

# UJAGAR

Triannual Newsletter of Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal (NeNAP)

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(8 pages including Cover)

## Editorial

"Ujagar" is a triannual newsletter of Neeti Anusandhan Pratishthan, Nepal (NeNAP) to raise awareness and to highlight various national issues of our country such as society, culture, education, health, politics, security, defence, economics and foreign affairs etc. It will be published in three issues in a volume in a year, and at the end of the year we will publish one special volume. This newsletter will be a link / reference to formulate programs to support the issues raised by people, organizations within Nepal and outside Nepal. This newsletter will be published in Nepal and also will be distributed outside Nepal such as India and China. The target audience of the newsletter is people involved in policy making and scholars, researchers and leaders in academic circles.

The articles in this volume are analytical, timely and fact-based. We expect the issue will make a significant contribution to the process of policy making. We encourage eligible, distinguished, patriotic, and knowledgeable scholars of the country, who have not been nationally recognized for various reasons and their voices have never been because of the swamps of selfish politics prevalent in the country.

One of the prime objectives of "Ujagar" is to connect emerging faces of scholars establishing channels in the field of national policy making by identifying such individuals as well as keeping them separate from these various topics. Therefore, we have planned to launch the issues of the newsletter in national and international forums.

In fact, this newsletter encourages the writers who provide systematic analysis of data from the field of their respective areas of expertise. In addition, we discourage personal and biased opinions targeted to certain groups or organizations or individuals. The newsletter envisions an 'equality in our society' following the age old mantra of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* of *Upanishad*.

## Nepalese Economy and Remittance



**Keshav Raj Panthee**

Remittance, through work-related migration in the world at present has become a hot issue. Especially, developing countries are getting heavy flow of remittance in last two decades. It has stimulated different types of economic activities of the developing countries. Nepal is also facing large scale work-related migration and experiencing heavy flow of remittance. And it has become a major factor for shaping and uplifting Nepalese economy. Remittance in Nepal is a major source of foreign currency and the families

of migrant workers spend the money from remittance for education, developing technical skills and other activities of socio-economic status.

Along with the advent of liberal economy in mid-1990s, migration to overseas countries was diversified and, accordingly, the amount of remittance increased. Before this India and Britain (in the form of British Gurkhas) were the major destinations for labor migration. According to the data of received for Central Bank of Nepal, the amount of remittance was Rs. 594,588.3 million in FY 2015/16 and it is estimated to reach Rs. 654003.1 million for FY 2017/18.

As per the World Bank report, Nepal ranks 4th in South Asia, 19th in the world in terms of remittance inflows in 2018 and Nepal also ranks 5th in the world in terms of remittances as a share of GDP. As per Nepal Rastra Bank data, remittance has exceeded export revenue since FY 2002/2003. Since FY 2003/04 the amount of remittance has increased in such a way that it is higher than the sum total of receipts through tourist income, merchandise exports and foreign aid. Similarly, it is fluctuating near about the total value of trade, trade deficit, gross fixed capital formation and total government expenditure

**Table 1: Selected Macroeconomic Indicators as percentage of GDP**

Fiscal Year	Trade Balance	As Percentage of Gross Domestic Product		
		Remittances	Gross Fixed Capital Formation	Total Expenditure
2008/09	-21.93	21.22	21.35	22.23
2009/10	-26.28	19.43	22.21	21.77
2010/11	-24.28	18.55	21.41	21.61
2011/12	-25.36	23.54	20.77	22.21
2012/13	-28.31	25.64	22.59	21.16
2013/14	-31.68	27.66	23.52	22.15
2014/15	-32.36	28.98	27.97	24.95
2015/16	-31.22	29.52	28.73	26.67
2016/17	-34.7	26.32	31.81	31.68
2017/18	-38.63	25.11	34.11	35.84

Source: [www.mof.gov.np](http://www.mof.gov.np)

Table 1 depicts the reality of Nepalese economy in last ten years (2008/09 to 2017/18). Government data on remittance as percent of GDP indicates the excessive dependence of the economy on remittance receipts. Remittance receipt is found even greater than total government expenditure (budget) in some fiscal years. Likewise, it seems almost similar to gross fixed capital formation, a major indicator of economic development. By observing the data of trade balance and remittance we can imagine regarding what could be the status of foreign exchange reserve without remittance.

If we look at the sources for remittances inflow the figures are concentrated only on few countries. The World Bank data on remittances during 2013 to 2017 is shown in Table 2. The top ten destinations for remittance inflow to Nepal are Qatar, Saudi Arabia, India, United Arab Emirates, United States, Kuwait, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Australia and Bangladesh. The five year data indicate the concentration of remittance mainly on Qatar, Saudi Arabia, India and United Arab Emirates. Top three remittance inflow sources for Nepal during 2013-2017 on an average are Qatar (1,817 million US\$), Saudi Arabia (1,690 million US\$) and India (917 million US\$). Remittance inflow from the same countries in 2017 was 1,968; 1,841 and 1,021 million US\$ respectively.

**Table 2: Top Ten Remittance Sending Countries to Nepal (2013-2017)**

Top Ten Destinations for Remittance Inflow to Nepal (in Million US\$)					
Country	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Australia</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>107</b>
Bangladesh	48	53	61	61	64
India	786	847	962	971	1021
Kuwait	220	226	243	234	246
Malaysia	146	156	181	181	190
<b>Qatar</b>	<b>1,590</b>	<b>1,703</b>	<b>1,951</b>	<b>1,872</b>	<b>1968</b>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>1,510</b>	<b>1,562</b>	<b>1,784</b>	<b>1,751</b>	<b>1841</b>
United Arab Emirates	630	677	796	795	836
United Kingdom	111	119	137	136	143
United States	266	280	320	314	330

Source: Writer's calculation based on based on World Bank's remittance estimates, April 2018

### Should We Be Proud Of Such Heavy Flow Of Remittance?

After the period of political transition in 2006, the amount of government expenditure is rapidly increasing. At the phase of implementation of federal structure the expenditure went tremendously up and it will continue in days to come as indicated by the increase in taxes in local levels. The total government expenditure share of GDP has reached from 22.23 percent in FY 2008/09 to 35.84 percent in FY 2017/18. For the same period tax revenue as percentage of GDP was 11.84 and 21.93 percent respectively. Collected total tax revenue is even insufficient to cover recurrent expenditure of the government. Recurrent expenditure as percentage of GDP has reached from 12.93 percent in FY 2008/09 to 23.17 percent in FY 2017/18. Along with the increase in government size, the expenditure efficiency of the government has been questioned in these days. Unbalanced and under expenditure of budget allocated for capital expenditure has not added speed to the sustainable development activities.

Government reports have shown that out of received remittance more than 80

percent is spent for daily consumption. And very insignificant proportion is used for productive purpose. Remittance indeed is fueling import in the economy. If we look at the trend of remittance inflow and import value, both are found increasing in upward direction during the FY 1990/1991 to FY 2014/15. The real cost of remittance for the family and the nation as a whole in terms of brain drain and shortage of active manpower is yet to be studied. Such aforementioned economic scenario makes us to think again and again regarding finding and developing alternative sources for economic survival. The more the world

is said to be modernized and globalized the more complexities, vulnerabilities and economic risks arise and our traditional ways of dealing them may not work. These complexities are creating serious threats to world economies. It is not time for us to be happy with remittance flow as labor migration is not a permanent solution for economic development especially for low income countries like Nepal. It is time for our planners to use our human resource for productive economic activities, internal stability and peace.

### Challenge to the Economy

Since long time, Nepalese migrants in different countries have been transferring their earnings through different formal as well as informal channels. Formal channels include banks, licensed money-transfer operators and other non-bank financial institutions. Informal channels include individual people, business people, and unauthorized remittance service providers. In case of Nepal, remittances from the formal channels are very less in comparison to the informal one. Government of Nepal has laid focus on the inflow of remittance through normal channels. Announcement of 25 percent exemption on the registration charge on purchase of land and houses in the budget of FY 2016/17, mandatory for opening of the bank account for outgoing Nepalese labors since FY 2017/18, plan for conducting bilateral agreements with destination countries for imposing the costs of workers going abroad for employment to employers in FY 2019/20 budget speech indicate some of the positive initiations made by the government to formalize inflow of remittance and for its productive use.

Despite the government attempt and campaign for financial literacy and financial inclusion by Nepal Rastra Bank, inflow of remittance through informal channels still has become a matter of great concern. Though the countries around the world have agreed to reduce the cost of remittance, due to procedural simplicity, cost effective and flexibility, hundi is still popular as a means of remitting money. Same situation is also found in Nepal. Several incidents related to arrests of hundi operators by security personnel in recent years also prove this fact. It was reported that in the initial years 90 percent of remittance from South Korea to Nepal used to come through informal channel due to lack of access to

## NeNAP's Bulletin

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Nepalese remittance companies. Banks are found most expensive remittance channels in Nepal and all over the world. Such factors have promoted informal channels like hundi. If we estimate the data of informal flow of remittance the figure might be giant one than the officially recorded one. The experts suggest adding 40% on official figures of remittance inflow. Then what could be about informal trade?

Several research works have shown the existence of informal trade between Nepal and India. SAARC economy itself has suffered from informal trade between the member nations and it is regarded as the major cause behind occurring low level of intra-regional trade. Having open border with India, being at the stage of political transition and having several loopholes in custom sector informal transactions are being held in the bordering part of Nepal and India. Likewise, trade mis-invoicing with Nepal-China custom centers as per the prediction of expertise also fueling informal trade these days. Along with this, presently developed and growing economies are engaged in the trade war. In such a scenario, how Nepal can tackle such trade and remittance related informal practices.

#### Conclusion

To conclude, this paper highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of remittance to the economy of Nepal. The economy of Nepal is dependent on remitted money from migrant workers. However, international labor market is uncertain for Nepali migrant workers, for example, the case of Malaysia. Such situations cause fluctuation on the flow of migrant workers seriously affecting the economy. The only way to address this issue is to increase internal economic activities to minimize the risk of dependence on international labor market. There is no any option rather than promoting internal economic activities related to trade, commerce and service sector. In spite of political instability unlike in the past, public aspirations are not fulfilled and commoners are having frustrating experiences. It is time for the government as well as intellectuals and experts to prioritize internal economic activities using local resources. Instead of sending youths as migrant workers, it is time to create a positive vibe for economy among youths instilling the love for nation through the policies of government.

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## Literature and Popular Imagination



**Mahesh Paudyal, M.Phil**

'Literature is the story of "man in action", says William J. Long in his History of English Literature. Classical understanding of literature agrees that literature shapes human imagination for the collective benefit of mankind, and of the entire creation at large. This moralizing aspect of literature has never been undermined. Literature is one of the finest manifestations of a culture, and the best channel to transmit culture from one generation to another.

How does literature treasure, mould, transmit and save culture? It does it through language that encapsulates for the message and the artistic finery of a writer. This article basically examines how literary language works, and how language in world literature and Nepali literature have changed over the decades from highly ornamental and figurative one to the diction of common people, together with all the informalities underlying them.

One of the main points of debate between William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge was on the question of 'poetic diction'. Wordsworth in the 'Preface' to the Lyrical Ballads advocated for rustic diction 'language of man' against the tradition of using ornate and figurative language for writing a work of literature. Coleridge, however, refuted the proposal, saying that to sustain a great thought, great language was necessary.

Though thematically different from what Coleridge picked up as subject matter of literature, Mathew Arnold, a veteran Victorian poet, took up Coleridge's tradition and voted for ornate language for poetry. By doing this, he established the linguistic identity of modernism, which later, albeit in a pejorative way, developed into 'high modernism'. This phrase 'high modernism' began to be understood as a derogatory phrase when the world entered

its postmodern phase after the sixties of the twentieth century.

This debate also figured in the tradition of the drama. When the western theater was forsaken from the hands of Aristotelians practitioners, the Twentieth Century Theater became the theater of common man. This transition was, as claimed by common man's writers like Arthur Miller, not only language, but also the subject matter moved from high-placed and ornate tradition to the common people. The classical tradition almost died out, when poets and critics like TS Eliot and WB Yeats stopped being popular with their lyrical and poetic dramas. Critics like Augusto Bowl championed the case, and pulled the tradition of the drama to the camp of the everyday man in layman's language. Bertolt Brecht was even more radical in freeing the theater from the clutches of the classical conservatives.

These are some global paradigm shifts in the language of literature. When we critically look at these shifts, one thing becomes very clear. Literature, in its subject and presentation, gradually moved out of the limits of eulogy—praising gods and rulers—to the open space, where the common people convened. As long as institutions of education and literature, like academies and universities continued to hold the key of literary criticism and appreciation, literature continued to drag the burden of ornamentation. But then, when these institutions were questioned as 'institutions of interpellation' by critics like Louis Althusser, and when the writing spaces—especially those of drama and poetry—were made political spaces for public interactions by writers like Bertolt Brecht, literature escaped the clutches of the few conservative perfectionists, and roosted in the crowd. Most of the post-modern American fictions and dramas, and non-Western poetry in the past two to three decades have been written in the common people's language. The proof of this reality is that, the literature of our own time is sustained not by the magic of the cultured and refined language—like that of Virginia Woolf or Thomas Hardy—but by slangs, informalities, fragments, phrases, cant, argots, pidgins, creoles, professional registers, noises, discordant hollering and multi-vocal articulations from all quarters of life. Much of the vocabularies in literature today are absent in a classically developed academic lexicon.

The same is true for Nepali literature. What was once known as 'pariskarvad' and

understood as an ideal approach towards literary refinement is today understood as a clumsy, centralist and limiting approach that discouraged the carnivalistic nature of human language. That movement, a Nepali counterpart of the West's high modernism, was invalidated by the readers before it had moved through three decades of its development. It's true that during the heydays of such high modernism in Nepali literature, there were drifts, avant-garde writers who tried to resist that movement with their experimental, non-conformist and idiosyncratic linguistic and structural permutations. But they could register little success, because legitimizing institutions were still the same centralist foundations, and they were both powerful and active.

Today's case, however, is not the same anymore. Not only in Nepal, but also across the world, academia and universities are no longer the only legitimizing, validating and judicial bodies to decide the trends and directions of literature. At least their roles have been slashed to a great extent, and the psychodynamics of literary market has moved to the quarters of the common readers. I can cite a number of cases wherein the reading public has ignored that have been institutionally merited as a high-order literature. The fact that Tribhuvan University Press is almost out of fashion, Sajha Publication's latest deliveries are seldom the choices of the readers, and publications coming out of Nepal Academy are more or less ritualistic, constrained by the traps of inclusiveness and representation. These three major institutions of literary legitimization have lost their hold on the literary market. Their positions are either ceremonial, or ritualistic, as far as popular literature of our own day is concerned. The fact that no modern writer considers Sajha Publication a viable option for getting a new book published, and the fact that many established writers are withdrawing their manuscripts from Sajha and handing them over to private publishing firms confirms that Sajha, like two other institutions I have mentioned above, has failed to catch up the changing language of the fleeting time, and the shifting aspirations of the reading public. Firms institutionally driven by government establishment are not likely to catch up with this linguistic transformation anymore, not only in Nepal, but also around the world.

This is symptomatic of the fact that conservatives suffer 'dinosaur syndrome' everywhere in the world, both in terms of issues and contents. This article doesn't take up issues as its core subject; so it dispenses by saying that today's literary content emanates from the diverse experiences of the common people through the

everydayness of their living. As for language, deeper analyses are deemed necessary.

Until the pre-modern and the modern times, ancient Sanskrit texts, or models developed by great masters, were the sources of language and vocabulary. The influence is evident in the imagination that literature should reflect the finest combinations possible in any language. The very assumption has fallen into disuse of late, and readers and critics today have started arguing that language should have close consonance with the content a piece of writing picks up. In theorizing 'verisimilitude', Aristotle imagined this consonance, but his own self-limiting theorization of high-placed characters and their language trapped him.

When Sanskrit stopped being the only source of literary language, and after personal models went out of fashion, writers started picking up the common people's language as the source of their literary creations. Beat and Black Mountain Generation poets in the US, authors of the Harlem Renaissance, postmodern experimentalists in America, the new avant-gardes in India and Nepal ushered slangs and informal, colloquial expressions in their writing to tune up with their contents, predominantly the concern of the common people.

The language of literature today is completely carnivalistic. The heteroglossia, as imagined by Mikhail Bakhtin, is in full swing. The same text is inflected with various languages, rising from various quarters of life. Since ancient assumptions of the unity of place or time are no longer considered key to a piece of writing, authors do not confine their language to that of one location. Accordingly, the entire marketplace, with its discordant speech, creeps into the modern day writing. This is the exact reason why the erstwhile margin is becoming the new centre, together with its language.

Words, therefore, enter modern day writing from every location where a crowd of heterogeneous people is expected. Voices from inside or outside a bus, a train, an airport, a marketplace, a school or a college, a tea-stall, a ration shop, a vegetable market, an election rally, a public carnival...and every other place, where common people are likely to gather and holler, are a source of literary language today. Words and phrases are picked up as they are—unprocessed—and fixed into a literary matrix. Only that the matrix, as mediated by the author's meditated consciousness, has a magical power to transform that discordant noise into a piece of sweet symphony.

In today's world, a true author is one who has the magical gift to pick up

noise from the crowd and process it into a symphony. Such symphony not only delights, it also connects layers in the society and cements culture, because even the neglected ones will find a space in the literary culture through the medium of art. This art of inventing symphony through the bits of linguistic expressions, and not merely the knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical rules, makes one an author proper. Philology has ultimately given way to art for such obvious regions. And today, the driving force of literature, both its creation and market, stands on the road, and not inside formalizing institutions.

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## Indo-Nepal Relations

### Things to Do



**Aruna Ghimire**

The dramatic landslide victory of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) in the 2019 Lok Sabha election brought Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India for another five-year. Hours before the announcement of the final result of the election, Nepali Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli telephoned Modi, congratulated him and expressed desire to work closely to further strengthen the bilateral relations. Moreover, accepting the invitation of his Indian counterpart, Nepali Prime Minister Oli attended the latter's sworn-in ceremony. Moreover, the newly formed Modi-led government made a massive increase in the foreign aid to Nepal. The foreign aid allocation of India to Nepal increased by 65 percent; Rs 650 crore of 2018-2019 reached to Rs 1,050 crore 2019-2019.

The earlier tenure of Modi witnessed several peaks and plains in Indo-Nepal relations. The six-month long disturbance

at the Indo-Nepal border following the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in September 2015 created a chaos like situation in Indo-Nepal relationship, bringing it to a lowest of all times. This period of crisis led to the growth of anti-Indian sentiments among commoners in Nepal. Nepal also signed a Trade and Transit deal with China in March 2016 and it made India uncomfortable. Moreover, India was also blamed of playing a key role in toppling Oli's government in 2016. On the other hand, during his first tenure, Modi visited Nepal four times. In his last visit to Nepal in May 2018, Narendra Modi tried to bring Indo-Nepal relations back to normalcy amid post-constitution uneasiness. Both the Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated the Ramayan Circuit and the construction of 900 MW Arun III project. The construction of Raxaul-Kathmandu rail link was also announced on the occasion.

With all these recent developments, Indo-Nepal relations are indeed marching toward a positive direction. However, there are still many issues to be addressed by both sides to strengthen the relations. To begin with, the fate of anticipated report prepared by the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on Nepal-India relations is still uncertain because India has not accepted it citing busy schedule of the Indian Prime Minister. The report incorporates recommendations on how to improve bilateral relations through updating treaties and agreements; improving trade, commerce, water resource, people-to-people contact and cultural ties. Thus, both sides are expected to review the report; and hold discussions on the possibilities of implementation of the recommendations so as to bring new insight in Indo-Nepal relations.

The second important issue that needs to be resolved soon is the issue of demonetized Indian currency left in Nepal. It is believed that Nepal has INR 950 crore i.e., almost NRs 15.2 billion in bank denomination of 500 and 1000. Moreover, Nepal has also banned the use of Indian currency of higher denomination than hundred. This led to the shortage of Indian currency in Nepali market leading to illegal exchange of Indian currency in districts bordering with India such as Parsa, Banke, Nawalparasi, Kanchanpur and Rupandehi. The number of Indian tourists visiting Nepal that accounts for a quarter of its total tourists also went down. The number of Indian tourists playing in Nepalese casino had also shrunk down. It equally hit the people residing on the Indo-Nepal border who cross the border to buy day-to-day commodities.

Another issue that both sides tend to turn a deaf ear is the flood and inundation in bordering areas of Nepal. Every year heavy rainfall induced floods and inundations claiming dozens of lives, livestock; destroys property, infrastructure and crops worth millions both in Nepal and India. Nepal blames India for the flood citing they have constructed dams on the border; India blames that Nepal is responsible for the floods in India as Nepali authorities open the gates of dams. Politicians and bureaucrats keep on blaming each other but they never had a plan to control the floods and common people keep on adversely suffering on either side of the border. Both the governments need to come with plans to control floods and save the lives and property of millions of people on the border.

Apart from these, both sides need to address the border security issues. The long-standing historical and cultural relations

between Nepal and India have always been facilitated by the open-border. However, unfortunately, it has not only encouraged the people-to-people contact but has also, at times, facilitated illegal trade along with smuggling, drug trafficking, human trafficking among others at the same time. It is being a safe-haven for carrying out illegal activities. Of all the cross-border crimes, counterfeit Indian currency has been a burden for both India and Nepal for long. Thus, both countries are expected to come with the joint security measure to curb such criminal activities along the Indo-Nepal border to meet their security interests.

Addressing the above mentioned issues will play a vital role to further strengthen the relations in a mutually beneficial way. Thus, Mr. Oli and Mr. Modi are expected to make efforts to address these issues at the earliest.

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## The Changing Political Dynamics of Nepal Consolidation of Political and Social Base



**Binay K. Mishra, PhD**

### Background

Recent political developments in Nepal have been dramatic. The Himalayan nation promulgated her Federal Constitution in 2015. Immediately after that, Nepal peacefully performed elections to elect representatives of three tier political system in two phases. The elections gave a stable government ending the period of political transition. The alliance between CPN-UML (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist) led by K.P. Sharma Oli and Maoists-Centre (MC) led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal-Prachanda worked like a magic in spite of all experts' speculations. The alliance proved to be a boon for the left parties but a serious setback to Nepali Congress (NC). The belligerent Madhesi political forces

ushered Oli to mobilize anti-India nationalist sentiments. These tactics worked well in garnering electoral triumph for the left parties. The left alliance renamed as Nepal Communist Party (NCP) enjoys two-third majority in the parliament and forms governments in six of seven provincial assemblies as well. In Province II, Madhesi parties Sanghiya Samajvadi Forum (SSF) and Rastriya Janata Party (RJP) form a coalition government. The main opposition party Nepali Congress is struggling with internal organizational disputes. Under such pretext, few unprecedented political incidents are aiming at altering the future political discourse of Nepal. First- RJP withdrew its support from the Oli government after its lawmaker Resham Chaudhary was convicted in Tikapur carnage by Kailali District Court. Second- the Supreme Court has released the coordinator of Alliance for Independent Madhesh (AIM) – Dr CK Raut, arguably, with some hidden political understanding reached out by the government. To the surprise of the country, the understanding revealed on 8th of March 2019 when the agreement was held public between the two. Third, Bhattarai led NSP has merged with Upendra Yadav led SSF on 6th May and transformed into a new political party called Samajwadi Party-Nepal.

### Changing Political Dynamics

These political developments are intertwined though they seem to be

unconnected. There are no explicit answers to questions: Why has CK Raut, all of sudden, been released? Why was the case of RJP lawmaker not settled politically? And, why has former PM Baburam Bhattarai and the incumbent deputy PM and Minister for Health decided to merge their parties? The article tries to examine these issues to speculate the future political discourse of Nepal.

First, let's ponder upon the case of mainstreaming process of Dr CK Raut, a Cambridge graduate. He was behind the bars for last five months. The Government of Nepal signed an eleven point agreement with him in the presence of Prime Minister, Home Minister and co-chair of ruling party in a program organized with much funfair in the city hall of Kathmandu. After the agreement Dr Raut's party AIM got a new name called Janamat Party. Dr Raut also appealed SSF and RJP the political power centers in Tarai. As per the agreement, CK Raut and his followers now would abide by the constitution dropping their earlier separatist path. They agreed to respect country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Rather, they would follow 'democratic means to address the dissatisfaction of people of Tarai'. This is not simply a political settlement but a calibrated strategy of Mr. Oli aiming at two targets with single political move. Oli's strategy worked in two ways: he consolidated his nationalist constituency and tried to fragment the Madhesi forces that could be threat to Kathmandu regime. In fact the Prime Minister took the separatist movements in Terai as a threat to national security as he showed his concerns in the program. Addressing to the 18th anniversary program of the National Security Council Secretariat, PM Oli expressed that a safe landing of separatist activities in Terai was an important for national security and peace and it was a positive achievement of the government. PM Oli understood the charismatic personality of Raut and his impressive political aura among Madhesi youths. The ruling regime clearly understood that establishing Raut in mainstream politics is to weaken traditional Madhesh based parties and such a move would also lessen the bargaining capacity with Kathmandu, particularly in regard to constitutional amendment. This move strengthened Oli and his government as the Madhesh based parties would not compel the ruling regime in Kathmandu to compromise on their demands.

Second is the case of the withdrawal of RJP after the decision of the Kailali District Court. The decision of the Court put the RJP law maker behind the bars. He hails from a Tharu community of western plain, and popular among his community as he is said to be fighting for the autonomy of Tharu community. He wanted to restructure provincial boundary to form a Tharus' ethnic majority. This restructuring of provincial boundaries constitutes one of the core demands of Madhesi parties. The ruling regime in Kathmandu has been against such restructuring and ethnic leaders been often blaming the ruling elites for not accommodating the ethnic diversities of the nation in the federal system. The Prime Minister declined the demand of restructuring the provincial boundary to form a Tharu majority because it did not serve his principle of his majoritarian politics. On the other hand, turning CK Raut into main stream politics would weaken the regional forces that have been threatening the national integrity. Consequently, RJP withdrew from the government.

Third is the consequence of these two events on Nepali politics. Newly formed Janamat Party led by CK Raut posed a threat to RJP. Consequently, RJP withdrew from the government and concentrated on reorganizing its cadres. Upendra Yadav, another player in Terai politics, sensed the importance of these events as these could cause him political insecurity. Baburam

Bhattarai, whose party was almost wiped out in last election and he was looking for some alternatives, saw Upendra Yadav, who would approve his ideology. Bhattarai wanted to expand his party outside his constituency. Yadav would dream that he would have a national party to counter the popularity of Raut among Madhesi youths. This convergence has led them to merge and transform into Samajwadi Party-Nepal.

### Conclusion

The foremost thing for the current ruling regime is to address the issues of development in Madhesh. In spite of a clear majority, the present regime spent too much time for political manipulation rather planning for development. Political manipulations could be interesting for political cadres, not for the commoners. These issues would take the floor of political discourse of Nepal in near future. Second, the ruling elites turned CK Raut, a former villain, into a hero in Madhesh politics. The followers of CK Raut could be strong vote bank for the Oli and group weakening SSF and RJP in Madhesh. Third, the craze of Madhesi youths for the ideology of CK Raut would appeal for a new Madhesi regional sentiment. Fourth, these equations in Terai politics would weaken both RJP and Samajwadi in Madhesh politics. And certainly new vote banks would be created and leading to different social polarization than ever before.

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## Oli's Dilemma Syndrome and Foreign Policy of Nepal



**Dipesh KC, PhD**

The current Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. KP Sharma Oli was the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Girija Prasad Koirala government after the success of Nepal's Democratic Movement of 2006. An experienced leader, famous for his speech and Nepali ukhan-

tukka, became the Prime Minister of Nepal in 2015 after the promulgation of Constitution of Nepal 2015 drafted by the Constitutional Assembly. During his tenure, the relations with India ran out of his control leading to severe consequences of fuel crisis for common people. However, he enmeshed the crisis in his favor challenging several Indian Policies towards Nepal and that established him as a "Nationalist" leader. As a result, his party got people's mandate in 2017 election leading him to the office of Prime Minister.

Oli reached the office of the Prime Minister for the second time with the support of two-thirds majority in the Parliament. He became the second Prime Minister in the history of Nepal with two-thirds majority; first being the BP Koirala led government in 1959. The two-thirds majority and his ability of making influential public speech made him one of the most powerful Prime Ministers of Nepal. Nepal-China Transit and

Transportation Agreement signed between Nepal and China on September 7, 2018 is often considered as a historic achievement of Oli's Foreign Policy. The Agreement provides an access of China's ports for overseas trade to Nepal. However, the Agreement would not be of any value to Nepal as it is not trade friendly and impractical because of high expenditure in the present context. In spite of the impracticality of the Agreement, Prime Minister Oli was held high by his supporters for opening an alternative trade route for Nepal. Oli's northern inclinations gained him popularity as people took him to be the only leader who can resist "Indian hegemony".

The Foreign Policy of Oli's government got a momentum when Pradip Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs met Richard Pompeo, the US Secretary of State. The American press release stated that Nepal is included in the Asia-Pacific, a US strategy to check increasing influence of Asian economic giants in the region. This move of Oli's move got bitter remarks in media and social sites alike.

In principle, the foreign policy of Nepal is guided by the principle of non-alignment. Shifting the foreign policy from non-alignment to different alignment principles such as Asia-Pacific and Brick and Road Initiatives initiated by the Government of China is taken to be risky for Nepal in long run. However, Oli government rejects the ideas of alignment of the Asia Pacific, intellectuals show concerns that alignments with power centers can be dangerous for Nepal. Oli visited Vietnam and Cambodia, which have no significant economic importance for Nepal. However, the visits have strategically meaningful that they are tilting towards the Asia Pacific Strategy. Vietnam, a communist-ruled country, has rising differences with China due to the claims on the disputed Islands in the South China Sea. Similarly, Cambodia is also inclining towards the West. Oli's latest foreign trips bring new suspects of his strategy of informal involvement in Asia Pacific Strategy.

As discussed above, the Foreign Policy of Nepal follows the principles of non-alignment. However, the latest developments indicate severe deviations from the principle. On the other hand, change in the government simultaneously changed the strategies on international relationships. Such a dilemma syndrome of the Foreign Policy of present government is evidenced by the remark of Janardan Sharma, an influential CPN leader, "...sometimes we tilt south at other times,

we tilt north and sometimes we are even running towards west." Such deviations from the principle of non-alignment in Foreign Policy are concerns of today."

Oli visited Vietnam, a communist country, as his first foreign trip as soon as he took office in February 2018. In Ho Chi Minh City, he visited the Mausoleum of late Communist Leader of Vietnam and paid tribute to him. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phu had a meeting on the sidelines of World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2019, the two leaders agreed to enhance mutual visits and exchanges at the high and all levels. In June, Oli participated in the centenary program of the International Labor Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. He then visited Great Britain and had a bilateral meeting with British Prime Minister Theresa May. Oli also visited France to take part in different programs related to tourism promotions and investments. The Europe visit of PM Oli concentrated on economic interest and tourism promotion. However, there has been a criticism on his visit with intangible preparations and outputs. There was no bilateral meeting with his French counterparts and the visit with Theresa May, at that time outgoing Prime Minister, was only the formality rather than any result-oriented discussions and agreements. Consequently, he got bitter criticism in media and social site networks for not having tangible outcome and spending millions of rupees from the tax payer's money.

### Interest of Powerful Nations

Because of her significant geopolitical location between two giant and fast growing economies of India and China, international power centers have their growing concerns

in Nepal. In a situation of this sort, a far sighted foreign policy is the requirement of today to maintain harmony in the internal as well as external politics. Such a policy can maintain peace not only within the country but also in the entire region of South Asia.

The interest groups are showing their concern with vested interests. The political discourse often centers round such vested interests, however, we do not have any solutions to resist them. One of the prime ways to solve it is to have fast economic development and prove to the international community that we work in the interest of our people. Such a perspective can handle the unwanted situations created by the interest groups to keep our national unity intact and response national security threats strategically.

Several powerful countries have shown their interests in Nepal. For example, our Minister for Foreign Affairs was invited to the United States of America to seek Nepal's central role in free and open Indo-Pacific Strategy and immediately after his visit there was a press release from the USA stating the agreement of Nepal in Asia-Pacific Strategy. Similarly India as a close neighbor has its security and economic interests in Nepal. China, the northern neighbor, has its growing interest in Nepal and the endorsement of Brick and Road Initiatives (BRI) is just an example. Nepal needs to resist the interests of global and regional power centers. However, the general public is not satisfied with the way the power centers are diplomatically handled in favor of our nation and people. There are often criticisms of being biased and popularity gaining strategies with regards to recent developments in Foreign Policy of Nepal.

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### Oli's Foreign Trips

Date	Country	Objectives	Expenditures (NRs. In Millions)
6-8 April 2018	India	State Visit	10.3
19-24 June 2018	China	State Visit	19.3
24-28 Sep 2018	The USA	United Nations General Convention	40.37
29-30 Sep 2018	Costa-Rica	Honorable PhD	
January 2019	Switzerland	World Economic Forum	11.81
9-13 May 2019	Vietnam	State Visit	21.28
15-13 May 2019	Cambodia	State Visit	
8-15 June	Switzerland, Britain & France	ILO Program and Others	-
3-12 August	Singapore	Health Check Up	-

# Higher Education in Nepal : Saddening Status-quo and Solution



**Premraj Neupane, PhD**

There are growing concerns with regard to the recent crises that majority of university and passing through. We wake up with the news of scandals in universities –financial, academic or administrative. Unnecessary political interventions leading to inefficient administration because of corrupt officials, financial constraints, have become our everyday news headlines in our media and social site networks. Voices have been raised from the general public and intellectuals for the need of revamping the academic activities of universities making them true institutions of learning and research..

Let's ponder upon the major problems in today's scenario. The primary one would be the explicit political intervention in the academic institutions. When students first walk into a campus, they are immediately hit with party politics. Soon they start noticing that everything in campus is determined by party politics, every decision, every appointment, even the hostel accommodation seats are divided between political parties. This party-system runs so deep that in every instance, it has superseded academic influence and qualification for party allegiance, in all levels. For example, administrators are appointed based on their political allegiances; the seats for teachers and officials are divided (and often disputed on) between parties. To be candid, universities in Nepal are run entirely by politicians and not by academicians. For every decision to be made, for any fund to be used, there is always dispute among parties. No one thinks of each other as fellow academicians, everyone is either a Congress or a Communist. This leads to complete

hindrance in any academic or infrastructural development in the University. This is the grass-root level problem in the Nepalese higher education, whose implications ripple into disastrous ramifications for the country as a whole and not just internally within universities. Such party based nepotistic tendencies are destroying the careers of thousands of aspirants who seek university education and they are forced to leave the nation for better alternatives. Government instability also heavily influences the atmosphere in universities. Every time a government changes (and this is very frequent in Nepal), the power dynamics shifts within the university. Works and projects from the previous administrations are stopped by the new ones in an effort to undermine them. In a nutshell, the political and governmental atmosphere of the country reflects itself in the university system, in both implicit and explicit ways.

The second problem is finance. We may believe that Nepal being an economically poor country directly translates into lack of funds for university which leads to infrastructural problems; but this is only half true. In paper, billions and billions are allocated and invested into university education each year. And yet, we do not see new buildings, we do not see better classrooms or repaired furniture or decent washrooms. Where does the money go? The money vanishes, and universities remain unfurnished. This brings about a direct shortage of infrastructure –no facilities on campus, lack of access to advanced didactic resources and supplies for instructional purposes, shortage of classrooms and clean lavatories and washrooms, lack of good accommodation facilities for students (national and international). The condition of our universities is shameful, for the university and for the country itself. When foreign academicians arrive to visit our universities, we are ashamed to show them the dirty, half-broken buildings and unclean toilets with the disgusting stench, dusty broken furniture and garbage-ridden hallways. Where did the money go? The budget is somewhere lost in the middle. And even if the budget manages to reach the university, there are very minimal chances of it reaching the intended destination. It goes through pockets of dozens of administrators, it has to go through party politics and disputes, and it has to go through corrupt officials, and somewhere

on this long route, it is completely depleted. Weak financial management is deliberate. So is this condition of universities due to poverty of the country? Probably! The poverty of the country brings poverty in the person that develops greed, greed develops desire for more money, and corruption takes place. The corruption then eats away all the money, and again the country is ridden with poverty. It is a vicious cycle, and our higher education systems are stuck in the center of it.

Teachers don't go to teach, students don't go to study. Corruption and nepotism run amok. But this is not all. Even in academic levels, the higher-education today in Nepal is not competent when measured in a global standard. Traditional pedagogical methods that have been long running remain unchecked and un-updated, despite their apparent lack of efficiency. The digital learning system is just a dream in the Nepali governmental scenario. Even the traditional pen-and-paper learning is not done properly. Education is not practical or skill-based, it is rote-based and theoretical and inefficient in real life. Moreover, new courses and subjects are not available in Nepal. This is the sad reality of higher education system in Nepal. No wonder the students travel abroad to receive university degrees and diplomas.

Just a few days ago, there was a case in the Tribhuvan University, the largest and the oldest university of Nepal. A student who got grades that were not satisfactory to graduate from that program was awarded Gold Medal. The student was said to have bribed the University officials in his favor. The exposure of this corruption brought a national outrage and mistrust towards the university education of Nepal. It is time for all of us to reflect on our mistakes in the past because we are suffering from those terrible and weak systems.

I see immense hope and positive initiations, particularly in younger generation. I also hope that one day this generation will cleanse the sins of our universities with their confidence. I also hope one day very soon our institutes of higher learning will be free from political interventions and they turn to be real centers of learning. I also hope very soon Nepal will give births to many Budhhas, ManuShris, Janaks and Sitas and all Sidharthas of Nepal will turn to modern Budhha with the light of our universities.

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