



# Republic of Nepal

*Emerging Hope & Scope*

***Published by***  
***Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal***  
*Sinamangal, Kathmandu-9, Nepal*  
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**Republic of Nepal**  
***Emerging Hope & Scope***  
*(Proceedings of a Seminar)*

***Published in 2016 by***

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Layout : Santosh Acharya

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***Printed at: Nepal Printing Support, Anamnagar # 42655821***

# Inaugural Session

(24th August, 2013)

**On the Dias:**

**Chief Guest: Ravi Shankar Prasad**

*Mr. Prasad is an Indian Lawyer, Politician and the present Union Minister holding Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in Government of India. He is a Deputy Leader of Rajya Sabha and represents Bihar. During the NDA Government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Prime Ministership, Prasad held the position of Minister of State in the Ministry of Coal and Mines, the Ministry of Law and Justice, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. He is also a designated senior advocate in the Supreme Court of India*

**Guest: Sunil Ambekar**

*Mr. Ambekar is an Indian educationist, and a veteran student's activist. He is the National Organizing Secretary of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). Mr. Ambekar is now the organizational backbone of ABVP.*

**Guest: Ajit Kumar**

*Mr. Ajit Kumar represents the Center for Policy Reform of India and is related with Nepal Sampark Cell of BJP.*

**Guest: Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat**

*Dr. Mahat was the Finance Minister of Nepal under the government led by Sushil Koirala. He represented Nepali Congress in the Nepalese Constituent Assembly election, 2008 and was elected from Nuwakot-2. He is a member of the 2nd Constituent Assembly as well.*

**Guest: Pradip Gyawali**

*Mr. Gyawali is a Nepalese politician, belonging to the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). He was a Former Minister. Gyawali is a Senior Leder of the Party.*

**Guest: Ajaya Sharma**

*Mr. Sharma is a Nepalese politician, and a central committee member of Communist Party of Nepali (Maoist), chaired by Mohan Baidhya.*

**Guest: Sarat Singh Bhandari**

*Mr. Bhandari is a Chairperson of the Rastriya Madhesh Samajwadi Party and a former Defense Minister of Nepal.*

**Guest: Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani**

*Dr. Lohani s a Nepalese politician, economist, and co-president and Senior Vice Chairman of Rastriya Prajatantra Party(RPP). He has served as a Minister of Finance, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Labor & Transportation, and Minister of Housing & Physical Planning in governments.*

**Guest: CP Mainali**

*Mr. Mainali is a communist politician in Nepal. In January 2007, Mainali was inducted into the interim parliament. He was the chairman of the Natural Resources Committee of the interim parliament. After the 2008 Constituent Assembly election, Mainali became a Constituent Assembly member. He is the General Secretary of Samyukta Baam Morcha.*

**Guest: Jeetendra Narayan Deo**

*Jeetendra Narayan Deo is also a Vice Chair Person of Madheshi Janadhikar Forum Democratic. He is a Madhesi People's Rights Forum-Democratic lawmaker person.*

**Guest: Kanak Mani Dixit**

*Kanak Mani Dixit is a senior journalist, publisher, editor and writer. He is the founder of the news magazine Himal Southasian which is published in South Asia.*

**Guest: Prof. Dr. Surendra K.C.**

*Prof. Dr. Surendra K.C. is a Professor of Central Department of History, Tribhuwan University (T.U.). He is also a President of History Association of Nepal.*

**Guest: Laxman Ghimire**

*Laxman Ghimire is a Lawyer, and was also a Minister and Sachetak from Nepali Congress and was Power minister.*

**Guest: Chandan Singh**

*Chandan Singh is a social worker and a Businessman.*

**Guest: Suresh Malla**

*Suresh Malla is a Senior Leader of Nepali Congress. He was a former Local Development Minister of government of Nepal.*

**Guest: Dr. Dwarika Nath Dhungel**

*Dwarika Nath Dhungel was a former Secretary of Government of Nepal and he was also a Executive director of Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS). Now he is known as a Senior Researcher and a Freelancer. He is a well known in the field of Hydropower.*

**Convener: Shree Deepak Kumar Adhikari,**

*Convener of Nepal Bharat Sahayog Manch (NBSM)*

# Introduction

*The age-old cultural relation between Nepal and India is unique having no other parallel to compare with. It has become a part of the global general knowledge. Though this is the bedrock of relation between our two nations, which is very firm yet it's time to be rational and practical, and delve through the depths of existing reality in the relation between the two peoples.*

*In spite of the pre-historic cultural relation and geographical proximity, the state-to-state relations, at times, exceptionally want smoothness and warmth as expected creating gaps in the communications. The state-to-state dialogue has, many a time, been influenced by factors other than true expectations, which are often many yards away from the ground reality. As a result, though there are apparently 'no problems' in the relation between the two states, there are certain contradictions and frictions on the ground, which need to be addressed.*

*There are some reasons why these problems persist. There have been no serious dialogues at the people's level. Political parties in India do not often come face to face with their counterparts in Nepal. Important people from various walks of life, who can have significant influence in the policy-making process of the country, are seldom consulted and brought face-to-face with incumbent and potential policy makers of both the countries. As a result, the real issues do not figure up in the bilateral discussions.*

*Nepal-Bharat Sahayog Manch which is now Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal as felt this serious lapse in the bilateral relations. So, at its own level, it has started organizing various seminars so that important people from various walks of life-politics, law,*

*media, business, education, history, industry, social work etc. to come to a common forum, inform one another about the pros of cons of their areas of expertise, and draw attention on the areas that need immediate notice. We also include the general public in the discussion, so that areas that need improvement become clear to everyone.*

*This seminar on “**Republic of Nepal: Emerging Hopes and Scope**” is the third event of such series. The first was held in New Delhi in December 2012, and the second at Kathmandu in 30th July 2013. This booklet presents the verbal transcription of the opinions expressed by the speakers in the seminar, which was attended as the chief speaker by Shri Ravi Shankar Prasadji, the deputy leader in the upper house of the Indian parliament. He was the former minister and the Veteran leader of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).*

# Keynote Address



**Deepak Kumar Adhikari**  
*Convener of the Seminar*

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I would like to speak in Hindi to make Shriman Ravishankarji understand us better. There is a saying in English which says, when heart meets, the tongue has no role. From the side of all the Nepalese people, I would like to welcome Shri Ravishankarji in this program, organized on your Nepal visit. I would also welcome all the senior politicians, officers and diplomats.

Nepal-Bharat Sahayog Manch is a small endeavor we started in December 2012. The contemplation and process behind its inception continued for a long time. Working in the social field, we all experienced that besides political parties, many social organizations have a great role to play in the wide perspective of social reconstruction with their positive role. The total task of the reconstruction of the nation cannot be accomplished only by political parties. So, collective efforts of many social organizations are necessary.

In this seminar, there are many leaders from many of such social organizations. Here are Vedji and Ravitji, who have lived all their lives working in social sector. Here also is Sunil Ambekar, the head and National Organizing Secretary of ABVP,

the largest students organization working in India. It has 25 lac members, in all universities and colleges in India, and as a mass organization, it is established. For the last 12 years, Mr. Ambekar has been coming to Nepal, and interacting with students and social leaders.

We have experienced that between political leaders and intellectuals, we need to an interaction. Any government initiative, or initiative of any group, or non-government is it not enough. Above this, when there have been problems facing both India and Nepal nations, the top political leaders, through dialogue, take the nations into a good direction. We all have been experiencing that.

We started our activities in December 2012. On December 14 and 15, we organized a seminar on Nepal-Bharat relations, economic development, shifting paradigms etc. We were 40 delegates from Nepal, and from India, there were senior politicians, senior professors, diplomats and social leaders. In the meantime, we also tried that a program of similar make be organized in Nepal too, and so, we tried on July 31, which was small, preliminary plenum in Kathmandu on upcoming challenges. It was attended by people who are also present here today. In the meantime, we had requested Shri Ravishankarji to come to Nepal and hold dialogues with political leaders on how the way ahead could progress in the transitional phase. We had requested him to provide time, and today he is here with us.

The discussions of the Delhi Seminar have been transcribed and published; we want to launch that book today.

A social organization, as I said in the very beginning, has important role in the leadership development and development of a human being. It is a process of social transformation, and is a long process. Many times, I share that when our goal is reconstruction of the country, it is not for personal interest; the personal is inside the development of the nation naturally. Moreover, when we work with a long mission, small human errors and slips are natural. We accept them very naturally in

this mission of making the country glorious at the end.

We all know about the contemporary political scenario of Nepal. We have Constituent Assembly (CA) elections ahead; all the political parties are trying their best; so all the general Nepali people are positive. How can India assist in this direction? How can Nepal be developed into a prosperous country? How can Nepal figure in the economic developmental map of Nepal?

Economically, politically and culturally, we need to be tied up, for which we need an engagement, a tie-up. Let's think openly about each other: we are making such an attempt. You all have come here accepting our invitation. There are many dignitaries present here. I feel, this is an initiative which should continue in future too, and hope you will continue to cooperate. Taking time into consideration, I hope all of you will get time to express yourself. We all are intellectuals; we know the things. In this seminar titled **“Republic of Nepal: Emerging Hope and Scope”** we will be contemplating and discussing again so that we can develop Nepal into a state of systems so that all the Nepalese in the world can say we are Nepalese. We have one request however: if I am wrong, please forgive me. I feel, we often revolve around certain fashionable words, as a result of which, we are putting national identity at stake. My name, Deepak Kumar Adhikari was given when I was ritually named, and so, I am naturally a Hindu. Where lies the real identity of Nepal: in its culture? in its languages? in its geography? in its diversity? in its costumes? I feel, uniformity doesn't make nationality; diversity does. That is our strength. If we accept that diversity, the nation will become strong. When every one of us feels we have owned Nepal's development, it will become strong and prosperous.

With this hope and expecting similar hopes for future, I wind up my welcome address.



**Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat**  
*Former Finance Minister and  
Senior Leader, Nepali Congress*

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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ravishankar Prasad, Friends and Colleagues. I take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Ravishankar Prasad in our midst. Mr. Prasad, of course is not an unknown figure. We practically see him every day in Indian media with very sharp and powerful comments on contemporary issues. So we welcome him very much. I don't want to take much of your time. The subject today is "Nepal's New Republic: Emerging Hopes and Scope". I think, since the time we declared ourselves a republic about six years ago, much water has flown down the river. We made some very positive achievements and positive progress. The violent era is over and we have entered a peaceful constructional politics. All the parties are committed now to fully abide by constitutional and peaceful politics. I think, it is a very strong achievement after having experienced violence of more than two decades, which took away thousands and thousands of lives. Secondly, one very strong beginning has been made in terms of making our politics inclusive, about which Mr. Ravishankar Prasad might know. Our CA, which also acts as a parliament, has one third of its members from the female. This is a very strong representation, and this is a shining example of Nepal's inclusive politics. Similarly, in terms of making our political system more representative with members from Dalits, from the indigenous tribes, from Madhes and from women, we have made constitutional provisions to make it as representative as possible. I think, not just in a developing country, even if we

compare ourselves with most of the developed democracy in the world, our parliament must be most exclusively better than anybody else's. I think these are very concrete achievements positive achievements.

But, at the same time, there have been some failures also. We had the second janaandolan with lots of hope. People had lots of expectations after the initiation of the peace process from the new republic, but we have some failures also. We failed to produce the constitution even in four years. I think that was our biggest failure. Now we are going for another election to the CA, and this time we hope we will deliver a very democratic constitution.

Our second failure is that we have not been able to focus fully on economic issue. I think, the modern world is about all economics. I think economic state is the central stage of the world politics also. But we have not been able to fully focus on economic issues; it has not become a common agenda of all the political forces, because we have been largely preoccupied with political issues. We have not come to term with what type of polity we should have, and the form of government, the type of federal structure we will have. The debate is going on.

We will have election very soon, and that will decide the type of federal structure the country will have and also the form of government and other issues which the new CA will have to settle down. And, eventually, we will have the taste of the new politics, new republic. The hope of the people is they should have better quality of life, their living standard must improve, and economic prosperity must be there in the country. If we have to get recognition, if we have to get respectability in the committee of nations, we must be economically well-off, we must have better growth, we must make our economic policy oriented to social justice accompanied by equitable distribution, and high growth. These are the challenges the future of Nepal will have to cope with.

Coming to our relation with India, I don't have to repeat

the similar things we all know. We have age-old relation, and economically and socially we are extremely interdependent. So far as the future is concerned, our hope is that we want to see India as a source of capital for Nepal's economic development, as a source of expertise, as a source of technology, as a source of education, as a source of high quality manpower, and as a market for our products. For that to happen, we must make use of our God-given natural resources and the very dynamic people the country has. We have to make use of these things. Nepali has a tremendous potential as an agro-power. As we know, within a very limited space, the agro-ecology, ecological diversity our country has within its small space, is second to none. Within a span of 150 to 200 kilometers we have practically any type of climate imaginable on earth. This gives us the opportunity and potential for being an agro-power. And also, our potential as a powerhouse of clean energy at a time when climate change has become a serious challenge, Nepal has a potential to produce clean energy with exportable surplus for the Indian market. Similarly, the tourism potential this country has is enormous.

For these opportunities to turn into reality, we need your cooperation, your goodwill, your capital, your expertise and your entrepreneurship so that we can give a better future to our children for the new generation.

On the political front, we have always received good will from India. We have always received your support, your good will, and supportive public opinion whenever we fought for democratic right, or fought against for political freedom. Be it against the Ranarchy, be it against the absolute panchayat rule, or be it during the janaandolan, we have had the support of the Indian public opinion who fully supported Nepal, Nepali people's aspiration for good political right and for political freedom. And I hope, we continue to have this relation, in economic term, in social term, and also your support to make democratic Nepal, inclusive Nepal, and federal Nepal, which we can effort. I think this is very important.

I don't want to take more time. We have heard of the time limit imposed in the meeting. With these words I hope, our relations in the days to come will be further strengthened. I am also happy to know the personal interest taken by the BJP leadership in Nepal's affairs. Personally, on behalf of our party, I would like to express our gratitude. Thanks to Ravishankar Prasadji for personally being here and showing interest in Nepal's affairs. Thank you very much.



**Pradip Gyawali**  
*Former Minister and  
Senior Leader, CPN-UML*

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At the very outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Nepal Bharat Sahayog Manch for hosting this very important seminar and inviting us to share some words on this very particular and pertinent issue. I hope such types of seminars, exchanges of views and the exchanges visits will definitely help to enhance Nepal-India relation into new height, which is the need of the day. The topic of this seminar is very very important - Republic of Nepal : Emerging Hope and Scope. I fully agree with Dr. Mahat that in a couple of years, Nepal made tremendous achievement and attained success in ending the century-long monarchy, in ending the violence which cost the lives of almost seventeen thousand people, to establish a new federal democratic republic of Nepal. To have a consensus to establish a new type of democracy which will not only fully adhere with the universal democratic rights and democratic values, but also emphasize the socio-economic and cultural rights for the people of the democracy with social justice? It is a very important phenomenon that almost all the political parties of Nepal have a common agreement that we should establish the democracy which will substantively be favorable for the working class, for the great mass of the people.

But unfortunately, in some of the areas we have not attained such success. Especially, the constituent assembly which was entitled to produce a new constitution for the people, failed. We know, there were basically three major reasons behind the

failure of the CA. You The main pioneer of the popular movement of April 2006 were three major political parties and it was the requirement of the time for the parties to forge cooperation and alliance. Unfortunately, the unity between the major political did not continue. There were sentiments, there were a feelings. There was a tendency of negation. So the division of the political parties was very detrimental in this regard; it was a major cause of the failure of the CA.

Second was the delayed peace process. Constitution making was one of the integral parts of comprehensive peace accord or peace process. But we stipulated that we would complete the peace process within six months of the CA election, but it was prolonged almost by four years and it created negative impact in the constitution making.

The third reason was the contention about the modality of federalism. We were not in common ground as to what will be the foundation and what will be the fundamentals of federalism be in Nepal, which is a very diverse society, as we all know. There were basically two schools of thoughts. One emphasizes that single-ethnic based federalism was the only way to federalize the country, but the other school did not agree because it thought, it would pave a way for the social tension. Nepal is a very very diverse society; so these were the basic points which paved the way for the failure of the CA.

Now we are in the eve of the new CA election. We hope that it will be held in its stipulated time, 19th Nov. We are trying our best to welcome all the dissident groups because this is CA election and we need the broader participation of people from all walks of life, and there are negotiations going on. We ask again to all dissident groups to participate in this very historical movement. If we cannot produce the constitution through the CA, it will be a great setback for the democratization of Nepal, for the constitution making of Nepal. So we are trying our best to convince and welcome the dissident group, and we do believe that they will join this process for the democratization of Nepal.

We believe that after the CA election, we will be able to produce a new constitution because time has taught us a lot; the extreme type of opinion has gradually lost ground. The realization process has been spread in all walks of life. Every political party has reviewed its earlier position and I hope after this election, there will be a new phase of compromise making; there will be new phase of agreement. We can believe that we will end the prolonged transition and after the end of this transition, Nepal will definitely focus itself in development, in the socio-economic transformation, because, until and unless there is a very speedy socio-economic transformation and until and unless we provide the dividend of this political development to people, democracy will not sustain. Only political development or change is not sufficient. It must be translated in the daily life of the people; so we will focus on economic development and in that case, the very important role of India will be expected because, India has achieved a very fast growth these couple of years and decades, and that development will be very very helpful to us.

Time has come to reexamine our century-long, epoch-long mutual relation, and it is time to redesign and redefine the relations to meet the expectation of today's reality. I do believe that the policy makers of both the countries will focus themselves to uplift and upgrade the mutual relation as per the requirement of the new situation. Thank you very much.



**Ajit Kumar**  
*Chief, Nepal Samparka Cell of BJP*

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I heard leaders of various political parties speaking on this issue. They talked on what challenges face the nation today, and what the opinions of the political parties are. This is the beauty of democracy to discuss on every topic. All expressed their own views. This is it; we listen to one another. We ought to give space to one another, and out of space we must debate, as Jeetendra Devji was mentioning, 'debate and decision'. We have every right to accept or reject others' views. Through that right, we take decisions.

You, the Nepali citizens, have done a great job; you fought a long battle for democracy. This movement took place many a time, and in many forms. It had one form, and then another and you came up with a third one, in which you all decided, you would form a new constitution.

Friends, through organizations we raise an issue and take it to a level; but institutionalizing it is a challenge. It is easy to destroy anything, but to establish it is a great challenge. You all, united, are moving towards that direction, to decide things. Democracy has been reinstated in the country; it waits institutionalization. There has been one election to the CA; it decided certain things. Differences and situations turned out that some part of it could not be established. New attempts are being made.

What is a prime duty of Nepal? In India, what we see is that after +2 level educations, we go for higher degrees. In India, +2 students often say, they hate politics. In Nepal, there is so much

of political awareness and that is your beauty though you have passed through different political models. I feel, to a large extent that among those who fought these movements, there is a gap of many generations. There are people who have seen everything from 1950 to 1991; they saw many differences.

In other parts of the world too, many waves of changes came up. In many places, many established traditions collapsed because young people came out into the street. Through social media, students are expressing their opinion, and such opinions are influencing the decisions. In this challenge, have noted a few points; I will mention them and finish my delivery. Of all the challenges facing the nation at present, the most difficult challenge is to establish the democracy in a legitimate way. The mutual difference, whatever in number, can be amicably settled through good and long debate, taking in view the interest of the nation. There is a need for forging a consensus. It is not bad that we differ. See, we live in Hindustan, and we face different types of internal differences. But one thing is true: in democracy, if every society's people are given participation, and if power is shared with everyone-as a true democracy means-and the system reaches to the common man, giving share to all types of people, problems can be solved. We must be able to address the basic requirement of the common man. The political parties should make a consensus about food, cloth, home, education, healthy and the basic basic infrastructures like electricity, road and water. This is a big challenge for all to ensure good governance and development in South Asian Countries.

In 1947, there was great famine in Bengal of India, and many people died. Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate made a study, which was published in 1965. In it he says, those who died did not die in want to cereals; cereals were rotting in stores and people were dying because there was no delivery mechanism that could fetch food to the people. I see this happening often in India: people die for want of basic things, while the resources lie unused in stores.

How you meet the challenges that come with the establishment of democracy is a crucial question. One challenge is about good infrastructure: road, airport, educational institution, and letting people get chances to higher education or basic education. These services should be available to people so that people do not have to go abroad. Let even the poorest one get chance to higher education. One big challenge, as Jeetendra Devji was saying, comes when we politicize the diversity issue. It comes as the biggest challenges. If social diversity is politicized, some people twist the issue for fulfilling their vested interest. So, we should be conscious about them. Address the problem: that is necessary. But, making it a base, do not allow anyone to play inside the nation. This seems a bigger challenge.

I would place a request with the upcoming generation: Think ahead! This my appeal to the new generation living in this, or any other country. The political system and people of country must have accountability and transparency, and must think how to establish that, to keep it living. Many times what happens is that we become parts of different political parties and to protect our beliefs, we compromise with the protection of the national interest. We protect our party interest, rather. It is a challenge before the new generation as to how they can protect the interest of the nation, raising themselves above partisan politics.

We become parts of such parties, then, often we do not think in that line. This nation has done a great thing.

Since there is a big debate, I would add one thing. Hinduism was replaced by secularism in this country. Sometimes, we see many things outside and apply them. Every imported thing is not bad. There are many big countries, which have different religions. But Hinduism is the only democratic religion in the world. It accommodates people of different sects. There has been no movement for telling people to go for this religion and not for this. Often, this concept comes, because in Europe, religion was made a basis for many fights, killing, and civil war. So, they needed the concept of secularism. At ours, there is no such

situation. Often, Hindutva, and Nepal's identity as a Hindu state is a cultural identity, coming from our heritage. It harms no one and challenges no one. It is not a theocratic state. In a theocratic state, a religious leader can topple the decision of the parliament. In Geeta, Lord Krishna says, "Dharma Samsthapanarthaya" in meaning, he would reincarnate to establish dharma: to protecting the interest of the common man, to establish the rule of law. That is the message of religion. Dharma means to feel people's difficulties, their lacking and challenges that come in front of them. Such challenges rise from devilish mentalities. We must think how to marginalize and finish them, and to establish good things: that is Dharma.

In Ramayana there is an incident; I would love to add it before finishing. When Laxman was injured by Meghanath, the challenge was that there was no medicine man, and Hanuman brought the medicine man from Lanka. He told Ram, "I am from the home of Ravan, how can I do your work? This is direct treachery, O Lord Ram, how can I go for adharma, as I am fed by Ravan? If I treat Laxman, it will be a case of quisling against my country. If you are the Maryada Puroshottam-the ideal human-should I go for adharma?" Then Lord Ram said "No!". I did not obey my father... and lost my father and brother. Sita was kidnapped. Laxman might die, but you must not misuse your faith for the nation. Let anything happen, but dharma should not be lost. This is dharma. It teaches us how we can become unbiased. It should never be misused. It should not foster violence. On this basis, we should not crush the interest of any marginalized society. Dharma should generate love, to share one another's problems, and to take part in one another's interest.

First of all, the way this Manch organized a discussion on Nepal-India relation and allowed our party CPN Maoist to place its opinion among the intellectuals present here. For this, I would like to thank the organizers from the side of my party and from my own side. Secondly, I would like to welcome Shri Ravishanakar Prasad and all other distinguished personalities from India, from my side and from my party's side, and hope, your Nepal stay will be good, and shall assist you in understanding Nepal better.

Today's topic is "Republic Nepal: Hopes and Scopes". There is very little time, and the subject is very serious. Briefly saying, 239 year old monarchy has ended and democracy has dawned. And this this is very important thing. From the viewpoint of opportunity, it can play a very important role. It is a simple thing that inside any opportunity, there are many challenges, and we must address them. Our party is of the opinions that as days have passed, opportunities have slashed down. We spent four years without making a constitution. With the dissolution of the CA, we have closed a chapter we had agreed upon through the 12-point agreement. With the CA's dissolution or death, whatever the name, the validity of 12-point agreement has ended. In this new context, we must make new consensus on new bases, and it is a must. This is our party's opinion.

Secondly, in the last four years, the so-called major parties, held the responsibility for making the constitution. 2 years were added to 2, but even without calling a CA meeting, they ended the CA. In that context, they were claiming to take the responsibility of the second CA election and claiming they were the only three parties. They have objectively lost morality, and our party feels, this is wrong. Therefore, on the basis of new things, we must have a new constitution, and the second CA elections should be taken up.

There have been rumors that our party boycotts CA elections and we don't want it. That is wrong. We want CA elections; we have the opinion that the constitution should be drafted by the CA. But look at the process they have taken up now! The parties who are responsible for the death of CA, if they themselves claim of taking the responsibility of the new CA, it is nothing but their bid to grab allowance for more 4 or 6 years. They can never make a new constitution. So, the question 'how to make a new constitution' should be floated in a round table conference of all the parties. The conference should make a conclusion. Can three parties or four parties change 25 articles of a constitution in the manner they like? Where are the other parties? An all-party conference of the former CA stake-holder parties and other newly emerged parties can do it. When you fail, shouldn't you take the help of others? But they boycotted majority of the political parties and moved ahead. So, our party has dissent with them in the present context.

Another thing is that, all the parties agree upon multi-party system. We also agree to it, but what is multi-party system? Who should own the executive power? What should be the nature of the competition among parties? What should be the situation of judiciary and separation of power? They forget everything, and dumped themselves into one basket, and they are doing whatever they like. Is that multi-party system? No, it is not. It is violation of the basic norms of multi-party mechanism of the western parliamentary system. If we are committed to the system, we should adhere to its basic norms. This way, the nation is gradually moving towards a party-less system. The major political parties have handed over the key of the nation to the bureaucrats, and judiciary is defunct, no matter whatever they say outside. 25 articles that have been amended, and the so-called major 4 parties, in their 11 point agreement, are all illegal. So, what we say is, all these things should be scrapped, and the bureaucrats' government should be dismantled and a prime minister should come from within the political parties and a government should be made from political parties. If elections

are held under such a government, we will participate too, and we will help the formation of such a government.

In the few days, some positive developments have been made in this direction. Such developments might give way to a round-table conference accepted by 4 political parties, and in that context, we hope, the round-table conference will forge a political culture away from bureaucratic culture and party-less culture, towards multi-party political culture, and the second election to the CA will be meaningful, and it will give the nation a liberation from the situation of lawlessness. This is what we hope.

Lastly, I want to say one thing. Other speakers and distinguished guests too talked on this and is necessary. It is about the relation between Nepal and India. In this regard, I would say in the midst of distinguished guests, that our party has a different opinion. Nepal, India and China are neighbors. Nepal should have similar relation with China and India. Traditional relations are different issues. Tradition-wise and religion-wise, we might be closer to India, but basically, we must have similar relation with China and India. If the power countries make relations in accordance with the expectation of a few leaders, such a relation will be against the power countries themselves. We need India's help no doubt, but India's relation with Nepal is centered on filling the expectation of a few leaders, and India should revisit this relation. It should consider what the general Nepali people are hoping for, and in that case, Nepali leaders will be forced to follow the public. At present, they are not obliged to follow their people, because, once they please India, they get all they wish. I request the guests: please do work according to the interest of the general people, and in that case the politics of Nepal will come to a track, and people will start visiting your people at their thresholds and the people and its rulers will be appreciated by our people.

In the changed context of the present time, the consciousness of the Nepali people is very high. The ten-year old people's war

has heightened their consciousness to a high level. The present populace of Nepal doesn't tolerate the unequal treatment of the neighboring power countries or any country in the world as done before the 1950. Nepali people will see whether the regard for sovereignty is equal or not. So, at present, the context of Nepal is that, even if the parties want, they cannot stop people's anger against India, because, many times, Indian friends have not been able to address the expectation of the people. But the leaders here are happy, because India has been able to address their needs. So, to earn more and more friends in Nepal, I request the Indian guests to meet the expectation of the Nepali people and make it their major thrusts. The leaders come and go, they may be five or ten, a chairman today might be replaced tomorrow by a second rank leader, but the citizens always remain citizens. So, make them the central focus.

There are some misunderstandings between the two countries; they too will soon be cleared out. I want to appeal the distinguished guest from this forum that our party is of the opinion that to make India-Nepal relation better and closer, all unequal treaties till today should be revisited, and unequal behaviors and practices must be rolled back. That will mean, you are addressing people's expectation. You might feel that what I am saying is bad, but tell today, why is an American citizen so unsecured in the world today? It is not because of the citizen; it is because of the policy of the government. The US government interferes everywhere in the world and influences the change of government. The people of those countries therefore do not like the US government. As a result, an American citizen becomes insecure. I mean, enemies do not come on their own; we produce them. I want to appeal our friends: produce only friends and friends in Nepal. This is what I wish for them. Thank you.



**Sarat Singh Bhandari**  
*Former Defence Minister and  
Chairman of Rastriya Madhesh Samajwadi Party*

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With previous speakers I also welcome our guests. I thank the Nepal Bharat Sahayog Manch for organizing this event, where we are discussing about new Nepal, and here, your presence is of great import and is a reflection of you great feelings for Nepal. I want to be brief, a long time has elapsed.

We made Nepal a Nepal, but those of us living in Nepal face the challenge of making all its dwellers true Nepalese. It is a great challenge. We feel, through the coming CA, we can make it happen.

The most important thing, as I think, is that the new Nepal promised by the 1950 political change have not been practically realized and so discontent has brewed. As a result, various revolts are continuing. The mass movements of the past, Madhes movement and ethnic groups' movement were revolts against discrimination, and we feel, discrimination gives rise to revolt, and if the revolt is not addressed, the way to disintegration becomes inevitable. So, in order to stop disintegration, we must put an end to discrimination. Be it disintegration of a family, a society of a nation, if the discrimination is not addressed in time, then, the revolt will come up, and lead to disintegration. It is against such discrimination that different movements are going on in Nepal. Be it discrimination on geographical grounds, or between communities, between religions, or between genders,

unless we are able to address such discrimination, we will be unable to think about new Nepal. So, the need of the hour is that we must address all types of discrimination. The power of the people of all communities and genders living in all parts of this country, should be used in making this nation.

So, we have come up with the 5-point formula. The first one is democracy. As long as democracy is left unstable, no country can prosper. This first formula is democracy. The second one is federalism with identity. We are not in favor of single community identity. Let there be cultural identity or geographical identity, but federalism with identity. Third one is inclusiveness. Unless we have inclusive democracy, people will not feel that they are a part of the nation, this state or this administration. So, inclusive democracy is the basis of positive division, for, many people have been marginalized, and we must address their needs and save them from discrimination, by honing inclusiveness. We talk of equality, and on that basis, we can bring prosperity. Democracy, federalism, inclusiveness, equality and prosperity. Prosperity will be such a bridge, which will give everyone a sense of equality. Unless the Dalits and women are prosperous, social discrimination will not end. Therefore, to end all types of discrimination, we must decide our ways ahead. If we can address such discrimination, I feel, we can make such a Nepal, which will engender great hope in our neighboring countries too. A strong, prosperous and peaceful Nepal can become the real friend of Hindustan. So, I feel, we should be moving ahead. This is both an opportunity and challenge for Nepal. With this, I would like to stop, and again, I would like to welcome our guest and thank you everyone. Thank you.



**Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani**  
*Former Finance and Foreign Minister and  
Senior Vice Chairman, Rastriya Prajatantra Party*

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In Nepal, we are on the path of establishing or consolidating a new republican system. I think when the republican system was established here the basic objectives were first the institutionalization of the republic democracy, based on the periodical action, human rights, inclusive government, and rule of law. So far, our progress here is like a saying you have a glass that is half-full or half-empty. In our case, you can call it half-full. More or less we are in that position. Basically, we have failed to deliver and promulgate the constitution to our people based on consensus. In the last five years, we have not been able to fulfill our commitments to the people. That's a fact. The second is on the economic front. We promised higher economic growth. We promised to increase the opportunities for the downtrodden and the poor, we promised good governance, we promised rule of law, and we also promised business-friendly environment. And, it's a fact, in most of these areas we have failed. Our growth has been below 3.5 %. Opportunities for the downtrodden and the poor have not made any significant progress. As for good governance, Nepal has made great stride in corruption. In rule of law also, we have problems, and as far as business-friendly environment is concerned, Nepali entrepreneurs in this country are reluctant to invest. So, here also, I think the performance has not been what we promised to our people. The third thing is on the defining Nepali nationalism. As Sharadji has said very

eloquently, we still have some ways to go in defining nationalism and nationality. This has to happen in different areas. Politically, an inclusive political system should come up, where different different ethnic or regional groups will have adequate say in the political structure of the country. This has not been happening partly because we have not been able to promulgate a constitution. Second is in economic front. We really haven't been able to provide opportunities to the lower sections of our population to share in the increasing common wealth. That part is missing. And of course, the idea of positive discrimination is being accepted. That is a positive part. But there also, I think, we should rely on the concept of human development index rather than ethnicity.

Another part is that we are culturally diverse nation. Nepal is as Laxmi Prasad Devkota said, is beautiful, large and peaceful, in terms of cultural diversity. So, the challenge is to make sure that all these different cultures mix into one total culture i.e. Nepali culture, giving them due recognition and dignity. And there also, the objectives or wishes, or the idea being generated, is not being translated into practice in terms of giving the people a workable constitution. This is our scoreboard; this is our record.

And now we are going to have elections second time, and if we are not able to improve on our record the second time, we are really going to bring a serious problem, because we are sandwiched between two great countries, two great civilizations, two great economics, two great potential super power in the world, and the fact is that if we cannot manage our problems, if we cannot remain stable, naturally, both are neighbors will be interested, both our neighbors will try to see what is going on, and that will be a problem. In order to make sure that we maintain our independence, integrity and sovereignty, we the Nepalese should learn to consult each other rather than consult outsiders, and come to a conclusion-come to our own conclusion, rather than depending on others for advice and suggestions.

Having said that let me also remember how political

interaction between Nepal and India has evolved over time. We know that many Nepali politicians took part in Indian struggle for independence in the 1940's. Similarly India helped Nepal in the early 1950's to launch a revolution for democracy, which Nepali people generally remember and appreciate. Over the last fifty years, there were many ups and downs in the democratic revolution of Nepal. We did manage to establish a multi-party democratic system in early 1990's; I think it was a new beginning and we are making progress, even though, in a manner that is rather messy.

But then, democratic evolution doesn't follow a linear trajectory. In 1996 we had the Maoist revolution, or the Maoist rebels, opposing parliamentary democracy in Nepal. That is a fact. India was one of the first countries to declare the Maoists a terrorist group. One of the first countries, I repeat! But, what our people had not been able to comprehend is the benign neglect by the Indian leadership, of Maoist friends organizing armed revolt against a functional multi-party democracy in Nepal. This is something we have not been able to comprehend. Forgive me if I am a little too blunt, but the fact is Indian state, which is proud of its parliamentary democracy, literally ignored a movement against parliamentary democracy in Nepal for almost ten years, and provided indirect shelter to the rebels. This has now been documented by many scholars and politicians both in Nepal and India.

One point I would like to stress to our friends here is that, among friends, we should be open because friendship is something that provides us the opportunity to express the feeling of our hearts. So one thing I would like to stress here is that, as friends, we must remain sincere to what we say, and I expect that India, a great country and a great democracy in the world, thinks about this issue seriously in the future, as it interacts with Nepal in the days to come.

Now finally, let me express my final conception. We are aware of the fact that India and Nepal have remained friends and

will always remain friends. We are also aware of the fact that between India and Nepal there is an invisible culture link that links us all the way from the mighty heights of the Himalayas, the abode of Lord Shiva to Holy Rameshwar on the southern tip of the subcontinent and the vastness of the Indian Ocean. This is an invisible cultural link which I would call as the link of the sanatan dharma, an invisible culture link among other things. And I think this is a cultural link that we should preserve, and strengthen. But to strengthen means to preserve this cultural link. The political, economic and security consideration as they relate to both countries will have to be reviewed and examined in the light of the changing situation. Thank you very much.



**Sunil Ambekar**  
*National Organizing Secretary*  
*Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)*

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Before saying anything, I would like to thank Nepal Bharat Sahayog Manch and its coordinator Deepak Kumar Adhikari, because in a short span of time, they have managed this discussion or interaction and honed it. It is a very positive initiative. One more thing is appreciable: all the people present here and the way they have taken initiative are highly adorable; it's a signal that from both sides, a heart-felt urgency has been recognized that Indo-Nepal help should increase and relations should consolidate. There too is an internal feeling that let India progress, let Nepal progress, but not alone but mutually. In this mission, the help we are getting from all is a great signal and a great thing for our future. So, at this, I express my happiness in this.

Secondly, twenty days back, I had got an opportunity to sit among you in such a seminar and had expressed myself. So, I will be brief. The first thing I am feeling is that we don't have choice in hand now, be it before Indian leadership or Nepali leadership. We have limited time. Be it in India or Nepal, I have been meeting young people very often. In their mind is an aspiration that they want to see a developed India or developed Nepal. They might be feeling that they were not born in such a country, but are willing to pass the rest of their life in a developed country.

It happens in a family that if children bargain, no one can deny then. Today, I want to say that be it intellectuals, writers, literary people or politicians, they are facing a family pressure, that in our political path, whatever be our past experiences, good

or bad, we must find newer ways, and that is for us a significant pressure, and I feel, the pressure is a positive one, a good one, and we can collectively address the same. Second thing I want to say is that in the world, there may be many nations that have different ambitions. Some might be willing to be a great nation, some to become a militarily powerful one, some to expand themselves to other's land, some to foist their culture upon others and some to foist their religious upon others. Nations can have different priorities. But, as Nepal and India sit together, we are Hindus, sanatan tradition connecting us. We have no such aspirations as I discussed above. Our aspiration is that we want to ensure the development of our society, at all its level, bringing the benefits of development to backward people, poor, forest and hill dwellers, and all those who are beset by scarcity. We must find means to address their need for food, education, health for children as our priority. They must receive the amenities of the modern world, and their aspiration should be addressed.

In the new modern times, we cannot use destructive means to solve these problems. The world does not have any such history. Arm can change governments, but such aspiration can never be addressed through violence. So, through peaceful, political and democratic ways, we must move ahead to find solutions. I think, we are having good processes. India is a democratic nation, and so is Nepal. And we are moving ahead struggling in a good way, and these are our priorities. So they are very essential for both for Nepal and India.

I would like to reiterate two things I have said in the past too. Some people are seen to be disheartened with political parties and democratic processes. They say, nothing had happened, no constitution has been written. What I feel is that in a democracy, things take time, and in everything there is a process of discussion, and through haste or through ordinance these cannot be accomplished. Someone brought an ordinance and the problem is solved-this cannot happen. So I feel, this has a process and this even lay people should know. Here are many

intellectuals and media people. As regards this process and its basis, we must educate the people and tell wait, give some time; with the present process, we can find a solution. Such assurance we must give to our society through this community that is present here.

Another thing, it is true that secularism is being discussed in relation with Nepal at present. India also is a secular state, owing to a clause added to its constitution later. But I feel the Hindus by their very nature are secular in themselves, and Hinduism is a guarantee that all people, in their own religions and thoughts, can stay well. This is guaranteed. I would say, in Hindustan, before it was declared secular, there had been no such incidents, where anyone had been barred from professing his religion or manner of worship. Our history doesn't record any such case. The Hindus do not have history that their heirs should seek apology for a crime their ancestors are guilty of. I respect Lord Jesus, but this is true that those who came from across the seas, the missionaries in the name of Jesus and churches, have not left a good history. The way missionaries went out, forced their agendas, launched separatist and armed movement in a different style and destroyed the identity of the local. This is their history. For this reason, as Hindus, we must respect all religions and all worship modes, but it should also mean that the dissent brewing from inside the society too needs to be addressed. If someone is in compulsion because of ignorance or because of poverty, he should be aided, and he should not go to embrace another faith. No one should have that chance, under allurements, or under force, or take advantage of his helplessness. He should not be diverted or converted religiously. Stopping it is a duty of the intellectuals and of political parties, what if they have the word 'secular' inside the constitution! That 'secular' too will be guaranteed, and no one should go away from this responsibility; nor can anyone.

I had these few things in mind. In thank Nepal Bharat Sahayog Manch for organizing this event. Thank you everyone.



**CP Mainali**  
*President, CPN (Marxist-Leninist)*

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I would like to express a few things in brief. First, such an event is a significant one. We want that we interact in this comprehensive fashion with the political parties of our neighboring countries at times. Talking about India, in 1947 and thereafter, Indian political parties are ruling over India. After the inception of the republic, we the people of Nepal too are trying to rule over Nepal. That's why we must have interaction among us so that we know each others' feelings very well.

These days, there has been some criticism that the foreign policy of some neighboring countries is decided by bureaucracy. If we are to overcome such criticism, we should hold such types of discussions among us. It will help each other very well. That's why; I very much appreciate from my heart, and want to welcome such types of seminars and interactions.

Having said that, I would add that after the inception of republic system, we have got a lot of opportunities, but there are several challenges before us. With republic, there has come the question of ethnic identity and regional identity. These are not good things. Ethnicity-wise, region-wise, there should be equality, among all regions and ethnicities, and we must have an inclusive system, not only to run the society or the state, but to run the society in all organs. These all things are all welcome. The CPM UML welcomes these changes.

Our state has decided to go for federalism—a federalism which will have the characteristic of Nepal. Such type of

federalism will be a boon to Nepal for its development. But there has been a great debate among us Nepali people and Nepali political parties as to what sort of federalism can cater to the need of the Nepali people and what sort of federalism will have Nepali characteristic. This has been a discussion, a very serious one.

After 250 years, we are changing our state structure. That's why it is a very historic responsibility to us. But you know, all these are progressive achievements. We are very sorry that we have not been able to successfully institutionalize all these achievements in constitution drafted and promulgated by the previous CA. This is a great failure on our part. Now, we are going for another CA election soon, and it should happen. The CA is the only remedy for us to treat two of our earlier failures. We failed to produce a construction, and secondly, now a day, we have left our responsibility to the bureaucrats. We have put the bureaucratic personnel in the government. This is our second failure and only this election can address this failure. This is the only way we can have a treatment of these failures of ours. So, election should be held.

But the election we are talking about is not an election to the parliament; it is an election to the CA. All parties should be in this process. Some parties are on the street with some demand. If we agree them, the election might be deferred. If we agree to their demand to tear the 11 point and 25 point agreements, elections might get aborted, though there are rooms for making some amendments.

If no election is held on 19 Nov, will the sky fall? Will the election be halted? If the government forces election anyhow, and if violence is invited, can that give the constitution? It might give a constitution, granted, but then, leaving behind one party, can such a constitution last long?

We are going not only for parliament elections; we are going for CA election. So, we must include all the parties. A major party, Maoist, had four no's. If we accept their three no's,

there will be no election in the near future, and in that case, they must reconsider their three demands: change of government, and cancellation of 11 and 25 point ordinance. But then, if they are really coming to the election, and are very serious to join the election, can't we move ahead changing Nov 19? This is our question.

Today, an Indian friend has come, and we are just expressing our feelings to him. This is our case, and we must solve it. We have so called big parties, and they must reconsider it. The CNP Maoist too should come into the fold of election and it too does not have any alternative in it hand. To change the nation, there is no solution but to go for election. The Maoists should reconsider some of their no's among four no's, and ask other parties which no's will they accept. We must seek a meeting point.

At present the talk of the round table conference is in the air, and I think that is a good venue. In the past, four parties did not listen to the Maoist. Why should the Maoists listen to the four parties? If all the twenty to twenty-five parties sit together and talk together, I hope, the Maoist should reconsider these three things. But the sole talks of the four parties cannot force them to agree. So, let's go for round table, and let the Maoists consider their three points, and let other major four parties consider the last point.

What the CPN ML feels is that, we can hold election by 14 April 2014. This is our feeling. If we can do this much in the present situation of Nepal, we will secure our future. We are very wise and rich people. We have plenty of natural resources and we have good friends in our north and south. We have very old and ancient relations with both the countries. The last thing I want to request them is please the friends in north and south, you must know our very sensitive geopolitical situation. One thing is that for us, there are so many lessons but for you, I want to remind only one thing: our geography decides that Nepal can have dispute with China and can have dispute with India, but never can garner enmity with India and China. This is the decision of

our geopolitics. That's why, from the core of my heart, I just want to tell our friends in BJP, that you have a long history and a very nationalist tradition. You have been fighting for saving Orientals in the broader sense. In such a situation, the independent and sovereign Nepal cannot stand against its neighbors, nor can any Nepali be against you. That's why; please have confidence upon the entire Nepalese. Please don't be sectarian. Let not both the parties try to spoil relation which is a relation of roti and beti. We all Nepalese have good relation with India. That's why, all parties, be it Congress or BJP, please just know our heart, our sentiments. We are all good friends of India. We want to be good friends of India. We can never garner any enmity against India. That's why, have a cordial relation with Nepal. As a free, independent and sovereign country having its own dignity, we are good friends of India. We are a part of Asia. We are part of South Asia, and we have to cooperate with each other. Prakash Chandra Lohani also stated that in the struggle against the British in imperialist, Nepalese shared the sentiments with the great Indian people and so many leaders of our country joined the movement against the British in India. That's why we want to continue that sort of sentiment and friendship in future. That's why I request them to understand this and also understand our geopolitics. Let them have more confidence upon the entire Nepalese. Let them not understand us as fragmented.

Another thing is that no Nepali party has ever supported that there should be referendum in Kashmir. We have read the resolution of the UN, but no Nepali party till has decided that India should just organize referendum on Kashmir. No Nepalese. We have seen it; we have been observing that since 1947. There has been struggle in north-east India, seven sisters. Last time, the Bodos struggled. Some of the Bodos are struggling for independence from India, but we have never lent any positive supportive to their struggle. We have never supported such types of moves. So, why some corner of India has been supporting the right to self-determination to some of our groups?

We are very sincere and serious about the integrity, geographic integrity of India. And so, we want reciprocity from the Indian side. Actually, even if we have so many disputes with us, we can solve through political dialogues, and seminars like this will be very much useful in the future, because we can share our feelings very freely.

For organizing such an event, I thank friends of Nepal Bharat Sahayog Manch, especially Deepakji. And I thank them for allowing me to express myself.



**Ravi Shankar Prasad**  
*Deputy Leader of Rajya Sabha (BJP)*  
*Former Minister, Government of India*

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In fact, my Nepal program was being planned for quite a long time. Deepakji was requesting me that I make a visit. I visited Nepal after a long time. Busy parliamentary schedule, the cacophony of Indian politics and their management in between. But when Sunilji said that my program had been scheduled for 23rd and I ought to come, I applied for leave from the parliament, and I came. You all welcomed me and expressed good things about me. I express my gratitude from the depth of my heart.

I listened to you very carefully. Some were very free, and some very frank. That's what friends can do. In the beginning what I want to say is, let me be very frank from our side. We in India have bipartisan understanding that we respect the dignity and integrity of Nepal. We fully support and respect the sovereignty of Nepal. We fully appreciate the right of the people to determine their own destiny and goals. We want Nepal to succeed as a democracy with the three principles you have determined: democracy, republican form of government and federal principle. We are fully supportive of that. And one more thing I would like to tell you with full modesty that there are many parties and thoughts in India and that is natural. About different nations too, they have their thoughts. Some like America while some hate it. There are many things against Pakistan, there are thinking about Sri Lanka and Tamil issue. But Nepal is such a neighboring country, about which all the political parties, all the think tanks and all civil societies and intellectuals are of the

same thought that Nepal should move ahead and there should be peace and harmony in Nepal.

Today, as a leader of BJP I have come to you, but I am not talking about the BJP. I am trying to convey a bipartisan role of India, whether it is that of the Congress government, Atal Behari Vajpayee government or may be a future government of India, again a BJP-led government. There will be the same policy with regard to Nepal: Nepal needs to grow, Nepal needs to be in peace, let democracy succeed in Nepal with the active involvement of the people of Nepal. I tell this out with full modesty; I don't have any second thought in my mind in this regard.

What will be the structure of your democracy? What will be the form of your federal structure? You will decide it. We have no interest in that. You are fit to decide it. I have full confidence in your capacity; we fully trust the people of Nepal. I don't know who told you that some people in India, even remotely, entertain the idea of promoting some type of self-determination. And even if there is some whisper by some people in some corner, it will be only an irresponsible whisper, because there is a complete unanimity in India about the unity and integrity of Nepal.

Since you raised the issue of referendum of Kashmir, let me tell you that 1948 resolution has become redundant, because Pakistan refused to comply with its own obligation under that resolution. And we had the 1971 Simla Agreement, which is a basis for bipartisan agreement. That is also a fact. However, if I say this, I want to say with high modesty.

Lohaniji, you raised another issue. People come from here, and no one stops. I come from Bihar, and there is a border of 1500 kilometers, and when I come to Birgunj, I feel we share a strange good will. But good will is not limited to that belt; it pervades across Nepal. When I come to Kathmandu, or to Pokhara, I see the echo of the same good wish. The echo comes not only to me, but to all: to leaders of Congress, to the leaders of other political parties of Hindustan. There is a great reservoir of understanding and friendship.

Let me tell you today, that it has been 35 years since I started working as a student activist, and rose to national level. I joined student politics as an ABVP activist after passing matriculation. I have not heard, till today in India-I am an MP for 13 years, work at the national level, have been a union minister under Atal Behari Cabinet, am a the chief of BJP's neighboring countries cell and deputy leader of the party in the parliament-but I have never heard a single voice of some substance who have any kind of negative understanding about the people of Nepal. I want to assure you very clearly.

Whenever you come to India someone might say something. People have rights to tell what they feel. But I want to tell honestly, that in peace process, the government of India actively helped. However, that process did not succeed. Today, this issue too came up here. The Maoists, who were active, came into the democratic process and came to change themselves under the pressure of democracy. That too is great.

I was the in-charge of my party in Chhattisgarh state during elections. There are many Maoists there too, as are in Jharkhand. I used to tell them: learn from Nepal. If people have their support they become chief ministers, become prime ministers. Why I am saying that? There is a great strength in democracy. This is a second point of my observation I am going to tell you. What kind of democracy you are carving, you have to decide. What kind of constitution you are making, you have to decide. What will the structure of your government be, you have to decide. The sooner you make it all, happier will India be. The world is looking at you. However, I want to share some experiences of our democracy.

Democracy needs patience and perseverance. In democracy, the power of the people and their understanding need to be trusted. You must learn to trust the understanding and the potential of the people. Look; I am an opponent of the congress party. But, when I talk about the democracy of India, I feel good that we had a constitution where leaders decided that

we shall be a democracy, and everyone has the right to vote. I have told you, I am a lawyer by profession. I heard, professors of political science are sitting here. I also did my graduation and MA in political science, and so, I keep reading India's constitution. There were lots of debates then as to what we were doing. How can a foolish person vote an educated person? We said, we would give all women the right to vote. That too was debated. At ours, purdah system was there, and its removal came with a debate.

Today I met a lot of your leaders. I met your former prime ministers Sher Bahadur Deubaji, Madhav Kumar Nepalji and Prachandaji. Today, I met Oliji and Paudyalji and I am meeting others this evening. I am also meeting the President. I am pleased to know the understanding among your leaders. They are decided: we must hold elections. This commitment is the most important driving force.

When the constitution was made in India, people were thinking: will India remain one? Is India fit for democracy? When a government came after the independence, only one party government came, and people again asked whether democracy would succeed with a single party's lead. Soon people started voting for other parties. In 1977 we rose to power at the Centre, and Morarji Desai became the prime minister. In 1989, VP Singh's government came. This time too people had thought that opposition parties could work in the states, but they would not be able to govern India, and break within a year. Later, Vajpayee government came, and that worked.

Since 1991, India is being ruled by coalition, as no single party has got majority in India. The biggest positive aspect of it is that the highest growth of India economically has taken place under coalition governments from 1991 to 2012. Second is that, you talked about disintegration, raised the issue of Bodo Land. Democracy is a very big leveler. Democracy gives you the space to know your worth. And people are becoming highly understanding. A normal citizen of India today knows that by dint of the power of his vote, he can remove anyone from power;

no matter how powerful the leader or the party is, be it in Patna, or Delhi, in Mumbai or else in Calcutta. As you can see, changes have come. From the state I have come, there used to be a leader who thought who would rule for forty years, but people displaced him. Some parties thought they would rule from Delhi forever. You know the most important thing as I said is democracy is a big leveler. There are parties in South India who said, we must be out of India. The same democracy gave them power, and once they came in power, they became responsible and thought, no, we have to govern India. They stopped talking about alienation and sensation.

In Punjab you know, there was a revolution, and many people died. Democracy gave them opportunities: some people who were terrorists took oath in the name of the constitution, sat in the parliament, and joined the government. You talked about North East. In the same place, there are many people. I remember when I was the Information and Broadcasting Minister, I went to the North East, and a Chief Minister of one of the states gave me lunch and said, “Ravi Shankarji, I was an extremist. I came to the mainstreams and became a Chief Minister. Then I realized how democracy makes you responsible.” What I want to say is, it is very important for all those who are trying to become the puppets of doom, not to belittle the great potential of democracy. I talked with many leaders of Nepal, and here, I heard the voice of your belief. I am convinced that Nepal has that strength which can bring change. From our experiences, you have learned, and sensibly decide.

There are a few preconditions for the success of democracy. Number one, there has to be a constitution. Second, the constitution must respect the rights of the people. Third, that constitution must not discriminate among people based on religion, sex, place or caste. That constitution must promote gender equity. Women should be empowered. There must be an independent judiciary where grievances can be addressed; there should be an election commission to hold free and fair elections.

And when you do this, people will have faith and belief. Whenever I see the people of Nepal, yes, in some questions you have be conscious. There are security and terrorism problems, and problems of fake currency. I am happy to know, all the people of Nepal are aware of these security threats, and feel; these threats need to be addressed. I felicitate the entire people of Nepal and the leaders of Nepal's political parties.

When you take up this process, free media becomes equally important. In India, there are more than 700 registered TV channels in which 400 are active. There are around 350 registered 24/7 news channels, in which 229 are active, in Hindi, English and regional languages. We have got 15 crore TV homes, and if one television is watched by 5 people, 90 crore people watch them. People read papers, they are aware of their rights.

As Ram Sharanji said, among young people, there has been a new aspiration for good quality life, they should come above poverty. It is an aspirational class. At ours, 65 % people are of age less than 35 years. I don't know the situation at yours, but I believe, you also have similar statistics. They have a vision, they have a future, and all those who believe in politics need to understand they owe something to the next generation.

Today, my appeal to you is that, this concern you must bear in mind, and to manifest the same, the only medium is an effective constitution. It too is important that those who run the constitution should have a broad heart. One thing I urge today is, learning from the experiences of our founding fathers; please ensure that all of you have a stake in the democracy of Nepal. All of you have a say in the good constitution which is pro-people and inclusive. In diversity, you cannot have an exclusive democracy. Exclusive democracy is irrelevant. Inclusive democracy is the need of the hour, but what will its structure be, you have to decide.

I will end up making two more points. You just talked about the empowerment of women. At ours, how democracy works at the ground level, I will give you an example. In the Panchayats in

India, we have reserved 50% seats for women, including the posts of Mukhiyas and Sarapanchas. There have been many challenges but we said we would do it. But it happened in many BJP states including Bihar. As I am an MP from Patna, from my fund, we made a village road, and I was there to inaugurate the same. In the village, the Mukhiya was a woman. She was presiding over the session, with veils all over her face, as she was a newly married bride to that village. I said, "You must welcome me today; unless you talk I won't talk." She hesitated; I told she must speak as much as she could. She came to the mike trembling, and spoke five lines. Last year, she came to meet me again in Patna, and said, "Ravi Shankarji, I was elected the Mukhiya the second time." I asked, "Aren't you the same?" She said, "Yes I am. These days, I deliver a lot of lectures, and I invite you to listen to one of them." This is the inclusive character of democracy, which is creating a leveling force.

One more thing I have to say is, it's your decision, takes it. But, what are the relations between us? As you said, it is the process of sanatan dharma. As long as there is Pashupati Nath in Kathmandu and Kashi Vishwanath in Kashi, as far as the history of the marriage of Sita of Janakpur with Rama of Ayodhya remains, our relations shall be living. These relations are neutral to state or ideology; they are politics neutral.

I want to share one more experience of India. The framers of our constitution were great leaders; they did not give any space to secularism in the fifties. Secularism came in Indian constitution in 1976, when India was in emergency. Such things can happen. The makers of the constitution of India knew the the strength of India's culture and legacy. Veda says ekam sata bipra bahuda bhawanti; truth is one, wise men interpret it differently. This is your way of truth; but this one is mine. You respect my path of truth, and you respect mine, for at the end, both our ways will converge into one. This is sanatan ways of life; I feel it talks of big hearts. That will respect the diversity of Nepal.

I will wind up by telling one more thing. What will be the

structure of your federalism, you will have to decide. But I am sharing one of our experiences. I was once asked: “Ravi Shankarji, who are you? Introduce yourself.” It was a very loaded question. In reply I said, “I have many aspects of my identity. One is the identity of the family I was born in, the identity of my parents, my community, the identity of the state where I was born, and the faith I was born in: Hindu, which I tell with pride, and my Indian identity, being born in India.” Any identity of my personality is not distinct from the other; all these are complementary to one another. The family, the state, the faith, the nation: they come together. If you look from this structure, then you will have a relation of honor towards diversity.

My last appeal to you is that, every Hindustani has sense of honor inside his heart for Nepal’s development, Nepal’s democracy, Nepal’s harmony and Nepal’s peace. I would tell, no matter which government comes, we will have the same feeling towards Nepal. Today I felt, friends expressed themselves so frankly, and in the same line, I also spoke all I feel with a sense of friendship.



**Jeetendra Narayan Deo**  
*Leader, Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum (Democratic)*

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All the honorable speakers speaking before me, especially the Nepali speakers have expressed most of the things, and I think, I should not take a lot of time. That is what I am feeling. The subject itself is a big topic; so, I would like to concentrate on the issue, and express some of my feelings.

In Nepali political firmament, what Forum Loktantrik thinks and what we are fighting for is something everyone knows. They have been hearing and feeling it. What our party wants and what manifesto we had, you all know. So, there is no point in basing my speech to our party's manifesto.

What could be the hopes and opportunities from emerging federal republican democracy is being discussed here today. Here three words 'federal' 'republican' and 'democracy' have come up, and I am speaking in that line. If, through CA, a meaningful constitution in favor of federal, republican and democratic nation is drafted, then in that case, Nepal has huge potentials in its front, and we hope for that.

We are fortunate that a country like India which is world's fourth largest economy and going to be the third is our southern neighbor. If the leaders of our country make domestic policy and India policy of Nepal a pragmatist, objective and a balanced one, that will be to our great benefit. After a federal republic and democratic system has been institutionalized through a constitution, the new Nepal will become a developed and

prosperous country, and this is the conception and belief of our country.

I have, repeatedly said in Nepal, in any place, that the 12 points agreement among the party was a historical political document and a historical achievement of the people of Nepal. Its crux was that, the unitary and most centralized state structure of the past had not been able to address the geographical, ethnic, cultural identity of various groups of Nepal and it should be done away with. Such a system neither addressed people's diverse identity, nor was the centralized state structure accelerating the rate of the economic development of Nepal. In other words, it could have failed to empower the general people of Nepal.

So, to address identity question through federalism, and decentralization of power to states and even lower level, and by empowering people, we want to ensure a growth of Nepal's development right from the grass-root level. In the context of identity and right, the unitary administrative structure and centralized structure should end and we must go for federalism. For that, the basic objective of federalism in Nepal is identity. We must address the identity and empower the Nepali people. On the basis of these two logics, we brought out the idea of federalism in Nepal. That is the understanding of the 12-point agreement, and the major political forces, only in that basis went for federalism to delete all sorts of discrimination.

Nepal has class discrimination, caste discrimination, regional discrimination and gender discrimination. Major political forces of this country will have to address those contradictions and problems. That was the commitment of the 12-point agreement, which was held eight years back. This is the then context. For that, inside Nepal, ethnic and regional discrimination exist, and to address that, we are going for federalism. This is one of our commitments.

Our second commitment is that from 1990 to 2002, the formal democracy or the multi-party parliamentary democracy has been practiced. That was an exclusionary democracy, a formal

democracy. Now Nepal wants to go to inclusive democracy. That was the commitment of the 12-point agreement. So, we abandoned the word 'Prajatantra' and took up 'loktantra'. We embraced federal, inclusive democracy, federalism and republic: an object we made through the onset of 12-point agreement. On the basis of the same, the document of the comprehensive peace agreement was made. On its basis the interim constitution was made, and on the same basis, we went to the CA. But unfortunately, the first CA could not deliver the constitution, and again on Nov 19, we are going for the second CA election.

In this context, I only want to say that the Madhes rebellion of the past, the people's war of the past, and the people's movement of 2062-63 brought about the commitment of the people to adhere to 12-point agreement, and to fulfill that, through the upcoming CA, we must make the constitution so that the constitution will be meaningful and it will be accepted by all. If not acceptable to all, let it be acceptable to the majority. That is what we hope.

The whole of Nepal is passing through a phase of transition, and we have many challenges ahead. In the face of the complexity of the present time and the challenges in front of us, if the parties cannot skillfully address them, there is a probability that the country will go for a long phase of political instability and collapse of democracy. If that happens, Nepal can take Egypt-like direction. As our party foresees this, our party appeals the political parties, intellectuals, civil societies who dreamt in the past and present about federal Nepal, that we must be conscious and speak in a single voice. This is what I am feeling. If we can make such a meaningful constitution, then, out of it, we can have a great opportunity to enter the path of development and prosperity. Therefore, our party is optimistic.

The republic Nepal and the upcoming federal democratic structure have placed before us many opportunities. It needs to be seen whether we can cash and materialize it. This lies in the hands of our political parties.

In this issue of emerging hopes and opportunist, I want to end here, and I want to add a few lines about Nepal-India relation because one of the key personalities of Nepal policy makers of India, honorable Shri Ravi Shankar Prasadji is here. In Nepali there is a proverb, 'Mohi magne dhungro lukaune' (asking for whey but hiding the container). I don't want to explain that. I want to place my ideas straightforward.

I can see two problems. To hone Nepal's development and prosperity, Nepal's relation with India needs to be highly trustworthy, reliable and intimate. Our party feels that it is very important. We have a unique and special relation with India, and to say that, Forum Democratic does not shy away. Between Nepal and China, we must have an equidistant policy; it is an emotional but not practical consideration. With India, our relation is unique and special and this is what our party believes. Second thing, we want to appeal India from the side of our party, that the leaders of India and the state of India should understand the small nation sensitiveness. Between Two or three months back, I had said in a seminar in Chandigarh, that there is an anti-Indian feeling in Nepal, and that is a reality, and we don't want to conceal that. How to tackle that kind of mentality or resolve that kind of mentality is a big challenge for the Indian state and the policy makers of India. The psychology is that Nepal is a small country, and so in so many cases, Nepal has a small nation's sensitiveness. India should research and understand what that sensitiveness is, be it in terms of territorial integrity, national integrity, psychology, or economic issues etc. So, what are that small nation sensitiveness, India should respect and understand and address the small nation sensitiveness of Nepal? This is my earnest request to India.

Then, what should we the Nepalese do? What should Nepal do? In one-way traffic, India Nepal relation cannot move ahead. If India respects and addresses the small nation sensitivity of Nepal, what should be the role of Nepal towards India? In that context, our party says, Nepal also should respect and address the security

as well as other concerns of India. Very honestly and sincerely, if we think that India is our friend and if Nepal is a friend of India, if that is the thinking and I think that must be the thinking. If that is the case, we should also respect the sensitiveness, security concerns and other concerns of India. I feel I do not need to explain those concerns: security concern, counterfeit currency concern, small arms trafficking concern, terrorist concern and many other concerns India has in the soil of Nepal. So, Nepal state and the people of Nepal should understand, respect and address these issues being a friend of India. If we move in this relation, India-Nepal relation will become extremely good.

In the election manifesto, our party is going to write that towards India, all of Nepal's policies so far have been unbalanced, and there have been prejudices. India is not a challenge, nor a threat, but an opportunity for Nepal. However, to this concept, we could not give thrust; we could not hone it. So, through a consensus about our policy towards India, Nepal will have many big hopes. Why we missed in the past is because only half of the population of Nepal formulated its foreign policy in the past; only half of Nepal made India policy. That is why Nepal's foreign policy and India policy were always fragmented. They could never get complete. So we are trying to Make Nepal an inclusive state. That might come tomorrow. We will frame India policy, and in that, a type of balance, a type of pragmatism will be reflected. I hope, the CA that has come as a result of the sacrifice of the people, will carve such an inclusive state, such a federal and republic Nepal. Through that state, we will transform Nepal-India relation in new dimension, and use the opportunities in front to develop Nepal. This is the hope of our party and me.

Finally, on our party's behalf, I would like to welcome from Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasadji and his team to Nepal, and end my speech. Thank you.



**Kanak Mani Dixit**  
*Senior Journalist, Nepal*

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I would like to make one point, in particular. What Mr. Prakash Chandra Lohani referred to is a deep disquiet that is genuine and exists in the Kathmandu intelligentsia or let me call it the Nepali intelligentsia and I think the response by Shri Ravi Shankarji too was equally frank, and I think heartfelt. For example the point you made about how the reference is not just about the sambandha between Patna and Birgunj, but also from Patna, Birgunj Pokhara, Kathmandu, there is a deep and unique relationship that you have refereed to and clearly you spoke from experience and I think, obviously, that because you are a senior politician of a very very large and upcoming super power of the world and you have happened to be in Kathmandu. The topic today is of course about Nepal and India, and therefore I would like to focus not much on Nepali politics, but on Nepal-India aspect and there, I also agree and appreciate the point that Nepal issue in New Delhi and elsewhere is bipartisan, a multi-party reference meeting of minds among the political forces in India. That, I think, is probably or definitely true but on the Nepal aspect it seems that the political class has lost its interest on Nepal mainly because of the thought of the Nepali political class. Nevertheless this continuous chaos in Nepal has been such that people have tuned off, and situation up to the point of the departure of Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala was that because of the long history going back to the independence years, that Nepal and Delhi were just a phone call away. But that has gone with this category of individuals; so now it is up to the Nepali political class

to redevelop linkage between Nepal's and India's political class, and there I think there has been a grievous failure not on the side of the Indian political class, the fault lies within the Nepali polity. I would not blame the Nepali leaders as such. It is the Nepali polity, the Kathmandu polity that has not responded to that.

I would start with that and make two quick points vis-à-vis Nepal-India relation. There have been reference; of course, to Pashupatinath and Vishwanath you said the two. I would like to take you a little deeper into the linkages between only Kathmandu valleys for now, but there are deeper linkages from other parts of Nepal but it goes beyond Pashupatinath and Vishwanath. For example, the largest chariot festival here is Machhindranath in Patan, and Machhindranath is from Kamrup. If you talk about Pashupatinath, it's even more interesting and people and people is the fact that the Bhattas come from Karnataka, and then you go deeper to the linkage of the temple of Gorakhnath temples all over the historical linkages I need not go deeper into that. My own town Patan, when in Kashi Vishwanath was defiled desecrated in 1650; a temple was built there to Vishewashwar. It is called the Bhaidega temple. Again that is not about Kathmandu, it is a link between Patan and Kashi Vishwanath. I mean to say, where is the link today? The link is there in a point where migration takes the poorest Nepali not to Dubai, not to the Gulf, not to Malaysia, but the poorest and unaccounted, massive numbers of the millions of Nepalese go to work as the underclass in India. I believe that while there are people who speak up for the Indian citizens of Nepali origin and of course the Nepalese of Nepal, the middle class go to India and do everything from their medical to shopping, but his category of the poorest Nepali who cannot go to Gulf or Malaysia, they go across the border, and they remain unaccounted. For example, the number of Nepali porters who died in the Kedarnath mishap is not even accounted right now, because they are the poorest of the poor with no records at the border point.

I would like to suggest, therefore, that this is something

Kathmandu intelligentsia has not paid enough attention to that the poorest Nepalis go to India, and they have no protection, no social protection because now there are Bangladeshis, the Dalits, the adivashis, the Nepalese remain the underclass, while the Kumaonis and Gadwalis who used to be the underclass have not moved up. I believe that this is something that actually binds India and Nepal together, yet the Nepalese people Nepalese intelligentsias have not been able to pay enough attention to this aspect. One I drove my Vox-wagon with great help from Indian Embassy from Kathmandu to Peshawar, from Gorkha to the Gorakhnath to a Gorakhnath Temple in Peshawar, via Wagha-Attari. I went on the Jalandhar bypass. There, I met an eight year old boy called Raju Thapa. He was from Pyuthan, a deep mid-western district of Nepal. Why was the poor eight-year old boy working as a kitchen labor in the Jalandhar bypass? It has to do with the political chaos in Nepal since the day violent political entered our country in Feb 1996. This is something resulted by the populist politics. We have not understood that we have been made poorer because of violent politics. You are right; Ravi Shankar Prasadji that we have come into a peace process and the peace process has taken too long. Our hope is that the new constitution will take us ahead. Where does India fit into this matrix, as we have also been suggesting that everything is to be done by Nepalese for Nepalese themselves? Nepal and India can and should and will remain friends.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that there are various regions for the complete political chaos that has led our economy to self-destruction. We are going from 6% growth rate in 1996 to continuous 3% which is zero per capita. Till today we have 3 or little above 3. The country with the best possibilities of economic growth in South Asia is actually becoming poorer by the day. That has to do with political chaos. If there is a place that India can help as a friend, it is for the Indian political class which you represent to begin once again engaging with Nepali political class so that there is a political linkage between Nepal and India. Thank you.



**Prof. Dr. Surendra KC**  
*Professor, Central Department of History*  
*Tribhuvan University,*  
*Writer and Political Analyst*

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There are a lot of leaders speaking here. I know not how much I can speak rising above them. Yet, in this issue of hope and scope we are discussing in relation with republic, Kanak Mani cleared out many things, about the political chaos that exist and the extreme instability whose load crushed the back of the Nepali people rendering it crooked. No matter how much you talk about the Maoist, the package of the Maoist, no matter how much Ravi Shankar Prasad said they have a lot of respect, but what we conceive is, it was almost a package of our neighbors, not absolutely, may be 49 or 51 %, it was an export item for us. We may or may not agree; it is an ideological question. Unless ideological issues are settled, our hopes and scores might never be settled. This is not only a question of democracy. It is a question of ideological, cultural and economic democracy. Until you have a policy and program and an operational spectrum, you won't be able to materialize the democratic system elsewhere.

Now we have political democracy but we don't have economic and cultural democracy. For that people are crying be it on the question of ethnicity, or region, or any other. Take Madhes for example. Inside Madhes, who is talking about discrimination? They just say Madhes, jaati or janjati, but no one is talking about the discrimination, exploitation and backwardness inside there. So, we are fighting from two perspectives. One is ideological. The question is being raised by new and old Maoist, B Maoist

or A Maoist, whatever you name. This is one pertinent question. Another one is the question of economic power.

Before 60 or 70, remittance came almost 70 % from India, but now it is coming from Europe and other countries. This is our situation today. Dr. Ram Saran Mahat is here. Again and again, I quarrel with him on statistics. I am an intellectual and I have no count; he is a politician and he is counted, and that is the difference. But what I am telling is, when he was the finance minister, our growth rate in 2056 was 5.6 %. It was in the midst of war, and emergency. Today, our growth rate is 3.6. Economists say this is not substantial growth; if you have grown of less than 4, it cannot be regarded as the actual growth in terms of economic theory. This is our economic perspective. Because of this, an ideological departure is needed to liberate people from such a state of economic underdevelopment. It is not good to think only of a new system to come. What if it doesn't work?

It suffices for us to have democracy: that is wrong and we are debating on that. On the issue of this emerging hope, I was listening to news this morning and you also did perhaps. 80% of our economic activities are related to foreign countries, of which 80% is with India. In 1959, our trade dependence was 95 percent. In 1955 it was 96 percent. The panchayat brought it down to 30%, for 30 years while after reinstatement of the multi-party democracy, it rose to 70 percent in 20 years.

Unless there is economic independence and economic democracy, no nation can move ahead. We are now at this juncture. Unless we free our nation from this, we will face worse chaos. Our emerging hope and scope will not materialize. I said this, because I don't care whether I am made an ambassador, or even if Pradeep Gyawali and his team give me no political appointment. Since I believe in that line I was bold to say this, but the henchmen will not be able to say. This is the problem of our country.

Thank you. You listened to me very carefully; often the near ones are given opportunity and others are made slaves; but today, I don't know why I too was given an opportunity.



**Laxman Ghimire**  
*Former Minister of Water Resources and  
Senior Leader, Nepali Congress*

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In this discussion about ‘Republic of Nepal: Emerging Hopes and Challenges,’ started by bosom friend Ram Sharan Mahat and coming up to Surendara KC, I want to foreground a different problem facing my country and myself, and I feel, we might have to face it even worse in the days to come. And so, I want to enter that direction.

The people’s movement of 2062-63 did not, at all, call for making Nepal a secular state and the declaration was made all of a sudden. Why? Where did it come from? I am a central member of Nepali Congress; this issue was not discussed in the central committee. I don’t know if other parties discussed it. Even inside the CA or parliament, this issue was not debated, but directly passed. My curiosity is that, that country, where 82 percentages of the people are Hindus, 9% are Buddhist, 3.1 % are Kirats and nature worshippers and another 0.5, and 0.3 are from Omkar Family. Islam accounts to 4.4 and Christian to 1.4 only according to the latest statistics. So, why should my nation, then, become a secular state?

Let’s look at SAARC countries. Let’s then look at the world. 51 countries in the world are Islamic states and 71 are Christian states. The only existing Hindu state, Nepal was made a secular state, why? Let’s not go far. Even among SAARC nations, Afghanistan is Islamic, Pakistan is Islamic, Bhutan is Buddhist, Bangladesh is practically Islamic, Sri Lanka is Buddhist, and Maldives is a Islamic state; so, then, my nation, where 94 percent

of the people belong to Omkar Family, what was the need for making it a secular state? This is not just my curiosity. Look at the problems that are coming forth.

In the previous census, the Christians in Nepal were 0.45%. In a span to ten years, the percentage has grown to 1.4 percent. How did full one percent grow? Who declined? The Buddhist. The Buddhists were 10.73 ten years back; they are 9 percent now. There is a decline of 1.73 percent in the Buddhists' population. How? Population increase does not explain this decline. Where has the decline come from? Look region-wise, district-wise. The decline has come there, where there is rampant poverty. These have been massive conversion.

The problems this can engender have slowly started flowing to the villages. Instead of monasteries, churches are coming up. Even inside the CA, the leftist friends were around 63 percent; they are by birth 'secular', but then, a video, a photo has been released that comrade Krishna Bahadur Mahara took up Christianity from the religious leaders. I feel happy, that at least a leader of UCPN Maoist has started following a religion. I was extremely happy. I a Hindu, that too a Brahmin, and my parents were Brahmins. But my being a Brahman is not my crime. I have the sacred thread. I have read the Bible, and the Koran. I have read about Hinduism and Buddhism as much as I can. But then, what is coming to us is sad.

We tried to end the conflict of the arms, but we have not yet ended the process and until we make and implement a constitution, I will not be convinced to accept that the conflict has ended. The Maoists have not yet come onto the negotiation table, and there is big a question that if we go for CA election keeping that party out, will we be able to write a constitution? But that is a different, though a big question. But the question of conversion is spreading like an undercurrent fire to every nook and cranny of the countryside of Nepal. Where did this secularism come from? Why were we forced to face it? If the logic is to contain religious conflict, then, there is no country in the world that exemplifies religious tolerance as much as Nepal.

Ravi Shankarji must also know that in the heart of the Kathmandu city, near the Ghantaghar, two mosques have been staying for centuries. In Indrachowk, which is the heart of the city of Kathmandu, there is a settlement of the Muslims for centuries. If you go west, especially to the mid-western region, in every village, you will find Muslim friends, and there are no cases of religious intolerance. But the censuses of the last ten years suggest a hike in the population of the Christians, and the fund for the same is coming as church funding, to every individual.

Maharaji has become 'religious' as a Christian. I congratulate him. Tomorrow if I become a Christian, no one can question me. But then, if people go to the remotest places, exploit people's helplessness and poverty and convert them, which are a problem. This is a highly sensitive issue, and in the days to come, it can worsen.

India is a big nation; you could absorb secularism. But in case of Nepal, a small nation, if we a religious conflict starts, that will be a difficult case. I appeal the friends present here. They might ask what my suggestions are. My questions are, where did secularism come from, and why was it brought? But it has come and we need to address the situation.

CA election is coming. I am not sure if it will take place, or if it will not. Still, there may be some election in some point of time. Let this question of religion be decided through a referendum and let people take their own decision. If people do not feel comfortable with 'Hindu' or 'Buddhist' terminologies, I have three options to suggest: it might be named 'Hindu state', or 'Hindu-Bouddha state' or 'Traditional Ancient Local Religious and Cultural state' where those from Omkar family to Muslims can be accommodated. Why then shouldn't we go for such a referendum to decide the nation's religious preference?

Let people take their decisions. Else, without even holding any decision inside the parliament, such a compulsion was foisted. Even in question of republic, we were not given an option, and the same came up in the question of secularism, which is not a good thing. Thank you for listening to me.

I would like to place some of my views briefly. Since 1950, we have been institutionally practicing democracy, but till now we have not completely institutionalized it. But why? We need to think seriously.

What I feel is that, coming up to this point i.e. 2013, till now, the discrimination that prevails is alarming. 50% population of the country, the Madhesis face that discrimination. 30% people that constitute the ethnic people face that. I am from Madhes, and I feel, it is necessary to think on this issue so that democracy can be established. These a few issues that need to be discussed.

Perhaps you know about South Asia; you are a great politician. I appeal that in the politics of South Asia, the neighbors of India, at some point, are apparently against India. What could be the reason? Perhaps, the border of Nepal connected with India along 1750 kilometer line is a sensitive issue and I feel, this too requires a deep contemplation. I wanted to appeal you about this.

There are a few other issues. At ours, democracy and republic are being institutionalized. The CA continued for 4 years, and has ended, and we are going for a new CA election. Federalism had become a forgotten issue. Madhes revolution brought it back on the discussion table. Be it a republic or a democracy, without federalism, it can hardly exist. In your country, Telangana has just been carved out recently.

Going to federalism, the chief thing people need to do is think, and we are trying to practice that and we are thinking deeply. Maybe if you also think in this line, it will give good results.



**Suresh Malla**  
*Former Minister of Local Development and  
Senior Leader, Nepali Congress*

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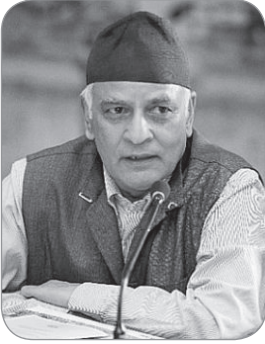
We listened to many discussions on the emerging hope and scope. Ravi Shankarji raised very important issues on Nepal-Bharat relation, which is highly appreciable. Our country, today, is facing a great crisis. A long period of transition continues through an interim political arrangement. In such a case, when two nations Nepal and India come together as Deepakji had tried, I appreciate it.

A similar conference had been held in Delhi too, and many of us present here had taken part in that seminar too. In today's situation, in Nepal, religion and ethnicity are issues being discussed, and they are very serious. We could not make the constitution, and the country has now been pushed once again to a new CA election. It still is not clear whether there will be an election. The country, in that situation, can plunge into chaos and chaos, and if that happens the country's future will face a terrible situation. The elites, the intellectuals, as Dr. Surendra KC said, are worried as to how this country can be delivered into a good path, how peace will prevail in the country and how social harmony will come back. That is the issue, we must not forget. It is elite's responsibility.

The type of political discussion we are holding is of high order. But in our country, people are discussing about religion, ethnicity, and self-interest. They are concentrated with their own personal issues, and not with larger interest of the country. A nation is a big thing; personal interest is nothing compared

to a nation's interest. If we did not think of this, but quarrel to have each faction of the hill-Khas and Arya claiming one side, and the people of the plains, Kochila, Madhesis, Rai, Limbu etc. demanding the other faction, then, the situation of the country will grow terrible. Every patriotic Nepali should think on this. All the leaders and friends should think. Even the Indian friends should worry, as the situation I see, demands.

I listened to the political speeches of the leaders here. What can we do to maintain the social harmony of this country, and be aware of what we can do? The endeavor made by Deepakji here is highly appreciable. Indian friends have come. Expressing warm welcome to them, I wind up, thanking the organizers for allotting some time for me. Thank you!



**Dr. Dwarika Nath Dhungel**  
*Former Secretary, Government of Nepal and  
Water Resources Expert*

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Let me right away go to the emerging hope and scope. There is no doubt a hope. We had hopes, we have hopes, and we will have hopes. Because of the very nature of the country, Nepal has immense scope in different areas and this has to be understood very clearly. So, we have no doubt about that.

In the meantime, there also are many problems in this country. There is also no doubt, and we have to solve the problems that have been raised here by politicians. There are economic problems, political problems and social problems which need to be tackled if we have to move ahead.

I heard the political speeches and also heard the bipartisan feeling from Ravi Shankarji. Thank you for that, but I know you are a politician, and the fact remains that the situation in this country is not moving as you think, the situation is getting much more complicated; much more fluid, and the hopes you started from Delhi are not going towards any conclusion. If whatever had started from Delhi had reached a conclusion you would have been right. But, the situation is different. Despite the fact that there is a scope and there is possibility, this country and its community are working without the existence of the government in real sense of the term. Government exists in form, it doesn't exist in substance, and in that situation also people are living. They are making their efforts. If there was a government in this country, things should pick up like anything, and we would be able to integrate our economy with the emerging two powers of Asia-or say, emerging global powers-India and China. But the

fact remains that we are in a very, very bad situation.

You are so nice that you have started a dialogue. I have told the organizers earlier too that you have started this process, so continue this process and have more dialogues between different sectors in India and Nepal. But we are no longer in 1951. We cannot afford to undermine the existence of the major players in this part of the world including the global power and the regional powers. Therefore, I have a request to you, since you are the deputy leader of the a party which might capture South Block or PMO in 2014 as things stand as we observe through different networks here. You are in a process of election, and in that context, probably once you go back, you may like to re-examine the policies being formulated on Nepal and think on how you want to deal with Nepal for next ten to fifteen years, if you want to see Nepal as a prosperous country.

Politics is the best of the policies; that's what I also have learnt. I was a student of political science too. OK. Therefore, political institutionalization of everything is quite important. If things had gone as expected, my colleagues Laxman Ghimire and others would not have raised the issue. Four years have gone; probably another four to six years we will be wasting. How long our fiends want Nepal to remain in a highly volatile situation! That will create a problem to our neighbors too. Thank you.



**Ravi Shankar Prasad**  
*(replying to queries)*

Friends, I had come to listen to you, and have given by preliminary comments. But a few issues came up, and I thought, I should say a few more things. Dwarika Babu said, whatever you are telling, is being heard here. This listening is your business. It is not our task. And what kind of a country you are making, you have to decide. We can give our humble suggestions. If we come to power, even then, we are not going to poke with Nepal; the sooner political leaders of Nepal come to have a clear understanding about a better future, the better. We are very clear about it that people of Nepal have to determine their own destiny; we can at best be a facilitator, we can only counsel, we can suggest. Therefore, I think that clarity is very much needed. Ojhaji, you talked about small-state sensitivity. I take that point. I can tell you that as far as our party is concerned, we have been trained by Atal Behari and Advani ji, and in both of their trainings, we know, we must extend relations to the neighbors, and we we have also been taught how to be sensitive towards small states. I was in Sri Lanka some time back, and there too, I placed this idea. You know, because of the issue of Tamil, very often the situation becomes hot with the discrimination of Tamils that takes place there, which in fact should not happen. But in the parliament I said, we have got historical cultural linkage with Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka is not an enemy country. I said it effectively. That means, the sensitivity of the small nations, as you have raised, I shall mind it. We shall be conscious of that, so that you will not have

any more chance to raise the issue again. I want to assure you that we have never had big-brotherly attitude, and when I say this I mean everyone, including the ones that are ruling today, and if there have been slips, that needs to be taken into account.

The economic issue as raised by Dixitji, is a fact. Economic democracy can come only when there is political democracy with peace. If there is no peace, there can be no development. How peace and harmony can come, you have to decide. I was feeling I should not be speaking on this, but it is necessary to refer to some statistics. 65 % of Nepal's foreign trade is with India. And the total value is nearly 22 thousand crores. It is a big amount. Of the total foreign investment in Nepal, 46 % comes from India, and that is a big amount. It means, we are helping one another. I won't talk of the smaller programs, but there are 126000 retired Indian army personnel of Nepali origin and about 1400 crores of pensions every year is sent from India to Nepal, because they have served India with dedication. More of such programs should continue among us. But I want to tell you a big fact: about such programs no debate ever takes place in Hindustan. If more money is needed, more should be given, because as I said, from Birgunj to Nepalgunj right up to Pokhara or to Dharan, the love that binds us is great. When we sit in the parliament or whenever I have been a minister and whenever there are allocations, we have to think hard and often there are discussions. But when it comes to the question of aiding Nepal, there has never been any debate, and in future too, there shall be none of such debates, and this we want to assure you. I want to place this with great clarity with you. I am of the opinion that the entrepreneurship of India is same as the entrepreneurship of Nepal. From Kathmandu to Birgunj, or from Birtanagar up to Bihar and to Uttar Pradesh, or from Gorkhpur to Calcutta port, if this entrepreneurship goes out to the world, I shall be happy. For that to happen we need harmony, we need peace.

Dwarika Babu, to you I want to tell, 'politician' is a very infamous word, be it in Nepal or in India. Please allow me to

talk, but no person is bigger than a politician, and I want to tell it with full humility. Here are many friends sitting here, who are politicians. As you know, I often take part in TV debates. In one of those debates I was partaking, and there some intellectuals whom I respect, were criticizing the politicians. I said, it was their right. In Hindustan, a leader criticizes someone inside the parliament; the media criticizes him. The courts too are active in our country. They too are vehemently critical of the politicians and often they pass harsh judgments. And if there remains an action, after five years, the public votes out, and sends the leaders off the work. A culture has evolved in India that if someone works well, the public votes him back with blessings. I am of the opinion that there is no other person who faces criticism at so many levels like a politician. And yet, we keep working, and for that, please appreciate the politicians.

Thank you very much. At the end I would say only one thing. I keep visiting different countries to take parts in different plenary to represent my party, but being a part of this seminar here in Nepal, and taking part in this program today, I am extremely pleased. I gained a lot of experiences. Meeting you and listening to you have given me immense pleasure. Thank you very much.



**Deepak Kumar Adhikari**  
*Convener of the Seminar*

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I thank everyone who has contributed to making this seminar a success. I thank Ravi Shankarji at the first place. I also thank every one of you for accepting our invitation and coming here. I want to clarify that it was a totally civilian, non-governmental initiative, and not a program aided by any government machinery or embassy. It was delivered as a result of the society's support and good will and the participation of the intellectuals like you. And thus, this program has been a great success. I thank everyone present here. I also thank representatives from the Indian Embassy, and every invitee. With that, I declare that the program is over now. Thank you all.