



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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Pampha Bhusal (Maoist) was the first to be declared winner from the party in the capital valley. She defeated Raghuji Pant (UML) from Lalitpur-3. Photo feature on page 6 & 7.



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Victorious

Mandate for peace

■ nf correspondent

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) secured the much needed support of the people for its legitimacy as a democratic party, and as the key agent of the promised transformation of Nepal into a peaceful, democratic and prosperous country.

As early results indicated, Maoists had already bagged more than 55 seats, with leads in as many constituencies, out of 175, where the counting was in progress from Sunday afternoon. Results from nearly 230 constituencies under the first past the post system are expected by Tuesday morning.

A re-poll has been ordered in nine of the 239 FPTP constituencies following instances of rigging and poll violence. The UML and NC were racing for the second and third position with 16 and 15 victory respectively by Sunday noon. The Madheshi Janadhikar forum (MJF) was emerging as the main party in Terai with a lead in about 21 seats, far ahead of the Terai Madesh Loktantrik party.

The final picture of the constituent assembly would be known in the next two weeks as by then the results for the remaining 335 seats under the proportional system will also be known as per the information given by the election commission. King Gyanendra promptly welcomed the poll outcome as well as Maoists' march to victory.

However, the unexpected Maoists victory visibly makes United States of America as well as India a bit uncomfortable. Maoists are still under the terrorist list of the US government while India was apparently was not yet ready to welcome Maoists heading the government.

But Maoists are all set to head the future government with Prachanda replacing GP Koirala who is under moral obligations not to

continue in the post. "We will be working together with other parties and not fail the people who have reposed their faith on us," Prachanda said while addressing swelling crowds of his supporters after his victory in Kathmandu's constituency no 10.

It was not only the US and India, but also the business community in the country also who fear 'capital flight' as Maoists have the image of being anti-economic reforms. "It is a mandate for peace and I hope Maoists understand it," an ambassador said.

Prachanda was quick to address these fears as he said he would be working in close cooperation with the international community as well as the security agencies. Besides, the Maoist supporters demonstrated more restraint in celebrating their victory as their slogans were not at all provocative as compared to the language they used against the King, UML and the Nepali Congress leaders during the election campaign. ■

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A rout

Madhav Nepal resigns as Gen Secy

■ nf correspondent

The Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) turned out to be the biggest losers as the final results and decisive trends of the first past the post votes began to emerge.

The party has lost its heavy weights from both sides of the debate - favouring and opposing any electoral alliance with the Maoists, who seem to have gained the most at the cost of the UML. In most places except in Kathmandu districts, UML candidates have lost to the Maoists.

Not only that the party that hoped to be leading the future government was humbled by the voters, almost all its stalwarts with some notable exceptions were trounced in the electoral battle. The losers include Madhav Nepal, Bam Dev Gautam,

Bharat Mohan Adhikary, Asta Lakshmi Shakya, Raghu Panta and Pradeep Nepal, and the latest trends show that KP Oli is also trailing behind. The party's over confidence about its results are now being seen partly as its arrogance, and partly as lack of touch with the political realities at the ground level.

But the debacle has led to a quick introspection on the part of its leadership. Madhav Nepal resigned as the General Secretary of the party and announced that party ministers would be withdrawn from the government. Nepal's resignation has however, not come into effect until the party reviews the entire results of the election including that under the PR system.

However, the victory of Jhalnath Khanal, Pradeep Gyawali and Subhash Nembwang came as a

saving grace that gave hope that despite the poor number, UML members will be making some quality 'contribution' to the CA making process. The UML, like the Congress and the Maoists, is still waiting for the final results of the proportional votes.

In fact, soon after the talks for left alliance failed, Maoists went aggressively against the UML. Beginning with printing photographs in the party's propaganda organs, of Madhav Nepal offering coin at the feet of King Gyanendra soon after he ascended the throne, the Maoists also began physically targeting the UML candidates like Devshanker Poudel in Ramechhap, Rajendra Pandey in Dhading and KP Oli in Jhapa, besides physically intimidating the active campaigners of many candidates elsewhere.

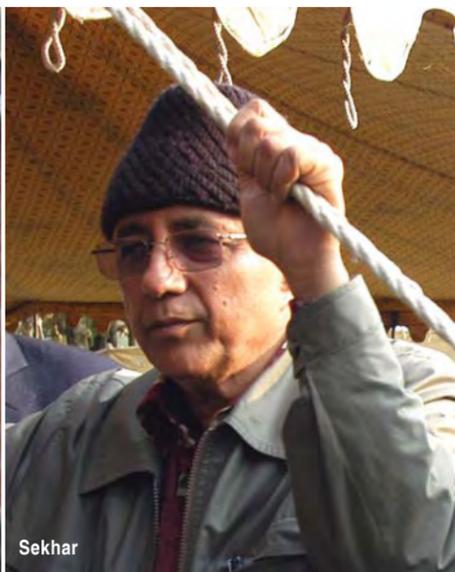


Madhav Nepal

Key 'peace actors' rejected



Sitaula



Shekhar

Home Minister KP Sitaula made no efforts at concealing his frustration and disappointment with the poll trends that leaves him trailing as a lesser known Maoist candidate. "What did I not do for the peace process and for the Maoists? I did not deserve the outcome," Sitaula told his disappointed party supporters as the counting of ballots indicates that his luck might be running out.

According to the information, both Prime Minister GP Koirala and the Home Minister, depended largely on the reports they got from chiefs of the Armed Police Force (APF), Civil Police and the Intelligence Department that the Nepali Congress will emerge as the single largest party with the Communist Party of the Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) as close second and Maoists as the distant third.

A senior official in the Ministry of Defense said that the reports that the Nepal Army submitted to the PM about the poll prospects turned out to be much closer to the outcome. Pleading anonymity, he said the army was clear that the Maoists were adopting different tactics and all set to get most or all seats in Nuwakot, Rasua, Dhading, Gorkha, Kavre, Palanchok, Sindhu

Palchok and Ramechhap.

It is believed that the PM had been told that the Maoists will win in all the places where it had intimidated the rival party candidates and their active campaigners, beginning with Ramechhap. "But once the PM consulted Sitaula, he refused to go by the army's reports," sources told newsfront. The Home Minister, sources said, insisted that there was no reason not to trust the three security departments' assessment as he had also traveled in most places and sensed the mood of the people, "which was clearly in favour of Nepali Congress."

Sitaula as the Home Minister was being criticised within his own Nepali Congress as someone who served the interests of the Maoists than of his own party. He was also projected as the key architect of the peace deal, with Shekhar Koirala and Amaresh Singh toeing the line.

By Sunday noon, when Shekhar Koirala's defeat had been officially announced; Sitaula was behind his Maoist rival in Jhapa while Amaresh Singh was trailing behind his one time political mentor, Mahantha Thakur of the Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party (TMLP) in Sarlahi.

Indian perspective

The southern calculation seems to have gone wrong...

The United States of America has reasons to feel uncomfortable with the gain that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) has made in the election for the constituent assembly, as the party is still on the US government's terrorist list. But Delhi seems to be no less perturbed having to see Maoists in the leadership position of the government in its immediate north.

Delhi, that brought Maoists together with the seven pro-democracy parties in November 2005, seemed to have little inkling that the mandate in their favour during the constituent assembly polls would be so huge. Understandably, Delhi till the last minute was calculating that it might have to welcome Madhav Nepal, if its first choice, GP Koirala could not make it to the top.

It is too early to gauge how the US government will respond to the emerging political situation in Nepal, but Jimmy Carter, a former President has made an appeal that Maoists must be taken off the 'terrorist list' now that they have got the mandate of the people through a democratic process.

Reports from Delhi indicate that the

government of India's channels suggested that the Maoists' tally in the constituent assembly in the first past the post system will be 20 at the most, and that the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) will be the single largest party, most likely in a hung-scenario. With the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) emerging as the largest party, with or without majority, when all the results come, Delhi's calculation has failed. The possibility of China getting closer to the Maoists appears to further upset the south.

The southern calculation also seems to have gone wrong on Madhesh politics in more than one way. It pursued a quiet policy of insulating the borders from the Maoists. But they got more seats in the area than the Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party (TMLP), the party that India supported. Moreover, the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), a party led by Upendra Yadav, emerged as the largest Terai party despite India's clear lack of trust in its leadership. While TMLP leadership consists of the upper caste leadership mainly, the MJF has its leadership mostly from the intermediary and Dalit castes.





PM Koirala



Sushil



Sujata

US president Jimmy Carter once called GP Koirala, "my hero" and Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh said he is a, "legendary leader" of South Asia. Koirala must be a shocked man today as not only his Congress party was trounced, but almost all his family members in the electoral fray have also lost.

There is no news yet as to how Koirala is reacting to the defeat of his party, but the defeat of the 'democratic dynasty' is something that he is very upset with, a Baluwatar source told newsfront. Koirala had resigned as leader of the Congress parliamentary party in 1994 when the Nepali Congress lost to the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist

(CPN-UML) in the second elections to the House of Representatives.

His daughter, Sujata Koirala lost to Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) leader, Upendra Yadav. His nephew, Shekhar Koirala who lost to Sujata, in the race to don the crown of Koirala dynasty once GP retired, also suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of Bijay Gachedar, another MJF leader. Interestingly, Gachedar,

who had been shown the door by the PM last month when wanted 'respectable number' of seats for his supporters from the Congress party had left Baluwatar with a parting sentence, "I will meet you only after my victory" - has won from two places. Gachedar refused to accept the Congress nomination and joined the MJF to take on Shekhar Koirala. Sushil Koirala, a prominent NC

leader in his own right, and a close relative of the PM resigned as working president of the party owning responsibility for party's poor showing. He however said he welcomed and accepted the outcome. "We have brought Maoists to the peace process, and we respect people's mandate in their favour," Koirala said in a statement. "As a leader I own the moral responsibility

for the poor show and resign from the post."

But there are speculations that Sushil Koirala was acting like a 'shock absorber' to let GP retain the leadership on grounds that, "throughout the election he acted more like a non-party man or leader of all the seven parties as he did not campaign for the Congress party."

Koirala's other nephews, Ashok Koirala and Mahesh Acharya also lost. The only saving grace for the dynasty was the reports of early lead of Sashank Koirala, son of BP Koirala, from Nawalparasi. His victory, many guess, might lead to the return of the dynasty's leadership to the BP family once again, after GP Koirala.

Demolished

Koirala dynasty tumbles

Picture of Nepal in Austria

...In Nepal we are plagued by the national disease of procrastination and myopia.

Bhumika Ghimire in Austria

Arriving in Innsbruck, Austria March 17th, I was struck by how similar the small Alpine city is to Kathmandu; with its snow covered mountains that carry hundreds of years of history.

Although the façade of history and culture seemed similar, there were stark differences. Walking through Innsbruck, I never had to cover up my nose to escape dust, smoke or unpleasant smell of garbage. No member of opposite gender offered uncomfortable comments on my dress; traffic was sane and public transportation a class of its own.

Austrians take pride in preserving their natural resources and their heritage sites. Rivers in Innsbruck run clean and clear, museums are well kept. People value their family and culture and work hard. Innsbruck and Austria offered a picture of what Nepal could be if only we could correct all the mistakes made in the past and stop repeating them now.

Contrary to Austria, in Nepal we are plagued by the national disease of procrastination and myopia. We rob the rivers of the sand to make quick buck, and we brand our own culture as 'backward.'

So what do Nepalis living in Austria think about their homeland? **Dr. Shyam Upadhyaya**, President of Non-Resident Nepali Association Austria answered some of our questions.

Innsbruck City, Austria



How many Nepalis are now living in Austria? What is their profession and background?

There is no reliable data about the number of Nepalis in Vienna. A large number are asylum seekers. Not all of them want to disclose their identity. Due to the free movements within Schengen states, it is hard to establish the actual number. The estimated number is around 1000. A formal gathering like New Year or Dashain celebration is

attended by 100 to 150 Nepalis.

A small number of Nepalis are working in professional position. In United Nations, there are three professional staff (UNIDO), two general service (IAEA and UNOV) and five UN Security Officers.

Outside UN there are around six families of professionals. There are around 150 university and Ph D students. Around 100 Nepalis permanently settled in Austria through job or marital relations. All others are refugees,

victims of conflicts whose lives were threatened by Maoists or Army.

There are reports that about 200 Nepali refugees now live in Austria. What attracts them to this country?

Well, to be a refugee cannot be an attractive matter. Here, social security is very strong. A recognised refugee may get benefit of up to 600 Euro.

About the political situation in Nepal?

As a president of NRN I am not supposed to make a political statement. As an independent citizen of Nepal I could say that the culture of violence is created by Maoists and they are responsible for lives lost during the war and till date. The rights of all ethnic groups must be respected within the state of Nepal. Maoist violence is a setback in the struggle of ethnic groups for their cause. However, I am optimistic. But election alone would not be sufficient to solve all the problems.

About your life in Austria?

I am working as a Chief Statistician of UNIDO. When I have free time I like to meet other Nepalis, especially those who have a hard life here. We also have a small group who arrange Nepali class for our children every Sunday. It gives us an opportunity to meet each other frequently. And I miss my country, my society.



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Point to Ponder

We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace. - William E. Gladstone

A vote for peace

The people of Nepal have spoken through their ballots. They have accepted and recognised the Maoists as the key agent of desired change. The present election is an outcome of the Delhi agreement that defined peace, democracy and economic prosperity as the common agenda of the nation.

So it is imperative that the Maoists do not misinterpret this victory as an endorsement of the politics of violence, extortion, annihilation of those they did or do not agree with. This is clearly an endorsement and encouragement of their pledge, post 12-point agreement, that they would shun violence and be a part of democratic process and politics.

It is time for the Maoists to be magnanimous in their victory. Revenge against the dissenters will have no place in future politics. They have also got the mandate to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in a much more responsible and credible way. Democracy is not just about setting some populist goals. It is very much a process that has wider acceptability. In that sense, the interim parliament has blundered on many occasions.

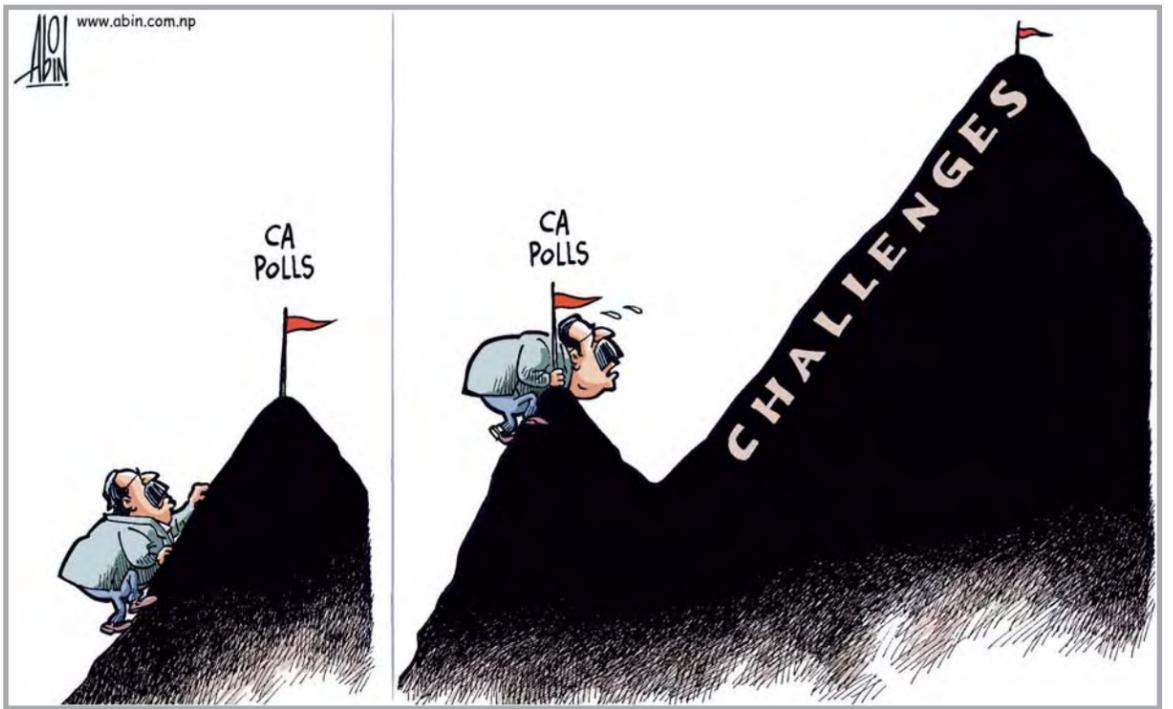
With Maoists coming in as the main party, international community's discomfiture is clearly understandable. Most of them including India were hoping that Maoists would get less than two dozen seats, and will only be a marginal player in future politics.

On the negative side, key international players - the United States, United Kingdom and India, all have contributed to Nepal's instability and conflict. The three not only supported the King in 2002 in sacking an elected government, but also supplied arms and ammunitions in 'militarily suppressing' the Maoists when an overwhelming majority of the people favoured management of the conflict through peaceful dialogues.

The international players backed out and aligned with the Seven Party Alliance, putting the entire blame on the king when things went wrong. And unfortunately, the rulers in the past couple of years that included the Maoists seemed to be guided more by these players even on domestic affairs. The challenge lies in defining the road map of future Nepal independently.

No doubt, the international community's support will be crucial for Nepal's peace process and development, but the future government needs to have a clear approach about how to solicit their support without inviting interference in country's internal affairs. However, Maoists need to understanding that it is possible only if their actions as a government are in conformity with the spirit of the people's mandate and are well within the parameters of established or accepted democratic norms.

There are going to be representatives from all parties including the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) and other parties which Maoists have been boycotting all along. Besides, Maoists must realise that they are very much on the terrorist list of the United States. Respect for dissents in internal politics, and shedding all traces of what could be called 'terrorism' are the minimal and natural expectation of people who voted for them. After all, it's not the bullets, but the ballots, that Maoists have derived this victory from.



Letters

Good wishes to PL

This is in response to the interview given by Mr.PL Singh. I think PL did speak well but after a long spell of silence. I am sure if he would have stressed these views from a political platform during the time the king revived the House of Representatives, today's parliamentary elections would not have been the same or the elections might have taken place a long time back.

PL forgets that we are all living in an era where we are in constant rift with speed and time. We live contemporarily and tend to forget things quickly too. This trend will also make the people of Nepal forget that they will be electing a government constituting of Maoists who till yesterday were killing their own countrymen.

My good wishes to PL who still thinks of morals in politics but also feel sorry for the Nepali mandate who does not find his name on the ballot paper this time.

Ashok Mathur New Delhi

Keep politics away from expedition

This is in reference to your story on Nepal's assurance to China that the expedition to Mt. Everest from Nepal's side will be all peaceful. I completely agree that expedition and politics are two different things. If any group wants to get involved in Free Tibet or other

political movements, they must do it from a different forum.

It was good that the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) took the initiative towards assuring China that no anti-Chinese activities will be conducted by the expedition group. Thus the NMA also has been able to ensure that Nepal does not lose revenue and foreign exchange through this expedition. This is truly a great service not only towards Nepal-China relationship, but also in retaining the faith of expedition groups who keep coming to Nepal each year.

Nima Lama Swayambhu, Kathmandu

Allow not anyone to curb press freedom

Newsfront's main story 'At last' in its last issue gave interesting details about the election preparations. Now people have voted and as trends indicate, Maoists may emerge as the largest party, with or without absolute majority of its own in the constituent assembly. And what will the big powers do in that case? Will they respect the mandate of the people or try to impose their own agenda?

It is also a big challenge for the media to continue warning the political parties and exposing their failures. Media must fight for its freedom and rights if Maoists try to curb it. Maoist Chief Prachanda's latest criticism of the media shows

he and his party do not feel comfortable with criticism, and if that continues once they are in the government, they might also contemplate bringing laws to curb press freedom.

Sunita Shrestha Makhan, Kathmandu

Readers, your reactions, criticisms, comments, suggestions are most welcome. Please address it to: newsfront@bhrikuti.com



Spiritual Corner

Wisdom teachings

Shri Gurudev Mahendranath (April 29, 1911-August 30, 1991) was a British occultist, mystic, writer, poet, Avadhut and founder of the spiritual organisation known as the International Nath Order.

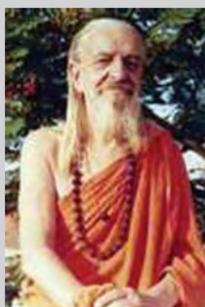
Born Lawrence Amos Miles in London, England, his interest in spirituality began at an early age. He arrived in India in 1953 and was given initiation (Diksha) as a Sannyasi into the Adinath Sampradaya by H.H. Shri Sadguru Lokanath, the Avadhut of the Himalayas.

He was later given tantric initiation by Shri Pagala Baba of Ranchi into the Uttara Kaula sect of northern tantrics and became his successor. He also received initiations as a

Bhutanese Lama, as a meditation master in Soto Zen, as well as into Taoism and both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism.

He resolved not to pass on the Indian Sannyasi initiation and made no new Indian sadhus. This decision was made in response to changes in Indian socio-religious patterns and the difficulty experienced by sadhus of tantric traditions to be welcomed and supported outside of areas where they were well known and loved.

To meet this situation and to give occult spiritual pursuits greater expression in western



lands, Shri Gurudev put into motion the formation of the International Nath Order. The Guru tradition and initiation which he has passed on includes not only the wisdom teachings from Indian, Bhutanese, and Soto Zen sources, but also includes gems of Taoism, and such wisdom as is rediscovered by the science and yoga of meditation and contemplation. A Nath or Devi of the International Nath Order is not bound by the rules of Asian sadhus, and may work for gainful employment, marry, and live the normal way of western patterns.

Shri Gurudev Mahendranath wrote numerous articles and essays on tantra and the spiritual life, including the Twilight Yoga Trilogy, the Levogyrate Tantra, and The Londinium Temple Strain, subsequently collected under the title The Scrolls of Mahendranath in 1990. These works present the essentials of spiritual life and the tantric path in a humorous, non-dogmatic and non-sectarian manner. In 2002, an expanded online version of The Scrolls of Mahendranath & Other Writings was published by the International Nath Order. His last residence was his hermitage, Shambhala Tapowan, near the Vatrak river, in the state of Gujarat, India.

Number of women casting their votes in Mahendranagar



Shyam Bhatta

Realising the dream

The constituent assembly members must act independently and with conscience. Their accountability to people is much higher than their allegiance to their political parties.



■ Binod P. Bista

Their accountability to people is much higher than their allegiance to their political parties. The future of Nepal rests in their hands.

Historically, a revolutionary force that is successful takes charge of a situation fully and completely. It does so, on the strength of ballot rather than a bullet for which there is no need after a successful revolution. This is a normal scenario witnessed by people all over the world as a revolutionary force fights for the sake of poor, oppressed and outcaste. Any situation different than this normal scene requires a critical assessment by the revolutionary force and the people as well.

In Nepal, despite a successful revolution of the Maoists for a constituent assembly (voting for which took place on 10 April) that is supposed to create a new Nepal for all Nepalis, yet the Maoists appear to be in a defensive situation. From current indications it appears that the Maoists may not receive the overwhelming support from the Nepali people in spite of their grand vision and numerous sacrifices made for the cause.

There are three major factors that prevented the Nepali Maoists from rejoicing the success of their revolution fully. Unfulfilled promises and commitment of returning seized lands to rightful owners, continuing extra legal and illegal activities of extortion, abduction and highhandedness, and lack of visible efforts to address and remedy the pains and sufferings of the

people during the insurgency period.

It is quite clear from the present behavior of the YCL (young communist league) during last one week of the constituent assembly polls date, when Maoists supremo Prachanda instructed YCL to behave as Gandhi (non violent means of campaigning), that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists is fully capable of functioning as a legitimate democratic political party. Mistrust of the system and the rival political parties might have kept the Maoists at bay extracting a very heavy price on them.

As soon as the constituent assembly is established in about three weeks time, the members of the assembly would have to act responsibly not only for drafting a new constitution but also run the country during the transition phase, expected to last about 3-6 years. In fact, this task is equally as difficult as the conduct of CA elections that fortunately saw good participation of voters as well as political parties. Chances are that the constitution in-the-making would be acceptable to most.

The present interim constitution, as amended, does not elaborate on the formation of government except that the same would be according to the interim constitution with necessary changes. At the outset, the first change that must be done is to either

delete sub-clauses 1,2,3 of article 38 of part 5 or form a new understanding among the parties and individuals represented in the assembly.

The new members as legitimate people's representatives, elected on the basis of adult franchise under an acceptable election process for Nepal, should alone decide the fate of Nepalis henceforth. No citizen of Nepal expects the constituent assembly and the government (yet to be formed) to behave like the present legislature and government that has projected an image of absolute submission to external influences, captivity from within, and whimsical actions and decisions except conduct of CA elections.

Moreover, the constituent assembly members must act independently and with conscience. Their accountability to people is much higher than their allegiance to their political parties. The future of Nepal rests in their hands. Since they must pay full attention to the task at hand, it may be desirable to work out a mechanism to lessen their involvement and time in the regular law making process and overseeing of the government.

The dream of a new Nepal can be hardly realised by leaders and parties that had never raised the issue of

constituent assembly and a change in Nepali system of governance. By all counts the present situation in Nepal has been possible because of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists. Logically, they should be leading the country for now. However, owing to mistrust and fear they could not make amends at the right time thus placing themselves in an awkward position. Like a wounded revolutionary, their behavior would be quite unpredictable and perhaps more difficult to sustain if they were left out of power. Peace in Nepal would again take a back seat.

Since the interim constitution has adequate provision to not only to accommodate but also change certain articles to suit the situation during the most critical transition phase, serious thought must be given by the forerunner political parties to allow the Maoists to take lead. The largest democracy and the second largest democracy, being close to Nepal and her people in the success of present elections, would certainly find a way to explain, interpret and persuade the people as well as the world that a minority party can also assume power under successful democratic governance. Most importantly, democracy will neither develop nor thrive in the absence of peace and stability in a new Nepal.

Maoist chief Prachanda, under burden of marigold garlands, addresses a cheering crowd in the Birendra Convention Centre on April 12 soon after he was declared winner from Kathmandu 10.



Pix by Bhaswor Ojha

CELEBRATING VICT





Suprabha Ghimire, Congress



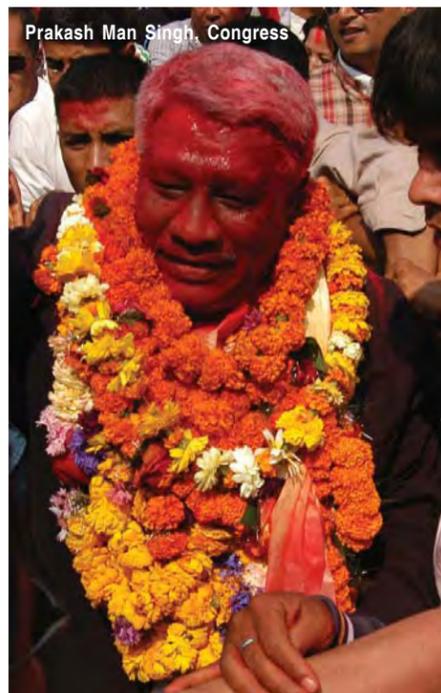
Navindra Raj Joshi, Congress



Chakra Thakuri, Congress



Jhakku Subedi, Maoist



Prakash Man Singh, Congress



Hisila Yami, Maoist

TORY



Narahari Acharya, Congress

Her passion is writing and it takes forms of stories, novels and songs. The woman behind the words is **Padmavati Singh**. She strives to reach out and touch the hearts and minds of women and the society at large. She believes strongly in integrity and in equal rights for women. Padmavati shared her views with **Sushma Amatya** recently.

Writing, an art that demands integrity

When did you start writing?

I was interested in literature right from my school days. I then came in close contact with Prema Shah, who was my neighbour and was a renowned writer. She used to lend me many books. She encouraged me to read a lot and gradually I found myself wanting to write. I've been writing for the past 35 years now. I've written many stories, poems, and songs. I sang several of my songs too.

How did your first novel, Samanta Akash, come about?

Writing a novel demands a lot of time and concentration which I was not able to manage here. So, one day, I decided to go to Biratnagar, stayed there for a month as a paying guest and completed the book in three weeks time. The book talks about modern women and their struggle. At that time I had no structure but once I started writing, it started flowing.

I focus mainly on women's issues especially regarding the discrimination they face. I being a woman, know their issues intimately and it so becomes my dharma to write about it. Gender discrimination is my main concern. When women and men are the same human being, living under the same sky, why can't they have equal rights? Verbally, everybody say women are equal to men but it does not happen in real life, not at home and not outside. Domination exists everywhere. Yes, men do have their problems too but my work concentrates on women. Samanta Akash is exactly about that.

How does literature help in creating awareness?

Reading something that is written with good intention, with honesty, does strikes one's psyche at a deep level and slowly makes one question one's attitude, behaviour and values in life. Although people do not read much in our country, due to illiteracy and poverty, the habit is picking up slowly and people are starting to read books besides their courseware. I was convinced of this after I received diverse feedback on my book.

Yes, there is lack of direct, measurable effect on the affect what you read has on you, but people are affected by what they read. They will at some point begin thinking and start questioning if the values they clung on to all their lives are right or wrong at this point of time. Thus, it is a step towards creating awareness. With this confidence that what we write does have a positive impact on people's attitude, mentality and will bring changes in the society - do writers like us continue to write.

What changes did you see in women in their work environment?



Niraj Sapkota

Reading something that is written with good intention, with honesty, does strikes one's psyche at a deep level and slowly makes one question one's attitude, behaviour and values in life.

I worked for various NGOs and INGOs for about 25 years. I remember the first time I was posted as a field coordinator when there were no women working in the outposts. Sensing their presumption that I would not be able to survive in the not so comfortable environment, I put in all that I had and completed the project successfully. Not long after, I began to see more and more women venturing into field work and excelling at it. Today, they are definitely more confident and can compete with men at any level.

Future plans?

Ratna Pustak Bhandar is publishing a collection of my short stories very soon. Now I'm planning to go to the US to write about this rising phenomenon of Nepalis migrating to the US citing various reasons. I want to see for myself what kind of lives they are leading there; how happy they are; what changes has moving to US brought to their mentality, their life style; how they are adapting to the different

culture and how they are integrated in the new environment. I will be studying their identity crisis, the problems they are facing, feeling their dreams and then write a book on this diaspora.

Why the US?

I have friends and relatives there and nowhere else. I will have a place there to stay. I am going there for just this purpose. I want to make my book based on the realities, not based on what I hear or read or see on TV.

Don't you plan to get your writing translated into English so that it has a wider outreach?

Unfortunately, due to lack of translation, a majority of Nepali writers are confined within Nepal only. People know me here but not even in India. For this reason, this women's organisation called Gunjan works to promote women writers. I chair the organisation that is ten years old. Lack of funds is another reason why translation does not take place but

Gunjan which is a totally self sufficient organisation with no outside intervention, is working on it. Translating our work is important and we should give it due attention.

What do we need to ensure books written by women reach all corners of our country?

Distribution is the main problem. A proper distribution channel is lacking here. I can get my books circulated in Kathmandu valley but it becomes very difficult if not impossible for me to get my books to go outside. The system is lacking.

Challenges that women writers face?

To be a woman is the first challenge! From my experience, finding time to write is another major challenge. Women have so many responsibilities such as looking after home, children, fulfilling social obligations, and if you are a working woman, then the load doubles. To be able to write with all that is itself a major achievement. I cannot write in the day time, there are so many distractions; so many things demand my attention, so I write only at night time. Had it been a man, he can just announce that he should not be disturbed and everything gets done for him and he can focus on his writing alone. Women definitely have a larger load to bear.

Another problem is lack of networking for women to get their work published. Men move around a lot but women again due to their responsibilities cannot do that and so they lag behind in that area too. These days without a proper network, it is not easy to get your work published and marketed. Another problem is lack of exposure. I have seen it in my years of working that whenever there is a chance of traveling abroad; it is the men who get the priority.

Despite all these setbacks, if a woman writes something then it is really something. For writing is not just writing, it takes a lot of effort, studying, research. It calls for a lot of personal experience, interaction with many people from different walks of life.

Here too, women face domination in a different way. When a woman writes, the general concept of men is that 'what will women write, we are better,' kind of attitude. Go to a literature programme and you will see all men out there on the dais; perhaps now, they will have a few women there just to make sure that the gender equation appears balanced out. Nobody can stop us from writing but we need to work together to overcome the seen and unseen domination that is taking place around us.

What would you advise women

who want to write?

In this intellectual arena, we have to compete with men who have better access to time, environment, opportunity, freedom to travel etc; and for very this reason, we need more women who are determined to walk in this less traveled space and make their mark on it. It calls for a lot of integrity and confidence in self; and be able to face the challenges without wavering.

Why would people be attracted to this field which is not known for its monetary value?

Right. In other fields, you earn money but in this field, you have to spend money. If you want your work published, you have to spend your money and the return is not guaranteed. Well known names do get published by publishing houses but for a new comer, it is very difficult. Their work just gathers dust.

And today the time is such that a lot depends on marketing for which you have to invite people, get yourself talked about in the media, etc. For this, you need money. What I've seen now is that those who have money, they publish one book after the next regardless of its quality; and they are viewed as successful; and there are poor and good writers whose works never see the light of the day.

Money talks and we have seen it happening not only with writers but singers, actors and other artists too. Those who throw around money, the media cover them again and again although they are not even worth it. And here too the domination of money has to be challenged and only we writers can do it.

What can be done to give opportunity to new talents?

Organisations that work to promote literature should hunt for talents and promote them. Priority should be based on the writers' creativity and capability. Potential should be recognised and tapped.

Final words?

I wish that the tendency of one group of writers to slander another group and turn it into yet another political, corrupted arena would stop. And I wish, money would stop taking precedence. We have even seen some people who give money to unknown writers to write something and then get it published in their names. This is sheer exploitation. It is a negative trend that should be nipped in bud. In this field as anywhere else, one's own credibility based on one's talent, hard work should be recognised; and not based on the façade one creates around oneself with money. This is an area of intellect, wisdom and integrity and it should be respected. ■

'Trade barriers should be removed'

President Pervez Musharraf has called for sharing expertise and experiences, removing trade barriers, involving public and private sectors and setting up regional cooperation networks to raise environmental and energy efficiency.

Addressing the Boao Forum for Asia on "Green Asia: Moving towards win-win through changes" here on Saturday, the president said: "The challenge of sustaining economic development and ensuring environmental protection is overwhelming and beyond the capacity of most individual countries in Asia."

He said that demand for water, energy and raw materials had grown in the world. "Collectively, we face an enormous challenge to ensure food and energy security, prudent water management and environmental protection."

The president said the phenomenal growth in Asia had led to an increase in



global demand for energy and added that 70 per cent of the new demand would come from developing countries, especially those in Asia.

"We will have to rely on both traditional and non-traditional sources of energy to sustain our growth. We simply cannot depend on fossil fuels to be the mainstay of global economy."

Mr Musharraf pointed out that despite success a large proportion of Asian

population still lived on less than two US dollar a day.

The president said Pakistan was dedicated to promoting cooperation for Green Asia, both in the region and within the Saarc framework.

He said Pakistan had taken various steps, including setting up of a policy and review forum on climate change, launching of a mega forestry project, mountain areas conservancy programme and Pakistan Wetlands Programme, to mitigate climate change.

Mr Musharraf said Pakistan was trying to maintain and accelerate its economic growth which had been seven per cent over the past five years.

This, he added, continued to remain the top priority of the new government.

President Musharraf praised the Chinese companies for their contribution to Pakistan's economic development through investment and business.

(Dawn)



Hu: China-Pakistan friendship is strong

Chinese President Hu Jintao and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf Friday reaffirmed the strong alliance between their countries, a news agency reported.

The leaders said during the Friday talk they would work to strengthen bilateral strategic joint efforts between China and Pakistan, Xinhua reported. Hu and Musharraf met during the Pakistani leader's visit to Sanya in China's Hainan province.

Hu said China and Pakistan were close friends and partners that have an all-weather bond and overall agreement. He also said their friendship was based in support and trust regarding each country's core issues.

Musharraf said he would like the countries to look into new methods of expanding joint efforts, such as with trade, energy, education and culture.

(UPI)



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Glimpse of enlightenment

In the Mahayana path, the first glimpse of enlightenment is attained when the person has a direct non-conceptual experiential glimpse of emptiness (Sunyata).

Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

The four noble truths was the first teaching the Shasta (master/ teacher) gave and it was in Sarnath to the five, who had abandoned him in the middle of his endeavours because he started eating. When a person moving on the Sraavakayana path has his first glimpse of enlightenment, he experiences in his own mental streams, the 16 aspects of the four noble truths. This is the first glimpse of enlightenment according to the Sraavakayana system like Theravada.

If one properly practices the Vipassana of the Theravada system, this is what he will experience. He will not experience the Atma – Gyana of the Hindus or Jains nor God realisation of some Hindus or Christians. An understanding of this is very crucial to the correct understanding of Buddhism. This glimpse is technically called Srotapatti and the person is thence forth a Srotappanna. Srota means the

stream, i.e. the stream that leads to final emancipation (Mukti/Mokchhya) and Apatti is falling into or entering. So it literally means entering into the stream that leads to or flows towards Arhathood which is the final emancipation (Mukti/Mokchhya).

However there are still two more stations or degrees of emancipation called Sakridaagaami and Anaagaami before Arhathood is attained. Sakridaagaami means once returner. The person will return once more to the human realm before he attains to the Anaagaami or the higher Arhat stage. The Anaagaami is the non returner. He will not come back to the human realm anymore but until he becomes an Arhat he may be reborn in the Deva or Brahma realms and go on to attain Arhathood. But if he attains Arhathood here he has no more birth. This becomes his last birth.

The steps, the realisation and the final emancipation according to Sraavakayana are totally different from any other non-Buddhist systems

as can be seen from the above explanation. But this is only the result of the Sraavakayana path. The Bodhisatwayana/Mahayana path again is a little different from the above, if not totally different.

In the Mahayana path, the first glimpse of enlightenment is attained when the person has a direct non-conceptual experiential glimpse of emptiness (Sunyata). As you can see this cannot really be equal to the realisation of the Atma as some Hindu Saints/Yogis/Paramhansa have tried to posit in the past. Sunyata is a synonym for Anatma but there are two levels of Anatma. One is the gross Anatma (no-self) which is the negation of I and me. But Sunyata is the subtle Anatma and therefore not only merely the negation of I and me but also the negation of real existence, inherent existence, true existence of all dharmas including the fabricated self or Atma.

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

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Talking
ANYMORE**

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

AST<space>ARI

NEWS

NEWS National news

SPO Sports news

ENT Entertainment news

INT International news

LIVE Breaking news

JOKES

JOKE

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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

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WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

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DICTIONARY

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■ Pramesh Pradhan

Historic backwater—Sankhu

Vajrayogini is the deity of wisdom worshipped by both Buddhist and Hindus

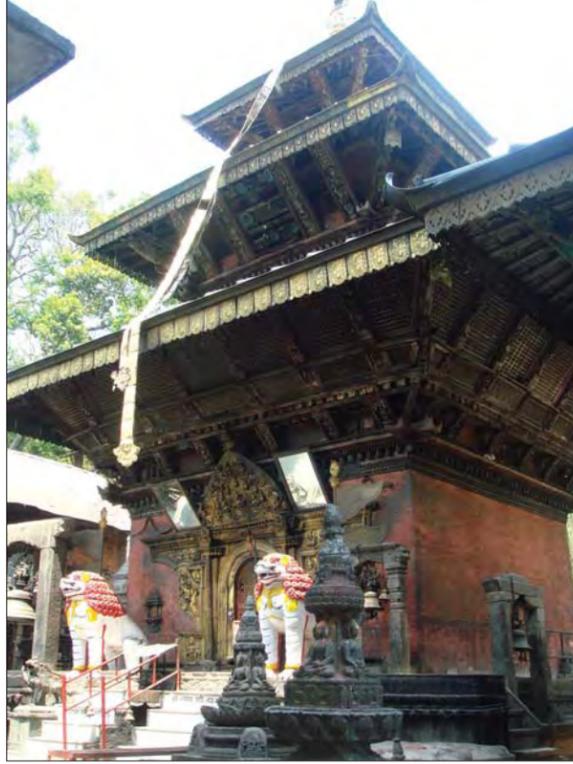
Sankhu is an old Newari backwater that lies 23 km north-east of Kathmandu. Its original name was Sankhapura that literally meant a 'Conch town.' It was once an important town, in the old trading route between Kathmandu and Tibet. Beautiful old houses, intricate wood-carvings, temples, public ponds and water taps are testimonials to its prosperous history.

The ancient city is believed to have been guarded by Asta-matrikas, the eight mother goddesses each in eight different directions of the city. Sankha deva is believed to be the first king of the city. This predominantly Newar town probably was settled in the Lichhavi era (2nd -8th century).

The present three storied temple is the contribution of King Pratap Malla who ruled in 1655 AD. The temple is believed to have been built originally by King Manadeva during the 5th century who is associated with his penance meditation for unintentionally killing his father. The typical courtyard behind the temple is called Gana Bahal, Gana means forests and Bihar (Bahal) means recreational place in Newari language. A finely carved sunken bath from 10th century is in the middle of this courtyard.

There are a number of waterspouts on the way up the steep stone staircase to the temple. Mid-way to the temple, images of Bhairav, Vishnu and Ganesh can also be seen. Animal sacrifices are made in front of the Bhairav image.

The smaller shrine beside the main temple houses Dharma Ghatu Chaitya which is a replica of Swoyambhu temple. An image of Manjushri with a sword also stands in there. Vajra Yogini is believed to have been the mastermind behind



Manjushri who used his power to cut the hill and drain the water from the valley and made it fit for human settlement.

There are numerous Chaityas around the temple. Carved in the wood around the temple are animals and gods from the Buddhist pantheon. The temple stands midway up the forest of Manichaur (heap of jewels) said to be dotted with the meditating caves of Buddhist and Hindu ascetics.

Popularly known as Vajra Yogini, the deity is Ugra Tara, Nila Tara (blue Tara) or Khadga Yogini. She is the eldest among 64 legendary Yoginis. She is the deity of wisdom worshipped by both Buddhist and Hindus. The beautiful goddess here is defined as a ferocious protector of the Buddhist doctrine. Her companions (dakinis) Baghini (tigress) and Singhini (lioness) can be seen nearby. To Hindus she is the goddess Kali. Nearby the temple lies the Dharma Ghatu Chaitya.

Sankhu is still noted for its religious significance related to holy Hindu book of Swasthani and its rites - the month long purification involves fasting, reading of sacred texts, and morning baths in the Sali river. One of the most celebrated festivals is the Vajra Yogini fest which falls on the full moon day in the month of March/April. Maghe Sakranti is the Hindu festival commemorating an important Hindu event associated with Shiva, one of the Hindu supreme trinity and Mahadevi, consort of Shiva.

Sankhu is a point to get started on some of the most pleasant hiking and treks around the valley. Richly endowed with forests, rivers, rivulets, hills, rich farmland, and hardworking people, this historic place could be made attractive if it were kept clean. Sadly, this historic town lies in the shadows, ignored, despite its glorious past.

(nte@mail.com.np)

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हरैक मंगलवार राति १०:३० बजे

बुधवार विहान ८:३० बजे

बिहीवार दिउँसो २:३० बजे

र शनिवार साँझ ६:३० बजे



Sanjeev Kharel

When the flames of envy are fanned, envy becomes hatred and hatred becomes violence.

Who's old fashioned?

national dailies, was cheeky ("it is not a matter that need concern the court") to say the least, if he did indeed say that, and the press would hardly misquote our very own emperor, would they? Had he given such a response to the Supreme Court of any really democratic country he might have found himself contemplating a spell of real retirement from politics-behind bars for contempt of court.

The fact that probably troubles the Supreme Court is that there has been no general election or referendum (and there will still not have been even when the constituent assembly elections are over on April 10th) asking all those who are entitled to vote in this country what kind of a state they would prefer. The glaring fact is that an interim unelected government has changed the constitution and laws and has made decisions that no unelected body should be empowered to make.

I have heard some of our politicians argue that they were elected once; but frankly we are being governed by people for whom the ink on the ballot paper has faded or is green with fungus. There are also a goodly number who have never stood for election and for whom no-one voted, namely the Maoists. It's called dictatorship.

Do we have a future? If so, when will it arrive? This dreadful shadow of conflict that has afflicted our nation was (and is) caused by egoists of one faction or another. Together they have exploited the wretched and poor among us: some of them have caused children to leave their classrooms and fight, even kill, their own compatriots. Others have been overburdened by their own feelings of importance. Their richness and privilege in

terms of education or money has done nothing but weigh them down with an aversion for those who do not have such privilege or who come way too low down in the pecking order.

There are awful divisions in this society. Divisions indeed caused by old-fashioned mindsets, but on all sides. If the fortunate are brimful of self-importance, some of the unfortunate are full of hatred and envy for the fortunate. It eats away at their being. Being poor is not a crime, but the exploitation of the poor who are young and have unlimited aspirations and limited means is. When the flames of envy are fanned, envy becomes hatred and hatred becomes violence. Those who have nothing to envy respond for the most part with an equal violence. Some politicians are adept at exploiting this, because they have ignorance on their side: the ignorance of the poor about the rich and the ignorance of the rich about the poor.

Politicians, of course, are expected to close the gap between rich and poor and not fan the flames of division; and that has never happened in this country. Well perhaps Thursday will change all that and we should just let it go.

Let what go? What are we really voting for? Are we voting to get rid of this infamous old mindset? If so we should remind ourselves that we are not voting on anything that concerns us as citizens because SPAM has already chalked out the order of the game; and the order is the same for all of these parties. We should also remind ourselves that democracy is about choice and looking at all the manifestos that the SPAM has produced, there is no choice. Whither democracy and a new Nepal? ■

■ The wanderer

It's been a very entertaining weekend. I had the opportunity to watch comrade Lotus Blossom in full bloom, so to speak, on two very entertaining occasions. The number one top spot, of course, just has to be his invigorating conversation on Kantipur TV on Saturday night when his very own version of the famous American phobia 'Reds under the bed' was revealed to be 'royalists under the bed.' A little more transparency on exactly who the 'many' are who 'attempted' to put the famous helmsman's 'lights out' would be useful; and obviously they couldn't have been too serious about it because he was jolly, fat and ubiquitous on the television show.

It is puzzling how, half a century after coming out of the jungle, Fidel Castro still manages to look mean and lean, but our own comrade leaders, after such a short time in the fat cat city, are, like June in the famous song, bursting out all over. Some of them are very roly poly and one has to wonder which of them really did the hard work of running up and down steep pathways and gasping through the jungles liberating us witless folks. There is much that remains to be made transparent.

Unfortunately, the very next day, in full flow, our 'President in waiting' revealed that the media has an old mindset and will have to be brought under control after the election. Get a life! If ever one needed proof that a) Lotus B's thinking is old fashioned and rooted in the past, failed glory of Stalinist dialectics and that b) he has no intention of adhering to democratic norms, it is that one statement.

The whole point of a democracy is that a free press is one of the estates or bulwarks of the system. The whole point of democracy is

that it changes and progresses as times change and it varies from country to country. The original democracy of the ancient Greeks has only one thing in common with modern forms really; and that is the rule of law - and on other issues, the ancient Greeks hardly thought women had souls, let alone giving them democratic rights. Intelligent women just had to be sorceresses or possessed by the gods. In fact in some countries that perspective hasn't changed to this day.

Norms that are always unchangeable in a democracy though are the supremacy of the law and the equality of all before it and the freedom of the press. It is not the media that is old and stale in its thinking but the extreme left wing and the extreme right wing in this country. They have many similarities. One that struck me as amusing on Saturday night was Mr. Dahal's reference to himself as 'Hajur', although I suppose he'll deny that ever leaving his lips as he has denied many statements that we have all heard gushing out of the heady environment of Khula Manch.

If truth be told, however, the supreme leader of the CPN/Maoist party is not alone in what I see as a feudal mindset. There, I used the 'f' word! Most of our current political leaders are feudal and belong to an old order that we would do well to put into retirement, making way for the younger generation. It's too late now frankly and people do get the government they deserve. For the rest of us, it is about time we reflected upon exactly what we have done to deserve this lot.

Another glaring example of the feudal mindset was GP Koirala's response to the Supreme Court's show cause concerning the constitutional changes that catapulted us into republicanism just on the Maoists say so. The prime minister's response, as reported in the

It is puzzling how, half a century after coming out of the jungle, Fidel Castro still manages to look mean and lean, but our own comrade leaders, after such a short time in the fat cat city, are, like June in the famous song, bursting out all over.

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