coalition.

Maoists' statements on the monarchy, its

abolition without allowing any debate and vote on the first day, Maoists instruction to the private schools not to hike fees and assertions that they may be nationalised, are issues which have already injected fears into the masses.

Equally frightened are the business and banking sectors. All these are issues that Koirala seems to have counted on for his continuation. Of course, the hung CA scenario and absence of consensus or a two thirds

majority in support of Prachanda as the future Prime Minister, has also raised hopes in the Koirala camp for his continuation in the post.

As the final tally shows, the Maoists will have a total of 220 members in the House of 601 followed by Nepali Congress with 110, and UML with 103. The Madheshi Janadhikar Forum with 50 plus members has emerged as a heavy weight in the House.

Koirala's reluctance to give up and resign also follows fears that some members of the international community have raised about how Maoists would go about on the issue of integration of the 'Peoples Liberation Army' (PLA) besides the issue of the independence of judiciary and media freedom.

"While the integration of PLA in the Nepal army is a major issue for us, the UN also has to think whether Maoist combatants will be acceptable if deployed as UN peace keeping force in other countries," Koirala is believed to have asked some diplomats recently. ■

"Nepal army, security agencies, bureaucracy and a section of the international community want me to continue," Koirala confided in a small group of loyalists.



Maoist Chief Prachanda addressing media, as UN Country Representative Robert Piper and UNMIN Chief Ian Martin look on.

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अब... १* रु. १ मै बचत खाता

नेपाल इन्भेष्टमेण्ट बैंक बढी भन्दा बढी
नागरिकहरुमा बैंकिङ्ग सेवाको पहिलो अनुभव
एवं बानी बस्न सकोस भन्नाका लागि सजोरब
प्रस्तुत गर्दछ...

**मात्र रु.१ मा
"आफ्नै बचत खाता"**

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Radical changes

Prachanda said that Maoists will not be satisfied anything short of abolition of the 1950 treaty, lock stock and barrel.

There is already a changed tone in Delhi about the way it should be treating Nepal under a government that in most likelihood will be led by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M).

KV Rajan, a former ambassador in Nepal went to the extent of saying that while India was so far dealing with a 'protectorate,' it should now be dealing with an independent neighbour. SD Muni who took the public stance in the late 80s that there is no provision of modifying the 1950 treaty of Nepal-India; said it is not as rigid now and in fact, he welcomed the modification.

The CPN-M however, does not look interested in having a cosmetic change in those treaties or approaches. On April 23, CPN-M Chief Prachanda gave a piece of his mind to the international audience at a meeting that was hosted by the United Nations in Kathmandu. He said that Maoists will not be satisfied anything short of abolition of the 1950 treaty, lock stock and barrel. He said the 1950 treaty as well as the Mahakali integrated treaty stood heavily against Nepal, and in favour of India.



He made it very clear that the government led by the Maoists will also be reviewing other treaties. The 1950 treaty, according to Maoists, brings Nepal under the security umbrella of India. Prachanda has also said that the Gorkha recruitment in the British and Indian army also needs to be stopped immediately.

India's former Foreign Affairs Secretary Shyam Sharan who played a key role in bringing the Maoists together with the seven pro-democracy parties against the monarchy under a 12-point agree-

ment way back in November 2005 said in a television interview that India had no problem in the 1950 treaty being revised. But what the Maoists are demanding is not mere revision.

Prof Muni, in many of his write ups and public speeches said the 1950 treaty can either be scrapped with a year's notice from either side, or remain as it is since there is no provision of the modification or amendment in it. The treaty is under a passive revision at the foreign secretary level of the two countries since 2001, with no progress so far.

Sood meets Koirala

In a clear departure from the diplomatic norms and practices, India's ambassador Rakesh Sood chose to meet the Head of the government before submitting the letter of credentials. Sood who succeeds Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, met Prime Minister GP Koirala who is also the Head of the State on April 26, barely 48 hours after he landed in Kathmandu.

Sood met Koirala at his own request, a source in the PM's office told newsfront, and added he had no idea about the content of the meeting. "But it must be very urgent as he was keen on the meeting."

Sood told Koirala that it was purely a meeting on a personal level, "Since we know each other." Koirala, the source said, had raised the issue of whether such a meeting was desirable as the ambassador was yet to submit his credentials.

Shital Niwas is however a bit uncomfortable about the whole thing. "The first thing any diplomat or ambassador is told by



the protocol division of the Foreign Ministry on arrival is that he/she should refrain from meeting top government officials before submitting credentials. And this is the practice followed everywhere," a foreign ministry official told newsfront on condition of anonymity.

"The message that this meeting has sent across the diplomatic community will be open to interpretation in the political circle as well as in the diplomatic circle," he added. Sood, a career diplomat and a Joint Secretary rank officer of the Indian Foreign Service, was earlier posted as the Indian Ambassador in Kabul.

Kandamul hunting for survival

Prem Bahadur is not alone in this mission against starvation.

■ Chhatra Karki

Prem Bahadur Chepang, a resident of Jawang, Dhading is about to leave for the jungle. He is prepared to face every odds along the route as that is the only way he can save himself and his family from starvation. "I am neither going to poach wild animals nor will I fell any tree. This trip is just for collecting some wild-food, preferably Yam," he said.

"Any Kandamul (wild berries and other edibles) will do, but Yam is preferred," he added. This is the condition of the entire Chepang community today. Poor and socially marginalised, the Chepangs have no land to cultivate. Some of them might have cleared small parts of forests and owned it, but that is too small and meager for their survival. At the most, the yield could suffice for about six months.

Prem Bahadur is not alone in this mission against starvation. But what pains him and others is the apathy of the government towards their problem. Birkha Bahadur Chepang said, "We have no other options but to go to the cities in search of work or to the jungles for search of food at least for six months in a year."

The worst months are April, May and June. Most of the members go out for 'Kandamul harvest' during the period. Thus, Chepang community in Nepal still continues with the aboriginal practice that take place in remote corners of some countries in Asia, Africa and America.

Although collecting Kandamul is not an easy job, many researches have proved that the wild berries and other edibles are rich in calories and have high nutritious value. Recognising its nutritious value, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) emphasised the need to promote the traditional food materials, three decades ago. But promoting traditional food materials and having to go to the jungle for food hunting to keep alive are two different things.

The food of Chepang community appears to consist of mainly three varieties of Kandamul, Githa, Vyakur and Tarul. While the first two fall in the wild harvest



category, Tarul (Yam) is cultivated in the fields.

Chepangs possess deep indigenous knowledge about the quality and distribution of Kandamul in their areas. The villagers can recognise a poisonous Kandamul easily. Bir Bahadur Chepang said, "It takes five to six hours of indigenous treatment to neutralise a poisonous Kandamul before it can be fit for human consumption."

But the continued harvesting pattern has its own ill effects. If the dependence on Kandamul continues on this scale, these varieties might become extinct. The only way to preserve them is to ensure supply of food materials to the community and reduce their dependence on the forest products.

There are some attempts already made in this direction. The ABC (Agrobio Diversity Conservation) program, which is sponsored by UNDP/GEF/SGP, also supports to conserve the traditional food technically and financially. The program is conducted by RIMS - Nepal.

To fulfill the target of ABC program, different groups have been formed to promote the conservation activities in the community. Rishi Bastakoti, executive director of RIMS-Nepal said, "Literacy classes, integrated pest management training and capacity building training are incorporated in the ABC program. It is aimed that the effort will empower the local community."

Journey of mistakes

Govinda Raj Joshi sets the political agenda

A senior Congress leader, Govinda Raj Joshi, has literally set the agenda for the Congress that is yet to recover from the disappointing poll outcome. Joshi, who lost the poll from Tanahun has asked the party leadership to snap alliance with the Maoists, who are "neither democrats nor nationalists."

Giving his assessment for the setback that the party suffered, Joshi told a meeting of the party's central committee that the journey began with the signing of the 12-point agreement. But the chain of mistakes went on multiplying.

"The party discarded BP Koirala's policy of national reconciliation and aligned with the Maoists who are neither nationalists nor democrats. This alliance with the Maoists was largely responsible for Congress party's rout in Terai."

In fact, it was after Joshi's strong plea that some prominent Nepali Congress leaders have come out openly against the government leadership being handed over to the Maoists who have emerged as the single largest party in the constituent assembly. Former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat came out openly on April 25 that GP Koirala must continue to lead the government.

Joshi also said it was a wrong to move closer to the Maoists, keeping the parties like UML and the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) at bay. Joshi said Maoists also indulged in large scale booth capturing, adding, "Police was helpless and Maoists appeared well above the reach of the law." He blamed weak party organisation and



the leadership's silence on internal sabotage for the reversal that the party suffered. Arjun Narsingh KC, another prominent leader of the Congress said that internal sabotage was one of the factors for the party's poor showing. He said that the party showed little interest over issues like deployment of the young communist league cadres in booths.

Joshi said the Congress is now left with only two options: wage the battle for existence or surrender to the Maoists. "They are still killing and harassing our members. They have not returned the property they confiscated, all this indicates that they do not want to be guided by the rule of law," said he.

"It is not a system of rule of majority. Those in agreement with us must work together and safeguard democracy," he said, asserting that under no circumstances should the Maoists be supported to lead the government. Instead, the government must start getting Maoists to return the property they confiscated as a proof that they respected the peace process.

News Brief

Tibet to be linked with Nepal

China will be extending its railway service from Tibet to Khasa in Nepal, which will be yet another milestone in the bilateral relationship after the Kodari highway was built in the 60s. The extension of the railway service from



China's autonomous region to Khasa has already been included in the five year plan of the people's republic of China.

Ai Ping, Director General of the International Department of the Communist Party of China told Prime Minister GP Koirala on April 25 that the plan has already become part of the 11th five year plan and it will be realised within the next five years. According to Aditya Baral, advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Ping said the railway link will help in Nepal's economic growth.

Compensation

The government has decided to pay rupees one lakh each to the family of more than 13,000 people who lost their lives during the 11-year old insurgency led by the Maoists. The decision was taken by the political committee of the cabinet chaired by Ram Chandra Poudel who is in charge of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction.

The committee also recommended that children, up to three in numbers, from such families should be given scholarships for their studies. But there are no clear guidelines and machineries to have these decisions implemented.

Post active election commission

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the government to investigate into major cases of human rights violation during the election. The instruction of the commission followed its meeting with the chiefs of security agencies of the government on April 25.

The commission instructed that the murder of Rishi Kumar Sharma, UML the candidate from Surkhet and of seven Maoist cadres in Dang; and the bomb explosion in Rautahat be probed and the guilty punished. The commission has neither given any deadline for the probe, nor has it instructed about who should be conducting it.

A House of 25

The 601-member constituent assembly will have its members from 25 different parties with the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists with the largest chunk of 220. It will be followed by Congress, exactly half the Maoist size and UML, a close third will have altogether 103 members.

The Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), a party grossly undermined by analysts as well as India which showed substantial interest in the development in Terai, will be the biggest regional party with 52 members. Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP) that saw its leader Mahanath Thakur's defeat will have only 20 members.

Sadhbhavana, an ally of the TMLP, will have nine members. The Rashtriya Prajatantra Party led by Kamal Thapa that advocated for constitutional monarchy being retained has bagged four seats, although the party could not open its account under the first past the post system.

In the meantime, hectic lobbying has begun for the 26 seats that will be filled up by the 'seven parties' as per the interim constitution. Those in the race, among others, include human rights leaders, Padma Ratna Tuladhar and Damannath Dhungana.



Sharan show

■ nf correspondent

A high level exercise of the government of India on Nepal affairs yielded the desired results. Minister for Physical Planning, the Maoist leader, Hishila Yami thanked and congratulated India for being the first country to welcome Maoists' victory.

Yami who is one of the two prominent Maoist participants in the jamboree hosted by the government of India in Patna, heaped praises on India for welcoming the outcome and 'our victory'. But CP Gajurel, in charge of the party's foreign affairs was more circumspect and argued that the 1950 treaty that brought Nepal under India's security umbrella should be scrapped. The workshop was aimed at gathering input on how the Nepal-India relation in the changed context should move ahead.

Yami's speech was soothing for India especially because the Maoists have long been preaching policy of



'anti-imperialism' (America) and 'anti-expansionism' (India).

The message coming from Shyam Sharan, special envoy to PM Man Mohan Singh who is still considered a voice more powerful than the south block on Nepal affairs was clear that India's policy will no more be based

on twin-pillar theory, and that it would look forward to working together with the Maoists; Journalist Tirtha Koirala, one of the participants, said in his dispatch to Kantipur Television.

However, the last minute cancellation of the programme by Foreign Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee in the workshop indicated that the government of India at the highest political level is still watching developments in Nepal and would want to wait for the formation of the government to give its final message.

Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister of Bihar, said India was in favour of a developed and stable Nepal and a 1500-Km highway network along the border provided an opportunity for access and expansion of trade across the border.

The 30-member delegation from Nepal that included leaders of the political parties and representatives of the media and civil society participated in the workshop. ■

Reactions to Maoists' victory

India's response to the Maoists victory and how the 'red storm' rising in Nepal would affect the largest democracy is also generating a lot of interest.

■ Bhumika Ghimire

Maoist's victory took many by surprise, also in the United States and India. The media is now buzzing with experts and regular folks debating on the future of Nepal and its relationship with the two nations.

On April 14th, Sean McCormack, spokesman for the US State Department released a press statement congratulating people of Nepal on the 'historic' elections and also expressed concerns regarding the incidents of violence and intimidation that took place before the election and reports of voting irregularities.

The cautious press statement indicates America's dilemma over the Maoists questions. Through an e-mail interview a State Department official responded to the question of US-Nepal future relations, economic and military in light of Maoists victory on April 24th, saying that "The United States congratulates the Nepali people on successful elections. Our focus now is to see that the newly elected constituent assembly fulfills its mandate to draft a constitution that reflects the will of the Nepali people."

When prodded about US response to Maoists victory, the official said, "We are looking forward to the announcement of the final results. Once that



DIASPORA

announcement is made, we will work with whichever parties are elected to move our bilateral relationship forward."

Responding to the confusion over the Maoists still being listed by the US as a terrorist organisation, the official said, "The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) / United People's Front is not on the United States' list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs). It is however on two other lists, the Special Designated National List and the Terrorism Exclusion List.

These fall under different conditions than the FTO designation. Thus, US government officials can work with members of the Maoist party in specific capacities when the Maoists are working for the Nepali government."

India's response to the Maoists victory and how the 'red storm'

rising in Nepal would affect the largest democracy is also generating a lot of interest. At the Vancouver Sun, Jonathan Manthorpe discussed about the effect Maoists victory will have on the regional 'great game' of power between India and China. He says that the victory puts Prachanda in 'enviable' position, allowing him to pit China against India and push his agenda forward.

At The Times of India, Swapan Dasgupta, dismisses any attempts by the Indian government to have a working relationship with the Maoists. His reason? Not Prachanda's decision to scrap the 1950 treaty with India, but, "Unfortunately, if history is anything to go by, the prospects of those who capture power professing Marxism-Leninism transforming themselves instantly into honorable social-democrats, are extremely remote."

Mian Ridge at the Christian Science Monitor, in trying to find answers to Maoist victory and relationship with India, included decidedly alarmist views echoed by some Indian publications along with cautious reports from Outlook and India Today. A Mumbai newspaper is quoted recounting concerns raised by the India's Border Security Force (BSF) over possible cooperation between the Indian Maoist group-the Naxalites and the Maoists in Nepal.



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Point to Ponder

Good leaders must first become good servants.

- Robert Greenleaf

Constitution of convenience

The country hangs in a delicate balance as major political parties are busy interpreting and misinterpreting the people's verdict, clearly a fractured one.

Its chairman has been speaking, often contradicting himself, on issues mainly related with economy and investment. There are substantial fears that independence of judiciary and freedom of the press would be the biggest casualty in the Maoist rule.

The radical tones of the Maoists on one hand and its continued attacks on its political opponent's rivals even after the election results only indicate that it might use both the state machinery and its private outfits to silence dissent and dismantle any institution that might offer moral and organised resistance to the authoritarian exercise of the new regime.

The fear is equally rampant in the major political parties including the Nepali Congress and the UML. That is why; a powerful section of the Nepali Congress still wants GP Koirala to continue despite the poll reversal Nepal Congress suffered in the April 10 election.

In absence of a consensus (among the ruling seven parties) or at least a two thirds majority of the constituent assembly members in favour of a Prime Minister, it will require at least two thirds majority to have GP Koirala removed from the post.

Once King Gyanendra handed over the power to the seven parties, the neo-rulers said good-bye to the democratic norms and values by denying any space to opposition. Together, they wrote an interim constitution that made one single person as the head of the government and the head of the state.

Having an active politician as the head of the state, a position that demands political neutrality was the biggest compromise made on values of democracy. As a result, the Maoists not only extracted many concessions, both reasonable and unreasonable; and its cadres emerged as the new class enjoying all kind of impunity for every crime they committed.

A new culture of impunity practiced by the Maoists and silently watched by the government and tacitly endorsed by the international community (UNMIN and UNOHCHR included) has flourished in the country under the interim constitution and parliament.

Democracy is not a simple label. It is a process that demands that the government and the system are guided by the principle of accountability and transparency. But thanks largely to the interim constitution of the seven parties and authoritarianism that they have institutionalised, the responsibility to bring the constitutional process back on the track lies on individual members of the CA.

Not only have they to contribute in writing a truly democratic constitution with all the values and virtues it represents, they also need to fight and defeat any attempt on the part of the Maoists or other leaders if they want to impose certain decisions, beginning with the scrapping of monarchy, by thwarting the process of debate and voting if necessary. Members must be dictated by their conscience and not be blind followers of the party or of any particular leader.



Letters

Fair election?

The Election Commission should come out with the details of events and incidences leading to re-elections. It should also make a fair assessment to come to a conclusion in matters related to the whole election process.

There are reports that Maoists' stunning performance was attributed to fear, intimidation, coercion and highhandedness. Maoist's poor showing in the places where there were re-elections confirms that they have relaxed their tactics as they were already in the driving seat.

Sanjay Tuladhar, Kathmandu

Fantastic interview

The interview with Beth Paige - Are you the woman you want your daughter to be, was a fantastic one, with a very different perspective.

developmental agency.

As pointed out by her, now that elections have taken place peacefully in Nepal, and appears like a 'charm' as she said, is it not the right time for the US to review its approach towards the Maoists?

Naresh Shrestha, Kamaladi, Kathmandu

Your science, Koirala!

GP Koirala's version on election outcome exposes his dishonesty as well as inefficiency. It was the Nepali Congress which controlled the home ministry, and he also arbitrarily appointed chiefs of civil and armed police

force when he became the Prime Minister.

He hand picked Bhojraj Pokhrel as the chief election commissioner who remained so loyal that he would have no hesitation in going to Baluwater to brief the Prime Minister about the preparations being made by the commission to ensure that the elections were absolutely free and fair.

If there is any honesty left in Koirala, he should be able to tell the world that his government and election machinery could not hold a free and fair election and the Maoists rigged it.

Ram Kumar Thapa, Sat Dobato, Lalitpur

Heed warning!

Binod Bista's columns not only dwell upon much wider areas of national interest, he has been objectively and passionately warning each and every political player about the costly consequence of their failure.

The interim parliament has no doubt failed the people as the seven parties with monopoly over power never acted transparently and with accountability. That must change now.

Mohan Sharma, Dilli Bazar, Kathmandu



Spiritual Corner

Jnanachandra - princess moon

Long ago in an age before which there was nothing else, the victorious one, the Tathagata Dundubhisvara came into existence and was known as the light of the various worlds.

The offerings she prepared each day were

in value comparable to all the precious things which filled a distance of twelve Yojanas in each of the ten directions, leaving no intermediate spaces unfilled.

At that time some monks said to her: "It is as a result of these, your roots of virtuous actions, that you have come into being in this female



male and female is quite worthless. The

form. If you pray that your deeds accord with the teachings, then indeed on that account you will change your form to that of a man, as is befitting."

After much discourse she finally replied, "In this life there is no such distinction as male and female, neither of self-identity, a person nor any perception, and therefore attachment to ideas of

weak-minded are always deluded by this."

And so she vowed: "There are many who wish to gain enlightenment in a man's form, and there are but few who wish to work for the welfare of living beings in a female form.

Therefore may I, in a female body, work for the welfare of beings, right until Samsara has been emptied." - by Tibetan Lama Taranatha (b 1573 CE) (Jnanachandra was an early name for Tara - A bodhisattva)

■ Ajai Sahni



Behind all this – bare, obvious and assiduously ignored – are the ponderously shifting realities and imperatives of power. Never concealed, but widely neglected, was the simple truth that the Maoist engagement with democracy is tactical, not ideological – and could not be otherwise. *South Asia Intelligence Review*, September 24, 2007

Nepal's Constituent Assembly elections, held on April 10, 2008, are yet to produce a final result, with counting for the Proportional Representation seats still to be completed, but there is little doubt, in a world of winners and losers, that the Maoists have emerged as unambiguous victors. Parties that have traditionally been wedded to democratic and constitutional politics in Nepal – and their vacillating international backers, including India – are unquestionable losers, as are those who had thrown in their lot with the monarchy.

Of the 240 seats determined by the First Past the Post (FPTP) system the Maoists had secured 120, just shy of a simple majority, with one result yet to be declared at the time of this Assessment. The Nepali Congress (NC), with 37 seats, the Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), with 33, and the Madhesi People's Rights Forum of Nepal (MPRFN), with a surprise 29, lagged far behind. The once-powerful royalist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) was unable to secure even a single seat.

The Maoist 'lead', however, will shrink dramatically with the results of the Proportional Representation (PR) vote are finally tallied – something of an irony, since it was the Maoists who were most strongly insistent on the PR system, believing that they would fare better here, rather than under a purely FPTP vote. 335 seats in the 601 seat Constituent Assembly, which is to rewrite Nepal's Constitution over the coming 30 months, are defined by the PR vote, while the remaining 26 representatives are to be nominated by the Cabinet.

With just over 9.7 million votes counted, out of the estimated 10.6 million votes cast, the Maoists account for just over 30.4 per cent of the present PR tally. By the time the vote settles, and the Cabinet nominees are defined, the CPN-M can be expected to end up with a final tally of around 230 seats – if the nominated seats are allocated on a proportional basis, or a few more, if the Maoists corner a lion's share.

They will, however, fall far short of the majority that they would need to railroad the Constitutional process according to their will. The relative absence of overt violence during the elections, and the divided outcome, has given rise to many sanguine expectations on Nepal's future. Some pundits in India have articulated the hope that India's own rampaging Maoists will draw lessons from the 'Nepal experience' and join the democratic process.

The state may not have manifestly been captured through the 'barrel of the gun', but it has certainly been secured under the shadow of the gun.

Fractured FUTURES



An overwhelming make-believe among commentators and international observers appears to be that the worst is now over, and Nepal is now firmly fixed on a trajectory of gradual – even if, possibly, slow – recovery and reconstruction, with the nightmare of the 'people's war' left irrevocably behind.

What has been engineered in Nepal through the electoral process, however, is unambiguously a partial 'seizure of power'. This seizure is no less a reality because it has not been effectively resisted by democratic forces. Nor, indeed, is the Maoist ideology any the less totalitarian because power is secured through a manipulation of democratic processes and institutions.

The state may not have manifestly been captured through the 'barrel of the gun', but it has certainly been secured under the shadow of the gun. This is borne out by the wave of violence and intimidation that had preceded the elections, creating what the European Union's election observers described as "a general atmosphere of fear and intimidation" under which the polls were eventually conducted.

Domestic observers, including the Nepal Election Observation Committee (NEOC) and the Nepal Election Monitoring Alliance (NEMA), who had the deepest penetration, with thousands of observers positioned across the country, noted that the Maoists had systematically resorted to "threats, intimidation and violence to terrorise voters and political rivals."

More significantly, the Maoist leadership had, in the run-up to the elections, clearly and repeatedly stated that the election outcome would be rejected if the outcome did

not favour their party, with Baburam Bhattarai, the CPN-M's chief ideologue threatening a 'new revolution', and to 'capture the state' in 'not... more than ten minutes'.

Ominously, Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda, the Chairman of the CPN-M, had spoken of an undefined "new method" to "capture the Constituent Assembly through elections" in February 2008. The effect of Maoist tactics was, no doubt, compounded by widespread disillusionment with the mainstream parties – but the eventual outcome certainly reflects a quantum secured through strong-arm measures across the country.

The divided electoral outcome will of course, constrain the Maoists from their graver excesses, even as their relative strength in the Assembly will tempt them to encourage or coerce 'cooperation' with their agenda. Many have hoped that the Maoist commitment to pluralism and parliamentary democracy is now real, and eventually will be total; others believe that the inherent dynamic of this system will soon make the CPN-M 'just another party', vulnerable to the endemic corruption and ineptitude that has afflicted Nepal's other political formations.

However, the Maoists will find it impractical, if not impossible, to entirely renege on their ideological agenda – even if we are to believe that their commitment will be sufficiently diluted by the lures of the many vices of the parliamentary system. It can, of course, be hoped that the Maoist-led regime that will eventually be installed at Kathmandu, will have the sagacity to reject the excesses of Stalinist Russia, of the Communist Party of China under Mao and the 'Gang of Four', or of the

Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

It is, however, difficult to imagine how it can carry its declared ideological agenda of national transformation forward without drastic attacks against those who currently control power, influence and wealth within the country's long-stratified and stagnant order.

Crucially, the radical imperative is not only ideological, it is structural. Nepal ranks among the poorest countries of the world, with a per capita income of just USD 260 per annum, and 42 per cent of the population below the poverty line. Poor connectivity afflicts much of the country, with isolated and dispersed populations in the hill areas largely unconnected by roads. A large proportion of the cultivable land and of the rural population is engaged in subsistence agriculture. GDP growth has tended to lag behind population growth – with a consequent decline in per capita incomes, and a rising population in poverty.

Worse, Nepal has one of the most rapid rates of population growth in the region, adding 11.25 million to its year 2000 population of 24.43 million by 2020, to realize a 46 per cent augmentation at 35.68 million (the current population is already estimated to have exceeded 29.5 million). This will push up population densities from 166 in 2000 to 242 in 2020, creating unbearable burdens on the country's resources, which are already stretched to a limit.

The pressures on any regime at Kathmandu will, consequently, be acute, and on the Maoists, exceptionally so. While the party's leadership now speaks of "10-15 years" to "reorganize the country", those who are denied the benefits of power

within the party, the cadre who have been promised a Republican Utopia after the dismantling of the monarchy, and the larger populations who fail to secure at least some economic relief from a party that claims to have waged a 'people's war' – and killed thousands – in their name, will have limited patience.

The problems created by multiple demands of autonomy, as well as the limited (though enormously improved) representation to some ethnic groups in the CA (and in the new Government), will also create a significant conflict potential. With the strident Terai groupings securing a substantial representation in the CA, there will be an inclination to vigorously push their own extreme autonomy agenda forward – something which will certainly be a thorn in the Maoist flesh.

The integration of the Maoist 'people's army' with the Nepal Army, a necessary tactical objective and cherished goal for the Maoists, and a measure that has already been agreed to on principle by the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), is another source of potential friction. The Army leadership has expressed opposition to a politicised Force; the Maoists will never be secure without an ideologically committed Army. The imperatives of strategy and of the current distribution of power fairly clearly define the natural inclinations that will prevail.

The cumulative thrust of these tactical and structural factors is that the temptation to grand schemes of 'social engineering' will be inevitable and overwhelming. However, pushing such an agenda forward will be difficult, if at all possible, for the Maoists, within the framework of the present distribution of seats within the CA and whatever the contours are of the new coalition Government. A united opposition from the other parties could exercise an overriding veto on Maoist schemes, and, given the history of the fractious democratic polity in the country, spoilers are certainly expected to play a disruptive, if not defining, role.

In any event, fulfilling their promises to their cadres and to the people of Nepal at large is not an immediate or realistic option either under the emergent framework of governance, or, indeed, the demographic and resource profile of the country. Ironically, the real choice that confronts the Maoists today is to be spectacular failures as democrats, or to be spectacular failures as Stalinists or radical Maoists.

With their engagement with democracy destined to yield rapid failures in the implementation of long-held promises, the temptation to totalitarianism – barely held in abeyance – will become overwhelming.

The world will do well not, too easily or too quickly, to forget that the party now ascendant in Kathmandu is still designated a foreign terrorist organisation by the US Department of State, and that it has not, in a single statement, diluted its ideological commitment to its radical Maoist ideology, or renounced the option of a future resort to political violence.

(Author is the Executive Director, Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi)

Test of Maoist leadership

Hasty actions might do more harm to the nation in general and to the Maoists in particular.

■ Binod P Bista



Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist has been successful in establishing its dominance in Nepali

politics from the recently held constituent assembly elections. It has acquired the necessary mandate of the people to lead the country now and also work with other political parties to frame a new constitution for a new Nepal.

The major objectives cited in the 'commitment paper' the Maoists refer to, as dismantling of centralised feudal management system and oppression from foreign expansionist powers, though noble are difficult to attain quickly.

Since the Maoists are trying to project a new ideology 'Prachandapath' yet untested as a viable system of governance, Nepalis as well as the whole world are naturally apprehensive of its success. Current mandate given by the people to the Maoists can thus be related to the desire of all Nepalis to continue the peace process and also receive convincing answers on the rationale and workability of the new concept.

This task can be achieved only by discussing every aspect of new nation building such as governance, economic, social, cultural issues with

other members of the constituent assembly during the constitution making process.

Declaration of Nepal as a republic entails the most crucial issue of monarchy. Though the interim constitution, drafted by the then seven political parties and the Maoists, calls for removal of monarchy and declaration of republic by the first meeting of the constituent assembly (as per amendment made in a closed door fashion), constitutional and legal experts are of the view that taking this decision under the present interim constitution could create complexities rather than solve it.

A permanent solution to this issue can be reached with a new constitution, to be drafted by the members of the constituent assembly. Notwithstanding this reality, the Maoists seem to be intent on going ahead with the

declaration as per plan.

Recent statements of contradicting nature about monarchy, coming from senior Maoists leaders, are only helping to confuse the issue further. Statements such as 'giving an honorable exit to the king', 'ready to discuss the issue with the king' and 'forcibly removing the king from palace' add more complications to this complex issue.

It would do well to the Maoists and others towing that line to clearly separate the issue of decision making from implementation. It is difficult to comprehend at this stage an immediate implementation of any decision made by the constituent assembly including at its first meeting. All decisions must necessarily pass through a legal and constitutional process before they become the law of the land.

At this time, gesturing and

posturing might do more harm than good when all of Nepal is eagerly waiting for lasting peace and reconciliation on a win-win basis. Maoist leadership must not squander this opportunity by raising issues and taking actions on matter which need to go through constitutionality and legality to give it legitimacy and the strength to be had from the rule of law. Hasty actions might do more harm to the nation in general and to the Maoists in particular. In fact, compounding this issue is one matter that they can do without.

Current seven-party government has been functioning well without any problem from unresolved issues including monarchy. The present Prime Minister is also acting as the head of state and this mechanism has been accepted and practiced for the past two years. It is also to be noted

that the Maoists did not have any problem to function as an integral part of the government (and legislature) under this framework.

Maoist led government should have no difficulty to continue in this fashion until such time that a new constitution comes into force or the constituent assembly members decide to bring some other legal/constitutional mechanism that takes care of both issues: removal of monarchy and declaration of republic.

Such an arrangement must clearly spell out the manner in which the decision would be implemented including the aspect of the king moving outside of the palace. That should also give a specific timeline for all involved. Considering the time required by temporary office bearers such as the Prime Minister and ministers from their official residences in order to make necessary forward arrangements, the question of moving out by a monarch from a palace, whose ancestors lived there for generations for the past 240 years, would be a sizable project in itself. The moving out would not only require the physical relocation of the king and his family but his entire household staff and other paraphernalia.

It is hoped that ultimately wisdom would prevail and the Maoists would prove worthy of the trust bestowed on them by the majority. ■



Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara with businessmen

■ Roop Joshi

Have the people of Nepal spoken? It is common knowledge that there has been wholesale pre-election intimidation by the Maoists. Leaders of rival political parties and their supporters have faced the wrath of the Young Communist League (YCL) mercilessly. Voters have been threatened, especially in the rural areas. Many voters were given a choice between voting for the Maoists or an end to peace. They chose peace. Even on the morning of election day, polling booths in Gorkha, Sidhupalchowk, Ramechhap and Bhojpur districts, to name a few, were captured by Maoist cadres and supporters of rival parties were barred from casting votes.

Irregularities in numerous voting stations have also occurred. As an example, at one station in Kavre district only a couple of hours drive from the capital, voters cast their ballots repeatedly. The polling officers and the police security, all known well to the voters, simply turned the other way. A couple of international observers visited the station briefly, and all nefarious activities were put on hold. Once they left, the comedy continued.

Celebrity observers, such as Jimmy Carter, stayed in the capital and lauded the fairness of the elections. They did not do any service at all to democracy in Nepal. It is little wonder that the Election Commission has instructed re-polling to be carried out in 106 voting centers which did not meet

Choosing peace?

The Maoist victory is really a challenge, a challenge by the people to the Maoists' commitment to peace and stability.

the code of conduct of the Commission, covering 21 constituencies. This makes up almost 4% of the 2,888 voting centers.

Another issue is whether the majority of voters know the nuances of a communist party. Dictatorship of the proletariat, class struggle, the bourgeoisie – these are but a few of the concepts that those who adhere to doctrinaire Marxism-Leninism use with grave sincerity. Would an illiterate voter, threatened and thoroughly intimidated, know that democracy has no great value in the communist lexicon?

Notwithstanding the aforementioned negative reasons for the Maoist victory, there are other factors at play. The demographics cannot be ignored. About 50% of the voters were under the age of 35. Most of

these youths have no strong ties or allegiance to the traditional political parties or their leaders. In 1990, when a multi-party democratic system was instituted in Nepal, a youth who is now 35 would have been just 17 years old, too young to vote.

The complacency of the other political parties, especially the Nepali Congress (NC) and the United Marxist Leninist (UML), cannot be overlooked. The leader of the UML, one of the 'big three' parties in the current government along with NC and the Maoists - as well as the leaders of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), RPP (Nepal) and Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) – all lost in the elections. The Maoists were supposed to obtain a maximum of around 20 seats in the CA. Even before the PR results, they already

have over a hundred! Someone miscalculated. Besides the leaders, most of the senior stalwarts of the NC and UML have also lost.

Finally, the voters did want change. Since the advent of multi-party democracy in 1990, the NC and UML have held sway, for the most part, over the political throne. Their achievements have been dismal. In a stroke of enlightened public relations, and just before the election, the Maoists came up with the slogan "The others have been given their chance – now give us a chance." They have been given this chance. Further, the grass-roots organisational strength of the Maoists, enabling them to get their votes on the election day, was unsurpassed.

The statement given by Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) immediately following his victory in constituency #10 in Kathmandu was meant to allay the fears of those who were threatened by the Maoist victory. Despite the likelihood that the Maoists will have a majority, or close to it, in the CA, he asserted that his party is committed to democratic values and competitive politics.

He promised that the new constitution will be formulated by a coalition, taking into account the views of all the other parties represented in

the CA. He assured the international community that the new government will not be a rogue government, dictated by an outdated political doctrine. He dedicated his party to the goal of rapid economic growth. He said all the right words on the right occasion. We will now observe whether he, his party as a whole, and especially his youth cadre stand by them.

It will be fascinating to see all the new faces in the CA. It should be a more inclusive legislative body than any Nepal has ever seen before - with more women, various ethnic groups, Madhesis, Dalits, and other previously underrepresented groups. The Maoist victory is really a challenge, a challenge by the people to the Maoists' commitment to peace and stability, independence and development for this beleaguered nation.

Will they be able to make up for their ruthless past that has left 13,000 Nepalis dead and many more homeless over the past twelve years? With careful amalgamation of vision, co-operation with all and emphasis on inclusiveness, incorruptibility, control of its youth cadre, pragmatism as opposed to being slaves to archaic doctrines, and pure and simple dedication to building a "New Nepal", the CPN-M may yet prove to the world, and more importantly to us Nepalis, that a communist party can actually come into national power via the ballot – a feat never before achieved. We, the people, await this feat with abated breath and with eagle eyes. ■

For the bright, articulate and charming **Meekha Mathema**, teaching is not a mere profession but a life long passion. She has taught in private and public schools in the US where she lives. She shared with **Sushma Amatya**, her sharp insights into what education really means and ought to mean for all children, parents and teachers. Meekha expressed her views about the responsibilities and challenges of being a teacher in this day and age, and the paramount importance that good education plays in all children's lives.

What led you to teaching?

I went to school in St. Mary's in Kathmandu and then studied education in college in the US. After my graduation, I came back to Nepal and worked part-time in Lincoln school, and then in project called, girls access to education, in USAID for a year and half, during which time I had a chance to travel in rural areas and experience schools in Nepal first hand.

After getting married, I stayed home for some time, rearing children, doing small home business, correspondence courses; and then later taught first grade, 4th and 6th grade. Then I went back to my studies, earned a masters degree in business management and wanted to go work in a corporate world. But destiny had it otherwise. At the time, I was volunteering in an adult literacy programme and found myself greatly intrigued by it.

I took over as a substitute initially and I never intended to work as a full time teacher. I enjoyed teaching adults from very poor background and raw immigrants from Nepal. Along with English, we were also teaching a lot of life skills - how to go about, get a job etc. I ended up working there for five years. The reason I went back to public teaching was that the pay was better and I wanted a system to support me. Thus I went back to teaching full time. I've been teaching for 12 years now. I am in it because I love children. Now, I'm on a longish break in my hometown and am doing my research in comparative religion.

What makes a great teacher?

Patience is the key. A teacher should be able to know the strengths and weaknesses of each child. If there is a problem with a child, you reflect back and see what the problem is. It usually is not the child's problem although in some cases, it might be. Mostly it is teacher's problem. For instance there was a child who cheated but come to think why did the child cheat? Obviously you did not teach well enough and because of that the child was not confident enough.

As a teacher, you have to constantly evaluate yourself. If there is behavior problem in the classroom and a child is singled out because he/she is not well behaved, it is up to the teacher to bring out the positive points in the child, praise him/her in front of the class the attitude of the whole class changes towards that child. The teacher is the role model. We have to remember that the whole class is listening and absorbing. The teacher has the power to change the attitude of the class.

Students, from not knowing anything to becoming able to think for themselves is the most rewarding thing for me. Some children can learn in a second but many others need different ways to learn the same thing through different methods.

Fifty percent of a teacher's work is

classroom management. The way you handle so many different types of children with so many different problems is a challenge. A teacher has to handle a whole class in a non threatening way. We cannot put fear in them. Physical punishment is out of the question.

How does a teacher bring out the best in a child?

When a child steps into your class; you have folder that says the whole history of the child, and no matter what it says, we think the best about the child. When we have a positive image about that child, we vibrate that positive image to that child by our communication. No matter what the child did yesterday, we greet the child at the door cheerfully every morning. The tone we set in the morning is so important for the whole day. And we have to believe that each child learns at his own pace and time with a lot of support from the teachers.

Responsive classroom is a new way of disciplining children. Treat the child in the best way throughout the whole year and by the end of the year, the child will think that he is the best and will do his best. There was a child from a complicated family background, who was very aggressive. I prayed a lot and kept showing to him that no matter what you have done, I love you and you are the best child to me. Slowly, I began seeing changes in him and he even began to try to please me.

Why is teaching not considered a prized career?

In ancient times, gurus were highly respected. Down the ages, the respect has vanished completely. Teachers need to be given respect and their dignity safe guarded. With this absent, the level of teaching inevitably goes down. So not surprisingly, nobody wants to become a teacher these days. To change this attitude, first of all, a certain pay scale has to be there that makes a teacher self sufficient.

In Nepal, I remember people telling me, only a donkey teaches, why did you teach after studying so much? Now, I know how wrong those voices were! Every year, the whole class is so different and you learn so much every year!

Teaching has always been treated as a secondary job option in Nepal. If we don't change that attitude, if we don't have that conviction that education is the only tool to change Nepal, we will never succeed in Nepal as teachers. We all have to remember that if you don't have educated children today who will be running the country tomorrow; if you do not invest in their education, it will be very difficult for Nepal!

How important is it for teachers to keep themselves updated?

Professional development is extremely important for all teachers. There are teachers who graduated in the 60s and those who passed out recently. So imagine the difference between them in terms of technological knowledge and life experiences. So the more professional development trainings we take, the more pay we get. It's a way of encouraging you to update yourself and they give you the credit for it by hiking up your pay scale.

There are lots of opportunities where I teach. Summer is the time when you can go to a lot of workshops, learn new techniques and new ways of handling children. We really enjoy it and plan for the whole year during summer. I learned a lot from online classes such as LEARN that



Good education creates independent thinkers

"In Nepal, I remember people telling me, 'Only a donkey teaches! Why did you become a teacher even after studying so much?' Now, I know how wrong those voices were!"

shows you how to improve your teaching strategies. We use technology to help weaker students, keep intelligent ones occupied and also to keep ourselves updated.

The internet has helped us extremely. We can download lesson plans, avenues, all for free. Any teacher can be the best teacher if one is hard working, also in Nepal. Maybe they have not been taught in teaching schools that this whole new world has opened up for them, that is just at the tip of their fingers. It has been a blessing for me to get all these resources through the internet.

You taught in private and public schools. What was the experience like?

Earlier I was working in a private school and later shifted to public school in a poor neighbourhood. A teacher has a lot of responsibility in a poorer area, where the parents are not concerned about how and what you are teaching but in a rich area parents can bother you and even interfere with the way you are teaching. There are pros and cons.

I enjoy teaching in a poor neighbourhood. It is more satisfying. There are mostly immigrants from poor and war torn countries. It's a different kind of environment where you not only teach the children but also educate the parents; visit their homes

and one constantly learns new things interacting with children and parents from different background.

How important is it for teachers to keep themselves technologically aware?

Technology is changing so rapidly and we have to use it since children are so used to fast paced tech, like game boys etc – that they get bored easily. You have to keep up with them and know all they are doing. Every summer I go and see all children's movies and that becomes the main theme that they can relate to that year.

About parent-teacher communication:

Parent teacher communication is vital. If a child has a problem, you need to know what made the child behave this way and only parents can help us there. Getting to know a child in the beginning of the year is so important. I had an attention deficient child who I knew respected his father very much. I called his father and told him your child respects you very much and I need you help to improve him. He agreed and the reward system we set up for the child was breakfast at McDonalds with his dad. It clicked. Going to McDonalds was a big deal for him and getting attention of his dad even more so!

Handling an aggressive child:

An aggressive child is usually the one who is very hurt - mentally, emotionally or physically. This situation should not be dealt with aggressively. If you deal with it aggressively, the situation becomes more aggressive. In such cases we tell parents to be sensitive, deal with it democratically and get help from teachers and counsellors.

Biggest challenge to a teacher?

To get a child's attention! How do you challenge them to do their homework? Even intelligent student needs to do enrichment work, to do their homework, so that their grades do not go down. We have hyperlinks related to the subject we are teaching, so that a child who finishes work the work faster, can use his time doing the research, present it to the class, sometimes even before the teacher does it.

About democratic way of teaching:

You have to talk less, act more as facilitators, encourage students to learn independently and be responsible for themselves and the class. This is the foundation of democratic way of teaching and learning. I used to think I was giving them knowledge and that I was doing it. It sure was difficult for me to unlearn it and start thinking in a new way. We also work very closely with other teachers. We always believe we learn from other teachers, no matter how old or young they are.

Five years down the line:

I'd like to teach elementary levels, where the children are just old enough to hug and kiss me when they are happy. I see myself working in different international schools all over the world - rich, poor countries and learn from that country and their education system and continue nurturing that passion for teaching.

About getting easily sued:

We get sued easily, where I teach in the USA. We have to have insurance like doctors have and have unions also. If a child complains about anything, they can sue us. They can sue the school system and of course it comes back to us and we have to have the union to protect us and to support us. We are very strong on teachers' union.

Your comments on schools in Nepal?

In rural areas of Nepal they lack even a proper structure for a school. There are no rooftops, no windows. It is still one room school in many places. And it is hard for teachers who do not have any training to deal with the children. Most teachers are not well educated.

Even today, many girls are not sent to school. To change this, we have change the parents' way of thinking. It has improved a lot but there is still a long way to go. Girls definitely need more support in our society.

And there are no materials in classrooms. Most children have schoolbooks only. Even in urban areas, story book and other books are hardly accessible to children, esp. for those from poor background. A good system of funding and supporting schools all over the country is essential.

Finally, good education is the way to being independent thinkers. What we need in Nepal is education for overall development.

(Meekha can be contacted at: Shalom1732@hotmail.com)

What kind of change?



■ Manish Gyawali

The people have spoken, and the indications are clear - they want change. But what sort of change?

The irony of the situation is that while the election results were pretty straightforward, the actual direction that the public wants to take is anything but. In a sense, we are right back to square one. Now it is up to the CPN-Maoists to interpret the results and take the country forward. It will not be an easy task, if history is any guide.

Democracies can be very demanding, simply because people have the right to revise their earlier verdict. The fact is that there is no 'given' in democratic politics. Democracies are dynamic structures which makes it very hard for analysts to pin down the exact causes of their behavior. Assumptions can be discredited very quickly.

Given that democracies are so unruly, and always in a state of flux, it would be naïve for anybody to assume that one has a perfect understanding of the situation at a particular time. At best one can have a vague idea that the general public wants to move in a particular direction. Any desire to implement specific changes, therefore, can backfire.

The political scientist Charles Lindbloom argued that the best way for democracies to move forward is in increments. I think his argument is fundamentally sound. Progress can definitely be made, but it doesn't have to be rushed. Rather, a slow-moving but steady progress is much better than having too much, too fast. The vagaries of public opinion are well known.

Trying to heavily capitalise on a temporary disposition of mind can be catastrophic because opinion could very well swing radically to the other direction. Public opinion has been known to fluctuate. The best course of action would be to wait. Let the excitement subside. Then, hopefully, the fluctuations would stabilise and one could get a truer understanding of public opinion.

The Maoist leadership is trying hard to convince business leaders and donors that it is not market unfriendly. It does seem that the comrades have decided that Nepal should go in for a pro-growth agenda, which is impossible unless the capitalists step in. The models are therefore Malaysia and South Korea, rather than Cuba. How will their base which consists largely of peasants respond?

It is gratifying that the Maoists revealed that their next step would be in strengthening the economy. Certainly the economy had been completely held hostage to political maneuverings in the last ten years. It is time to bring the economy back to center stage and give it the primacy it deserves. But too many questions remain about the nature of the economic changes that the Maoists want to bring about. If the Maoists want to implement the Chinese model, they better be prepared for a deep urban-rural economic divide as is happening in China. This cannot be what they want, because that would mean repudiating the very people that elected them and who they claim to represent.

At the same time, they also favor growth, so if their economic policies are tilted too far leftward, towards the rural areas, they certainly cannot achieve the kind of growth that they hope for because growth is primarily generated by urban and suburban areas. It is only industry, either heavy or specialised, that can deliver truly impressive rates of growth.

Nepal is in no position at the moment to undertake either heavy or specialised industrialisation. Where are Nepal's engineers and technical experts? The few are already abroad or preparing to go abroad. And if the Maoists truly want the country to be economically independent, then they need the support of all the technical experts they can find. Civil engineers, especially, should be given red-carpet treatment because the country's infrastructure is in a shambles. But that's only the first step.

The next step would be to start opening technical schools so that the country has a competent pool of technicians who can fix its problems over the long term. India and China both have excellent engineering schools. The objective of these schools should be to get competent technicians into the workforce in as little time as possible. They needn't be 'world-class.' For the cost of opening and maintaining one 'world-class' institution, ten mid-range colleges could probably be constructed, which would prove far more useful in moving the economy forward. Agricultural colleges should be opened so that farmers are taught scientific methods of cultivation.

Certainly, as long as stability is ensured, one can think of many pragmatic solutions to the country's economic problems. But stability can only come if there is a consensus among all sectors of society that the direction being taken is the right one. ■

Political pundits' predictions regarding the election outcome failed measurably.

You reap what you sow

■ Shirish Ranabhat

Ballots are powerful. Nepali people have spoken, loud and clear, for their aspirations for a change in the existing political set up. Nepali Congress (NC), the grand old party, is turning out to be a distant second largest party with a humiliating number of elected members in the Constituent Assembly (CA).

Whether it was anti-Rana movement or fight against Panchayat autocracy, or even post-1990 democratic era, Nepali people have always supported NC. Sixty-one years after NC's inception, this party congregated a shameful defeat in the CA elections.

Political pundits' predictions regarding the election outcome failed measurably. Even the Indian and US intelligences, who interfere in Nepali politics from time to time and have a great deal of influence over almost all Nepali political leaders, couldn't correctly measure the strong gusts of wind of change.

One can argue that the Nepali people might have been attracted to the Maoists' agendas of abolishing monarchy, inclusive democracy, federalism, republic and socio-economic transformation in the

by lawlessness, poor governance and crisis of leadership in GP Koirala's interim government. Acute price rises, many hours of power cuts every day, shortage of petroleum products and uncertainties of lives and livelihood have ruled the ordinary Nepali people.

Furthermore, Maoists' influence and control over the government including the Prime Minister, administration, police force and overall government machinery helped demoralising the NC cadres. Instead of leading the country efficiently in difficult times, the NC-led government and several inept NC ministers directly and indirectly helped pro-Maoists activities that heightened the despair on voters.

4. Political and legal commitment to provincial autonomy

NC's lack of clear policy towards republicanism and federalism, and the leadership's unwillingness to explain and clarify to Nepali people regarding the same affected a large population. Instead of sticking to its centrist stand, the NC stood up for Maoists agenda of political and legal commitment to provincial autonomy with the rights to self-determination on the basis of caste, race, language and sectors.

5. Deviation from ideology

NC abandoned six-decade long, nationally and internationally recognised ideology and principles of the party, policies of national unity and reconciliation, established by BP Koirala, without discussing among party cadres. The NC lost its identity, history and deep rooted popularity of the party and thus the traditional votes for abandoning the path of BP Koirala.

The abrupt adoption of the republican agenda and party leadership's unresponsiveness with the feelings, suggestions and recommendations of the grass root workers created a negative impression on voters that hindered securing votes. Furthermore, current NC leadership's disrespectful and ungrateful attitude towards the great leaders like BP Koirala, GM Singh and KP Bhattarai fueled the disgust in the NC supporters that increased the reluctance to vote for the NC.

6. Lack of true information and unawareness of ground realities

The NC leadership failed to get the information regarding the true situation, and the party's status in the constituencies. They were also unaware of the ground realities of shifting the wind from their side. When the Maoists' cadres were mobilised in every inch of the country for the elections campaign, the NC leaders were busy day-dreaming of their win.

No leaders from within the NC visited their constituencies until the last hour. Also, GP Koirala's dependency on selfish, narrow minded, visionless and fifth-columnist advisors, believing in their bogus reports regarding the country's situation and ground realities hindered, to a great extent, the effective mobilisation of party cadres.

7. Selection of CA candidates

One of the most significant reasons behind the defeat of the NC in the CA elections was the candidate selection. Leadership was inattentive to the image, character, reputation, popularity and efficiency of the candidate. The NC leadership completely ignored the devotion and commitment of capable and genuine leaders who could be far more effective and strong candidates than the selected ones. Many leaders who won the previous elections were denied the tickets. Young generation was completely ignored.

8. Disorganised election campaign

The NC could have done lot better if the election campaigns were well organised and managed socially, politically and scientifically. The NC leaders, who were in charge of the campaigning, have failed measurably. Ignorant leadership never showed willingness to efficiently organise its cadres. Moreover, party president and the Prime Minister GP Koirala's decision of 'not contesting' first-past-the post elections demoralised the enthusiasm of the party workers.

9. PM GP Koirala's ambitions to control NC with Koirala clan

A major contribution to the NC's disgraceful crush in the CA elections was courtesy the ambitions of the PM Koirala to take control of the NC with Koirala clan and his relatives. Koirala focused chiefly on the advancement of the interest of members of the Koirala clan.

10. Anti-Indian sentiment of the people

An anti-Indian sentiment grew bigger when the National Security Advisor to the Indian Prime Minister MK Narayanan issued a statement backing the NC and Prime Minister Koirala over Maoists barely few days before the polling day. India's interference and control over the NC leadership was unacceptable to the Nepali people. Improper and unwise decision of Indian authorities taking sides of the NC on the eve of elections provoked Nepali people, especially the leftists.

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link

The NC can learn so many lessons from these events. The CA election outcomes proved the old leadership is outdated. The traditional organisational techniques and styles have failed. The NC should start strengthening its organisation with modern, liberal, and scientific visions. It should manifest programs and agendas to address and attract the uneducated, downtrodden, unemployed Nepali people, who have a dream of peaceful, secured and prosperous future to themselves and to their generations to come.

All NC leaders are loitering in a crisis of confidence. They should be unprejudiced and create an atmosphere of good-will and faith among themselves. Above all, they should not forget their responsibilities to safeguard the sovereignty, integrity, independence, and national unity of their country. They should march ahead with a confidence under collective leadership.

(Author, a PhD, is a member of Nepali Janasamparka Samiti in USA.)



Maoist Chairman Prachanda in a meeting with international community

center-stage of Nepali politics during the CA polls, but Maoists agendas were not the only factors affecting NC's shameful defeat. This defeat can be analysed through various factors:

1. Psychology of fear and hope

The outcome of the elections indicates that the voters were psychologically influenced by the fear of Maoists. The Maoists' election campaign was a combination of coercion, intimidation and terror tactics. The Maoists took full advantage of their sister organisations, Young Communist League (YCL) and People's Liberation Army (PLA) across the country. On the other hand, Nepali people voted Maoists as they saw a hope to lead the country towards progression, which NC has failed to do so in the past.

2. Underestimation of strength of the Maoists and regional parties

Maoists and newly formed regional parties including Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) and Tarai Madhesh Mukti Morcha (TMLP) virtually eliminated the NC from the Tarai, which used to be a stronghold of NC in the past. The NC leadership completely undermined the organisation, strength and influence of the Maoists and newly formed Madhesi parties.

3. Poor governance under the Prime Minister GP Koirala

The last two years have been marked

Karzai escapes Kabul parade attack

Automatic gunfire has broken out at a ceremony marking the defeat of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, forcing Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's president, to take cover.

Hundreds of people, including government ministers and foreign dignitaries, fled the celebration in chaos as shots rang out near the presidential palace on Sunday.

Gunfire and explosions erupted after Karzai had taken the stage following an inspection of troops in what was meant to have been the largest annual parade of Afghanistan's military. A live TV broadcast of the event was quickly cut but sounds of gun fire could be still heard.

Afghanistan's Taliban movement claimed responsibility for the attack. "We carried out the attack. We fired rockets at the scene of the celebration," Zabihullah Mujahed, a spokesman for the group, said. "We had placed six personnel in the area," he said. "Three of our men have been killed." A defence ministry spokesman said Karzai, all Cabinet members and foreign diplomats were safe.

"President Hamid Karzai, with all the Cabinet members and foreign diplomats who were on the main stage, are safe. They have been evacuated from the area. It is not an exact report yet, and I'm not sure, but



I heard two parliamentarians were wounded," General Mohammad Zahir Azimi, the defence ministry spokesman, said.

An official at Karzai's palace said the president was safe and back in the presidential palace.

"It is not clear at this stage what exactly happened but the president and other dignitaries are safe," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr said that the Taliban had warned to attack or carry out some sort of operation to disrupt the ceremony.

"To them, this ceremony should not be taking place because they are against the government and the

foreign forces. They said the target was to give them a message that they are not safe and we have to point out that there was a very tight security around the venue of the military parade and they managed to infiltrate and so yet another security breach, only two months after the attack on the Serena hotel in the diplomatic area of Kabul.

"There have been reports that the government has not been able to control even 30 per cent of the Afghan territory and now with this attack it is not clear how the Taliban managed to infiltrate the security guards of the President."

(Al Jazeera)

Olympic torch relay kicks off in Seoul

The Olympic torch relay in Seoul, the 17th leg of the Olympic Flame's global tour, started Sunday in the Olympic Park after a launching ceremony at the Olympic Park.

Li Binghua, vice executive president of the Beijing Organizing Committee of Olympic Games (BOG), handed over the torch kindled with the sacred Olympic flame from ancient Olympia of Greece to Rah Jin-Koo, deputy mayor of Seoul. Kim Jong-Kil, chairman of South Korea's Olympic Committee, received the torch from Rahy kicking off the torch relay as the first runner at 2:18 pm local time (0518 GMT). "I feel greatly honored to be the first runner of the torch relay," Kim told reporters. "During the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, many of the games were held at the stadiums in the Olympic Park. The Beijing Olympic flame relay starts from the very place which has more symbolic significance," said Kim.

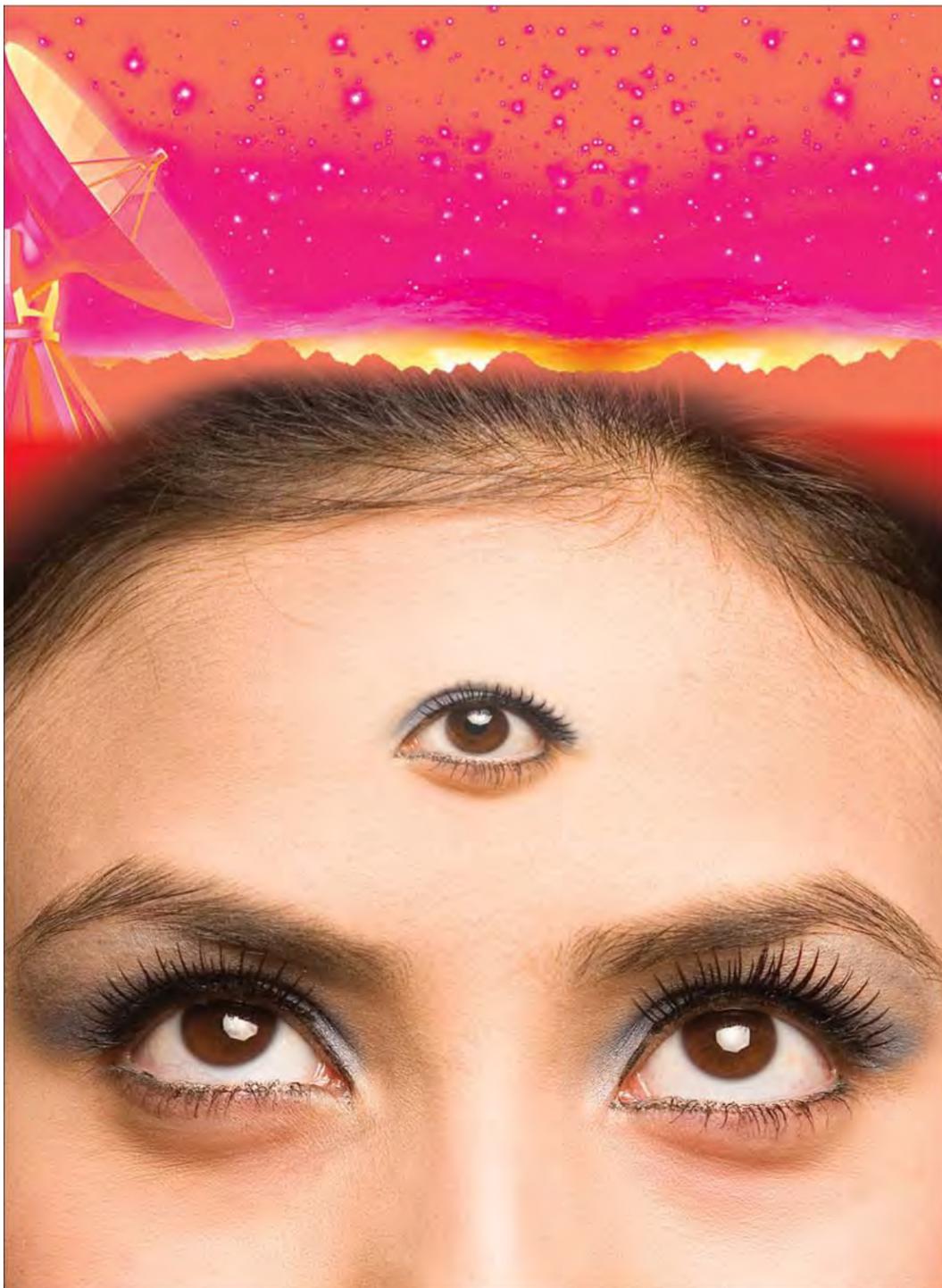
In the launching ceremony, Roh said that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, and 20 years later the Olympic flame returned to Asia. He hoped that the torch relay will

provide a favorable opportunity to promote the relations between China and South Korea as well as the friendship among Asian countries. "The Olympics belong to the whole human kind," said the deputy mayor. "I wish the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games an enormous success." Starting by the South Korean Olympic chief, 70 plus

runners, selected from distinguished representatives from various circles of life including Lee Sei-Kee, chief of the China-South Korea Friendship Association, Heo Nam-Soo, mayor of Pusan city,

actresses Chang Nara, Kim Mi-Jung, movie director Kim Jong-Seok, and Olympic gold medalists Moon Dae-Sung, Ahn Hyun-Soo, Nam Eun-Young and Kim Soo-Nyung, will run along the 22-kilometer route that covers Seoul's most famous landmarks and historical sites and concludes at the City Hall Plaza. The Olympic flame is to reach a total of 21 cities on five continents outside the Chinese mainland before arriving in Beijing for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on August 8.

(Xinhua)



संचार जगतमा तपाईंको तेस्रो आँखा

स्पष्ट, दरिलो र विश्वसनीय श्रोत, केहि तीतो सत्य, केहि मिठो विचार र पुरो विवेचना अनि विविध विषयको सुमधुर समिश्रणका साथमा समाचार र निष्पक्ष विश्लेषणलाई फरक दृष्टिकोणले प्रस्तुत गर्दछौं । तेस्रो आँखाको कोणबाट हरेक पक्षको विश्लेषण र प्रस्तुति गर्दै तपाईंको तेस्रो आँखा बन्ने प्रण गर्दछौं ।



सगरमाथा

तपाईंको तेस्रो आँखा



MARSHLAND FLOWERS

Freedom from emotional and conceptual defilements

This is the major reason why Buddhism does not consider a yogi with mighty powers equal to an Arhat or a Bodhisatwa or a Buddha.

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Now there is also a sixth Abhigya which is considered the last and the highest Abhigya but not part of the five we have talked about so far.

All the above five Abhigyas are lower Abhigyas and are considered lowly in all forms of Buddhism. But this last Abhigya, called Asrava Cchaya Gyana (knowledge of the extinction of the outflows) is considered the real Abhigya (or Siddhi – Riddhi) in Buddhism.

Asrava means the outflow of mental defilements (emotional and conceptual defilements). When we have emotional and conceptual defilements they are always flowing out from our subconscious mind through verbal or non – verbal expression. These Asravas remain even in yogis who have attained high Samadhis and various Riddhi Siddhis Praatiharyas.

This is the major reason why Buddhism does not consider a yogi with mighty powers equal to an Arhat or a Bodhisatwa or a Buddha. Even such a yogi, no matter how charismatic and mind boggling, still has not destroyed the Asravas. Only an Arhat, an 8th Bhumi (level/stage) Bodhisatwa and above, and the Buddha who is even above a tenth Bhumi, has totally destroyed all Asravas.

This brings us to the big question, how are the Asravas totally destroyed? This brings us to a very important issue within Buddhism which is missing in non – Buddhist systems or at least it is not clear enough.

According to Buddhism there are two major types of meditation systems and they do not produce the same results. One of them, which usually comes first in the Buddhist texts, is Samatha – meditation and

the other is Vipasyana meditation also called Vidarshana meditation.

To understand Buddhism and its correct view, it is of utmost importance to understand these two types of meditations very clearly and to be able to distinguish between these two. Vipasyana is the Sanskrit word used in the Sarvastivad and Mahayana – Vajrayana schools while Vipassana is the Pali word used in the Theravadin School and it is closely linked with what is called mindfulness – meditation but is not limited to that. Mindfulness is called Smrityupasthan in Mahayana and Sarvastivad texts while it is called Satipatthan in the Pali Canons of the Theravadin.

We shall go into greater details with Samatha and Vipasyana later on but here we shall deal with them in short as the occasion demands it.

(To be continued)
(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)



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You're still in the bubble, boys!

Lucille Bolduc

Well, that was a hysterical two weeks! Within hours of the polls closing the press was filled with stories about the huge turnout, and the Maoists winning a two-thirds majority. International observers jumped on the bandwagon, each outdoing the other in an effort to praise the elections. Peaceful, credible, remarkable, the compliments flowed like Raksi at an NC rally.

Soon the country's self-styled intellectuals weighed in: hmmm, the Kathmandu bubble has finally burst... We had no idea the Maoists were so popular... Here is more evidence of the nobility and wisdom of the people. Not that we've talked to them, of course, or listened to them. But here is an expression of their will, written on ballot papers, a massive rejection letter mailed to the country's elite.

A nice story, but it belongs in the fiction section at the Pilgrim's book store. Like the best fiction, it relies on a plausible premise: Kathmandu is an isolated bubble-world floating in the valley, surrounded by a filmy membrane that distorts the inmates' view of the outside world. No arguments there.

But then the story falls apart. The turnout for these elections was the lowest ever, at around 60%. Why? Was it lack of awareness? That

seems unlikely, with two years to prepare for this vote and the country swarming with NGO voter-education campaigns, and the media heralding the importance of April 10.

I am sure some people didn't vote because they were fed up with their parties, and chose to stay at home rather than cast a ballot for the NC or the UML. Those parties did their best to annoy voters looking for a change by running terrible old fossils in the direct elections.

But did that cause a Maoist landslide? A week after voting day the media calmed down and it became clear the Maoists had won 30 percent of the vote, translating into around 40 percent of the seats in the CA. If the turnout was 60 percent, then 20 percent or two out of every ten Nepali voters chose Prachanda's crew. Making them the biggest party, yes, but the other eighty percent voted for non-Maoists, or stayed home.

Everyone who wanted to vote for the Maoists in these elections had every opportunity to do so and, based on reports of pre and election day violence and intimidation, some who didn't want to have the same opportunity. So it's reasonable to say that Maoist voters could vote freely, without intimidation, just about everywhere.

Could the same be said for the Congress, UML and, RPP voters? If not, then how many were intimidated



Bhaswar Chha

into staying home? How many voted for the Maoists out of fear of the consequences should they lose? And how many voted because of direct intimidation, because on early April nights Maoist cadres visited their homes, and made it clear their votes were not secret, and they did not have a choice?

Let me be conservative and ignore the booth capturing (invented by the NC and UML; they were outclassed by the Maoists this time around), the intimidation of polling officials and non-Maoist polling agents, the

problems in counting centers where only Maoist agents watched the election officials. This sort of quiet pressure made the polling process look calm and well-organized, so international observers went away happy. There's nothing like fear to make people behave.

But let us say all these threats, combined, only changed the behavior of one in ten citizens. That equals half the Maoists' total vote. Do the math.

So, when the Kathmandu babblers start navel-gazing, talking about the message from the countryside, do not

believe them: They were trapped in a bubble before, and they're trapped in one now. The Maoists have given Nepal's elite the excuse they needed to bow down before a new class of masters, and to feel good about it. They now talk knowingly about underestimating the people, that mass of unpleasant peasants, heaving away somewhere outside the Ring Road. As if acknowledging past analytical failures somehow makes them better students of the future.

I'll give them one thing: the Maoists know Nepal, and the weakness of its elite. They spent two years running rings around Kathmandu while consolidating their hold on the countryside. They rigged an election while no one was paying attention, and now they're back to the same games, talking coalition government and economic miracles. The SPA, the Election Commission, the international observers and the donors, they all traded justice for the people for a promise of peace.

The Maoists took the challenge, and took power. Once again the country is left with a single, frayed, thread of hope that, having been offered Nepal as a banquet meal, the Maoists appetite will now, finally, be satisfied, and they will settle into sated respectability. You might as well wish for a well-fed shark to turn vegetarian. Let the feeding frenzy begin. ■



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AST<space>ARI

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NEWS National news
SPO Sports news
ENT Entertainment news
INT International news
LIVE Breaking news

JOKES

JOKE
JOKE<space>DOC
JOKE<space>SILLY
JOKE<space>LAWYER
JOKE<space>SANTA
JOKE<space>BLONDE

THOUGHT

THOUGHT THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

STOCK

SHG Top 5 gainers of the day
SHL Top 5 losers of the day
SHH Stock related help

FOREX

FOREX<space>BUY
FOREX<space>BUY
FOREX<space>CURRENCY ID

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

WEEK<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign. i.e.
WEEK<space>ARI

DICTIONARY

DICT<space>the word you want to know the meaning of. i.e.
DICT<space>tut

CALENDER SERVICE

Calnep ddmmyyy Nepali to English
Caleng ddmmyyy English to Nepali

TOP 5

TOP5<space>Nepsong
TOP5<space>Engsong
TOP5<space>Bolsong

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Belling the cat: The paradox of polls

■ The wanderer

Reading the different dailies and weeklies in Nepali and English over the last two weeks since that fateful day when the polling stations opened to receive our offerings, one is confronted with a whole flurry of contradictions. President Carter, who is strangely honoured for being a President, who was weak when it came to 'biting the bullet' during crises that demanded strength of will; declared them peaceful and fair.

This observation was based no doubt on his fleeting visits to places within the valley. Not understanding the Nepali language and not being privy to all the tricks and connivances our various political players have perfected over the years, how would he know?

One much cited survey has declared that people were prevented from campaigning in 40% of the country. There were 241 cases of poll-related violence in 51 districts, 33 people were killed, 81 kidnapped and 890 injured in a poor security environment. The same reputable survey (DEAN2008) said there were numerous incidences of irregularities, ill-managed booths (ours was one of them), and booth capturing.

The researchers also observed incidences of kids voting and the same person voting numerous times, people showing up with voter ID cards being told their names weren't listed, and a number of other minor

infringements of citizens' rights. Now if this is what President Carter or any other international observer calls free and fair then I think we speak a different language when we speak about democracy. Then, again, I believe, but may be mistaken, that it was President Carter who, elections ago, declared one of President Mugabe's 'wins' free and fair.

Those who did intimidate and rig votes are lucky they live in Nepal among a population terrorised by memories of doubtful 'liberation'. In a stalwart democracy they would have been shown the door. But who is going to bell the cat and tell it like it is?

The system used initially or for 50% of the votes in Nepal's case is one that many nations still using it have debated reforming for a number of years now. It's a paradoxical system in that even a discerning voter can be compelled to vote for a candidate even if they don't really want to because they know voting for any other candidate is a wasted vote since he/she won't get in. The Election Commission's calculation of wasted votes by no means comprehends the oddities of the First Past the Post (FPP) system.

In FPP the fact is that you can theoretically have 12,000 voters and two candidates: one gets 6,001 votes and the other 5,999. Now is it just that almost half the voters are stuck with a candidate they didn't vote for? In Nepal's case it is even more unfair.

Look at the number of parties (I counted 55 on my ballot slips). Wasted votes are usually calculated as those cast for a losing candidate, those cast in excess of the number needed for one candidate to win, and those cast for 'spoilers'.

Of course in these neat calculations no-one has included votes cast in the name of hundred of thousands who are absent from the country; votes

Now if this is what President Carter or any other international observer calls 'free and fair' then I think we speak a different language when we speak about democracy.

cast in the name of people who don't exist (made possible by the EC's rather lax acceptance of voters without proper voter ID cards); and votes cast in the name of many people who have already departed for the heavenly abode. In Europe it's called 'Corsican voting.'

First Past the Post encourages voting against someone rather than for someone. What Nepal experienced was a magnitude of 'spoilers':

that is candidates and parties that didn't have a hope of getting a seat or a sizeable number of votes. Their presence meant that votes were diverted from meaningful contenders. In Nepal's case the established parties didn't help themselves by coming up with cowardly policies that simply kowtowed to Maoist threats and rhetoric. They deprived the people of a choice, and many people, weary with conflict, voted for the lot that was more 'persuasive.'

Of course there was rigging, of course it's unfair, of course it's undemocratic but now, of course, the people are going to have to put up with it unless the lack lustre parties in the alliance suddenly wake up, become inspired, and ensure that people get a fair deal. When all parties have the same policy, votes are merely cast in dissent against parties they see as failing in the past: give new blood a chance. It's a good intention but then let's hope it doesn't lead down the road to hell, from where there is no return.

Chances are in a truly fair democratic system where there are only a couple of main parties; you will return a party with a majority that gives them the mandate to govern from 75-80% of the time. That means the party in question will have received 50% or more than 50% of the votes. That is what a party needs to start calling the shots. It's not the number of seats that finally determine

whether a party has the strength to govern as single party or not, it actually is the number of votes. If a party doesn't have a real majority, it is treading on thin ice to presume it has.

Here in Nepal we have a party that received a little less than a third of the votes, more than any other party but all the same it still means that the majority of voters did not vote for the CPNM, they voted for some other party. They wasted their votes in doing so but the CPNM would do well to remember two things.

The first is that this was not a general election to change from the alliance to a single party, it was an election to select members of the constituent assembly, any decisions about ministerial posts and so forth still needs the consensus of the alliance. When a constitution is drawn, a general election has to be fought and then structural and other changes will be legal in a democracy.

Secondly, the Panchayat did some rigging in 1980 and too came back as a minority government, although having a substantially larger proportion of the total than the one third that is now the case. It was a case of another totalitarian form of government determining that it will take power no matter what the cost.

You can of course, as they say, fool some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all of the time; and we will be watching you, that's what the fourth estate is for!

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