

---

## Book Review

Uddhab P. Pyakurel, *Maoist Movement in Nepal: A Sociological Perspective*, New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2007, p. 228, Price Irs.450

Most researches that are carried out on movements generally adhere to the tradition of analyzing them from a political perspective. Such researches often miss the social roots as the origins of the movements. But the book, *Maoist Movement in Nepal: A Sociological Perspective*, is distinct as the author defines the movement in a broad social perspective. The book examines the state-sponsored discriminatory social practices prevalent in Nepalese society since time immemorial. It also claims that the reason behind the emergence of the Maoist movement is the long historical process of Nepalization through Hinduization. According to the author, the process of Hinduization, on the one hand, has overlooked the spirit of the people of other religions, and it has created dissatisfaction within the Hindu per se due to its oppressive nature to the lower castes, ethnic groups and female on the other. The author has tried to explicate how Hinduism created caste, ethnic and gender-related inequalities and oppressions in Nepalese society, thus helping emerge the Maoist movement. The book consists of four chapters with many sub-chapters.

Chapter I is an introductory chapter in which the author attempts to depict an exacerbating crisis that Nepalese society witnessed following the Maoist insurgency. It left no single part of the nation untouched and unaffected. Since then, extortion, killings, disappearances, abduction, rape, looting, etc, became the regular news for Nepalese people. Thousands of people died without any genuine reason. Besides, a large number of people were compelled to migrate as their lives were threatened by the unwanted clashes between the rebels and the security men. Many development infrastructures, including factories and industries, were destroyed. The nation witnessed the arrival of tourists decreasing to an unprecedented level. Above all, development activities were severely paralyzed along with the increase of security expenditure.

In the later part of this chapter, the author tries to justify the Maoist insurgency as a social movement on the basis of their agenda, collective

endeavor and orientation towards change. From the beginning, the Maoists have been repeatedly and consistently raising the agenda of discrimination and inequality in the society (24). Indeed, most issues raised by the Maoists are the people's agendas as they are related to nationality, democracy and livelihood. It is also true that the Maoists got tremendous support from the mass and were able to mobilize people nation-wide. As far as change is concerned, the Maoists, from the very beginning, have been insisting on protection of social privileges of Nepalese people via complete structural reforms. Their orientation rests on ushering in the "Rule of People" ending all types of social and cultural injustices.

Chapter II mainly deals with the process of Hinduization and Nepalization in Nepal. The focus of this chapter is to explicate how the country was Hinduized in different historical periods and how the seeds of conflict were sown at a similar pace. This is one of the major chapters of this book. The twin process of Hinduization and Nepalization got accelerated after the Nepali state incorporated all the people speaking different languages, practicing different religions, culture and tradition into one political, social and cultural system (27). The Hindu was made state religion along with Nepali as official language. In the pre-unification period during the *Gopala* (cow herders) and *Mahispala* (buffalo herders) rules, the king or the ruler was appointed through elections. During the *Kirata* and early *Lichchhavi* periods, there was no sign of hierarchy of people. It was the *Lichchhavi* rulers who for the first time in the Nepalese history introduced Hinduism in the state system. They were the Hindus and promoted the Hindu religion by constructing many temples. They made *Sanskrit* as an official language and literary language of Nepal and promoted it in the field of architecture and sculpture too. When the *Mallas* superseded the *Lichchhavi* dynasty, they made every attempt to promote Hinduism. With the help of *Brahmin* priests, the *Malla* rulers introduced *Varna* system in Nepali society and stratified people on the basis of caste structures. For the *Mallas*, enforcement of caste hierarchy was supposed to instigate social cum political stability. They expected lower caste groups and non-Hindu communities to gradually adopt the rituals and ideology of high caste Hindus. Further, Jayasthiti Malla started promoting social reform activities on the threshold of Hindu doctrines.

In the later part of the eighteenth century, Prithvi Narayan Shah, King of Gorkha, began to unite fragmented states into a complete sovereign state. Since the rulers of the petty states were mostly Hindus, social ties such as marriage and *miteri* helped the unification process along with the use of shrewdness and strategy by the king. For the author, the king was a true epitome of split personality. Although he advocated equally in favor of all ethnic groups, he failed to frame his words into actions. He did include 6 *thars* including two ethnic groups in his consultative body. But after the unification in 11768, he reduced 6 *thars* into 4 *thars* excluding two *thars* i.e., *Gurung* and *Magar*, notwithstanding his claim to himself as "the king of *Magars*". Moreover, Shah kings' activities of providing fertile land to *Guthi* land, recruiting *Kshetriyas* as rulers, regarding *Brahmins* as astrologers, lawgivers, and diplomatic emissaries, condoning *Brahmins* from death penalty with impunity, etc. prove that his words were a sheer pretense and nothing more than a policy to gain the favor of ethnic communities. According to the author, he was truly a Hindu ruler who always stood as a bastion of Hinduism.

During the *Rana* regime, similar Hinduistic patterns were applied in the governance system. The responsibility of social control was given to the royal priests. They introduced *Muluki Ain* (civil code) in 1854 and compelled all the Nepalese people to accept it as a tradition. The code categorized Nepali society on the basis of castes where the people were grouped into 6 main clusters. The code comprehended the plural *Varna* system into a uniform scheme of Hindu caste system with the provision of different punishment systems on the basis of caste system. Changing the Hindu religion was strictly prohibited. For the first time in history, *Khas Kura* or *Gorkhali Bhasa* was declared as the official Nepali language in 1930 (4). The Ranas began to sponsor migration of Nepali speaking Hindu Brahmins to other ethnic dominated areas to expand Hindu culture nationwide. During the pseudo-democratic period, the first elected government of B.P. Koirala in 1959 initiated various reforms. The Koirala government gave *Newari*, *Hindi* and *Maithili* languages the status of national language. Various ethnic and dalit welfare organizations were established but such reforms were affected by the *Panchayat* regime of King Mahendra.

During the *Panchayat* regime, *Shah* kings reinforced an authoritarian rule provoking "one language, one attire and one nation"

as a national slogan. The regime continued the Hinduization process as it enjoyed all the power in the name of god's incarnation (51). The *Panchayat* government banned news broadcasting service in *Newari* and Hindi from Radio Nepal. The books published by ethnic groups were banned. Almost all national symbols reflected Hindu ethos. Nobody was allowed to preach Islam and Christianity.

With the restoration of democracy in 1990, various groups and organizations voiced together to entitle Nepal as a secular state. Due to the neutral position taken by the two largest political parties i.e. the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist and Leninist), and the support to the King by the Hindu fundamentalists of Nepal and India, the country remained a Hindu state.

History repeated itself when king Gyanendra declared a royal coup dismissing the elected government on 4th October 2002 by neglecting the spirit of the 1990 constitution. The king constituted government after government under his direct control. Exhausted with the apparently never-ending political imbroglio, Nepalese people took to the street supporting the movement called by the mainstream political forces and backed up by the Maoists. The Maoists declared an end to their people's war but still insist on inclusive democracy for the heterogeneous country like Nepal.

Chapter III examines the origins, development and spread of the Maoist movement in Nepal. In this chapter, the author gives a brief introduction to the history of communist parties and argues that the history of the Nepalese communists is the history of struggle for leadership. He emphasizes that the Maoists are the most radical leftists amidst the communist parties. This is of course true. The author has identified four major elements of the Maoist movement: ideology, environment, organization and strategy. The Nepalese Maoists claim that they are ideologically following Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. But the author doesn't agree with them due to their inconsistency in their ideology. Of course, they are neither pure Marxist-Leninist nor Maoist. They regard themselves as communists but they carry identity issues at the forefront, which is against communist ideology. They speak in favor of ethnic and oppressed nationalities and at times, in favor of high caste and elite communities in the name of creating social harmony. As far as environment is concerned, the author talks about the social-cultural environment that has given space to the Maoist movement in

Nepal. Here, the author argues that the Maoists have genuine agendas of people against any type of oppressive systems. They are smart enough to handle the socio-culturally-oppressed environment through their party organizations that consist of party, army and united front; party from standing committee to area committee; army from headquarters to squads and united front from United People's Revolutionary Council to United People's Ward Committees. Thus, they follow the strategy of the people's war.

The Maoists adopted their insurgency by attacking the office of Small Farmers Development Programme supported by Asian Development Bank at *Gorkha*, and by attacking police posts in *Sindhuli*, *Rolpa* and *Rukum* districts on 13th February 1996. Among four districts, Gorkha is situated in the Central West Hill, Sindhuli is situated in the Central East Hill and the rest are situated in the Mid-west of Nepal. Important determinants playing decisive role behind the operation of insurgency in *Rapti* zone are: (1) The role of Mohan Bikram Singh, who spread the communist ideology in this area after going underground since 1957, (2) The brutal state repression on the *Magar* community while they were engaged in the struggle, and (3) The presence of the forest, which offers a natural opportunity for guerrilla operations (104).

Though the Maoists started their guerilla attack with only 200 cadres, they intensified their programmes and activities nationwide by applying various tactics. The split of CPN (UML) into CPN-UML and CPN-ML in 1995, the sweeping out of ML from 1999's general elections and the palace massacre of 2001 are other major factors, which helped for escalating the Maoist movement (121). Between 1996 and 2005, approximately 13000 people lost their lives. Physical infrastructures of the country were hugely destroyed along with the deterioration of law and order in the country.

The last chapter sums up the study by pointing out the shortcomings and failures of government, political parties and their policies that were accountable for triggering the Maoist movement. In fact, neither the 1990's constitution nor the policies and programmes of the elected governments totally addressed and fulfilled the people's aspirations (129). He concludes the book by suggesting the policy-making bodies of the Nepal government to adopt preventive actions rather than curative ones to prevent other social revolts in coming days.

Finally, some of the issues raised by the author leave certain queries

to answer. Although the title of appears to provide sociological flavour, the author fails to make it so. What makes caste, ethnicity, gender, Hinduization and Nepalization as sociological entities is yet to be elucidated. On the other hand, the author's prime focus rests upon the role of the Maoists for revolutionizing the people's way of thinking but the author underestimates the role of other communist and democratic parties in sowing the seed of a revolution. Social stratification for the author is a significant source of disorder in society. But he failed to realize that during the *Licchhavi* period, stratification was an indispensable source of social order and harmony. Lastly, the contribution of Prithvi Narayan Shah in the unification of Nepal cannot be undermined though the unification was less emotional and more territorial.

Yet, Pyakurel has done his level best to study the Maoist movement of Nepal. The credit goes to the author for his skilful presentation, well-organized chapters, simple language, sufficient data sources and annexes. The book no doubt is significant for those academics who keep keen interest in studying the Maoists and their movement. In today's changing context, it will also be helpful for policy making and government bodies in making new Nepal more democratic, representative and participatory.

*Tek Nath Subedi*

## Contributors

**Bidya Nath Koirala** (Ph. D) is Researcher at the Centre for Education Research, Innovation and Development (CERED), Tribhuvan University.

**Krishna P Pokhrel** is Professor of Political Science at the Department of Public Administration Campus, Tribhuvan University.

**Abhi Subedi** (Ph.D) is Professor of English Literature, Tirbhuvan University.

**Keshab Man Shakya** (Ph. D) is Coordinator of Social Inclusion Research Fund in SNV/ Nepal

**B.C.Upreti** (Ph.D) is Professor of Political Science at South Asia Studies Centre, University of Rajsthan, Jaipur, India.

**Bishnu Raj Upreti** (Ph.D) is a conflict management expert.

Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies Vol. VII No. 1 2007

# Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies

Vol. VII No. 1  
March 2007

---

---

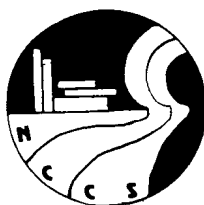
- 1 **KRISHNA P POKHREL**  
**A Narrative of Politics and Constitutional Development in Nepal**
- 16 **B. C. UPRETI**  
**Regional Movements and Madhese Politics in Nepal**
- 37 **ABHI SUBEDI**  
**Historicism and Dynamics of Social Science Research in Nepal**
- 53 **BIDYA NATH KOIRALA**  
**Restructuring the Nepali State: Gender and Dalit Perspectives**
- 69 **BISHNU RAJ UPRETI**  
**Restructuring Nepal Army: A Conflict Transformation Perspective**
- 95 **KESHAB MAN SHAKYA**  
**Nationalities, Movements and Nepali State**
- Book Review**
- 107 **Maoist Movement in Nepal: A Sociological Perspective**

# Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies

bi-annual publication  
Vol. VII No. 1 March 2007

Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies Vol. VI No. 2

- 
- 1 KRISHNA P POKHREL  
A Narrative of Politics and Constitutional Development in Nepal
- 16 B. C. UPRETI  
Regional Movements and Madhese Politics in Nepal
- 37 ABHI SUBEDI  
Historicism and Dyanmics of Social Science Research in Nepal
- 53 BIDYA NATH KOIRALA  
Restructuring the Nepali State: Gender and Dalit Perspectives
- 69 BISHNU RAJ UPRETI  
Restructuring Nepal Army: A Conflict Transformation Perspective
- 95 KESHAB MAN SHAKYA  
Nationalities, Movements and Nepali State
- Book Review
- 107 Maoist Movement in Nepal: A Sociological Perspective
- 



Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies

NCCS

Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies Vol. VI No. 2

NCCS

**Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS)**, set up in 1995 as a non-partisan, non-profit making and non-governmental organization, undertakes studies/research on subjects and issues of national and transnational nature and dimensions. The emerging socio-economic and political trends and opportunities to be generated by new developments come within the scope of NCCS. The pluralistic nature of Nepali society and polity demands greater understanding and cooperation among political forces and others engaged in dealing with issues of democratic consolidation. The Centre gives priority to local development and other areas of national concern. Policy analyses, in-depth studies of national and regional issues and development, and their likely impacts on Nepal and other regions, especially South Asia, are some of the principal agendas of the Centre. One of its objectives is to assist the young social scientists to enhance their research capabilities.

NCCS, through organizing seminars at local, central and regional levels, has provided a forum for dialogue among the experts, professionals, stakeholders, policy makers, parties' leaders/workers, and people's representatives to elected bodies on pertinent national and regional issues e.g. on *Political Consensus, Electoral Reforms, Decentralization*, and State Restructuring. The Centre has credit of producing several books i.e. *Political Leadership in Nepal*, 2001; *Nepal: Local Leadership and Governance*, 2004; *Nepal: Political Parties and Parliament*, 2004; *Election and Governance in Nepal*, 2005; *Nepal: Quest for Participatory Democracy*, 2006; *Non-traditional Security: State, Society and Democracy in South Asia*, 2006 and *Nepal: Facets of Maoist Insurgency*, 2006.

**Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS)**

Sanepa, Lalitpur

P.O. Box: 3316

Tel/Fax: 5542323

Email: [nccs@contemp.wlink.com.np](mailto:nccs@contemp.wlink.com.np)

Website: [www.nccs.org.np](http://www.nccs.org.np)

Printed at:

Modern Printing Press

Kantipath, Kathmandu

Tel: 4253195,4228871

E-mail: [modprint@infoclub.com.np](mailto:modprint@infoclub.com.np)