

LEGISLATIVE ELITE AND THE NEPALESE PARLIAMENT: A STUDY OF THEIR CLASS CHARACTERISTICS¹

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Introduction

Be it a developed or a developing nation, the concept of elite has most frequently been invoked in explaining the problems and prospects of social change. Nevertheless, in the Third World social system, such a tendency is more apparent as the social order usually, in these areas, is a function of the political leadership or elite dynamics. There are differences of opinion among social scientists with regard to the definition of term *elite*. I have here, therefore, as it would be relevant, tried to explain about the term elite, just prior to embarking on the class characteristics of the national legislative elite of the Himalaya Kingdom of Nepal.

Elite and Society: In fact, the term elite is of the French origin and is derived from the Latin word *eligere*, which etymologically implies to elect or to choose (Kerstiens 1966:4). The very word has been subject to diverse use from the earliest days in the military terminology in the sense of a choice of persons *homes d' elite* and *compagnie d' elite*, to Froissart's 15th century term *-meilleurs des meilleurs*, the best of the best. It was also applied in the 17th century, to recite the characteristics of the commodities of the excellent qualities. The term later came to refer to the prestigious and superior social groups such as the crack military units of the higher ranks and nobility. The term elite had not been in vogue in socio-political writings until the Italian Sociologist Vilfredo Pareto wrote a book the *Trattato di Sociologia Generale* in which he discussed the term with academic excellence. The same book later was translated into English as *The Mind and Society*, which helped bring about a shift of the elite term from choice and election to eminence. Pareto (Pareto 1935:1422-12), for whom *elite* and *class* are synonymous, writes:

Let us assume that in every branch of human activity, each individual is given an index that stands as a sign of his capacity, very much the way grades are given in various subjects in examinations in school... And so on for all the branches of human activity. ...So let us make a class of the people who have highest indices in their branch of activity and to that class give the name of elite.

Pareto, in fact, was of the firm view that individuals living in society are not equal intellectually and also morally. Therefore, he preferred to call *elite* to those who are the most competent and effective social groups under a socio-economic and political system. In his writing, *elite* as a notion, is devoid of any intent implying respect or honorific connotations. He argued that people who possess superiority in intelligence, character, skill, power, etc. are only regarded as the elites (Zeitlin 1909:187). According to him, all successful professors, businessmen, politicians, artists and so on are the elites.

There is almost a consensus among social scientists that the term 'elite' is not categorically applied to only one or two people but always to a plurality: a collectivity of some kind inside a society. The idea of high status and superiority is always linked with the term. Elite members do often feel having a high status and in some way superior as a model and standard setters to the society's institutional culture. He further says, *the elite group possesses power, respect, wealth and skill in combination or singly* (Lasswell 1965:21). Gaetano Mosca (1939:50). defined the elite in terms of a social class believing that behind the facades of state government, the power is always limited to the governing few. According to him:

In all societies... two classes of people appear -a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always the least numerous, performs all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages that the power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first in a manner that is how more of less legal, how more of less arbitrary and violent, and supplies the first in appearance at least with material means of subsistence and with the instrumentalities that are essential to the vitality of the political organism.

A cohesive and irresponsible small group is more readily organised for its vested interests than a large one, says Mosca. He says further that the power

of any minority is irresistible as against each single individual -the majority-who stands alone before the totality of the organised minority (Mosca 1939:50). He believed that elite has advantages simply because it is unified and less numerous. Besides, Mosca's (1939:61-62) interesting observation, in respect to class character, is that the *political class* tends to become hereditary, if not in law. This, infact, is a landmark contribution in the study of sociological theory. According to Mosca, because of the lust to establish itself in power, this class of people tries to remain dominant for an indefinite period, hence, encouraging oligarchy. However, with some exceptions, such a phenomenon has been in vogue all over the world. Even in democratic societies, successful candidtates make efforts to express hereditary characteristics. Mosca observes that in the French and Italian parliaments there were seen the sons, grandsons, nephews, and sons-in-law, etc. of ex-members.

However, the Marxian doctrine of governing or ruling class has a different theoretical approach regarding the power elite. According to it, all societies bear people of two different socio-economic and cultural classes: bourgeoisie or capitalist and proletariat or workers. The former, who holds monopoly over the means of production and distribution, also controls the political machinery that becomes a means by which it perpetuates its dominance and exploitation on the latter or common working class ranks. The people of ruling classes, comprising a small number of individuals, use the state's political machinery to assert their common interest (Marx 1970:52). According to Raymond Aron (1970:152), Marx believed that political power was the power of one class used in oppressing another which ultimately leads the society to a radical polarisation of classes breaking directly into antagonistic camps; bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Cole has considered elites, not as constituting social classes, but rather as groups which emerge to positions of leadership and influence at every social level- that is to say, as leaders of classes or of other important elements in the social structure (Cole 1955:105-6). At bottom, the central theme of the elitist theory is that a minority population that is superior in thought and action, takes decision affecting the socio-economic and cultural life of the majority of the population in society. The general views of the elitists that power, Pelf, and social status concentrate in a closely integrated socio-economic group, however, is criticised by the pluralists. According to them, in a pluralistic social system, there is not only one integrated elite class but various elite groups with different characteristics. As per Dahl (1961:64-66), there are the political notables, the economic notables, and social notables with hardly any overlap between different groups. The modern democratic polity in which power is largely distributed in the different organs of the

government also refutes the elitist theory. Aaronovitch's (1961:149) observation that the pressure group allegedly compels the governing elites to share their power with the former also invalidates the elitist approach.

Elites and politics are often linked with the concept of power. *Power* being a controversial concept, however, possesses two distinctive meanings in both social sciences and common parlance, i.e., 'power' as the capacity to influence other individuals and 'power' as the legal competence to influence the collective decision making process (Chalise 1987:81). According to Maciver also, power means "the capacity to control, regulate or direct the behaviour of person or things. The power inherent in external nature regulates the universe; working in the laws all must obey. Those possessing power control or command the behaviour of persons and manipulate the energies inherent in things (Maciver 1964:77). As a socio-political phenomena both: power and the leadership or governing elite class, in a society are synonymous for each other. These two forces reflect the ability to influence the actions of the general mass. Therefore, it is hard to separate power from the elite class and the latter from the former. However, an elementary distinction could be made between the two. Power usually implies the capability to force others to react or behave in desired manner. Whereas the elite implies the competence to direct social group of community in a particular fashion in accordance with its desires. In other words, one who holds power in a community is an elite and is generally responsible for the social transformation by shaping the actor's course of action.

Whatever arguments and counter arguments are there, in defence of or against the elitist and pluralistic school of thoughts, the truth may lie closer to the latter. As per P. Scott (1988:129) also, an elite is the most influential and prestigious stratum in a society. It is composed of persons who are recognised as outstanding, are considered leaders in a given field, and exercise tremendous influence in shaping the values and attitudes held by their segment of society. Here the contention that elites exercise an important influence is associated with the power and authority in connection with the four functional problems to be resolved by the four types of strategic elites (Sills: 1968:27): Goal attainment, Adaptation, Integration, and Pattern-maintenance. All these elites are equally wealthy, prestigious, and powerful in their respective areas. However, in a transitional society, the elite of goal attainment have, relatively, much more *power* than other elite groups, as politics is a key realm of human activity that has a considerable impact on other areas namely—economics, military, diplomacy, science, religious institutions, philosophy, education, art, sports, and other recreational institutions of society.

In other words, in all societies, there are a number of elite groups that exercise power in their respective areas. However, relatively the greater power lies at the hands of the political actors at the top. The political elite, particularly the legislative one, by virtue of their outstanding position in society, not only inspire but also implement the developmental programmes. Nevertheless, the degree of effectiveness of the legislative elites, in launching the programmes and policies of development, may vary from one polity to another. The recruitment process of the legislative elite depends on the nature and structure of the political system. Under a democratic setup, these elites are being recruited through the electoral processes on the basis of the adult franchise and yet on the party lines, while under an autocratic polity, such a popular process has mostly been discouraged if not outrightly prohibited.

Nepalese Polity and elite.

The modern Kingdom of Nepal has undergone many political changes since her unification in 1769 A.D. The Shah Kings ruled the country through a centralised system of governance from 1769 to 1846². Then, the Ranas took over the reigns of power reducing the King's status to a figurehead and established their own oligarchy³. In spite of this, the Shah Kings have, in the light of the social standing, always a superior position than the Rana prime ministers⁴. The Rana oligarchy continued till 1950. It was opposed by the new educated elites of those days who were inspired by the political movements taking place all over the world, especially in India, against the British rule. In 1951 the Rana rule came to an end giving way to a new democratic order. The clouds of political confusion, however, did not end until 1959 when a democratic constitution was proclaimed by the then king and elections were held in accordance with the spirit of the new constitution. Subsequently, an elected government was formed by the Nepali Congress Party, as that bagged two-thirds of majority in the Lower House of the Parliament— *Pratinidhi Sabha*. Unfortunately, a headlong confrontation developed between the elected government of the Nepali Congress and the monarch, as the former started working in line with the principles of socialism which ultimately led to the Royal Takeover in December 1960 and the consequent dissolution of the elected parliament, and its government. With draconian measures, the elected prime minister and his cabinet colleagues were imprisoned, political parties were banned and a state of emergency was set in. The King ruled the country through peremptory command in the name of Partyless Panchayat system for thirty long years. In the year 1990, when the wind of change was blowing all over the world and subsequently many monolithic regimes were tumbling down in eastern

Europe, a people's prodemocracy movement was launched by the outlawed political parties, that were banned in 1960, under the leadership of the Nepali Congress, which in 50 days of struggle, finally dismantled the Partyless Panchayat System thoroughly.

On November 9, 1990 for the first time in the 221 years political history of modern Nepal, a multiparty democratic constitution was ultimately promulgated. The interim government, which was headed by the acting president of the revolutionary Nepali Congress Party Mr. K.P. Bhattarai was, at bottom, successful in bringing out the most democratic constitution in the political history of the Kingdom. The constitution legalised the political parties, guaranteed the fundamental rights to the people and vested the sovereignty of the country into the citizens.⁵ The King who used to carry out the administration, exercising his divine rights, now has become a constitutional monarch thus marking a dramatic shift in the Nepalese politics from an autocracy to a modern democracy. Now, the Kingdom of Nepal, according to the constitution of 1990, has two-tiered legislature: the House of representatives— *Pratinidhi Sabha* and the National Council— *Rastriya Sabha*. The members of the former chamber are directly elected from 205 electoral constituencies— scattered all over the country, based on adult franchise while the latter are elected indirectly.⁶ After the promulgation of democratic constitution in 1990, the Kingdom of Nepal, apart from 1959, has already witnessed two general elections during the years 1991 and 1994, respectively. In 1991 elections, the Nepali Congress Party -headed by Mr. K.P. Bhattarai, secured a majority of seats in the Parliament and formed its government. As, president and sitting prime minister Mr. Bhattarai lost his elections, the general secretary of the party Mr. G.P. Koirala, secured a majority of seats in the Parliament and formed its government. Whereas the Communist Party of Nepal (UML)- that came into existence in 1991, catapulted itself into the role of the main opposition in the bicameral legislature. These two parties had sacrificed hundreds of lives of their activists in their relentless struggle for the establishment of multiparty democracy with constitutional monarch in the Kingdom. However, in 1994, there was a midterm elections which gave a birth to a hung parliament. The ruling Nepali Congress Party reduced to 2nd position while the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) emerged as the largest party though in non-majority parliament. Due to nature and composition of parliament, country experimented with various kinds of governments such as minority and coalition, under different articles of the 1990 constitution. Whatever outcome may be there during 1994-1998 period, particularly the coalition politics in Nepal could be attributed to mainly three factors. The first is the compulsion posed by the hung parliament and the second owing to the

power struggle among the top ranking leaders of major political parties. The third, however, universal in nature in the pro-power politics by all political forces at the cost of their doctrinal values.

In the multiparty democratic Kingdom of Nepal, the Parliamentary or the legislative elite, among other goal attainment elites, not only exercise power for their personal ends but also make policies and decisions that carry major consequences in all spheres of society. These elites are directly in command of the influential institutions such as government and its administration, besides parliament. In the present study, by the legislative elite, we mean a group of adult people who are- irrespective of their close as well as open class background, are the members of any chamber - the National Council or the House of Representatives, in parliament and are there to make laws for society, to carry out developmental works in the electoral constituencies and also to solve and redress personal problems of the general populace of society. It is indeed important to state here that in South-Asian democracies, people in general, expect legislative elite or political representatives taking care of their personal as well as constituency's difficulties, apart from making the laws in the interest of society.

Objective

In the evolving democratic process, the representatives chosen by the political parties and elected to the national legislature by the adult and yet sovereign electorates, play a crucial role in the path of goal attainment. The elected legislative elite's values, judgement, skill, alignment with interest groups, etc. impinge directly as well as indirectly upon the entire social life of the nation as they are supposed to be the key actors and standard setters of society. As the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal where multiparty democracy has recently been ushered in and has started functioning in order to create and establish a new institutional norms for the new political structure, it is academically *sui generis* in exploring the socio-political processes and patterns of the recruitment of the legislative elite in this society, as these elites do not only represent their personal social characteristics but also reflect the socio-economic and political classes of their political parties, interest groups and respective constituents, at the national level.

The social characteristics of the legislative elite of 1991 parliament was studied by the author. It was an empirical work based on Census population. In that study, all 265 members of parliament were interviewed and interestingly, it was found that the bicameral legislature was dominated by members of higher social classes.⁷ In view of this, the present study proposes to make an attempt to record the key socio-economic and political

characteristics of the national legislative elite, thereby investigating the class structure of the current 1994-1999 parliament. In Nepal, although, elections for the new House of Representatives, has already been slated for 3rd of May 1999.

Methodology

This Census data, empirical in nature, were collected with the help of an interview-schedule during the years: 1995-1998. The legislators were approached, personally, by the trained research assistants that included a member of the secretariate of the parliament, Singh Darbar, Kathmandu. Besides, the record available at the parliament secretariate also was taken into account in order to ascertain the profile of the legislative elite. On a few occasions, respondent elite gave information with regard to their background, on the telephone, as they had no time to meet the interviewers. The SPSS -a software programme of the computer; was taken into account for statistical analyses of the data.

Class Character of Elite and Parliament

In the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, the legislative elite occupy the principle role for framing and launching of the programmes directed at achieving the desired social change in society. **Their every decision** carries a substantial consequences, not only on the socio-economic but also on the political sphere of society. Especially, in the post democratic era, this elite class of people, who are being chosen by the adult and yet sovereign electorates, is considered as the most effective and powerful strata. In view of their importance and also strategic status, an attempt has been made here to delineate some of their key social, economic and political characteristics that would lead to divulge the *class structure* of the Nepalese Parliament. When a person is born, he or she is the member of certain class. In the light of social indicators, it can be said that there are two types of classes- closed and open, in every societal order and be it an infant or an adult, both of them find themselves as the members of these classes. Especially, in traditional societies like that of Nepal, when a baby is given birth, she or he has a privilege or disadvantage to be a member of certain station viz. race, caste, religion, economic strata and so on. Education or an economic class of a person has a tendency of mobility- upward or downward or even horizontal, and therefore, these variables are responsible for one's acquired social status or class. Whereas, on the other hand, elements of social fabric such as sex or gender, caste, religion, and race are the rigid and yet closed in nature which provide their membership to an individual but refused to bring mobility in their traditional structure. In other words, every body in the

Nepalese social structure, has two memberships of two different classes, at a time. He or she is the member of closed class such as caste, religion or race and simultaneously also the member of an open class such as education, wealth and profession, governing or non-governing political institution, where an entry is entertained only on one's ability or role performance. At bottom, these close and open bases of social fabric are principally responsible for the formation of the class structure in the Kingdom.

Against this backdrop, by the Class here we mean that a group of people who, through common descent, similarity of occupation, wealth and education, have come to have a similar mode of life, a similar stock of ideas, feelings, attitudes and forms of behaviour and who, on any or all these grounds, meet one another on equal terms and regard themselves, although with varying degrees of explicitness, as belonging to one group (Edwin 1959:32-36). In view of the definition of the term *class*, and also in order to avoid misunderstanding, we have taken into account the following variables that owe both ascribed as well as acquired status of person in the Nepalese society such as: religion, ethnicity/caste, age, occupation, economic status, affiliation of elite with political party, education, etc. around which the class structure of the only Hindu Kingdom, in general and legislative elite in particular, takes place. These social indicators would help identify the social, economic and political class structure of one of the Asian Kingdom's Parliament where democracy has recently been ushered-in.

The demographic composition of the Nepalese society shows that the women constitutes 50 percent of the total population. However, this section of society has a very little share in the area of politics. It is partly due to machopsyche and partly owing to socio-cultural values of society in which female's participation outside family, has always been discouraged. In both-autocratic and democratic system of governances, women have been represented poorly in the legislature. Under Partyless Panchayat Polity, for instance, in the 1981 elections, out of a total of 1096 candidates, there were 3.1 per cent female contestants in the fray and 1.1 per cent were elected to the 112 member unicameral assembly. However, in the elections held in 1986, women's participation as candidates slightly surged ahead. A total of 4.4 percent female candidates out of the total 1548 contestants fought elections and 2.6 per cent got themselves elected in the 112 member legislature (Chalise 1995:60). In the elections of 1991, after the advent of the multiparty democracy, out of a total of 79 female candidates in the fray 8 were elected which amounted to 3.9 per cent in 205 member House of Representatives. Similarly, there were 3 women elected that constituted just 5 per cent to the 60 member National Council (Chalise 1995:60).

Table 1: The Composition of Parliament on the Basis of Gender

Gender	National Council	House of Representatives	Total
Male	54 (90.0)	199 (97.1)	253 (95.5)
Female	6 (10.0)	6 (2.9)	12 (4.5)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

According to the table 1 above, women members irrespective of their party background, are represented to the National Council and also in the House of Representatives. However, their share in the former and latter houses of parliament are disheartening as compared to male members. Of the total 60, only 10 per cent are women in the National Council- the Upper House of Parliament while male constitutes 90 percent. And, in the House of Representatives- the Lower House of Parliament, women entrants are limited to 2.9 percent only while rest percentage goes to the male population. It should be mentioned here that the powerful political forces especially their core leadership, of the Kingdom that are overwhelmingly dominated by males, are hesitant to distribute tickets to their women members to contest elections. As a matter of fact, till 1994 elections which was as part of the 1990 constitutional provision, political parties gave party tickets upto 5-6 percent to women members as candidates to contest elections for the two houses of parliament.

In Nepal, like other South-Asian social structures, the institution of marriage not only provides a kind of socio-economic position but also brings an opportunity to an individual to be more responsible, as he or she would be locked into a social relation of the two different families. This nature of social recognition usually is denied to an unmarried person (Chalise 1995:35). And to person, who is aspirant to become a member of a legislature directly chosen by the adult voters, his or her marital status is always meaningful. Inquiry into the marital status of the legislative elite reveals the fact that of the 60 member National Council, there are 90 per cent elite who are married, 1.7 per cent unmarried, 3.3 per cent divorcee and the rest 5 per cent are widow or widower. Likewise, in the 205 members House of Representatives, 95.1 per cent members fall in the category of married people. The remaining 5 per cent is divided among unmarried, divorcee and widow/widower.

Table 2: Marital Status of Elite in the Houses of Parliament

Marital Status	National Council	House of Representatives	Total
Married	54 (90.0)	195 (95.1)	249 (94.0)
Unmarried	1 (1.7)	3 (1.5)	4 (1.5)
Divorce	2 (3.3)	1 (0.5)	3 (1.1)
Widow/Widower	3 (5.0)	6 (2.9)	9 (3.4)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

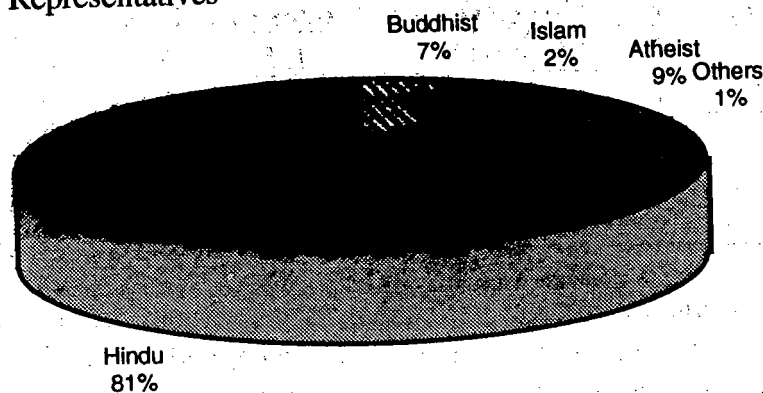
In other words, of the 265 parliament member, married elite members constitute 94 per cent while unmarried, divorcee, widow/widower register 1.5, 1.1, and 3.4, respectively. It is important to mention here that all the politics of the Nepalese society, since her inception, have always been enjoying the legislatures dominated by the married members.

Religion

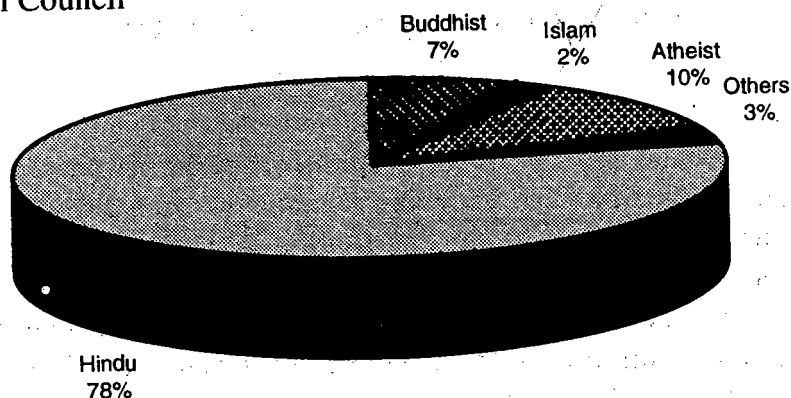
The Nepalese social structure is the outcome of the earlier phase of Hindu culture and civilisation. The Kingdom has always been a Hindu nation, constitutionally. Before, 1990, the constitution of the land, besides stating that it was a Hindu country, it had also declared that the Hindu King was the protector of Aryan culture. Almost in line with it, the Article 4 of the democratic constitution of 1990, continues to declare Nepal as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, *Hindu* constitutional monarchical nation.⁸ In Nepal, according to the 1991 Population census, of the total 18,491,097 population, approximately 86.5 per cent are Hindus, about 8.3 per cent are Buddhists, 3.5 per cent Muslims, and 1.7 percent are Christians.⁹ The entire demography can broadly be divided into two racial stocks-namely Caucasian and Mongolian. The former stock that comprises of ruling elites of society including the Kings and all the prime ministers, follow Hindu culture. Nevertheless, most of the members of the latter racial stock also show their allegiance to the Hindu religion and culture.¹⁰ Notwithstanding, in recent years, especially after the promulgation of the democratic constitution in 1990, the *de-Hinduisation* process has begun and some of the members of the Mongol ethnic group, are making efforts to reassert their old cultural identity. In doing so, some of them claim themselves as Buddhists while others claim as the followers of Mundhum¹¹ and a few of them have allowed themselves to be baptised as the Christians.

Fig. 1: Religious Composition in the Houses of Parliament

House of Representatives



National Council



The above diagram depicts the religious composition of the Parliament. According to it, of the 60 members, 78.3 per cent are Hindu in the National Council of the Parliament. Similarly, in the 205 member House of Representatives, the Hindus constitutes 81 per cent. The Hindu religious background legislative elites, by and large, have occupied 81.1 percent of seats in the 265 member houses of Parliament.¹² It is noteworthy here that in the earlier Parliament of the year 1991-1994, the percentage covered by the Hindu population was just 79.2 per cent.

The Buddhists constitute 6.7 and 6.8 percent in the 60 and 205 member houses of bicameral legislature, respectively. In the 265 member Parliament, the Buddhists and followers of Islam religions enjoy altogether 6.8 and 1.9 per cent, respectively. They had, coincidentally, the same percentage of seats in the earlier 1991-1994 legislature.

It is interesting to note that in the national legislature of the Kingdom, there are sizeable number of Parliamentarians who claim themselves as the *atheist*. In other words, they say that they do not have faith in any religion. In fact, their presence was felt in the last 1991-94 houses of parliament also

as they were able to register as much as 12.1 per cent seats in the 265 member bicameral legislature (Chalise 1995:33). However, the percentage of Atheist category of the legislative elite, could be attributed to the absence of relatively an extremist Communist Party- known as the United People's Front (UPF) which boycotted the 1994 snap-elections and now, a section of it, has been indulged in the Peoples' War.¹³ The UPF had as many as 9 members and was the 3rd largest party in the 205 House of Representatives in 1991 parliament.

Ethnic/Caste

An ethnic or caste usually symbolised as a status for social groups in contemporary society. It is a collection of individuals with a distinctive style of life and certain consciousness of community (Betile 1977:60). It also works as stabiliser of society (Hutton 1987:120). Caste, which confers a certain social status to individuals (Scott 1988:288), has been one of the most powerful bases for socio-political stratification in the Nepalese society (Chalise 1995:100). Since her inception, as a modern nation in 1769, the Kingdom has been ruled by the Hindu Kings and semi-Kings, under authoritarian rules. On the other hand, under democratic nature of polity, she is governed by the higher caste legislative elite such as Bahuns and Chhetris. Racially, all of them are Caucasian and are of hill cultural background.

Table 3: Ethnic/Caste Structure of the Houses of Parliament

Ethnic/Caste group	National Council	House of Representatives	Grand Total (%)
	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)
A. Hill group			
Bahun	26 (43.3)	86 (42.0)	112 (42.3)
Chhetri	8 (13.3)	45 (22.0)	53 (20.0)
Newar	8 (13.3)	13 (6.3)	21 (7.9)
Mongolians	8 (13.3)	22 (10.7)	30 (11.3)
Occupational caste	1 (1.7)	1 (0.5)	2 (0.8)
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>51 (85.0)</i>	<i>167 (81.5)</i>	<i>218 (82.3)</i>
B. Terai Groups			
Brahmin	4 (6.7)	5 (2.4)	9 (3.4)
Kshatriya	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	2 (0.8)
Tribals (tharus)	1 (1.7)	12 (5.9)	13 (4.9)
Yadav	1 (1.7)	9 (4.4)	10 (3.8)
Occupational caste	2 (3.3)	6 (2.9)	8 (3.0)
Muslims	1 (1.7)	4 (2.0)	5 (1.9)
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>9 (15.0)</i>	<i>38 (18.5)</i>	<i>47 (17.7)</i>
Grand Total (%)	60 (100.)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

In Nepal, the ethnic or caste groups, on the bases of their culture and topography or geographical conditions, can broadly be classified into *hill* and *terai* communities. According to the above table, in the 60 member National Council, the hill group has a huge majority of 85 per cent while the terai group enjoys only 15 per cent. Likewise, the hill groups, in the 205 member House of Representatives constitute 81.5 per cent followed by terai groups with the remaining 18.5 per cent. In the 265 member national bicameral legislature of the Kingdom, the hill community or ethnic group alone occupies as high as 82.3 per cent and the remaining 17.7 per cent is shared by the terai ethnic group. The hill group which had already made its overwhelming presence, during 1991-1994 Parliament by securing 81.13 per cent of seats, has further been able to increase its strength by gaining of 1.17 per cent more seats in the current 1994-1999 Parliament.

The caste structure as per the data in the above table, indicates that among the hill groups, higher castes such as Bahun and Chhetri dominate overwhelmingly in both the houses of Parliament. The former, of the 60 member National Council, constitutes a relative majority of 43.3 per cent however, the latter Chhetri scores 13.3 per cent. Among the other hill and yet non-higher caste groups, the Newar constitutes 13.3 per cent, Mongolians,¹⁴ 13.3 per cent and Occupational minority caste occupies 1.7 per cent. Similarly, in the 205 member House of Representatives, again a relative majority of 42 per cent is occupied by the Bahuns, 22 per cent by Chhetris, 6.3 per cent by the Newar, 10.7 per cent by the Mongolians and 0.5 per cent by the occupational minority caste groups. At the national level, in the 265 member Parliament, 42.3 per cent - a relative majority of seats is occupied alone by the Bahuns. The Chhetris constitute altogether 20 per cent, followed by the Newar 7.9 per cent, the Mongolians 11.3 per cent and 0.8 per cent by the Occupational minority caste.

Contrary to the hill pattern, the terai groups on the other hand, have set a different nature of caste representation to the national legislature. According to the data illustrated above, of the 60 National Council members, though the Brahmin constitutes 6.7 per cent, nevertheless, the Kshatriya lacks absolutely. The tribal group does have only 1.7 per cent followed by the Yadav 1.7, Occupational minority caste 3.3 and Muslims 1.7 per cent. Unlike the National Council, in the 205 House of Representatives, the Brahmins scores only 2.4 per cent followed by the Kshatriya with 1 per cent. However, the tribals occupies 5.9 per cent, the Yadav 4.4 per cent, the Occupational minority castes 2.9 per cent and Muslims 2 per cent. This pattern indeed is indicative of the fact that, among terai groups, the non-higher castes are much more effective in the House of Representatives - as this house is directly elected by the adult voters than the National Council.

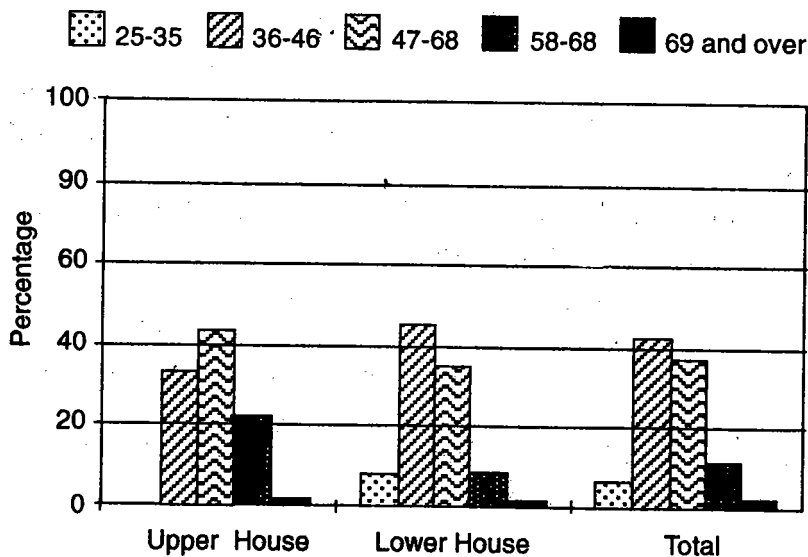
More specifically, of the 47 terai legislators, only 11 (23%) seats are captured by the higher castes such as Brahmin and Kshatriya while the rest seats i.e. 77%, have gone to other non-higher caste groups, including the Muslims, who constitute altogether 10.6 per cent of the 36 seats.

It would perhaps be relevant to bring to the reader's notice here that the last Parliament of Nepal also had witnessed almost similar nature of ethnic or caste representation i.e. the hill groups constituted 81.13 per cent while the terai groups mustered the rest 18.87 per cent, in the 265 national council.

Age

Age, since ancient times, has been a significant factor in determining the nature of role performance and value orientation (Singh 1974:59). It is also associated with experience, wisdom and even elite status in a traditional society (Thakur 1981:131). In Nepal, where most of the constitutional organs, including political parties, of the society are headed by the senior age people; it is interesting to know the age structure of the Parliament. Mention may be made that as per a rule laid down by the Election Commission of Nepal, a person aspiring to contest the elections of the Kingdom must be 25 years old for the House of Representatives and 35 years old for the National Council. Elite and Age-Structure in the Houses of Parliament.

Figure 2: Elite and Age Structure in the Houses of Parliament



The above Table shows the age-groups of the legislative members of the parliament. With a view to make the data tangible, they are here split into

five different categories with an interval of 10 frequencies. According to the data, of the 60 National Council members, a relative majority of 43.3 per cent comes from 47-57 age-group. The 2nd largest per centage i.e. 33.3 goes to 36-46 age group category. The rest 21.7 and 1.7 percentage are shared by 58-68 age-group elite.

Contrary to the National Council, in the 205 member House of Representatives, a relative majority of percentage of 45.4 per cent, comes from the 36-46 age category while the second largest percentage i.e. 35.1, come from 47-57 age group. The remaining percentage such as 8.8, 8.3 and 2.4, come from 58-68, 25-35 and 69 and above age groups, respectively.

At the parliament level, out of the total 265 members, a relative majority of 42.6 per cent is constituted by 36-46 age group members, which is slightly less by 1.2 percent than earlier parliament, as in the 1991-1994 legislature, there was as much as 43.8 per cent members from 36-46 age category. The second relative majority of 37 per cent of the members of parliament comes from 47-57 age group. However, 11.7 percent of elites belong to the 58-68 age group. Whereas, the remaining 6.4 and 2.3 percent fall in the youngest and oldest category of age groups, respectively.

Table 4: Family Structure of the Elite in Parliament

Family structure	Upper House	Lower House	Total
Joint	18 (30.0)	105 (51.2)	123 (46.4)
Nuclear	42 (70.0)	100 (48.8)	142 (53.6)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

In Nepalese social system, family as a basic unit, has a great influence over its members. The family not only reigns over them, but also tends to meet their social requirements such as social rituals, marriages, division of property, education etc. However, the extend and nature of influence of the family over its members and pattern of relation between the two, without any doubt, to a greater degree, depends on the family structure: joint or nuclear? The former is regarded as a traditional type while the latter as modern or contemporary which is the by product of the industrial revolution and urbanisation process. In the light of these two types of family structures, here it has been tried to understand the nature of family in which the legislative elites of Nepal live.

It is indeed interesting to note that the National Council is overwhelmingly occupied by the members who have nuclear family structure. Of the 60 members, 70 per cent come from nuclear family background. However, in the case of the House of Representatives, a simple

majority i.e. 51.2 per cent of the members are living in joint nature of family structure. Notwithstanding, almost equally, i.e. 48.8 per cent of the members of House of Representatives, have a background of traditional joint family structure. One of the striking features that could be seen in the above Table 4 is that the national council is composed of both types of families. In Nepal the overwhelming population live in rural areas. Not only the industrial revolution but also education and media brought a change in the traditional family structure. This assumption is also validated by Table 5 showing that of the 265 members, 66 percent come from the rural society.

Table 5: Social Condition of Upper House and Lower House Members

Social Condition	Upper House	Lower House	Total
Rural	33 (55.0)	142 (69.3)	175 (66.0)
Urban	27 (45.0)	63 (30.7)	90 (34.0)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

The relation of human life with the social environment is extremely intimate, and therefore, it is always important to take it into account in order to understand one's personality traits, socialisation process and even value-orientation.

The social condition here refers to the social environment in which the national legislative elite born and brought up. According to the table, of the 60 members, 55- a majority percentage, hail from rural social condition while the rest 45 percent come from urban condition. Similarly, of the 205 members of the House of Representatives, 69.3 per cent have rural background while the remaining hail from an urban social condition.

Economic Class

Occupation: Occupation of an individual, especially in a non-industrial societies, is not only the source of livelihood but also a matter of status (Edwin 1959:533) and prestige (Treiman 1994:208-9). It is therefore an influential factor in the process of his or her socialisation. With a view to understand it, an indirect question i.e. *what is the main source of your income in order to meet the basic requirements such as food, clothes and shelter, for your family, apart from the Parliament*, was posed to the elite respondents. On the bases of their responses, the gathered data were categorised mainly into three occupations namely agriculture, industry/business and others,¹⁵ which are discussed below.

Table 6: Occupational/Professional Background of Elite

Source of income	Upper House	Lower House	Total
Agriculture	35 (58.3)	163 (79.5)	198 (74.7)
Industry/Business	8 (13.3)	19 (9.3)	27 (10.2)
Others	17 (28.3)	23 (11.2)	40 (15.1)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

As per the data illustrated in Table 6, most of the legislators have, irrespective of their houses in the Parliament, regarded agriculture as their chief source of the livelihood. The percentage covered by this section, in the National Council, is 58.3 and in the House of Representatives, it is 79.5, which, nevertheless, shows that comparatively the latter house consists of more agriculture background elite than the former house in the parliament. Contrary to it, however, relatively the National Council is comprised of more members from industry/business class than the House of Representatives. The data here reveal that the National Council, of its 60 members, enjoys 13.3 per cent from the industry or business group while the House of Representatives, of its 205 members, has only 9.3 per cent from this class. However, from the other category, 28.3 per cent elite are represented in the National Council and 11.2 per cent in the House of Representatives. At the national level, of the 265 members, the Parliament does witness as much as 74.7 per cent members from agriculture occupation and only 10.2 per cent from business/trade communities. The rest 15.1 per cent elite, however, hail from the other category.

When compared the present houses with the last Parliament, it is worth noticing here that mainly the representation of the agriculture background members to the legislature has slightly been declined while the percentage of the representation of the industry/business class has been considerably enhanced. In fact, the 1991-94 Parliament, had consisted of 79.6 and 3.8 per cent members from agriculture and industry/business occupations, respectively.

Economic Status: Sociologically speaking, in order to know one's social standing, it is essential to understand his or her economic class, as the latter is closely and unavoidably associated with the former. As a natural phenomenon, the economic class of the members of society, is unevenly distributed in all sections, and due to it, individuals are placed in certain socio-economic groups. George Orwell, in his work, has said that throughout recorded times and probably since the end of the neolithic age,

there have been three kinds of people in the world: the high, the middle and the low with irreconcilable aims (Orwell 1949:15).

According to Abraham and Morgan, who have made a contribution on the thoughts of Karl Marx, say that the crucial determinant of an individual's behaviour is one's relation to property (Abraham and Morgan 1985:37). In Nepal, where feudal and aristocratic values still dominate the social sphere of human life, the economic class weights most heavily in ranking of person in the socio-political hierarchy. This phenomenon has even affected the revolutionary political parties of the Kingdom. The study carried out by the author showed that the political parties had a tendency to distribute election tickets to those party workers who, within the party structure, occupy a higher economic rank (Chalise 1995:42:49 and 56).

However, it may be mentioned here that, in the Nepalese context, the economic class of a person is loaded with a connotation of relativity, as the value of land property in various districts of the Kingdom including the capital city of Kathmandu, substantially varies from one place to another. Notwithstanding, an economic class or status of a person should be judged on the basis of his or her position in their respective areas of residence as compared to other's status. In the light of this constraints, in order to investigate the economic standing or status of the legislative elite, they were asked to judge their economic class at their own¹⁶ at two levels namely-among the general population at the *electoral constituency level* and among the activists of their respective political parties at the *constituency level*.¹⁷

Table 7: Economic Class/Status of Elite in Houses of Parliament

Houses of Parliament	Economic Class/Status							
	At electoral constituency level				Among party activists at electoral constituency level			
	High	Middle	Low	Total	High	Middle	Low	Total
House of representatives	72 (35.1)	116 (56.6)	17 (8.3)	205 (100.0)	109 (53.2)	86 (42.0)	10 (4.9)	205 (100.0)
National Council	8 (13.3)	46 (76.7)	6 (10.0)	60 (100.0)	18 (30)	35 (58.3)	7 (11.7)	60 (100.0)
Total	80 (30.2)	162 (61.1)	23 (8.7)	265 (100.0)	127 (47.9)	121 (45.7)	17 (6.4)	265 (100.0)

Table 7 shows the economic status of the members of the Parliament. According to the table, the economic class of the elite of the National Council, *among the general population at the electoral constituency level*,

ranges from higher to the lower stratas. Of the 60 members, an overwhelming majority of 76.7 per cent legislative elite comes from the middle class followed by 13.3 per cent from the higher and 10 per cent from the lower classes, respectively. Almost likewise, of the 205 members of the House of Representatives, a majority of 56.6 per cent members, fall in the middle economic class category while the remaining 35.1 and 8.3 per cent of the elite owe to the higher and the lower economic stratas, respectively. The data, at the Parliament level, depict that most of the members, that constitutes 61.1 per cent, have a *middle* economic class background among the general populace at the constituency. The *higher* economic background members enjoy as much as 30 per cent and the *lower* economic status elite registers as less as 8.7 per cent strength in the bicameral legislature.

Unlike the legislative elite among the general population of their respective electoral constituencies, the table at the same time also shows a different pattern of the elite's economic class, as compared to their party's activists at the electoral constituencies. Of the 60 members of the National Council, only 58.3 per cent belongs to the *middle* economic strata. The *higher* and *lower* classes elite, however, occupy 30.0 and 11.7 per cent strength, respectively. The picture of the House of Representatives, nonetheless, divulges a different picture, as it witnesses that of the 205 its members- who are elected to the house directly by the adult voters, a majority percentage i.e. 53.2 per cent of them, hail from an upper or *higher* economic class, which significantly, indicates that the political parties back, with election tickets, to those partymen who enjoy relatively a better economic clout at the electoral constituency. The remaining, 42 per cent of elite, nevertheless, come from *middle* economic strata followed by *lower* class with 4.9 per cent. The table, at the national legislature level, illustrates that out of its 265 total elite, a relative majority of 47.9 per cent, are having an upper or the *higher* economic class background, among background among the activists of their respective political parties at the constituency level. Whereas, the 2nd largest percentage i.e. 45.7, is held by the *middle* class background members. The *lower* class background elite, in the Parliament, has an insignificant volume of strength i.e. 6.4 per cent.

Political Class

Political Parties: In Nepal, originally, political parties were formed with a view to work against the Rana oligarchy that ruled the society from 1846-1950, autocratically. After the success of the historic 1950-51 revolution, spearheaded by the Nepali Congress, political parties became the part and parcell of the Nepalese political process. Notwithstanding, in 1960,

following the royal takeover, these political elements were outlawed for almost 30 years.

Perhaps, learning a lesson from the past, the revolutionary political forces which now were the determinants just after the success of the peoples' movement in 1990 and were actively participating as members in the constitution drafting body, made the Article 12 in the democratic constitution of 1990, that unequivocally denies to ban or outlaw a political party.¹⁸ As a consequence, parties have become the soul of the democratic polity and are supposed to form and represent the *will* of the people.

Table 8: Political Parties in the Houses of Parliament

Political Parties	National Council	House of Representatives	Total
Nepali Congress	29 (48.3)	89 (43.4)	118 (44.5)
Communist Party of Nepal (UML)	17 (28.3)	90 (43.9)	107 (40.4)
NSP	0 (0.0)	3 (1.5)	3 (1.1)
NDP	4 (6.7)	19 (9.3)	23 (8.7)
NLPP	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	2 (0.8)
Others	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	2 (0.8)
King's Nominee	10 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	10 (3.8)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

The above table shows the strength of the political parties in the parliament for 1994-1999 period. There are, altogether 6 parties represented to the Parliament excluding the King's 10 (ten) nominees to the National Council or *upper house*. Among them, however, only 4 are constitutionally recognised as the national parties as they could meet the 3 per cent clause of the electoral laws¹⁹ of the land. Of these parties, the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal (UML)²⁰, Nepal Sadbhawana (goodwill) Party (NSP) and National Democratic Party (NDP)²¹ have secured more than 3 percent of votes in the general elections of 1994, but the Nepal Labour and Peasant's Party (NLPP) and a faction-known to be associated with left extremist, are failed to fulfill the electoral clause. Nevertheless, they each have two representatives in the House of Representatives or *the lower house* in the parliament. Mention may be made here that NLPP had three members in the parliament but one of them, who was elected from western hill constituency, was seduced by the big Nepal Communist Party (UML) to its fold. In the 1991-1994 Parliament also NLPP had not met 3

percent clause while it had, then also, two representatives to the House of Representatives.

According to the table, the NC enjoys 48.3 percent seats in the 60 member National Council and 43.4 per cent in the 205 member House of Representatives. In total, the NC has privilege to have the support of 44.5 percent legislative elite in the 265 member Parliament of the Kingdom. However, looking at its past performance in the 1991 general elections, the NC's stature could be attributed as disappointing. In 1991-1994, the NC had 56.2 percent seats in the 265 member legislature (Chalise 1995:30). On the other hand, the CPN (UML), has 28.3 percent strength in the 60 member National Council and significantly 43.9 per cent seats in the 205 strategically powerful lower house of the Parliament. Yet, it trails behind the NC at the national level, as it has 4 percent less strength i.e. 40.4, than the latter, in the Parliament. Notwithstanding, the CPN (UML) has substantially enhanced its support base as compared to its strength in the last 1991-1994 Parliament. Earlier, it had only (68 + 13) 30.5 per cent seats while now, in the current legislature, it enjoys as much as 43.9 per cent in the 265 member legislature (Chalise 1995:29).

The NSP- a regional-cum-ethnic party, champions the cause of Tarai *Madhesi* people in the plains of Nepal. It does not have, at the moment, any member in the National Council mainly owing to betrayal by its one member. The member who was elected to the upper house of parliament on the ticket of NSP, not only left it but also opened a new socialist party, nonetheless, relatively a secular organisation than his mother Party. The NSP has 1.5 per cent seats in the 205 member House of Representatives which altogether amounts 1.1 percent seats at 265 member national parliament. It could be noteworthy here that this party has considerably lost its ground as compared to the last Parliament. In the last 1991-1994, the NSP had as much as 2.6 per cent of seats in the 265 member bicameral legislature. Notwithstanding, the NSP has been able to meet 3 per cent clause of the electoral law of the land in both of the general elections held in 1991 and 1994.

Contrary to the NSP, the NDP- a political force led by the ruling elites of the old Partyless Panchayat System, had only 1.5 per cent seats in the 1991-94 national legislature and many had then predicted that the party was rout to by the pro-democracy forces and would not be able to survive in future. But, four and half years later, in 1994 snap-polls, it, unbelievably, emerged as an unavoidable political entity, as it secured 6.7 and 9.3 per cent seats in the National Council and House of Representatives, respectively. The reason for a gain in the strength of the NDP, of course, not only because of the disappointment of the general mass with the irresponsible

behaviour of pro-democratic forces, but also due to the internal feuds within the ruling Nepali Congress Party during the 1994 polls.

The other non-national parties such as the NLP and others,²² who have been unable to find births in the National Council, nonetheless, each occupies 1 per cent in the 265 member bicameral legislature.

Profession/Job before Politics

It is always important to know the professional class of a person who has been participating in the decision making process of a society. In fact, one's professional class or background, in which he or she spends a considerable period of time, plays a significant role in moulding his or her personal behaviour, attitude and also the orientation pattern. Such a background phenomenon helps one to choose or join a certain professional career in life. Mills and Gerth are of the opinion that politicians are likely to be recruited from dispensable profession such as journalism (Mills and Gerth 1970:206). Similarly Lipset (Lipset 1971:365) also believed that the legal profession substantially could transfer a social animal into a political being. Against this backdrop, an effort has been made here to understand that from which career or job the members to Parliament have entered an active politics of society.

Table 9: Houses of Parliament and Profession/Job Before Entering Active Politics

Profession/Job before Politics	National Council	House of Representatives	Total (%)
Study (student)	26 (43.3)	110 (53.7)	136 (51.3)
Farming	6 (10.0)	25 (12.2)	31 (11.7)
GO/NGOs service	15 (25.0)	58 (28.3)	73 (27.5)
Industry/business	1 (1.7)	3 (1.5)	4 (1.5)
Others	12 (20.0)	9 (4.4)	21 (7.9)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

According to the table, of its 60 members, the National Council of Parliament constitutes a relative majority of 43.3 per cent from the students class. In other words, a huge no. of members of the upper house of Parliament were studying as a student in some educational institutions before they entered an active politics. The elite with farming background are only 10 per cent, while employees of some non-governmental/governmental organisations, however, constitute the 2nd highest i.e. 25 per cent, and the elite involved in the business/industry profession before their active

participation in politics, occupy only 1.7 per cent. The others category of elite, however, has as many as 20 per cent elite. Likewise, in the 205 member House of Representatives, a majority percentage of elite were found involved in an active politics from their student life. This category, nevertheless, along constitutes 53.7 per cent alone. Like in the National Council, the 2nd largest percentage i.e. 28.3, is shared by the elite with an NGO/GO background. The rest percentage of the elite are splited into farming 12.2, business/industry 1.5 and others 4.4 per cent categories as profession of elite prior to entering active politics of society.

At the national Parliament level, of the 265 members, a majority of 51.3 per cent of them come from students class while the 2nd largest percent is covered by the elite with NGO/GO background members. The farming background elite constituted 11.7, business/industrialist covered 1.5 per cent while the others category of elite, nonetheless, constituted the remaining 7.9 per cent.

Education

Education of a person, in all developed or developing societies, has indeed been a crucial factor for determining one's social position. In other words, the educational element, as it has been witnessed especially in developing nations, generally unlocks opportunities to every one for his or her upward socio-political and economic mobility. Therefore, in these developing societies, education has always been regarded as a gateway to elite strata. The main reason for attaching the education to the elite position is due to the fact that the quality of an individual's role performance and judgement, in any field of social life such as economy or politics or even cultural, is significantly correlated to the level of education he or she has attained.

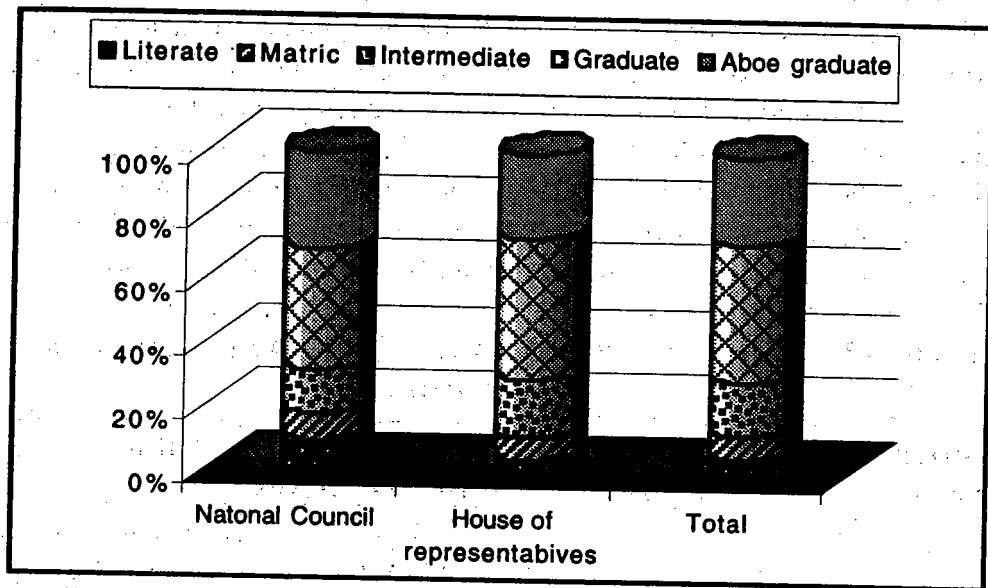
Table 10: Composition of Parliament as per Elite's Level of Education

Education level	National Council	House of Representatives	Total (%)
Literate	6 (10.0)	9 (4.4)	15 (5.7)
Matric	5 (8.3)	15 (7.3)	20 (7.5)
Intermediate	8 (13.3)	36 (17.6)	44 (16.6)
Graduate	23 (38.3)	91 (44.4)	114 (43.0)
Above graduate	18 (30.0)	54 (26.3)	72 (27.2)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

Here an attempt has been made in order to understand the educational background of the houses of Parliament. According to the table, of the 60 members, the National Council consists of as many as 38.3 per cent

graduate and another 30 per cent above graduate elite. The members, who are just intermediate, matriculate and literate,²³ constitute 13.3, 8.3 and 10.0 per cent, respectively. Similarly, the 205 member House of Representatives enjoys as much as 44.4 per cent graduates and 26.3 per cent above graduate members. The intermediate, matriculate and literate²⁴ categories occupy 17.6, 7.3 and 4.4 per cent, respectively.

Figure 3: Education Background of Members of the Houses of Parliament



Educationally, at the national level, the 265 member Parliament is dominated by the graduate members with their relative majority of 43.0 per cent. Moreover, the members who are above graduate, registered as many as 27.2 per cent. These two sections, of elite indeed clearly show that the Parliament is overwhelmingly dominated by educated members. The intermediate, matriculate and literate²⁵ constituted 16.6, 7.5, and 5.7 per cent, respectively.

It may be mentioned here that comparatively, the present houses of Parliament, of course relatively, enjoys more educated members than the last 1991 parliament. The previous Parliament constituted, out of its total 265 members, only 39.2 per cent graduate, and 23.0 per cent above graduation elite (Chalise 1995:37).

Inspiration in Politics: Entering in an active politics is an unusual phenomenon in the Nepali society. Particularly the outlawed politics or anti-establishment politics, during Partyless Panchayat regime i.e. 1960-

1990, was a crime declared by the state. Punishment meted out for such a crime were- the confiscation of property, imprisonment and even execution. This kind of punishment was carried out not only against the people directly involved but also against the persons who cooperate with them. Notwithstanding, people have been participating in the pro-and anti-establishment politics of society.²⁶

In spite of such state terror, people in general and the members of the Pro-democracy political parties, took part in the anti-establishment politics during 1960-1990 period. What were the reasons for their anti-polity activities that involved risks not only for their property but also for their lives? In view of this, here it is tried to know the agencies or factors that, at bottom, had inspired or motivated the legislative members- who either worked for the Partyless Panchayat System or struggled against it with an objective to restore multiparty democracy in society, to join an active politics as their profession. In order to make a clear distinction, the entire agencies, which were gathered through the interviews, are divided into two broad: Primary Social Group and Secondary Social Group,²⁷ categories.

Table 11: Elite and their Inspiring/Motivating agency in Active Politics

Inspiring agency	National Council	House of Representatives	Total (%)
Primary group	28 (46.7)	84 (41.0)	112 (42.3)
Secondary group	32 (53.3)	121 (59.0)	153 (57.7)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

According to the table, of the 60 members of the National Council, a majority of 53.3 per cent elite are found being inspired, to join active politics, by the agencies of the secondary social group while the remaining 46.7 per cent are found inspired by the agencies of the primary social group. Likewise, of the 205 members in the House of Representatives, a majority percentage of 59.0 are witnessed to have been inspired by the agencies of the secondary social group. The rest 41 per cent of the members of the Lower House of Parliament are, however, found being inspired by the agencies of primary social group.

At the national level, it is found that of the 265 members of the parliament, a majority of 57.7 percent legislative elite are inspired, to take an active part in the politics of society, by the agencies of the secondary social group while the rest 42.3 per cent of the members are found to have been inspired by the agencies of the primary social group.

Imprisonment/Incarceration: As has already been pointed out in previous chapter that the democracy was restored in 1990. Before it, the king-as an active leader, used to carry not only on the administration but also on the government denying democracy and fundamental rights to the common people. Political parties were outlawed since 1960 and any attempt to form or organise them was considered as a state crime. Any individual or institution found participating in such an unlawful act was levelled as anti-national element and he, she, it, or they were severely punished. Notwithstanding, the banned political organisations, at the cost of their property and lives, continued their struggle against the King's direct rule. Ultimately, in 1990, the outlawed political forces, with the massive support of the common citizens, could give a *coup d' grace* to the 30 years old Partyless Polity of the King. Nevertheless, during this long and arduous struggle for the restoration of multiparty democracy in society, the pro-change forces suffered a lot. Some of them were killed while many of them had to face incarceration or imprisonment. Against this backdrop, attempt has been made here to understand the composition of the parliament. In other words, to what extent the outlawed political elite- who were incarcerated, and those elite who are not incarcerated, are represented to the national Parliament of the Kingdom. In order to examine this question, respondent elite were asked whether they were ever incarcerated or imprisoned by the Partyless Panchayat regime of the King, on the charge that they participated in the anti-system movement, or not?

Table 12: Parliament on the basis of Incarcerated/Non-incarcerated Elite.

Inspiring/Non-incarcerated	National Council	House of Representatives	Total (%)
Incarcerated	34 (56.7)	144 (70.2)	178 (67.2)
Non-incarcerated	26 (43.3)	61 (29.8)	87 (32.8)
Total	60 (100.0)	205 (100.0)	265 (100.0)

According to Table 12 above, of the 60 National Council members, a majority of 56.7 reported that they were incarcerated/imprisoned for their activities against the Partyless Panchayat system while remaining 43.3 per cent of the legislative elite²⁸ denied such experience of incarceration. Slightly different than the National Council, in the 205 members of the House of Representatives, it was found that an overwhelming majority of 70.2 per cent elite were incarcerated by the *anciene regime* for their

participation or involvement against the system. Nevertheless, a small size of 29.8 percent of elite said that they were not incarcerated for the stated reasons by the deposed Partyless Panchayat system.

At the national level, it was found that, of the 265 member Parliament, a majority of 67.2 per cent elite were incarcerated for their active participation to overthrow the old Partyless Panchayat regime of the King. The rest 32.8 per cent of elite, however, were non-incarcerated.

It would be interesting and significant as well to mention here that the present houses of Parliament witness more non-incarcerated legislative members than the previous houses of parliament. In the last 1991 parliament, the percentage registered by the non-imprisoned or incarcerated members was just 21.1 per cent. Now, it has been reached to 32.8 per cent a gain of 11.7 per cent, in the present 1994-99 Parliament.

Conclusions

Empirical studies pertaining to the representative system not only show the countours of the power structure but also extends an explanation regarding the nature and dynamics of the socio-political processes. The empirical findings of the present study, with regard to the class structure of the houses of the parliament, interestingly show that the representative politics, under multiparty democracy, has also been advantageous to the socio-economically privileged groups. Such a phenomenon had been invogue under Partyless Panchayat Polity. The socio-economically weak populace have not been able to effectively participate in the kingdom's political process, partly owing to their confirmity to the traditional value system and role stereotype and also partly because of their socially disadvantageous or lower status in societal structure.

Social Class: The data, on the legislative elite and their social class in the houses of the parliament, show that the followers of the Hindu religion dominate both houses of parliament by occupying as much as 81 per cent of seats. Ethnically, the hill background elite are overwhelmingly represented as these groups capture as many as 82.3 per cent of the parliamentary seats. The tarai groups constitute the remaining 17.7 per cent in the 265 member bicameral legislature. Among the hill groups, the Bahun scores a very high percentage of the seats. The Chhetris, who used to dominate the national legislature under Chhetri King's Partyless Panchayat rule before 1990, are now being overshadowed by the Bahuns in the legislature after 1991 (Chalise 1995:55). These two higher castes, nevertheless, enjoy 75.6 per

cent among 165 hill members and 63.3 per cent of the seats in the 265 member parliament.

Contrary to the hill groups, among the tarai castes, the Brahmin and Kshatriya are poorly represented to the legislature. The non-higher but majority castes in many electoral areas, including Muslims, dominate the legislative elite recruitment pattern. These non-higher caste and communities constitute altogether 13.5 per cent out of their total 17.7 per cent seats in the 265 member parliament. Racially, the parliament is overwhelmingly dominated by the Caucasian stock, irrespective of their hill and tarai ethnic background. Another race- that forms the social composition of the Kingdom, i.e. Mongolian, mustered only 16.3 per cent.²⁹ In the light of the dominance of certain race, religion, caste and ethnic background elite in the parliament, here, it would be relevant to point one important fact out that the Kingdom of Nepal, which except for a short democratic period of 18 months i.e. from 1959-1960, most of the time has been directly and yet autocratically ruled by the most powerful Shah Kings and Rana semi-Kings, and significantly these two also owe the same elements in their social background. Nevertheless, in accordance with the Hindu values, the Shah Kings in Nepal, have been regarded and worshiped, mostly by illiterate people, as the incarnation of God Vishnu- a protector of the universe. In a society where the population of the Hindus constitute approximately 86.5 per cent and the constitution of the land declares herself as the Hindu Kingdom, it is undoubtedly a matter of privilege and also advantage to be one of the members of this social class.

In terms of the age, our findings indicate that the legislative eliteship in the popular and yet competitive politics of the Kingdom, is neither only influenced by the younger generation nor limited to the older generation. It is, however, centred between the two. According to the data, the 36-46 aged elite registered a relative majority in the Lower House while the 47-57 aged elite constituted a relative majority in the Upper House of the Parliament. In other words, electorates and political parties tend to elect and nominate those legislative candidates who are aged between 36-46 for the lower house and persons aged between 47-57 for the upper house of the parliament.

Economic Class: Occupationally, agriculture or farming background elite significantly dominate both the houses of parliament. Most of the legislative elite of the Kingdom still are dependent on the agriculture as their main source of income to meet elite and their family's basic requirements, besides the regular income from the parliament. It has been found that economically most of the elite enjoy the middle class strata among the general populace in their respective electoral constituencies.

However, the economic status of the majority of the elite is observed as higher, amongst the activists of their respective political parties, at the electoral constituency level.

Political Class: Political parties or institutions, which are supposed to form the *will* of the common people were outlawed for 30 years. They are now constitutionally legalised after the promulgation of the multiparty constitution in 1990. The Nepalese Parliament now enjoys a number of peoples' representatives who are directly linked with the various political forces working in the political process of society. Among them, however, chiefly the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the National Democratic Party, and the Nepal Sadbhawana (goodwill) Party, are of the national stature as these forces have been capable of meeting the 3 per cent clause of the electoral laws of the land. Small political forces like that of Nepal Labour and Peasants Party also have members in the House of Representatives, the Lower House of the parliament but they are failed to muster 3 per cent of the total votes polled in the general elections and therefore are not treated as the national parties.

The Nepali Congress- a social-democratic since inception, is a mass based political force in Nepal. It is the oldest force that is chiefly instrumental in overthrowing the two undemocratic regimes of the Rana Oligarchy and also the Partyless Panchayat policy of the King. It has own a workable majority in the 1991 elections constituting as much as 56.2 per cent seats in the parliament. But, when the party went for a snap polls in 1994, mainly owing to internal dissention, it failed to secure majority of seats. As a consequence, party's stature got changed from the ruling to an opposition in the legislature. Notwithstanding, the party has as much as 44.5 per cent of the seats in the 265 bicameral legislature and, following a vertical split in the UML, it is in an advantageous position and is heading the coalition government.

On the other hand, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) born in 1991, is a strong cadre based political force. It is composed of the liberal and conservative elements, in regard to achieving the communist ideology in the Kingdom, and therefore, it behaves marginally³⁰ which is, time and again, reflected in its programmes and actions. This party had just 36.0 per cent of seats in the 1991 and now it enjoys as many as 40.4 per cent of seats in the parliament and is a partner in the coalition government with the Nepali Congress.

The NDP is a political force mainly composed of the stalwarts of the ancience Partyless Panchayat regime, headed by the King. Before 1990, the leaders of this political party were the governing elite and were vehemently

opposed to, even practicing coercive measures, the elements that were against the Panchayat regime. It had, only 1.5 per cent strength, in 1991, in the 265 member parliament and was, then, considered as the rejected party by the electorate. But, after 4 years later, it now enjoys 8.7 per cent of seats in 1994 houses of the parliament. With this party's cooperation, all other revolutionary parties including NC and UML, either headed were led the coalition governments.

The NSP also was formally came into existence after the return of the democracy in 1990 though it was working as a political group even during the Panchayat regime as it had participated itself in the political process of the partyless polity. This regional-cum-ethnic party was the 4th largest party in the 1991 parliament and had as much as 2.6 per cent strength in 265 member houses. But it lost its ground and reduced to 1.1 per cent in the houses of the parliament after the 1994 elections.

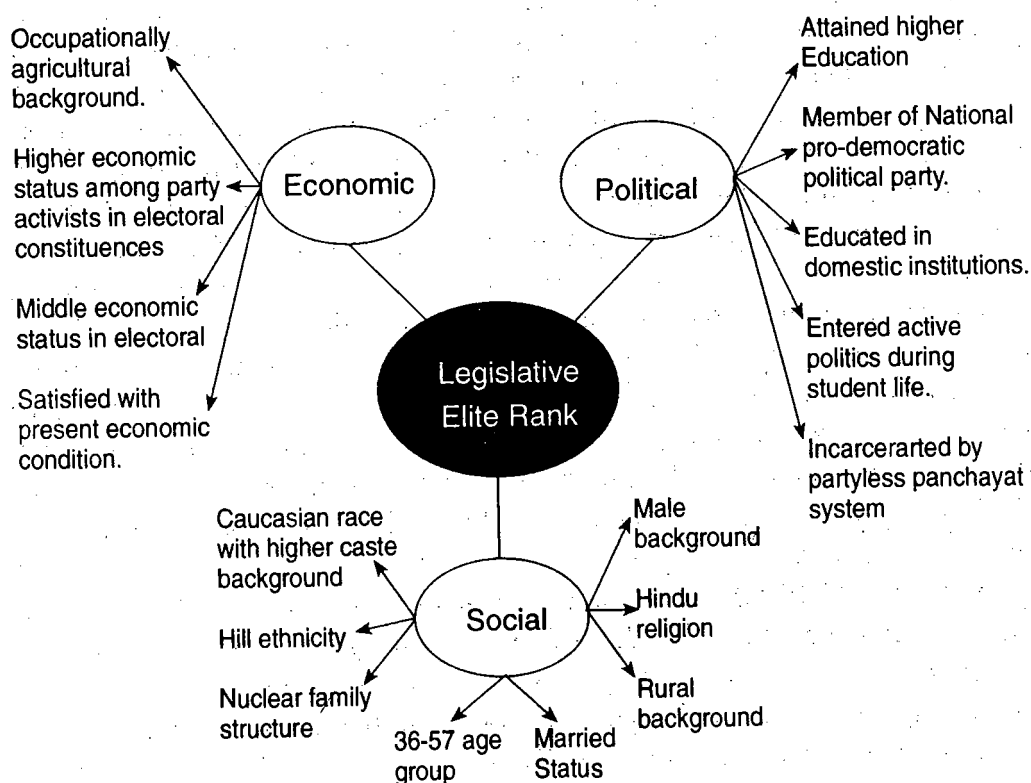
It is significant to reveal here that ethno-racially, the core leadership of all these political parties, are over represented by the Caucasians and yet higher caste personalities such as Bahuns and Chhetries.

The parliament witnesses that educational institutions of the Kingdom are playing role of major agencies to politically socialised young people to join politics, as majority of its members were students when they, at first, entered in an active politics of society. Those who were involved in the farming job were negligible. Nevertheless, it is found that those who were working in some Governmental or Non-governmental organisations constitute the 2nd largest percentage i.e. as many as 27.5 per cent. It is indeed significant to note that the parliament is overwhelmingly dominated by the graduate and above graduate legislators. Majority of these legislative elite are found inspired by the agencies of the secondary social group. Nevertheless, the elite who are inspired by the agencies of the primary social group also constitute a large share of percentage i.e. as much as much 42.3 per cent. The national parliament continues, as it witnessed as many as 78.9 per cent in 1991, to be dominated by the jail goers for the restoration of multiparty democracy in Nepal.

Except the NDP-which is composed of the ruling elite of the deposed Partyless Panchayat System that ruled the country for 30 years from 1960 to 1990, all other political parties of the national stature had relentlessly worked against the ancienne regime. In course of their arduous fight, many of their workers suffered economically and also physically, as they were incarcerated and their properties were confiscated. After the restoration of democracy, these political forces have become the ruling parties one time or other and have enhanced their socio-economic standing. Now the power and authority are more or less attached to them. Nevertheless, these powerful

parties, of which core leadership is overwhelmingly dominated by the political sufferers,³¹ as *quid pro quo*, distribute legislative tickets to those activists of the party who were incarcerated under Partyless Panchayat period. And, sovereign electorates, have been found rewarding the politically imprisoned personalities in the elections for their sacrifices and arduous struggle against the autocratic regime in the Kingdom. In other words, it can be said that to be the member of the political sufferer class, in the post-democracy era, is an advantage or politically higher status in the political domain of society. Also according to the data, 67.2 per cent elite had a background of being suffered or incarcerated for their active participation to overthrow the ancient regime of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, the percentage of the non-incarcerated elite has been enhanced as compared to the last parliament in which it was as much as 21.1 per cent only.

Figure 4: Determinants for Legislative Elite Rank in the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal



Source: Based on the findings of the study.

Notes

1. This article was prepared during author's research stay in the Federal Republic of Germany, from June 1998 to May 1999, under Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung's *Special George Forster Post-Doctoral Fellowship*.
2. Shah Kings of modern Nepal- Chhetri by caste, trace their ancestral line to the Solar and Lunar Kings of Chitaur Garh who fled to the Gorkha following the Muslim invasion into their state in the 14th Century.
3. Chhetri by caste, the Ranas of Nepal, also have social root in the Chitaur Garh in the family of one of the Solar clan Kings.
4. Shah Kings in Nepal are addressed as *Sri* 5 while Rana Prime Ministers were addressed as *Sri* 3. It may be noteworthy here that *Sri* is a word which is generally used before the name of Hindus in order to pay or show one's respect. For an ordinary being, only one *Sri* has been practiced so far.
5. According to the 1990 constitution, the sovereignty of Nepal is vested in the Nepalese people. Please see *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 and Electoral Laws*, (Legal Research Associates: Kathmandu), p. 2.
6. Of the total 60 members, 35 including at least 3 women, are elected by the House of Representatives under the system of Proportional Representation by means of a single transferable vote while 15 other members, at the ratio of 3 members from each Development Region (There are 5 Development Regions: Eastern Development Region, Central Development Region, Western Development Region, Mid-Western Development Region and far-Western Development Region), are elected through single transferable vote by an electoral college that consisted of Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the VDC and Town Committees and the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the members of the DDC. Each Development Region has its own electoral college. The rest 10 members are directly nominated by the King.
7. Suresh C. Chalise, *Sociology of the Legislative Elite in a Developing Society: an empirical study based on the members of the first Parliament of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal after the 1990 people's revolution*, (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Nepal Foundation for Advance Studies, Kathmandu, 1995), pp. 53-57.
8. *The Constitution of Nepal, 1990*, (Kathmandu: HMG Law and Justice Ministry, Law Book Management Association, 1990), p. 3.
9. *Population Census-1991, Social Characteristics Tables*, (Vol. 1, Part VII, His Majesty's Government of Nepal, CBS; 1993) p. 1

10. It is significant to note that members of this Mongolian racial stock possess Hindu names.
11. *Mundhum* as a separate religion was also reported in an unpublished Ph.D. Thesis by S.C. Chalise, opcit. P. 114. At bottom, *Mundhum* is a religious text to be recited during social rituals, particularly among *Kiranti* ethnic groups, in eastern Nepal. However, it is explored that local variations of Limbu mundhum include muddum among Mewahang-Rai and muntum among Yakha tribe. See for details Harka Gurung, *Nepal: social demography and expressions*, (New Era, Kathmandu, 1998), p. 104.
12. The members of the Nepali Congress, National Democratic Party and Nepal Sadbhawana Party, have no ambiguity in declaring themselves as the followers of Hindu religion. But, specifically in the case of the members of the Communist Parties, it is found that they are either divided or express conflicting views on the question of their religion. For example; the founder General Secretary of Communist Party Mr Chandra Prakash Mainali says he believes in Hindu Culture, *Sanskriti*, not in religion. The riddle is that the element of religion can hardly be excluded from Culture. Similarly, the President of Communist Party (UML) Mr Manmohan Adhikary claims to be Hindu, Mrs Sahana Pradhan- by caste a Newar, President of CPN (Marxist and Leninist) also claims to be Hindu, Mr Narayan Man Bijukchhe- Newar, president of NLP Party is also a follower of Hindu religion. Mr Hiranaya Lal Shreshta- Newar by caste though claims to be believer of humanism, nevertheless, confesses that his family is follower of Hindu religion. Furthermore, interestingly, those who claim to be Atheist also place themselves in some of the caste groups and ironically, the caste itself is the byproduct of the social stratification in the Hindu religion.
13. This violent class struggle or war, which was launched in 1996 by the Maoists in Nepal, still continues.
14. Many scholars in Nepal still consider the members of this Mongolian racial stock as the tribals. In earlier days, people of this stock, might be called a tribal in view of their socio-economic and educational status but it would be unscientific to call or regard them now as a tribal, as their life style has considerably been modernised. Besides, they are actively participating in social, economic political and cultural domains of the Nepalese society.
15. This category of response includes, teaching, governmental and non-governmental job of spouses, private legal practice, house renting, economic support from respective political parties and pension from previous Governmental or Private job.

16. The material obtained on the economic status, at bottom, comes from the elite respondent themselves and, as it is still regarded as valuable for revolutionary elite of 1990 to have economically poor class or status- as they are being alleged for corruption in view of their relatively comfortable economic life introduced by their privileged status in society, it may well be that a few of them might have given their economic status as lower.
17. The entire Kingdom of Nepal, as per 1990 constitution, has been divided into 75 districts as administrative units and these districts have further been splited into 205 electoral constituencies. For details see, *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 and Electoral Laws*, (Legal Research Associates, Kathmandu), p. 85-86.
18. Ibid. p. 68.
19. According to the electoral law of Nepal, every political party requires atleast 3 per cent of the total votes polled in the general elections, to be recognised as the national party. For details, see, Suresh C. Chalise, *Sociology of the Legislative Elite in a Developing Society*, (FES and NEFAS, Kathmandu, 1995). p. 29.
20. The Communist Party of Nepal (UML) has almost vertically and yet formally been splitted on 5th of March 1998 after 46 of parliament members led by Mr Bam Dev Gautam registered an application for their separate identity as the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist and Leninist) at the parliament secretariate. But this splinter party has not been recognised as the national party by the Election Commision, as it has not yet the privilege of meeting the 3 percent clause of the electoral law. And, therefore, in this study the members of CPN (ML) are not separately dealt.
21. Unified after 1991 general elections, this party does have two arch rival personalities Mr SB Thapa and Mr LB Chand. Emulation, between the two, has been since the growth of the Partyless Panchayat politics. The reasons for their rivalry have partly been for their political ambition hedged with caste stereotype and partly due to their attitude towards politics of the contemporary Nepalese society. Mr Chand, according to *Gorkhapatra* of December 22, 1998, opened National Democratic Party (consolidation) on 21 December and later that forum was changed into the NDP (Chand) as it declared its central committee headed by Mr. Rajeshor Devkota. This party, according to *Kantipur Weekly* dated January 17, 1999, was also officially recognised by the secretariate of parliament on 16th of January 1999 but again was also not recognised by the Election Commission on the same ground that was applied in the case of CPN (ML). In view of this, as was done in the case of CPN

- (ML), the members of both the factions of the NDP are not dealt separately.
22. *Others* category of response is to denote the two members, Mr Pari Thapa and Mr Nav Raj Subedi, who show their allegiance to some extreme left force in Nepal.
 23. This category consists 2 or 3.3 per cent illiterate legislative members.
 24. This category includes 1 or 0.5 per cent illiterate member.
 25. This category constitutes 3 or 1.1 per cent elite in 265 member parliament.
 26. People participated in the periodic national and local elections. They also actively participated in the *national referendum* of 1980 and 45.8% adult citizen then had boldly exercised their franchise against the Partyless Panchayat system. Even after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, people are found indulged in all sorts of politics from unconstitutional Maoist People's War and revival of the deposed Partyless Panchayat system to the main stream of the present multiparty democratic process. In other words, people, nevertheless, continuously be that of pro-establishment or anti-establishment nature of politics, are taking part in the political process of the Kingdom.
 27. *Primary Social group* includes those family members/relatives and peer groups of the respondent elite, who already are involved in politics of society, while the *Secondary social group* comprises of political leaders, ideology followed by political party, exploitation by landlord in respondent's village, anti-British movement by nextdoor Indian people, impact of 1979 students movement, inner feeling to fight against injustice and exploitation in society.
 28. This category of elite also constitutes the King's 10 nominees to 16.7 per cent of the 60 members in the National Council.
 29. This category of elite consists of the Mongolians from hill groups and Tribals (Tharus) from tarai community.
 30. On the one hand, the CPN (UML) regards the place or the monarchy as the political protector of feudalism and imperialism while on the other hand, it accepts the supremacy of the 1990 constitution, in which the monarchy or His Majesty the King, is an integral part of the parliament. It is stated in the Article 44 of the 1990 Constitution. Please also see, *The Parliament of Nepal: an overview*, (Parliament Secretariat's Offset Press, Kathmandu, 1999) p. 3.
 31. In 1991, the Political Sufferer's Committee was formed with a view to rehabilitate the persons who were incarcerated or exiled during Partyless Panchayat Polity. This Committee has been headed by the former Prime Minister and President of the Nepali Congress Party Mr K.P. Bhattarai who himself had suffered imprisonment as many as 14 years.

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