



Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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King Gyanendra accompanied by Queen Komal driving back after offering Pooja to Pashupatinath temple on the day of Shivaratri.

Bhaskar Ojha

Two mistakes Party unity wrong: PM

■ nf correspondent

With just a month left for the polls to the constituent assembly, Prime Minister GP Koirala is giving conflicting messages regarding the party unity and the citizenship issue. According to senior leaders of the Congress Party, Koirala has been confessing his two major 'mistakes' - one against the interest of democracy and another against country's sovereignty.

"Distributing citizenship to 24 lakh people in Madhesh without any proof to back-up the entitlement was a mistake as it will pose a threat to the national unity in the long-run," Koirala is believed to have told some senior leaders of the party at his residence recently. The other mistake, "was to have united the two Congress

party." Koirala made the confession when senior party leaders mostly from western Nepal who were denied tickets, called on him separately.

Putting the entire blame for denial of certain 'deserving candidates' on Sher Bahadur Deuba (who headed the Congress-Democratic party till it was united with the one led by the Prime Minister) Koirala is believed to have said, "Deuba made it a prestige issue that

Koirala has been confessing his two major 'mistakes' - one against the interest of democracy and another against country's sovereignty.

some of the senior and deserving people did not get the ticket. I could not challenge him." Among those who met him recently to express their unhappiness included Sunil Bhandari, Yagyraj Pathak and half a dozen others from the west.

Although Koirala pleaded helplessness in case of senior leaders like Bhandari, Pathak and others, it is believed that a majority of the party tickets were decided by the Koirala family. While Sushil Koirala was given a free hand to decide on his followers, PM Koirala himself accommodated some of the candidates who Sujata and Shekhar wanted. The candidates belonging to the Deuba faction have been complaining that since Koirala controls the purse, they are not getting money from the party's central office, leaving it on Deuba to manage funds for them. ■

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No backtracking

Yadav says no to GPK



Yadav and Koirala

■ nf correspondent

The Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) has declined to consider Prime Minister GP Koirala's request to withdraw its candidates in favour of his daughter Sujata Koirala and nephew Shekhar Koirala. PM Koirala's request was turned down by MJF leader Uppendra Yadav and Bijay Gachchedar who are contesting election to the constituent assembly from Sunsari and Morang against Sujata and Shekhar respectively.

PM Koirala who was to return to

Kathmandu from Biratnagar on March 10 sent feelers to the MJF leaders that they should not cause a situation where pro-democracy votes are divided. "But the response was negative," a family source told newsfront.

With the prospect of the Congress declining by the day, "Koirala now seems reconciled to the fact that he may not be able to lead the government after the CA polls," a senior leader of the Congress who is very close to the PM said. MJF's rebuff has not only demoralised the PM, but is also posing a threat to the

Congress party as a whole in around 120 constituencies in the Terai.

With Maoist party either absent in most parts of Terai, or weak, the obvious advantage of the fierce conflict between the MJF and the Congress is likely to go to the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML).

A senior leader of the United Madheshi Democratic Front (UMDF) said the PM himself was responsible for scuttling every possibility of understanding in the election. "He denied even minimum time to the UMDF to prepare for the polls. Moreover, Koirala showed the door to Gachchedar when he put forward a similar proposal only last week in Baluwater," a Front leader said.

Gachchedar, on behalf of the UDF, is believed to have suggested an alliance with the Congress in about 30 seats, but Koirala was not willing to concede to anything. "UMDF decision to field formidable candidates against Sujata and Shekhar Koirala was a direct result of that", the Front leader said. "The question of any alliance or understanding at this moment is over. I will be meeting Koirala after I win the election," Gachchedar told newsfront.

Unsafe diplomats

How safe are the common people?

A year has lapsed after the government promised fool-proof security to the diplomats in the country. But the Norwegian ambassador was robbed, and a security guard wounded during an armed robbery at his residence in Bhainsepati early Sunday.

Ambassador Tore Toren was at his residence when the armed robbery took place, but he was lucky to escape unharmed. The robbers took away a personal laptop of the ambassador besides Rs. 40,000 and 90 Euro. An armed guard who put up some resistance was attacked by the robbers, police said.

The attack on the security staff of the ambassador and robbery at his house comes less than a year after Prime Minister GP Koirala and Foreign Affairs Minister, Sahana Pradhan had apologised for the attack on US Ambassador James Moriarty and Abraham Abraham, Representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, during



Tore Toren

their visit to Jhapa by the Young Communist League. Koirala had also personally apologised to Moriarty during his farewell speech for Moriarty at the American Embassy in July.

In response to a collective letter of concern by most of the diplomatic and UN missions in Nepal for their safety in the wake of these attacks, the government had promised to make all arrangements regarding this issue. The YCL activists had however been let off without any cases filed against them.

An official in Shital Niwas said what happened at the residence of the Norwegian ambassador was a reflection of the prevailing law and order situation in the country including the capital, and that, "it does not look as if it was targeting any diplomat." The robbery has received huge publicity in most media in Norway and "possibly the issue will not go unnoticed by the government there," the official said.

Breach

King's route leaked

In what appears as a major security breach, King Gyanendra's visit to Pashupatinath and Guheshwari temple as a 'commoner' was leaked to the media. His visit to the temple sans usual security and status got into print in the media with details of the route and timing soon after it was conveyed by the Royal palace to the Prime Minister's house.

A source in Baluwater confirmed that a senior palace official had conveyed to PM Koirala on the eve of the Shivaratri that the king would like to go to the temple during 'Arati'. The visit was planned with clearance from the PM. "But given last year's attack on the king and the security risk that he faces in the current political climate, security agencies at the top level had been informed to keep the route details a secret," sources said. The palace sources refused to comment on the issue.

However, despite the 'leakage' King Gyanendra, accompanied by queen Komal, drove to Guheshwari temple and then to Pashupatinath spending more than an hour in Pooja. PM Koirala who represented 'secular Nepal' in the temple visited the temple just before the king and spent nearly ten minutes there. He had stopped the palace from getting involved in distribution of alms to the Sadhus assembled there from different parts of Nepal



and India, asking the Pashupati Area Development Trust (PADT) to manage the entire affair this time onwards.

Some of the Sadhus from India however, declined to accept the alms, saying that the supply of logs for fire and other arrangements including the supply system was poor this year. An estimated 250,000 pilgrims visited the temple on the Mahashivaratri this year. The figure which was far less compared to last year could be because of the unrest in Terai and shortage of fuel, a PADT source said.

Some people raised slogans in support of the king as he came out. King Gyanendra smiled but chose not to respond to any of the queries of the media people present there.

Endorsing impunity

YCL guilty, but above law

■ nf correspondent

A seven party probe panel belonging to the ruling alliance has concluded that the attack last month on Congress leader, Dilendra Prasad Badu in Darchula by the Maoist cadres, was done with the intention of murdering him. The probe panel however, suggests that it is for the political party concerned, and not the government to take action against the culprits.

The probe panel headed by Shankar Pokhrel of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Maoists Leninist (CPN-UML) submitted its findings along with recommendations for actions to Peace and Reconstruction Minister, Ram Chandra Poudel on March 5. The 26-page report suggests that the Maoist leadership must take action against the people involved in the incident 'which appears clearly aimed at taking Mr. Badu's life.'

Badu, a radical pro-republic parliamentarian of the Congress and someone considered close to the Maoists earlier, had jumped down from the window of a house after Maoists locked it from outside and set it ablaze. He was discharged from the Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu after nearly two

weeks treatment for injuries and trauma that he sustained in the attack.

The all party panel had been asked to go into the incident involving attack on Badu besides the confrontation between security forces and the Young Communist League in Kathmandu valley after Minister of State for Home, RK Chaudhary, ordered the police to evict YCL from houses which they had forcibly captured.

The probe team has not blamed the police for the raids, and rather it maintained that YCL and Maoist cadres were still driven or guided by the war-time psychology. "All these clashes and attacks by the YCL are influenced by that," the report said. It has also held Maoist guilty for unilateral attack on a series of attacks on other party cadres in Baitadi, Sindhuli and other parts of the country.

Interestingly, the panel saw no reason for the government to act on these 'crimes' by the Maoists as it simply asked the party to discipline its workers and take 'internal actions'. Narayan Sharma, a Maoist member in the probe panel, however, wrote a note of dissent suggesting that no action should be taken against his party cadres who, "may have acted in retaliation."

Extortion list

From rickshwallas to hotels

A phenomenal increase in the number of tourists coming to Nepal might be good news for the hotel and restaurant business as well as for the rickshawallas. And the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CMN-M) cadres know exactly who should be included in their extortion list. As the sight of rickshapullers with the foreigners enjoying the tri-cycle ride has become increasingly common, the Maoists have now targeted this low-income group of labourers as the source of their revenue. Each rickshawallas in the valley have to pay Rs ten each to the comrades.

But that does not fill their deep pocket. So they have issued fresh orders to the restaurants in Kathmandu to levy ten per cent additional amount from the customers. This ten per cent which has to be in cash, is over and above the ten per cent service charge added in the bill, meant for hotel unions controlled by the Maoists. "This ten per cent is not meant for us, as a major part of it goes to the leaders of the hotel union that is under Maoist control," an employee working in a Lazimpat restaurant told newsfront.

Hotel owners complain that YCL and Maoist cadres have, "asked us to charge ten per cent more in cash and hand it over to us. They have also threatened that we will not be allowed to run our business if we do not comply with their orders." The new drive is supposed to be a fresh way of collecting election money for the party candidates in the capital which among others include Party Chief Prachanda, Ministers Pampha Bhushal and Hishila Yami besides senior leaders Barshaman Pun alias Anant and Hitman Shakya.

Another restaurant owner at Durbar Marg said he that he would rather close down the hotel than succumb to this 'day light political robbery.' He said the restaurant owners will be collectively opposing the move in a formal way, adding, "We will also approach the Election Commission against this terror tactics of the Maoists."

UN air-crash



■ nf correspondent

The United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) lost its ten members, four of them international arms monitors, in a tragic accident that took place in Ramecchhap district, about 140-KM north east from Kathmandu on March 3. The UNMIN made public the names of international monitors only four days after the crash—through press release and media ads—after the family members were duly notified. The identity of three Nepali employees had however, been confirmed within hours of the crash.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has formed a commission of inquiry into the accident, and the UNMIN has pledged full cooperation in it. The UNMIN pledge comes after the UNMIN officials and Nepali media were locked in a bitter tussle with UNMIN stopping the media personnel from taking photographs at the crash site.

The Federation of Nepali Journalists Association has expressed regret over the UNMIN behaviour with the Nepali media that contradicted its oft repeated public stance in favour of open support for the right to information and unhindered access to the events. The UNMIN also asked a rescue team of the Nepali army joined by officials of the civil aviation ministry which had reached the site in the morning of March 4, to not to take any photograph of the bodies lying nearby. Among others, a retired army doctor, KS Shrestha had also joined the rescue team.

The revelation of the identity of UNMIN international monitors came after a five-member South Korean team arrived in the capital from Seoul to authorise the postmortem of Lt.Col Hyung Jum Park, a Korean national, in the teaching hospital here. Those who lost their lives in the air crash included international arms monitors, Maj. Famara Jammeh (Gambia), Maj. Mats Norhult (Sweden), Lt. Col Sondang Irawan (Indonesia) besides Park. The crew members of the ill-fated M18 Russian aircraft that had been leased by the UNMIN here were: Nikolay Yamshchikov (Russia), Sergey Oreshenko (Russia) and Nikolay Yamshchikov (Belarus).

The Nepali employees who lost their lives include Bhim Bahadur Gurung (liaison officer), Rajesh Maharjan (vehicle mechanic) and Rabindra Khaniya (language asst). UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon expressed deep sorrow over the loss of UN employees lives for the cause of peace. He also expressed his appreciation to the Nepali authorities for their assistance provided to UNMIN in recovering the remains of the victims, and for the many expressions of sympathy the mission has received from people in Nepal.

The arrival of the South Korean team is also expected to go into major security aspects and operation guidelines for the MI17 that crashed. It is understood that the UNMIN aircraft had hired its own maintenance group—Vertical T or TVER company—and the civil aviation had no operational jurisdiction above it except that it conducted a week long familiarising training for the crew. Only few days ago, one of the aircraft had force-landed following fire alarms.

CA Election Countdown

Dream merchant

What will Nepal be like in 40 years when Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai will be approaching 100 years, if they survive that long? It will be one of the world's most prosperous and advanced countries. But in 40 days? Maybe Prachanda will be the first president of the 'Republic Nepal.' These are the promises that Maoist manifesto, a document of commitment released last week, promises.

The manifesto that among other things promises 10,000 MW hydro-electricity generation within 10 years, almost 15 times increase in the per capita income of each Nepali and a revolutionary land-reform promising land to the tillers on domestic front, scrapping of the 1950-treaty of peace and friendship with India, review of other unequal bilateral and multilateral relations, settlement of Susta and Kalapani issues on the basis of evidences and in 'mutual interest' on the external front. The manifesto also says that it will



stop the 193-year old practice of recruitment of the Gorkha soldiers in the British and Indian army right away.

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) that has its top leadership coming from Aryan-Khas-upper castes, blamed these castes for Nepal being relegated into the current state of economic and social position, but made no promise that the leadership will go outside this group.

It insists that the country will be a Federal Democratic Republic divided into 11 provinces: two of them, Bheri-Seti and Karnali-Mahakali, based on geography; and the rest based on caste and ethnicity. Each state will be autonomous and have the right to self determination.

Despite Maoists' present conduct and approach on the contrary, it guarantees that it will honour all the human and fundamental rights including right to property and right to religion besides freedom of the press.

Brief

'Blessed' Bhattarai

Recall the Maoist cadres who shot dead the sons who were in mourning for their parents. Recall the defilement of Shiva temple in far west by Maoist cadres

saying religion was a crime. Contrary to that party ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai began his election campaign from Gorkha by bowing before the almighty Gorakhnath, the famous ascetic who is considered to be the Avatar (incarnation) of Shiva, Nepal's presiding deity. Dr. Bhattarai bowed before the priest of the Gorakhnath temple in Gorkha in 'obeisance,' and empowered with the blessing hit the election campaign.

A few years ago, Dr Bhattarai had taken his old parents to Manalapan temple in Gorkha, the abode of goddess of Shakti, although he later had pleaded that he had gone there as a tourist. Is this an exercise of the right to religion by Bhattarai, and an indicator that Maoists will now onwards respect others' right to religion and rituals?

Undoing what was done

It might not be easy for the Maoists to undo what they did. But they are doing it. Under the instruction of the Election Commission, the Maoist cadres have begun rubbing off from the walls, the slogans that were adulatory to their leader Prachanda and derogatory to King Gyanendra.

Most slogans said 'Red salute to the first future President of Republic Nepal.' EC sources said they had been informed by Maoist central committee member, Dina Nath Sharma in writing and Baburam Bhattarai orally, that they would abide by the instructions of the commission. The Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) was the first to begin erasing slogans voluntarily.



Nominations in figure

Total Candidates	-	4212
Male	-	3827
Female	-	385
Party candidates	-	2302
Independent	-	1010



Not so innovative

Perhaps nobody took it seriously when Maoist Chief Prachanda said his party would capture power through the polls. Now it shows he has the knack to copy electoral mal-practices used elsewhere. It seems Maoists have fielded at least 18 candidates from Kathmandu constituency -10 as independent candidates. Although all of them seem pitted against Prachanda, the party's official candidate, it is basically meant to use all resources including two vehicles each of which every candidate is entitled to while campaigning for Prachanda. The practice is quite common in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where either independent candidate is fielded by major party contestants so that the vehicles of the lesser candidates could be used for greater mobility of the greater one.

Moreover, each candidate gets to have two agents posted in each booth. As a result, Prachanda led Maoist party can have 38 agents in each booth and they can easily keep an eye on who is voting for which party. What could poor Election Commission do to defeat such innovating and 'not-illegal' methods used in the election? But at least it has asked the Maoists to respond to the news that it has fielded 18 candidates to use their resources.

Maoists obstruct Rana

In a clear breach of code of conduct prescribed by the Election Commission (EC),

the Maoists tried to obstruct the election meeting of Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) Chief Pashupati Shumsher Rana at his constituency in Sindhupalchowk.

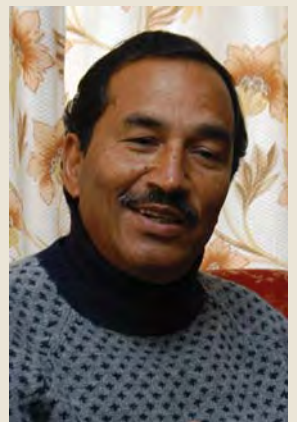
According to the complaint lodged by Rana with the EC, the Young Communist League assaulted his supporters and tried to obstruct his election meeting on March 8.

Political parties, international community and the EC are quietly pursuing a 'verbal complaint' that - Maoists have issued a secret circular to their party units in constituencies and districts to obstruct election meeting and use weapons if necessary, but without making it obvious that they have done it. The confidential circular, sources say, also suggests that there must be arms and ammunitions 'supplied' in different constituencies to face any eventuality during the electioneering and the polling.

Thapa defies Maoists

As the ruling seven party alliance has approached the Election Commission to vacate all the 62 captured houses that the Maoists have captured in the capital, at least one leader outside the ruling alliance, has taken re-possession of his house without government help.

Kamal Thapa, former Home Minister and president of the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (Nepal) took possession of his house in Hetaunda although the Young Communist League had captured it a few months ago and had planted Maoist flag over its roof-top warning others that it was a no-entry zone. Thapa who is contesting the elections from Hetaunda went along with his supporters, broke the locks, and possessed rightfully his property.





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Point to Ponder

When a resolute young fellow steps up to the great bully, the world, and takes him boldly by the beard, he is often surprised to find it comes off in his hand, and that it was only tied on to scare away the timid adventurers.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Justifying plunder

It is a rare moment in the current context of Nepal that the Supreme Court (SC) musters enough courage to issue a show cause notice to the government on issues of public importance. It happened, belatedly though, that the SC at least mustered enough courage to ask the government not to disburse Rs. one lakh each to the sitting members of interim parliament which the finance ministry allocated. The allocation that was made on the eve of election process was clearly meant to bribe electorate in the name of carrying development activities.

A parliament that has rarely discussed and debated developmental issues in the House suddenly displaying its collective will and commitment to development is unbelievable to say the least. The SC which initially chose not to restrain the government from allocating the fund when a case was filed before it, however, felt compelled after the Election Commission (EC), issued orders to the government not to go ahead with the allocation. It would have been a matter of shame for the SC not to have taken cognisance of what the EC did, and it swiftly passed fresh instruction to the government conforming what the EC did.

For any sensible government, it would have been the right occasion to retreat and inform the government that it was not going to go ahead with the allocation. But the response that Prime Minister GP Koirala, and Speaker Subhash Nembwang have filed before the SC clearly indicates that both have tried to justify the plunder and they have displayed deficiency of their character as well as moral bankruptcy.

They have tried to justify this heinous crime simply by stating that there was nothing wrong in it as it was just a continuation of what the previous government had done. Their reactions cannot be taken merely as individual opinion or the stance taken by Koirala or Nembwang. This gives the impression that both the executive and the legislature are corrupt as institutions with no respect left for what the Election Commission or the SC has desired.

The government has been mildly rebuked already by some members of the international community, although many of them, who were earlier vocal against institutionalised corruption during earlier regimes, seem to be in a condoning mood this time, through their silence. There are also reports that taking advantage of absence of monitoring mechanism, some of the members have already spent the money from districts. This blatant act of the government clearly gives certain political advantage to the sitting members, an overwhelming majority of them belongs to Congress, UML and Maoists, over the new contestants.

This discrimination in itself is in violation of the law or equality. Besides, it is a case of state acting for some candidates and against others with an intention to motivate or influence voters to cast their franchise in a particular way, that is, in favour of those 'who have already begun developmental activities.' The PM and the Speaker, even at this stage, must withdraw their earlier and pledge before the SC that they would erase the blemish on them, of having headed the corruption drive.



Letters

Election awareness in people

The parties are not taking the CA polls seriously. The historic polls which was once declared by King Tribhuvan some 50 years ago but couldn't come into existence is very crucial and important in Nepal's recent political context. But the people do not seem to be aware of the procedures of the polls and the features of Constituent Assembly.

That is why people are not taking it seriously as they should be. They should be fully aware that it is the election to draft news constitution and that the drafted constitution will fully replace the 1991 constitution which once called 'the best constitution ever made.'

We have seen a number of candidates facing corruption charges and with questionable characters being nominated. Why did parties select them? The parties are also not transparent about their expenses and financial sources. We haven't seen any party disclosing their financial transparency and inner party democracy in their manifesto. Why cannot the so called civil society press on the political parties for it?

Nepal needs clean, responsible leaders; not corrupted, visionless leaders and parties.

■ Dilli Raj Upadhyaya
Salaura, Dang

Praiseworthy

It was indeed an inspiring interview by Ellen Coon in which she brings to the public the metal Krishna Bista is made of. She has turned her personal grief



and humiliation into an opportunity for social service as well as for spreading education in remote corners of the country. Krishna deserves all praise for all that she has done.

I am sure there are many who, in their own modest and quiet ways, are doing similar things in similar manner. Newsfront will be doing a great job if it continues to uncover more people like her and brings out their contribution to public knowledge.

■ Sharat Panthi
Naya Bazar, Kathmandu

Pahadi mindset

Newsfront and most other papers are full of opinion pieces and readers' letters taking offence about some media writing

that about 50 per cent of the electorate would be out of the poll process if Madeshi groups insisted on boycotting the polls. Most write-ups and letters with Pahadi mindsets challenged such suggestions.

It is still not known what percentage of electorate will be supporting which party. The simple fact that this government failed to ensure supply of essential commodities in most parts of the country including the capital during the 16-day strike in Terai at the call of Terai based groups. How can one imagine that such a government could have ensured law and order and proper atmosphere for the polls if the strike had continued? And naturally, the electorate in Terai would not have been able to cast their votes.

Only a Pahadi mindset could imagine that with any kind of situation in Terai, the country must go to the polls. Fortunately, accords have been signed between the government and the agitating parties in Terai, and now definitely the situation is much better and Terai electorate will be voting as per their choice.

■ Rashmi Jha
Pulchowk, Lalitpur

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

Spiritual Corner

Revealing Samadhi to mankind

Gorakshanath (also known as **Gorakhnath**) was an 11th to 12th century Nath yogi, connected to Shaivism as one of the two most important disciples of Matsyendranath, the other being Caurangi. There are varying records of the spiritual descent of Gorakshanath. All name Adinath and Matsyendranath as two teachers preceding him in the succession. Though one account lists five gurus preceding Adinath and another lists six teachers between Matsyendranath and Gorakshanath, current tradition has Adinath identified with Lord Shiva as the direct teacher of Matsyendranath, who was himself the direct teacher of Gorakshanath.

The Nath tradition underwent its greatest expansion during the time of Gorakshanath.

He produced a number of writings and even today is considered the greatest of the Nath. It has been purported that it was Gorakshanath who wrote the first books on Laya Yoga. In India there are many caves, many with temples built over them, where it is said that Gorakshanath spent time in meditation. According to Bhagawan Nityananda, the Samadhi shrine (tomb) of Gorakshanath resides at Nath Mandir near the Vajreshwari temple about a kilometer from Ganeshpuri, Maharashtra, India.

Romola Butalia, an Indian writer of Yoga history lists the works attributed to Gorakshanath as: "Guru Gorakhnath is



thought to have authored several books including the Goraksha Samhita, Goraksha Gita, Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati, Yoga Martanada, Yoga Siddhanta Paddhati, Yoga-Bija, Yoga Chintamani. He is believed to be the founder of the Nath Sampradaya and it is stated

that the nine Nath and 84 Siddhas are all human forms created as yogic manifestations to spread the message of yoga and meditation to the world. It is they who reveal Samadhi to mankind."

One legend states that Guru Gorakshanath, the "eternal sage" traditionally associated with Hatha Yoga has been around

for thousands of years watching the welfare of humanity. Other legends ascribe different stories to his birth and the period of his worldly existence, and they vary greatly. The Nath Rahasya, which literally translates into the mystery of the masters, recounts birth, work, and death of nine such Nath (masters), and Guru Gorakshanath was the ninth Nath, preceded by his Guru, the eighth Nath, namely, Matsyendranath.

Traditionally, Guru Gorakshanath is believed to have been born sometime in the 8th century, whereas some believe it to be anytime from 8th century to several centuries later. He traveled widely across the Indian subcontinent, and accounts about him are found in some forms or others several places including Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Punjab, Sind, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Maratha, and even Sri Lanka.

Mother of all elections in a mortgaged nation

NC candidate Narahari Acharya filing his nomination from Kathmandu-5



Without appropriate security and safety of the citizens, the voting booths may remain empty, foiling the very purpose of the elections.



■ Binod P. Bista

Now that the major political forces including many of those representing Tarai have agreed to take part in the forthcoming constituent assembly elections, there seems to be hardly any doubt that the elections will not take place. Thanks to the last minute Indian intervention, despite several questions raised on the modality and venue directly challenging the sovereignty of a beleaguered Nepal, the uncertainty surrounding the elections, to take place on 10 April 2008, seems to have been removed for now.

The international community must have heaved a sigh of relief on this occasion as the Nepali leaders, particularly the government, had been making promises but hardly keeping them in the two failed attempts earlier. The people of Nepal, too, had been pushed on edge by the uncertainties surrounding the most important election of all times in Nepal. It was agreed by most during the 2006 April revolution that the constituent assembly would chart a new course for Nepal ushering into an era of prosperity and pride for all Nepalis.

Among others, the key issue revolved around the lack of inclusiveness of all people of Nepal owing to outdated and illegal practice of non-inclusion of the weak and vulnerable class in the society and national affairs. While there was an overriding concern on Maoists' action during and after the elections, lack of elections would have placed Nepal on a path to massive confrontation between the existing and emerging

The international community must have heaved a sigh of relief on this occasion as the Nepali leaders, particularly the government, had been making promises but hardly keeping them in the two failed attempts earlier.

forces. The entire country could have been easily drawn into a civil war of unimaginable proportions. The future of all Nepalis looked bleak. Fortunately for all, the catastrophe has been averted presently.

However, the government which has the responsibility of conducting the elections cannot remain complacent and not do everything in its power to make it a success. Since the government holds the state power and has legal authority within the bounds of Nepali constitution (which, however seems to be changing at the beck and call of seven parties) it must first provide the much-needed security in the country. Without appropriate security and safety of the citizens, the voting

booths may remain empty foiling the very purpose of the elections. Moreover, nobody can imagine, much less feel, the 'freeness and fairness' of elections if every eligible voter is not allowed to vote.

Since the forthcoming election is the first of its kind in terms of marking the ballot as mixed system of direct and proportional representation is being planned, the voters need to be educated clearly on all options available to them. For example, if a voter likes a party but does not like a candidate can he still vote for the party without supporting the candidate? Does the voter have a choice of supporting a party and also vote for a candidate of another party?

Without clearly understanding these basics the entire exercise might turn into a fiasco. Wrong things done now would yield wrong results. Although it is the government's responsibility to ensure a free and fair election for the sake of present and future Nepali generations, government efforts alone may not suffice to educate and prepare the voters for same.

The political parties and their leaders, who are taking part in the election, must support the effort of the government. The reports received so far appear to be quite inadequate in the sense that neither the parties' cadres have come in contact with the voters nor the voters are fully aware of the importance as well as the modality of the constituent assembly election. This creates a good opportunity for the Nepali civil

society by enabling it to make its move quickly and efficiently. This task can be achieved, among others, with the help of media which is the only sector that has developed and expanded during the last one decade in Nepal.

Disregard to the code of conduct established by the election commission has become a norm rather than an exception. Illegal actions and activities of sister organisations of some of the parties contesting in the election have placed the rest in an awkward position. Some others are making unwarranted noises such as 'seizing power by any means' or 'the party will resort to a force of massive resistance if confronted in the process of electioneering'.

All these remarks point to confrontation in-the-making. The government has remained virtually non-existent and condones everything in the name of furthering the peace process. So much so that some of the well-meaning leaders have taken a submissive attitude reflective in their statement that 'if anything were to go wrong United States and India will take care of Nepal'. It seems to be a clear case of a mentality of a mortgaged nation.

Nepalis must wake up in time to get out of this mentality since a mortgaged nation can hardly find a firm ground much less stand tall on it. We all must be reminded of the courage, valor and pride of a free and independent nation, although impoverished. ■

Real obstacle for elections—the Maoists



■ Siddhartha Thapa

In a free and fair election, the Maoists stand no chance of securing a majority.



Prachanda

I was aghast to read that Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, a senior Maoist leader declaring, "The Maoists would launch a new revolution if his party lost the elections," during his election campaign rally in Bhachhek, Gorkha recently. Furthermore, Prachanda, the commander of the so called Peoples Liberation Army has been reported by Kantipur Daily to have reached some form of an agreement with the UML to secure his victory from constituency number 10 in Kathmandu. What this signifies is that the Maoists are caught in a serious dilemma about facing elections. Most importantly, the silence of the Maoists in the recent days suggests the crisis fermenting in their camp. In a free and fair election, the Maoists stand no chance of securing a majority.

I remain very much a pessimist - I doubt the elections will happen. There are three things that need to go wrong for the elections not to happen and about 30 things that need to happen correctly if the elections are really to

take place. First, the Maoist insurgency is not just a Nepali phenomenon but it's a global and a regional phenomenon. The Maoists have been aided by international leftist organisations and of course the COMPOSA and the CPI-M in India. Having said this, the Maoists came into an agreement with the SPA as a tactical move to capture state power through the 12 Point Agreement.

However, if the Maoists fail to secure a majority in forthcoming elections, the Maoist party will not be in a position to implement their revolutionary ideals. The whole purpose or the rationale of participating in the transitional phase and participating in the elections would prove futile if the Maoists can't secure a majority and implement their outdated dogmatic ideals. So, in a perfect situation you will have elections that are semi free and fair and the Maoists will reject the results.

On the other hand, the Maoists will not want to be in a position where

they are singled out for the deferral of the polls. Hence, they will participate in the polls but they will want to dictate the terms and the conditions of what they define as free and fair elections. In a free and fair election, the Maoists know they stand no chance of winning. Even Prachanda has been forced to negate an agreement with the UML to ensure his victory from Kathmandu where the UML have a strong base.

If the Maoists lose these elections, their revolution and of course the leadership will be in utter crisis. To secure a majority in the forthcoming elections, the Maoists would have to capture booths and hold farcical polls but then other political parties will either boycott or not agree to the results of such polls. In any event, the Maoists want to capture power - they have to or they face a crisis, both internal and external in nature. Prachanda and his comrades very well know that time is against them, and the comrades believe the present uncertainty provides them

the only realistic opportunity to capture state power.

However, it is critical to understand what actually motivates the political decisions taken by the Maoists. Dr. Bhattarai is fundamentally correct when he opines the Maoists will change the course of the economy when the Maoists come to power. The Maoists aim not just to change the structural functions of the economy but they also envisage a classless society - free from social, cultural and religious assertions. For the Maoists to be in a position to implement such rigid and radical ideology, a majority is a precondition. Fortunately, that is not possible.

Similarly, the Maoists have sold lofty dreams to their cadres by promising to implement their radical brand of communism. Therefore, if the Maoists lose these elections, not only will they face desertions internally, the Maoists would also face the possible threat of external isolation.

The crisis the Maoists would

endure if they lose the elections is of a far greater magnitude than that is understood by the larger populace. The YCL has an annual budget of Rs 1 billion as reported by their chairman. To sustain such an enormous organisation; great resources are required. A vast majority of the resources generated by the Maoists' for the elections has been collected through illegitimate means such as abduction, intimidation and coercion.

Concurrently, the Maoists are also guilty of orchestrating some the worst crimes that often resulted in unimaginable human rights abuses. The people in general are buoyed by the prospect of the polls and have given in into the intimidation of the Maoists for the sake of peace and democracy. However, the Maoists know that the longer they remain a part of the status quo their chances of getting exposed for who they actually stand for is higher. Hence, they need to capture power to avoid further embarrassing exposures. ■

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Ellen Coon

Born in Kathmandu in 1927, **Kesar Lal Shrestha** is one of Nepal's most prolific writers, with over 100 articles and three dozen books to his name. His works include original poetry and stories; collections of the rich oral literature of this country; and English translations of works written in Newari and Nepali. His contribution to the literature of Nepal has been great. Even so, he is a gentle person, unassuming and modest about his accomplishments. He likes to answer questions by telling a story, and can come up with a tale to fit any situation. **Ellen Coon** interviewed him recently for newsfront:

Tell us about your latest books.

There is *Legends of the Kathmandu Valley*, published by Nepal Bhasa Academy. This may be my last book about the legends of the valley. And then, my latest book is a slim book of poems, *The God of Compassion*. I have been writing on and off about Buddhist themes, very simple things like the Buddha meeting an old man, seeing a dead man, and then the night his son was born. And about my visits to Lumbini and Kushinagar – what those places mean to me personally. As another writer has said, I feel lucky to have been born in the same part of the world where Lord Buddha was born so many centuries ago.

How did you become a writer?

For as long as I can remember I wanted to write. I wrote my first story when I was 18. It was published in an Indian magazine called *Pushpa*, in the December 1945 issue. I tried to write what an Indian reader would expect, under the pen name Ashok Pal. I published about a dozen stories back then. My greatest achievement at that time was to write an article about Shivaratri that got published in the *Statesman*, in Calcutta. I didn't use my pen name that time.

How did you start publishing folktales and legends?

I have always looked around me for things to write about. I am curious about everything. I wrote some Newari stories – ones that in those days, every little boy and girl had heard, like *Dhuncholechaa* – sort of our Cinderella. I showed the stories to an American friend, and he thought that they should be published. So I got

a loan for 400 rupees, and went down to Nagpur and got 500 copies printed on Nepali paper. That was in 1961. The book was called *Lore and Legends of Nepal*, and it is still in print.

You have published many books of folktales, but not just Newari stories. You have trekked all over Nepal collecting stories.

I have always liked three things: writing, trekking and travelling, and photography, when I could afford it. I have always felt at home in lonesome places, in the wild, with nature. As soon as I am inside the borders of Nepal, I feel comfortable, whether in the Tarai or in the mountains.

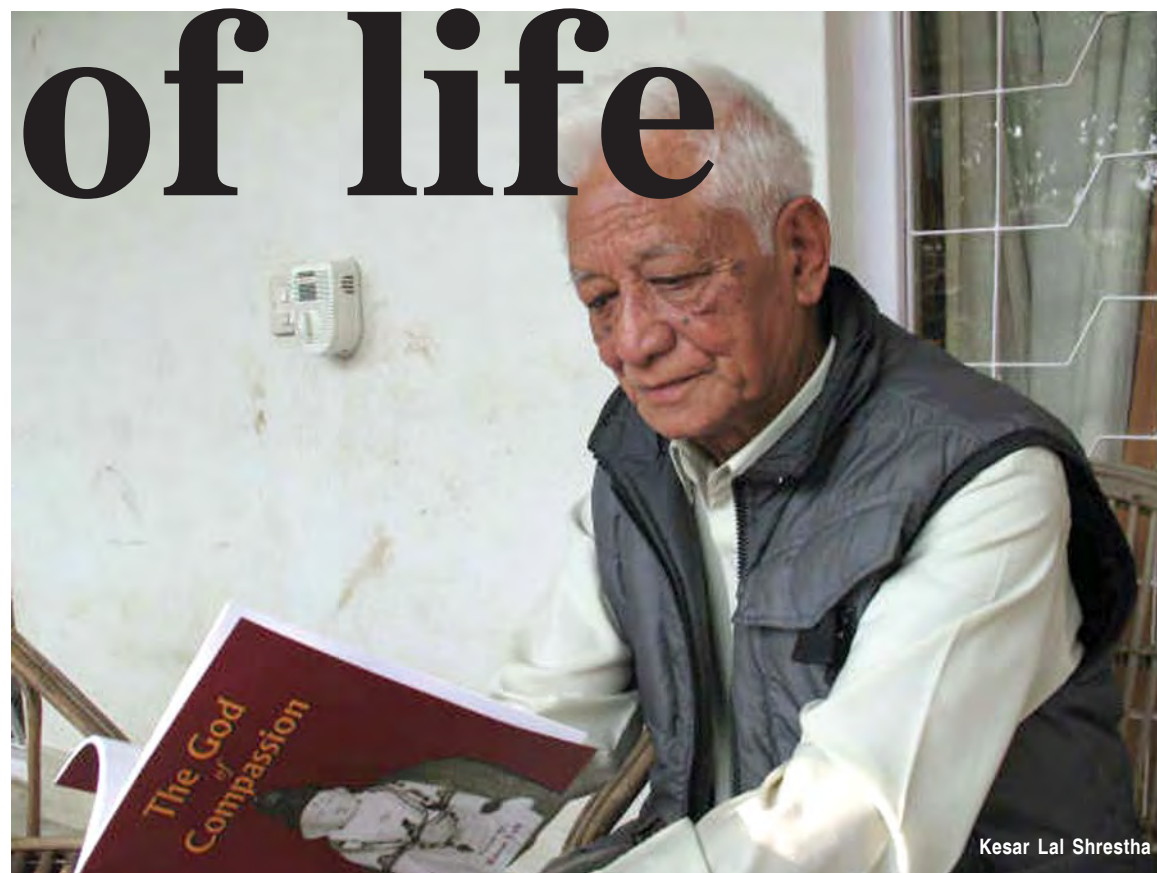
In those days, almost everybody knew a story or two, but now people don't hear those stories anymore. So I decided to collect as many stories as I can. Wherever I went, I would ask people to tell me a story from their own ethnic background. I found it worked best if I told a story first. I would tell them a Newari story, or a Japanese story, or a story from Grimm's Fairy Tales – and then ask them for a story in return. I have also translated some stories I found in writing. I'm about to bring out a book of Rai-Kirati Limbu folktales, based on a book published by Shiva Kumar Shrestha from Dhankuta College.

Your translation into English of Chittadar Hridaya's Letters of a Lhasa Merchant to his Wife is one of my favorite books. Was the book a part of the Newari literary movement?

Chittadar Hridaya was a real initiator of that movement. He was a Tuladhar, who took Hridaya as his pen name – it means heart in Sanskrit. He was a real writer; he wrote all the time, it was his whole life, and because of that, he was jailed for six years.

Why? Who jailed him?

Juddha Shumsher jailed him in the forties. He was singled out as a writer in Newari. It was illegal to write in Newari; one man who wrote in Newari was hanged, and all his writing was destroyed. But Hridaya was not the only one put in jail, there were many others working for political freedom, for industrialisation and so on. The



Kesar Lal Shrestha

rulers didn't want anything innovative. Juddha Shumsher called a dozen or so people together once and said, it is not good to imitate what the Indians have done. Let us do what we have done according to tradition. You merchants sell things, you Brahmins stick to your preaching – and so forth. But time didn't wait for him.

There's a wonderful picture in that book of you leaning out of a window with Hridaya.

That photo was taken by Irving Penn, the famous *Vogue Magazine* photographer. He came to Nepal in May of 1967. Elizabeth Hawley asked me if I could spare a month to assist him here, and it turned out to be one of the happiest periods of my whole working life. He was such a dedicated artist. He had a little portable studio made of canvas that could be set up in half an hour. His wife, who was a model and I, would walk around the streets looking for interesting people to photograph, and if they agreed, we would bring them to where Penn had the studio set up.

He also set it up on the banks of the Manohara, Patan, Jamal – in various places. One day, he saw Chittadar Hridaya walking in the street and said, oh, this looks like a wonderful man, let's take a photograph. Because I knew him personally, Hridaya said yes. There was a carved wooden window above us, very ornate, and I asked the house owner if we could use the window for a photograph. He said yes, so Hridaya and I went upstairs, and Irving Penn took a photograph of us looking out of the window together. I treasure that photograph.

You grew up in Masangalli, near Asan. Was it an interesting place?

For me the most interesting place in the area was the *Bangsa Chen*, the old Customs House. I still don't know how the paying of the customs duty on Tibet trade worked, but it was there. The house belonged to a Kansakar family who had been in Tibet for many years. Lots of Tibetans from Kyirong and Kuti would come for two or three months in the winter time and camp out in the courtyard, so I knew about Tibet.

Is there a Newar Buddhism that is distinct and special?

What I think is that for 2500 Buddhism has been a pacifist religion, of compassion and wisdom, and they have been trying to protect themselves as best they can. Newar Buddhism developed into a kind of armor designed to protect Buddhism's soft and simple essential core. That explains the emphasis on secrecy, and how the priests became more Brahmin than the Brahmins. It became quite something else. It is not what it used to be; they are just trying to survive.

How is it that someone educated before 1945 knows such good English?

Schooling in those days was very rare. My father was my teacher, and he taught me to read in English. I read constantly. But I never went to school.

Who were the other members of the Newar literary movement?

Chittadar Hridaya had a guru called Jog Bir Singh Kansakar. He was a Tuladhar who had a cloth shop in Kel Tol, a poet who wrote in Newari, and he had literary friends. One of the friends was Siddhidas Amatya. He printed a book of verses on how to live a virtuous life, in Newari, but because he was very poor he was only able to get that one book printed. You did the bulk of your writing while holding down full time jobs. You worked with both BP and MP Koirala, and then with the US Mission to Nepal.

I worked first for BP Koirala in 1951-52, as a typist. Then, when he resigned, I went to work for his brother, MP Koirala, who became Prime Minister. After he was not the PM anymore, I went back to my old job that was always open to me, working in a friend's drugstore. Then when MP became PM again, I worked for him again.

On the last day that MP Koirala was in office, he was in a meeting of what was called the Defense Committee in Singha Darbar. Keshar Shumsher was the Defense Minister, and there were a couple of Foreign Ministers. I was at the residence across the bridge. A man came galloping on horseback with a letter from the palace. It was marked Very Urgent

and Top Secret. So I took the letter and got a driver to take me in a jeep to Singha Darbar. The ADC gave the PM the letter, and he immediately came out. I didn't realise what had happened until he told the driver not to uncover the flag on the car. Then I realised that from that moment he was not the PM any longer. That was the first period of democracy.

Was it then that you began working for the US Mission?

After that, I had nothing to do for a couple of days. By chance, I met a friend who was working at USAID. I met him at Tribhuvan's statue. He said, why not try USAID? So I went back to MP Koirala, and told him about it, and then and there I typed out a letter of recommendation to Paul Rose, and MP signed it. I went to Rabi Bhawan the next morning, and within a few minutes I was hired. I was supposed to come to work the next day, but King Tribhuvan passed away that very day, so the office was closed for 13 days. I reported to work the 14th day. I went over to the US Embassy once it was established in 1960, and stayed on until my retirement in 1985.

Are you going to do more translations? What are your next projects?

I am interested in modern Newar short stories, and so far have translated about fifty of them. And I have published one book about the Newar merchants in Lhasa, but there is a lot of material for another book about Newars and their relationship with Tibet. Also, I'd like to publish a book about my treks and travels.

Do you have any advice for young writers?

You have to love life – both your own life and of those around you. Be interested in people, whoever they are. Don't get caught up in big ideas, but focus observantly on the little things around you. And don't waste time. Once there was a boy drowning, and a man passing by jumped in and saved him. The boy thanked the man, and the man asked, what for? For saving my life, the boy replied. The man said, then make sure that your life is worth saving. ■



■ Suvechha Adhikari

Make space for younger, committed, capable leaders

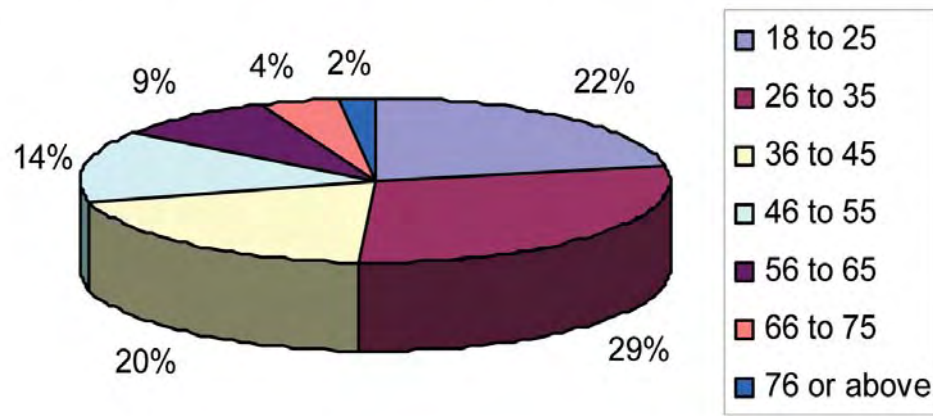
Currently none of the candidates nominated by the parties for the election can claim to represent the interests, values and aspirations of the young people.

Nepali people will not see any difference in forthcoming elections with the 'old faces and old leaders' being nominated in both the direct and closed list for proportional represented based election. Considering the current list of dysfunctional candidates that the parties have prepared, Nepal politics may once again fail to live up to the expectations, aspirations and dreams of many Nepalis, especially of the young people.

In analysing the process of conflict transformation of Northern Ireland and South Africa Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (1999) said that, "Conflict is directly relational to the transformation of the actors involved. And such transformations may take the form of 'a change of character, a change of leadership, a change in the constituency of the leader or adoption of its goals, values, or beliefs."

The hierarchical and traditional structures and processes of political party leadership has once again resisted change; change not only of leadership but of ideas and ideologies that are contemporary in outlook. It has deterred the role of young political leaders who played an important role in every democratic struggle, in bringing social and political change either by participating in the democratic struggle directly or indirectly. The political parties' nomination has signified that the 'old age' leadership is still fighting against young catalysts of their own party structures. Once again they youth leaders became dictated and misused by the party

Constituent Assembly Election 2008: Voter Distribution



Source: National Election Commission

leadership and are left out from giving any meaningful role or position.

Even the mainstream parties like Nepali Congress and CPN-UML are neglecting the sentiments of the youth, which consist more than 50% of nation total population (Nepal Population Census, 2001) and 50% of parties vote bank filed nomination of only handful of young candidates. This has slashed the enthusiasm of young Nepalis and increased apathy and cynicism among many young voters. Mere jargons for good governance, end to corruption, hunger, lawlessness, power cuts, water shortage, unemployment, bad roads will not

attract young voters.

Currently none of the candidates nominated by the parties for the election can claim to represent the interests, values and aspirations of the young people. All around the world political players have realised the strength of youth and brought young new faces in the government and in the parties to meet the challenges of 21st century. Gordon Brown in Britain slashed the average age of the Cabinet to under 50, by appointing young people in his cabinet and appointing the youngest foreign secretary in 30 years in the worlds' biggest government.

China transferred leadership roles to the younger next generation and brought in younger people. The exit polls of Super Tuesday in America also showed that in almost every state, youth voter turnout increased significantly from 2000 and 2004; three millions voters under the age of 30 were seen flooding in the polls. The reason for these young American being active in the voting process was the hope and urgency to change things and they saw the opportunity to effect change in the spirit of fresh and young candidate like Barack Obama, with whom they can identify with.

The aim of any election is to see change in the leadership. Nepal needs to respond to the reform needed in the political, legal, social, educational and health sectors. There is a need for a new crop of politicians who are different from their older counterparts; those who are technocratic, more global in outlook, more comfortable with technology, more idealistic and yet less ideological and less invested in old debates.

The change today is desired by all the sections is possible only through the overhaul in terms of leadership; leadership which wants to understand and do something for the country, for themselves and for the future generation. There is still a chance for the mainstream political parties to regain their credibility among the young voters by bringing in younger faces with more commitment, clearer vision and better capabilities. ■

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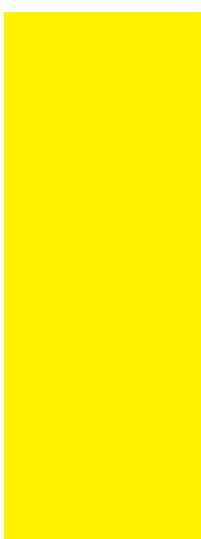
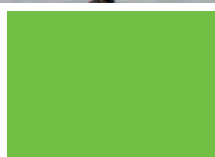
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Will Clinton-Obama fight injure Dems?

WASHINGTON —

Let Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama rip each other apart. It's really no problem for the Democratic Party, veteran California Democratic strategist Bob Mulholland said.

"This is not a debate about ideology or war," he said. "This is about which one we Democrats love the most."

That's the line most Democratic activists are using these days as they watch the two presidential hopefuls engage in an increasingly bitter battle for the nomination, a war that, at least theoretically, threatens to open wounds that could be tough to heal.

"This could be a serious problem," said Shirley Anne Warshaw, a presidential scholar at Gettysburg College.

The past offers some worrisome lessons. In 1980, President Carter and

Massachusetts Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy fought up to and during the convention, and Carter never had the enthusiastic support of his party that fall. He lost.

Twelve years later, conservative commentator Pat Buchanan's supporters remained wary of President George H.W. Bush, and analysts think that a lot of them stayed home rather than vote for the man who'd broken his "read my lips, no new taxes" pledge. He lost, too.

Concerns are starting to grow that this year's Clinton-Obama contest could fracture the Democratic Party. African-American turnout has exploded, and Obama usually rolls up 8 or 9 to 1 ratios among black voters. He also does well among upper-income voters of all races.

But if he loses the nomina-



tion - particularly if the decision turns on some insider maneuver such as last-minute superdelegate switches or a convention credentials committee ruling on disputed Florida and Michigan delegates - will they back Clinton in the fall?

And would Clinton backers, notably the older women who've routinely given her 2 to 1 majorities in primaries, come

out for Obama?

Most experts give a qualified yes to both those questions.

"Everyone knows that winning the presidency is the ultimate goal," said Leo Lalonde, a veteran Michigan Democratic activist.

Warshaw said the key would be the loser's attitude. If that person quickly and eagerly embraces the winner, supporters should be quick to follow.

Being lukewarm or waiting, though, could be costly. In 1968, Democrats split bitterly and sometimes violently over the Vietnam War, and backers of antiwar candidates Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy had a hard time forgiving Vice President Hubert Humphrey, the nominee, who lost in November.

McCarthy didn't formally endorse Humphrey until October. Humphrey, who was far behind in the polls, began a comeback as dissident Democrats grudgingly gave him support. But he fell short, losing the popular vote to Richard Nixon, 43.4 percent to 42.7 percent. Third-party candidate George Wallace claimed the rest.

But there's a big difference between 2008 and 1968, argued David Barker, an associate professor of political

science at the University of Pittsburgh.

Both candidates largely agree on how to tackle major issues, notably the Iraq war. As a result, "the odds will still be with a Democratic win," Barker said.

The problem for the eventual nominee could come down to the most basic of motivations: whether voters like the candidate enough to vote for him or her.

Ohio exit polls made it clear that many Obama supporters would be less than happy if Clinton wins, and vice versa.

"Is there going to be enthusiasm for Hillary Clinton in the black community? No," said David Bositis, a senior research associate at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, which researches black voting trends.

(Bradenton Herald)

'Musharraf trying to sabotage people's mandate'

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif mounted another attack on President Musharraf, alleging that the Presidency had been converted into a centre of intrigues to sabotage the mandate of the parties that won the February 18 elections trouncing the PML-Q.

In an interview, he alleged the president had become partisan and leaders of the PML-Q were meeting him everyday, which was regrettable.

Sharif said parties winning the polls had not been transferred power and the caretaker government was increasing the prices of various commodities without any authority.

He said his party would disband the National Security Council, an institution set up through an enactment to institutionalise army's role in politics. The PML-N leader said the army should have no role to play in governance and his party would strike down the NSC to achieve the target.



(Khaleej Times)

Special Olympic trains in China



Workers labor on the interior of the 'Bird's Nest' National Stadium in Beijing, Thursday, March 6, 2008.

Special trains are to run between Beijing and co-host Olympics cities — including Hong Kong, Qingdao and Tianjin — for the convenience of athletes and spectators, a Chinese legislator said Friday. Luo Jinbao, who is also deputy director of the Beijing railway administration, made the remarks on the sidelines of the annual session of the National People's Congress, the top legislature. Earlier, the government of Qingdao, where the sailing events will be held, said that

commuter buses would run between the Qingdao railway station and Olympic venues during the Games. The 2008 Olympic Games run from Aug. 8 to 24 and Beijing is expected to have 500,000 to 550,000 overseas visitors during the period. China has geared up transport preparations for the Games with Beijing airport's new

Terminal 3, a major expansion project, getting its first commercial flight last week. The country will give the world a unique, well-run Olympic Games, Premier Wen Jiabao said on Wednesday at the opening of the NPC session. The 2008 Olympics and Paralympics are of great importance in promoting China's economic and social development and increasing friendship and cooperation between Chinese and people in other countries, Wen said.

(Xinhua)

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Joint Statement by the United Nations Country Team in Nepal on the occasion of International Women's Day

In recognition of the theme for this year — "Investing in Women and Girls" and on the occasion of International Women's Day, the United Nations agencies working in Nepal would like to reiterate the achievements that have been made and the gaps that remain in financing women's empowerment.

Over the last few decades, agreements at major UN conferences and meetings — including the Beijing Platform for Action, Monterrey Consensus and the 2005 World Summit Outcome — have urged international and regional organizations, including governments, to provide sufficient resources for programmes that support women's empowerment as a priority for economic development.

CEDAW and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 have called for investment in women, increased women's participation at all decision making levels, protection of women for sustainable development and peace building. As a signatory of these documents, the Government of Nepal has expressed its commitment to improve the status of women.

In the words of the UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, "Achieving gender equality and empowering women is a goal in itself. It is also a condition for building healthier, better educated, more peaceful and more prosperous societies. When women are fully empowered and engaged, all of society benefits. Only in this way can we successfully take on the enormous challenges confronting our world — from conflict resolution and peacebuilding to fighting AIDS and reaching all the other Millennium Development Goals".

Statistics on women in Nepal reveal that women account for only 12.5 per cent of civil service employees and 17.6 per cent in the interim Parliament; 42 per cent of Nepali women are literate compared to 65 per cent of men. There still exists a significant number of laws and provisions that are discriminatory against women, and violence against women is still prevalent which is a violation of human rights.

In Nepal, Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR) has reduced from 539 to 281. However, while IMR will reach the MDG goals MMR is far from reaching the MDG of 134. One in every three person living with HIV is a woman. Research shows that education increases the ability of women and girls to protect themselves against HIV as they become more knowledgeable about the use of health facilities, family planning methods and the health of their children. Understanding this, the Government of Nepal, with support of United Nations, is committed to ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, have good quality primary education as stated in the Millennium Development Goals.

Nepal has launched gender-responsive budgeting initiatives to ensure adequate resource allocation for programmes aimed at enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Ministries and departments focusing on progress of women need to play a vital role in public finance management, including planning for national budgets. Partnership with women's organizations, which have extensive grassroots experience, can enrich the design and development of such policies and strategies.

Prevailing social norms limit women's access to information, result in a high work-burden and restricted mobility. Women's insufficient access to credit, land, health care and training in new technologies, fewer educational and employment opportunities than men, and marginalization in decision-making not only affect their lives and the lives of their families, but also are detrimental to human capital development and labour force participation. For effective poverty reduction, families, communities and the state, must increasingly invest in women's health and education, enabling them to live more productive lives and participate fully in society and its development processes, including the peace process. Therefore, the upcoming Constituent Assembly election is a great opportunity in the direction to address the gender gap to improve the lives of women for the benefit of Nepalese society.

The United Nations in Nepal strongly appeal to the government, financial institutions, banks, bilateral development agencies, and regional and international bodies to incorporate gender perspectives and women's voices into all economic policymaking.

Lucille Bulduc

What Dr. Bhattarai's favorite philosopher, Karl Marx, described as the 'feudal mode of production' is fading away in the thin air of the Himalayan foothills. Nepal is racing, in the space of decades, from the medieval to the modern world. But in that race one element has been forgotten, and, as the country heads to elections on April 10, it will cripple the country, unless addressed.

The country has its flawed Magna Carta, in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; we have an out-of-touch King, John Bikram Shah Dev. Fast forward to the ineffectual government of self-appointed aristocrats, with Congress as the House of Lords, complete with blood feuds. Prime Minister Koirala, living on imported oxygen and borrowed time, is King George III, wondering what happened to his empire.

We have our peasants' revolt. Quickly we moved from the middle ages and arrived in 1917 Saint Petersburg. Nepal is counterpoint to the United States, countries born within a decade of each other. Where the Americans distilled the values of 19th century Britain, of the individual and the citizen, Nepal adopted the symbols and rituals. Where America evolved politically, Nepal devolved: instead of competitive elections, hereditary prime ministers.

But Nepal's democrats and revolutionaries, with their affection for the form over the substance of western ideas, ignored one element that cannot be faked. They forgot the robes of democracy are not only elections, but citizens: people with a sense of their rights and obligations who believe that they own their government. Without them it makes no difference whether the government calls itself royal, democratic, communist: they will always be barons, the people always serfs.

Creating citizens is a political project. Through human history few people embraced it. Most



Bhaskor Ojha

Fast forward without clear vision

...Robes of democracy are not only elections, but citizens: people with a sense of their rights and obligations who believe that they own their government.

attempts went down a slow and often bumpy road, people experimented with greater rights, balanced them against their obligations to each other, to the family, the state. But every country that tried to skip this step suffered for the mistake. The Soviet Union created an empire of healthy, educated humans who lacked the habits of criticism and skepticism.

So this past week Russia, in democratic costume, acted out the same old feudal play, as

Czar Putin passed the scepter to his heir, with an election as a coronation ceremony. And in Nepal the subjects of the state prepare to do as they are told, in elections that may or may not happen a month from now.

Just as wars used to be fought over the often-imaginary need for new territory, Nepal's parties today battle over dead ideologies. But the people doing the fighting do not have a say. And they won't get one, not with foreign governments

applauding today's feudal lords as heroes of democracy and donor money ties up the most obscene examples of neglect, allowing the leaders in Kathmandu to play their games unhindered.

Nepal will not step out of the looking glass and become a nascent modern state until at least one party embraces the idea of citizenship as the goal of development, not a result of it. New Nepal will not be created from words, donor money, or kilometers of asphalt. Education does not mean building concrete huts, printing textbooks, or hiring party drones to work as teachers. It requires a leader or a party driven to change the people of Nepal, not by building donor-funded hospitals or Indian-subsidised dams, nor by blowing them up, but by changing the way the people think, and giving them the intellectual tools to expect more.

If the state cannot teach people to read and write, that political party must. If the state cannot teach people critical thinking; that party must help. Well-educated people in Kathmandu talk about feudalism in coffee shops, but act as though people in bondage will somehow free themselves. Today's political parties pretend the people have freed themselves already, so their easily guided cadres can be passed off as citizens' armies.

An educated citizenry can be created in five years, and every free and wealthy country in the world stands as testimony to the need, and to the benefits, of swift action. But first Nepal's rulers must accept this goal as their driving purpose: to stop talking about what the people want and start offering them something real, in the form of an education in critical thinking.

Quotas, deals among rich men, no matter what family, clan, or caste they are from, will not make a prosperous federal republic. Only a state of citizens can do that, and citizens are made, not born. There is no more time for excuses, or study missions, or five year plans: this is a country waiting for the liberation of its minds. Once that begins, everything becomes possible. Until that begins, nothing is worth trying.

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Buddhism is not Nastik March Hare Festival

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

non – dual. This is a complex topic we shall deal with later.



MARSHLAND FLOWERS

We do not need a being of any kind to create gravity. It is the law of nature that whenever there is some mass there is gravity. This is what Niyam means in Buddhism. Every-

Let it be said that whereas most other religious systems are theistic (Taoism being the only exception). Buddhism is non – theistic. Non – theistic does not mean here not believing in gods and goddesses and other realms of existence where they exist. That would be atheistic. Non – theistic here means, not believing in a single creator or any creator as such for that matter. In Sanskrit, we use the word Unishwarvadin. Iswhar meaning the creator, God.

However, Buddhism is not 'Nastik'/non-believer as some mislead and unread Hindus would like to believe. Astik comes from the word 'Asta' which means belief. So Astik would mean 'believer' as opposed to 'Nastik' which would mean 'non – believer'. While Buddhism does not accept the Vedas or any other scriptures and whatever comes within their paradigm, it does believe that man can be free from suffering and thus attain Mokchhya or Mukti. It does believe in karma and the cycle of existence; it does believe that man can attain enlightenment. Thus it is an 'Astik' system. In a sense, all systems believe in their own tenets and thus are 'Astik'.

But Buddhism is a paradigm shift from all other theistic systems, be they monotheistic or polytheistic. With this background now let us take up what the Abhidharma has to say about the psi phenomena. (To be continued)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)

thing arises through causes and conditions; including those causes and conditions themselves arise through other causes and conditions. Because of this there can be no beginning. Therefore there can be no creation 'in the beginning'. About this there are no two minds within any form of Buddhism. Any system that believes in a beginning (and thus a creator) cannot subscribe to the principle that all things arise from causes and conditions. And without that, that system of thought does not and cannot fall within the paradigm of Buddhism.

Many people get confused because many systems of meditation also use the word non-dual like Buddhism and thus come to the conclusion that the final point 'non – dual' is the same. But this is merely a confusion that arose due to the use of similar words. Actually the Sanskrit words used in Buddhism is Advaya while in monotheistic system is Advaita (Hinduism to be more specific); but when translated into English both are called

An annual island-wide celebration of words and music.

■ Yuyutsu RD Sharma



The arrival at Canada's New Found Land is reminiscent of Nepal in every possible way - the landscape, the strategic position of the Canadian island and the gusto of the people here at the Annual March Hare festival. The March Hare is Atlantic Canada's largest poetry festival. It began as an evening of poetry and entertainment in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador, and has evolved into an annual island-wide celebration of words and music.

Associated with Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, it takes place in March of each year. It invited poets, authors, musicians and storytellers, featuring in recent years Michael Ondaatje, Alistair MacLeod, Paul Durcan, Lorna Crozier, Susan Musgrave, Stephen Reid, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Wayne Johnston, Stan Dragland, Ron Hynes, and others. The festival was made possible in the past with the collective efforts of Al Pittman, John Steffler, Randall Maggs, Rex Brown, Adrian Fowler, David "Smoky" Elliott, Des Walsh, Clyde Rose, Nick Avis, and Pamela Morgan.

St. Joan's where the festival began yesterday had all the wonderful elements and memories of the past. Soon I realise how New Found Land had remained isolated like Nepal from the rest of the world and displays a strong cultural identity and unparallel passion for music and poetry.

Newfoundland and Labrador is the tenth

and latest Canadian Province to join the Confederation. A cursory look in any encyclopedia will show how Newfoundland has a number of historical firsts. The oldest known settlement anywhere in The Americas built by Europeans is located at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland. It was founded around 1000 A.D. by Leif Ericson's Vikings. Remnants and artifacts of the occupation can still be seen at L'Anse aux Meadows, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The island was inhabited by the Beothuks and later the Mi'kmaq.

John Cabot became the first European since the Vikings to discover Newfoundland landing at Cape Bonavista on June 24, 1497. On, 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert formally claimed Newfoundland as England's first overseas colony under Royal Prerogative of Queen Elizabeth I.

As I am working on my Helumbu poems, a drive from St. John's to Gander tells me how alarmingly similar the alpine landscape here is to the Himalayan high hills with juniper, fir, and frozen lakes.

The visit to the Canadian island also exemplifies the forging of international friendship made possible with the modern-day travels and technological revolution of cyber space. Now I am reading here as guest poet and there's a possibility of Canadian poetry coming to the Himalayan kingdom in Nepali translation.

(writer@yuyutsu.de)

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फरक प्रसंगहरू बिल्कुलै नौलो अनि रोचक प्रयोग

सूचना र मनोरंजनका लागि

फरक विश्व

... मात्र सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनमा

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बुधवार बिहान ८:३० बजे
बिहीवार दिउँसो २:३० बजे
र शनिवार साँझ ६:३० बजे

Stv
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समाचारका बिबरन नेपालको सौरभ

तपाईंको मनमा उठेका प्रश्नहरूको उत्तर खोज्ने प्रयास

जनसरोकारका विषयमा सगरमाथा टेलिभिजनको खबरदारी

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SPA has agreed for autonomous Madhesh.

POLITICAL vocabulary

■ Roop Joshi

"All men are enemies. All animals are comrades." - George Orwell, Animal Farm
A discerning political analyst friend, P.S. Kunwar, recently suggested to me that there is a lot of confusion in political discussions in Nepal these days due to the unfortunate fact that the same words have different meanings for democrats and communists. Right off, this statement implies that a communist is not a democrat.

In fact, our communists consider Jana Andolan II as only a 'democratic revolution' which is to be followed by the real revolution on 10th April 2008 when the CPI-M will win and transform the country into its own image. Consequently, the term 'Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal,' is being bandied about so haphazardly, already has a built-in contradiction since this term has been endorsed by the communists in the SPA.

'Democracy,' to democrats, stands for a

pluralistic form of governance where all views have the chance to be endorsed or rejected through elections by the majority and, once accepted or rejected, is binding to all. To communists, democracy is a tactical move leading to a form of governance whereby a communist party, which is supposed to represent the voice of the 'people's' rules.

Hence we have the tiresome repetitions by the CPN-M and its leaders on how they are fighting for the 'people,' while the people seem unaware of this uncalled for championing on their behalf. This is inevitable since, to communists, people are the recipients of the party's benevolence who need to be directed and taught. Democrats consider people as the ultimate deciders of the direction of the State.

The 'State,' to democrats, is a permanent framework that governs society, and the parties which have won popular approval can steer the state for a limited time. It is an instrument of the party for communists. If the state does not follow party lines then parallel institutions will be

We have the tiresome repetitions by the CPN-M and its leaders on how they are fighting for the 'people,' while the people seem unaware of this uncalled for championing on their behalf.

created. We in Nepal are very familiar with this parallelism. There is a dichotomy even on the definition of 'political parties.' Is it a vehicle to formulate and articulate views or, as the communists would have it, a vehicle to usurp and maintain power?

The CA elections are only about a month away. Democrats consider 'elections' a periodic impartial event. For communists, it is an event which endorses the rule of the Communist Party. That is why we have these events - the proclamation that 200 YCL cadres will be present at each voting booth; the statement by a top Maoist leader that should the CPI-M not win the election it will not be an election; and the numerous instances of YCL ruffians employing scare tactics to prevent candidates from rival parties from campaigning.

It should also be increasingly apparent that parliamentary democracy is anathema to communists. 'parliament,' to democrats, is an effective arm of governance providing checks and balance to the executive. Communists consider parliament an instrument to rubber-stamp the activities of the executive.

Equality to democrats is equality of opportunity while, to communists, it is equality of outcomes. How the outcomes are achieved is up to the wisdom of the Communist Party, with all ends justifying the means. Simplistic definitions mired in outdated doctrines are also the monopoly of the communists. For them, underdevelopment is caused by the oppression

by the feudal classes. Democrats see underdevelopment as being caused by a myriad of socio-political, economic, domestic as well as international factors.

The SPA has just agreed in principle to the autonomy of Madhesh, to be endorsed by the CA. It will be interesting to see what happens, since the communists view 'autonomy' as the principle of de jure federalism with de facto centralisation through the Communist Party, while to democrats, autonomy is the principle of decisions being most effective if they are taken closer to the ground. Again, social harmony, to democrats, means that no group or segment of the population is left unfairly behind. To communists, it is the elimination (physically in most cases) of all 'anti-people' elements.

'Development' has largely been ignored in Nepal while a divided government is preoccupied jockeying for power. Even here, democrats consider that the establishment of a framework and conditions for all to prosper leads to development. Communists want to achieve development by allocating resources as per political needs. Finally, and most strikingly, 'history,' to democrats, is facts from the past while to communists it is interpretation for the future. Of course, the interpretation is the purview of the communist leadership.

So we stumble on with two groups speaking two different languages yet telling us Nepalis that they are united. The question is for how long are we going to be fooled? ■

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