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In yet another jolt to the Maoists, Lalitsman Rajbanshi, leader of the Maoist-affiliated Thawan Muki Morcha, joined hands with powerful Maoist rebels like Rabindra Shrestha and Mani Thapa to open a front to, “oppose, expose and rebel” against the policy of compromise pursued by the Maoists. The group has decided to form armed battalions as well.

A Maoist source said it was hard for Prachanda to convince the participants who asked pointed questions like whether Maoists should continue in the government or quit. Prachanda and Bhattarai were also accused of complying with Indian interests and allowing themselves to be dictated by it. However, all indications suggest Maoists are unlikely to withdraw from the government immediately.

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But it was the resignation of Yadav and his turning down Prachanda’s request to withdraw it that dominated the extended meeting, participated by about 2,000 representatives from central to district level of the party that followed a two-day meeting of the central committee.

Yadav was miffed mainly with PM’s behaviour and also with Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai over his unceremonious removal as chief of party’s Terai wing last month. He also attacked Home Minister K P Sitaula, a close ally of the duo, for not cooperating in tracking down the sandal wood smugglers despite his repeated requests. He made it clear that all these need to be rectified if he is to continue as a minister.

Yadav also made his reservations clear about Maoist leadership’s endorsement of the dialogue between the government and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum led by Upendra Yadav, who he described as the head of the criminal groups backed by India and the palace.
Govt-MFJ talks put off indefinitely

Chandra Poudel announced that the government wanted to include three more members in the team that included Jhajhah Koiral of CPN-UML, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat (Cong-D) and Deb Gurung (Maoist). In fact, inclusion of the Maoists minister in the official team follows insistence from the Maoist leadership that it cannot be excluded from the process of finding a solution to the Terai problems. But MFJ is upset with Gurung’s inclusion as the Maoists have been regularly branding MFJ as criminals and India-palace sponsored outfit.

As a result, the earlier decision to have the Terai issue resolved ended with no solution in sight in near future. The government leader, peace and reconstruction minister, Ram Rayamahri commission report, and not holding any accountability of the killing of Terai people. “The talks are indefinitely postponed,” Yadav told newsfront, adding “government does not seem to have done its homework at all.” The 26-points submitted earlier demands among other things, a federal set-up with full autonomy to the provinces with the right to self-determination and proportional representation system of election. Yadav said the forum also demanded that the current parliament should be dissolved after the election process gets started.

Minister Poudel on his part tried to convince the forum that they should not read too much in the inclusion of the Maoists in the committee. “It was incomplete and we had to give it a wider representation,” he said. He added that the government would soon get back to the forum with its response to some of the demands.

Maoist inclusion in the official team irritates MFJ

Commission of compromise

In a clear act of betrayal, the government led by G P Koirala is all set to set up the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commision with the power to withdraw cases of violation of gross human rights and that of international humanitarian laws. The move has brought the government in. direct confrontation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal. (OHCHR). The OHCHR has objected to the provisions of the draft bill that empowers the proposed commission to withdraw such cases. “OHCHR-Nepal is deeply concerned about provisions which would amnesty the perpetrators of gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), including extrajudicial execution, torture and disappearances,” a statement issued on Friday said. “These provisions which prevent prosecution for these offences are inconsistent with Nepal’s obligations under international law,” it added.

The move, human rights groups say, will only help in continuation of the culture of impunity, adding this can be used to absolve those who have committed grave crimes of human rights both from the government as well as the Maoists’ sides. In fact, provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by Prime Minister G P Koirala and Maoist Chief Prachanda in the presence of UN and diplomatic community’s representatives in Nepal in November clearly states that the cabinet will have the power to withdraw any case against anyone and such decisions can be challenged before any court of law. OHCHR also makes a point that the provisions of the draft bill came as a damper to what the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon had stated recently, that the UN neither had a policy of endorsing or condoning amnesties for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or gross violations of human rights; nor undertaking or encouraging activities that might foster them. It also says the draft bill does not guarantee enough safeguards for independence, impartiality and diversity of the commission.

The government and the Maoists had earlier agreed to set up the TRC with a mandate to investigate violations of human rights and crimes against humanity committed during the course of the armed conflict between 13 February 1996 and 21 November 2006. The commission, which will consist of up to seven commissioners, will have two years, with a possibility of a 12-month extension. It will then provide the government with a report of its findings, and recommendations as to reconciliation, prosecutions, amnesties and reparations.

“The creation of TRC is a very important initiative that can assist a nation in building a culture of peace and reconciliation based on truth, justice and reparation,” it said. All season corruption in NA

In a clean and open bid process, the aviation sector of the government of Nepal has faced some of the most alleged and un-proven corruption cases during the last few years. The operations of the aviation sector are going through the worst ever challenging times in the last couple of years. The industry, once running smoothly, is now facing the dark side of the seemingly faceless corruption. Over the last four years, once the aviation sector has been the most buzzing sector of the Nepalese government.

Nepal Airlines (NA) now faces doomsday thanks to ever proliferating corruption within its corridors. Even though its external operation has come to a halt, a major scandal that has already cost nearly 400,000 Hong Kong dollars has come into the light. A spare engine of the Boeing, is lying at a warehouse in Hong Kong for which Nepa...
Newsbrief

E-fund poached

Ministry for agriculture and environment may not be so visible in terms of what it has done in the past one year after the great political change. But the deploration of the environment fund is something that is very visible in the ministry. According to the information available, around two crore rupees have been disbursed to various NGOs from the fund that is meant to conserve environment and control pollution. While about one crore rupees was spent during the first eight months after the political change, almost an equal amount has been disbursed after Mahantha Thakur took over as the minister in April.

The fund disbursement to the NGOs is done on the recommendation of a committee headed by the ministry secretary which has members from the ministry of finance and planning commission. But there are questions about the veracity and eligibility of these NGOs - who are they and which political party are they affiliated to? The general perception is that most of them are affiliated to the congress party which Minister Thakur also belongs to.

NTNC’s third member secretary

The Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) has seen three member secretaries in less than six months. The latest head that rolled was that of Siddhartha Vajracharya who has replaced Nirajan Koirala less than a month after he was appointed as member secretary of the trust.

Bimal Bania, senior official in the National Agriculture Research Centre (NARC) has been appointed as the new member secretary with immediate effect. The member secretary is the main executive post in the trust which has prime minister as the patron and forest minister as the chairman. Before last year, the trust which used to be known as King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) used to have King Gyanendra as patron and Crown Prince Paras as the chairman.

Frequent change of member secretary, according to NTNC employees, is a reflection of politics dominating the trust which might ultimately discourage the donors. Nirajan Koirala was removed mysteriously within a month of his appointment following a feud over the post in the Koirala family. To appease a section of the congress, the Prime Minister G.Koirala took over as the minister of the trust.

Calling it a day

Ram Pradhan has decided to quit the Himalayan Times as its founder editor.

Dollar MD in Kathmandu

Managing Director of Dollar India (Bhawani textile) Vinod Kr. Gupta visited Kathmandu this week for business meeting. In the meeting with business-persons in Nepal, he claimed that despite being a new brand in the market, Dollar MD is becoming a success as no. 1 innerwear and winter-wear in India and Nepal. He added that due to its quality material and reasonable price, Dollar products are gaining popularity in Nepal.

As festival season is approaching in Nepal, Dollar products will be coming in more variety and at affordable prices. Gupta claimed that their product is as popular and as films Balman Khan who is the brand ambassador for this product.

Koirala warned

Hold CA election on time or you will be non-entity

Mukherjee spoke to Koirala, NC (D) leader Sher Bahadurneeb and some others over the phone that such a move would destroy legitimacy of the political system and credibility of the leaders entirely.

The move which Koirala discussed with some of the Maoist leaders and close aides in Nepali Congress, has also been criticised by senior leaders like Arjun Narsingh K.C. “I will join the revolt against such a move which seeks to take away people’s right to participate in the election,” said he Koirala’s assertion that he is committed to hold elections to the constituent assembly as scheduled in November comes in the wake of disapproval of his move to short-circuit the CA poll.

This conspiracy is on. And we cannot accept it. This will destroy democracy for ever,” former PM and Janashakti leader, Surya Bahadur Thapa said. It is believed that while Koirala discussed in details such a plan with Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Bubaram Bhattarai in detail, he only gave a broad hint about it to UML Secretary General Prachanda Mithle Kumar Nepal. In fact, Prachanda’s latest prediction for CA election in November – a proportional representation system of election and Republic Nepal soon - many believe, somehow reflects Koirala’s grand design to convert existing parliament into the constituent assembly.

“We have been hearing such moves from outside. And it will be a total betrayal of the people and therefore (will) not be acceptable to our party,” Minister Rijal, Member of the Central committee of the Nepali Congress (D) told newscript.

An appeal to be aware of false propaganda and conspiracy against Salt Trading Corporation Ltd.

Everyone is aware of the credibility and reputation that the Salt Trading Corporation has earned over a period of time. The corporation, which has set quality, availability and low price as its aims, has planned to improve its services throughout the country in future. But some people clearly busy rocking their own ship are busy spreading false canards against the corporation now.

An attempt is being made to defame the iodised salt duly certified by the appropriate authority of the state, as ‘not fit for consumption’.

The corporation has supplied the salt to the market only after the authority of the state had issued certificate about its quality.

Against the normal practice of having 30-PPM iodine in salt for other countries, Salt Trading Corporation has been mixing 50-PPM iodine in the salt for sale in Nepal. They are distributed among consumers through dealers and offices in sealed packets.

It was solely with the intention of a conspiracy against the salt, the then Executive Head, after he had been divested of all his executive authorities, raised questions regarding the quality of the salts through a circular sent to all zonal offices on 2064-4-6. We request all to our customers and authorities concerned to be aware of such conspiracies that claim everything is right when in power, and nothing is right once out of it.

The Department of Food and Technology and Quality Control of the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperative (Govt. of Nepal) had analysed the salt last imported. Its report made public on 2064-5-6 showed Sodium Chloride content at 99.5 per cent and iodine PPM at 60.2 per cent. No salt has been imported after that.

Therefore, we request all concerned not to give credence to the campaign of conspiracy and defamation against the Salt Trading Corporation, a model of excellence of public-private partnership. We also want to reiterate that we will continue to give utmost priority to the issue of public health as well the quality of salt and other commodities while conducting our business.

Salt Trading Corporation Ltd.
Nefarious design

A dictator is one who wants to rule without people’s mandate. An authoritarian government cares little about submitting itself to the parliament. It would want to avoid elections, and yet wants to stick on like limpet, in power. By all definition, Prime Minister G P Koirala, is behaving like an authoritarian. There are clear indications that he does not want elections to the constituent assembly scheduled to be held in November. Instead, he seemed toying with the idea to convert the existing parliament into a constituent assembly after accommodating some Daals, Janajatis and Madhesis in it.

If all, his sinister design does not find any taker, the initial credit for this should go to India which is quite involved in Nepal’s peace process. India currently believes that legitimacy of the entire political system in Nepal will collapse if the elections are postponed or stalled. But this does not mean that Koirala will give up so easily. He might try to rope in domestic allies to make such design. Surprisingly, one can conclude through conjectures that Maoists are equally keen to toe the Koirala line. By demanding that Nepal should be declared a republic now, and that the model of elections should be based entirely on proportional representation model, the Maoists are only making elections in November impossible.

Secondly, both demands not only undermine the previous political understanding between the Maoists and other seven parties, but overrule them altogether unitarily. It raises sufficiently suspicions that maybe Koirala and Maoists have reached a secret understanding to ensure that elections do not take place in November under any circumstances.

No doubt, Koirala acted as an absolute PM under an ad hoc arrangement in the past 15 months, but it would be a political suicide on his part to try and continue as an authoritarian ruler. Past 15 months have seen Koirala totally undermining the parliament, being absent in it during crucial times. On Friday, he chose to fly to Bratnagar when the new national anthem was being played and the Rayamajhi Commission was being tabled in the House.

Why does Koirala want to run away from elections? It is high time that the constituents of the ruling coalition warn him against staging elections under any pretext. Maoists also owe an explanation if the central committee’s demand for proportional system of elections is an outcome of the pact with Koirala - to covert the current parliament into the constituent assembly without facing the poll. It is time for Koirala to ouf if he has lost courage to face the people.

Shame, Mr. PM

Newsfront has made its mark on the political circle. Its last issue revealed that G P Koirala, despite the public pledge he took along with other leaders that they would not repeat their past, has not changed a bit. He is conspiring to turn the existing un-elected parliament into the constituent assembly.

This is a matter of shame that Koirala does not trust the electorate of this country, does not reveal his plan to them, but consults India and other countries for endorsement of his dictatorial ambitions. How is he different from King Gyanendra?

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910 - 1991)

Consider all phenomena as impermanent, we will be able to turn inwards and reflecting carefully. You will see that the mind does not exist, or not by just turning inwards and reflecting carefully. You will see that the mind does not exist, or not by just turning inwards and reflecting carefully. You will see that the mind does not exist, or not by just turning inwards and reflecting carefully. You will see that the mind does not exist, or not by just turning inwards and reflecting carefully.

Aristotle

6-12 Aug, 2007
Why another cultural policy?

This supremacy and Brahmanbad attitude prevailed in the country till recently.

The Nepal government has announced in its policy and programme document for the year BS2064/65. It says a new cultural policy will be implemented for managing the protection and promotion of traditional rites and rituals, languages and cultures of all castes and ethnic groups throughout the country.

This is not at all a new thing in the country. Since early 1970s three cultural policy documents have been drafted and somewhat implemented as well. All the three above-mentioned cultural policy documents have given emphasis on these matters categorically. But we all know that in practice how the previous govern-ments have implemented them.

The politicians and ministers have used the treasury of the country for the benefit of their own constituency and for the protection and promotion of their own cultural heritage or those of their masters for long. The annual programme prepared by the bureaucratic envisaging the over all balance for maximum number of districts and communities have always changed its track on the whims of the politicians or ministers. How can a bureaucratic challenge the politicians or ministers who have been ruling this country autocratically since long?

We should be clear that haste in drafting and implementing a new cultural policy at this junc-ture of time will be useless and suicidal. Let the election of Constitution Assembly finish and let a new constitution for Nepal be promulgated. In this new constitution certainly there should be some clauses which give guarantee for the up-liftment of language, cultural and traditions of all Nepalese.

In Nepal since the beginning of the fifth Five Year Plan period (1975) cultural heritage preservation has been receiving some sort of recogni-tion from the government. Every year in the official address of the king and in the budget speech of the finance minister, a line or two on the issues relating culture and cultural heritage are being mentioned and budget allocated.

For a long time some acts like the Ancient Monument Preservation Act, 2013 and the Guthi Undertaking Act have been fulfilling the vacuum of the absence of cultural policy in the country. Till 1983 nobody gave any attention and thought for the need of formulating a cultural policy for the country. That year a high level committee called Cultural Policy and Program Drafting Committee formed Program Drafting Committee.

This committee submitted its report and recommendations in the same year, which was not at all materialised by the government. In 1991 the government set up a National Cultural Policy and Program Drafting Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Bishnu Prasad Bhattarai to formulate a cultural policy for the country. The committee submitted its report and recommen-dations in 1992 but those recommenda-tions are also not yet fully imple-mented.

Whether the officials of the Ministry of Culture have seen all these above-mentioned documents or not, is not known. It is recommended they read these reports before finalising their plans and programs for this plan period. Both culture and cultural properties is the product of history and time. Numerous generations of rulers and people of our country have been contributing in enriching our culture since ages. The Kathmandu Valley is the best example of it.

The valley culture is not only our glory, prestige, and recognition in the international world but also our bread and butter through tourism industry. If we open all the cultural assets of this valley to tourism, it would be easy to generate employment to our youths and develop home industries such as service and handicrafts. What we need is a broad national perspective and policy for developing cultural tourism in the country. This ultimately demands a broad cultural policy and rational plans and programs.

This century is the age of ethnic revolution. Minorities and ethnic populations of every country are fighting for their recognition and cultural upliftment. This is a very sensitive issue. If we cannot satisfy and pacify them they can be the cause of national disintegration. We have examples of Soviet Russia, Yugoslavia and numerous other countries.

In Nepal too, our ethnic minorities have been suffering a lot since ages. They are poor, illiterate, and have always been dominated and deprived of opportunities by upper class privileged minorities. If we look into the civil service cadre more than 80 percent people belong to this class. This class has been controlling legal profession, teaching profession, politics and even businesses of the country.

History says that after the formation of unified Nepal in 1769 the Thar Ghar who came to Kathmandu from Gorkha with King Prithvi Narayan Shah became all-powerful. With the rise of the Thapas under the leadership of Bhimsen Thapa the family belonging to the Thar Ghar gradually lost their hegemony in Nepali politics. For many decades Nepali court politics entered into the period of turbulence or struggle for power till the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana in 1848.

The Ranas and their kith and kin ruled the country despotically for more than a century. During the Rana regime the Brahmins received maximum benefit. The Ranas ruled the country arbitrarily with the help of the Brahmins. They were even exempted from execution even if they had committed heinous crimes. This supremacy and Brahmanbad attitude prevailed in the country till recently.

We should never forget that the wrong doings of previous politicians and governments and their short sightedness and narrow attitude towards the culture of minorities have helped in augmenting separatist movement in the country in the names of Newar Mukti Morcha, Madeshi Janandolan, Chure-Bhawar Andolan and so on. A sensible democratic government should always try to balance this type of unharmo-nious situation and establish harmony and peace in the society.
Are we dying?

It is truly baffling to see that such problems are not even noticed by the ever active civil society of Nepal, much less acted upon.

Nepal, the darling of neighbors and overseas friends, particularly of the United States, is not yet ready to promote their agendas vigorously during internal strife, support timidly during execution of ideas, and ignore conveniently afterwards, appears to be losing control of everything including its newfound freedom and democracy. The death of a small and insignifi-

cant nation may not matter much to the global actors as there is no dearth of activities that present themselves on a daily basis owing to a variety of reasons, the foremost being the state of poverty and deprivation.

It would certainly be an unfortunate event to the common people of Nepal who have placed their trust unconditionally to the promises of reform made by the major political parties in power today. They have also believed fully in the assurances of the international community that the new Nepal would not only correct the power today. They have also believed fully in the non-aggression of the Maoists, Nepali Congress and UML have eventually moved closer on agreeing to convene the CA elections in a free and fair manner but when to launch their proposed ‘people’s revolt’. Besides, the signals transmitted by the Maoist leadership on its proposed foreign and economic policies seem to be quite alarming international financial institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank away from Nepal.

The image of ‘our’ Nepal conveys a contradictory message, thanks to the contradictions proven in the speeches and the actions of the political parties. The same ambivalence characterises the concept of a ‘new-Nepal’. All political parties preach inclusive democracy but are doing the opposite in action.

The fundamental problem plaguing Nepalese politics is that the people have failed to take ownership of the constitutional drafting process. Be it 1990, 1995, 1999 and even 2006, the verdict of the people will not suffice. Many scenarios need to be considered here: what if the elections are fraudulent, what if the elections turn out to be only reasonably fair and the Maoists won? Would India accept a totalitarian government of India categorically states in its constitution in one form or the other for their survival in the last sixteen years. The palaces inked a constitution but that too failed. Similarly in 1990, the agitating parties and the palace inked a constitution but that too failed. And now although the present constitution is an interim one, it has been amended twice. The real problem with constitutions that are drafted by a handpicked team is that the constitutional forces responsible for drafting the constitution have consistently abrogated the constitution. For example, King Gyanendra’s move of article 127 and even elected prime ministers have all abrogated the constitution in one form or the other for their survival in the last sixteen years. There are gargantuan challenges to the constitution drafting process. First, the ethnic violence has to subside and the political issues raised in the Terai should be solved sympatheti-

cally. Second, the government must arrest the present situation of lawlessness. Third, the government has been unable to assert political authority and as a consequence the Maoists are still operating as an extra constitutional force.

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There was a time when we believed that we were able to speak with animals.

We have 16,000 enrolled members out of which 7,000 to 8,000 live in the reservations; where we suffer from domestic abuse, drugs and unemployment of 80 percent. Through a relocation programme, there is a number who have left for big cities, went to good schools and hold good jobs. As for jobs in the reservations, during summer time we are able to go fire fighting, or work in national park service.

What was your childhood like? I grew up with kerosene lamps and no toilets. There used to be many trips to the river, filling water in cans, fishing. Nature was our teacher and the buffalo was our staple food. We were always playing games outdoors. I see it in sharp contrast to kids these days who just sit and watch the TV. All the stories I hear, I’ve written it all in a book called, The Ways of the Blackfeet.

Did you face discrimination while growing up? Yes, it was hard growing up as a minority. White kids used to call us prairie nigger and other names. Discrimination still exists.

How did you cope with changes, with western lifestyle? It was very hard. They took our land, slaughtered our buffaloes, forced us to attend mission schools and took away our oral ways of life. We were forbidden to speak our language and follow our way of life. We had and have a lot of depressed people.

How are you stopping from your indigenous culture from dying out? Blackfeet language and ceremonies are taught in colleges. To preserve culture, it is important to preserve language. We are trying to bring back our language. We also have a tribal council set up in 1930s by the government. We have museums, colleges and have some old ways of life like the sweat lodges that are built with logs, covered with hides, a fire pit in the centre and water is put on hot rocks to get steam for steam bath.

Most of us still practice our traditional rituals. Preserving one’s culture is largely an individual effort, it is developing one’s self awareness. It does not depend on the government.

What challenges do you see the Native Americans facing today? I see the population and the chaos prevailing all around us as challenges. I fear that when one day survival at large is at risk, the day might come when our reservations will be the target for trees and wild animals for food to feed the masses outside. Present problems are getting government jobs and we are still fighting for our education and health care.

Are there any similarities you see between your community and those that you observed in Nepal? Our colouring and sometimes features are similar. There are also similarities in the sense of our values, especially that of respecting our elders.

What values do you hold dear? Honestly, caring for others and treating others the way you would like to be treated.

Do members of your community still harbour any negative feelings towards those who invaded your land? The feeling of animosity still exists. But we all have to get along, adapt and forgive to survive.

Tell us about the connection between nature and the Native Americans. There was a time when we believed that we were able to speak with animals. We are closely intertwined with nature. We have totems, just like you have deities. Totems are our guides. Mine is grizzly bear and my brother has cat. We intertwined with nature. We have totems, just like you have deities. Totems are our guides. Mine is grizzly bear and my brother has cat.
The harlots of anarchy

Rimal...spent the rest of his life, roaming insane in the streets of Kathmandu.

Times of the dark ones came and passed away - Gopal Prasad Rimal

Over the past decade Nepal’s image has undergone a dramatic change. Known as a little sequenced kingdom and God’s own land, currently Nepal is known for its political upheavals and makes news worldwide everyday with its fast changing political scenario.

This poem shows a poet’s life and his nations interwoven in a highly imaginative form. Rimal during his adolescence came under the influence of revolutionaries who were aspiring to overthrow the despotic Rana rulers. Though Rimal began his career in 1930 and as playwright in 1940, it was in 1941 that the real Rimal remerged on centre stage of Nepal’s literary and political arena.

In 1941, the brutal execution of patriot Durlal Chand and his friends fired Rimal’s imagination and then revolution became the bedrock of his creative imagination. He founded a creative organisation called ‘Paiga Panchayat’ to raise voice against the suppression of Nepali people by autocratic Rana rulers and was imprisoned on several occasions for his involvement in the movement.

Rimal played a pivotal role in making the 1950 democratic movement successful but soon grew disillusioned. His dreams of democratic Nepal were shattered as harlots of anarchy in the garb of democracy started dancing in the castles of Rana. Rimal lost his mental balance and was sent to an asylum in Ranchi. There doctors pulled a rib from his back and Rimal was brought back to Nepal to spend the rest of his life, roaming insane in the streets of Kathmandu with the dream of true democracy seething in his heart.

Rimal foresaw Nepal’s struggle with the political systems. His legacy shows how poetry and politics are inseparable in Nepali society. He also saw the inherent corruption in politics and how writers become mere tools in the hands of clever and corrupt leaders and are often sidelined. Moreover, Rimal defines a writer’s role as an outsider, marginalised but supreme, above all parties and political systems. He sees writer as a separate entity and an authority above all ideologies and that’s what makes him the greatest poet of this era.

Norris Vedanandaassuli the one that Shasta emphasised as the root practice of all practice. There are no Suttas in the Theravada tradition to validate that. In fact, it is stated that in the Visuddhimagga that the exercise of mindfulness of the body had never been practiced before the advent of the Buddha, nor does it come within the scope of any of the other religious systems.

It is praised in various ways by the Buddha in different Suttas; for example, there is one state, monks - which being developed and repeatedly practiced conduces to great religious emotion, great benefit, great freedom from bondage, great mindfulness and self-possession, the attainment of knowledge and insight, the happy state in this visible life, the realisation of the fruit of knowledge and release. What is that one state? Mindfulness of the body...”

Again, “those who do not enjoy mindfulness of body do not enjoy deathlessness (Amata); those who enjoy mindfulness of the body enjoy deathlessness. Those who have not enjoyed mindfulness of the body have not enjoyed deathlessness; those who have enjoyed mindfulness of the body have enjoyed deathlessness. Those who have neglected mindfulness of the body have neglected deathlessness; those who have enjoyed mindfulness of the body have enjoyed deathlessness. Those who have neglected mindfulness of the body have neglected deathlessness. Those who have enjoyed mindfulness of the body have enjoyed deathlessness. Those who have not enjoyed mindfulness of the body have not enjoyed deathlessness.”

Nagarjuna says that Kayagataanussati is the most important meditation taught by the Shasta.

(To be continued.)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master.)

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In Nepal, as in my own country, many people are unable to develop their capacity for respect, freedom and love.

Enduring connections

Nepal. I walked as though in a dream through Asan Tol, overwhelmed by new and indescribable experiences, until reality called me back to my mission.

Of course I tried to change too much, too quickly, and this led to many misunderstandings. My colleagues would agree to certain goals in a limited amount of time, but somehow these goals were never quite met. I felt aggravated and frustrated, because although my co-workers would say “Ho, Hajur, Memsab” to satisfy me, the words were empty of the will to turn my request into action.

Soon I understood that I was overwhelming my colleagues. “Why change something that has been done the same way all these past years?” If a VIP came to visit however, disorder was quickly put in order, the house cleaned and children freshly dressed. Superficial improvements were made to impress the higher-ranked people, but they were not prepared to make profound changes to improve on the work at hand, that most impacted on their lives.

Eventually I started to cut back on my demands, and started to pay more attention to my co-workers as individuals. I thought more about how they felt, having never been given the opportunity to develop confidence in themselves, only ever to react submissively to the will of someone stationed in a higher rung in life than them.

This realisation helped me to understand and change, mentally. Only through the awareness of my own thoughts and development of empathy toward my colleagues could I understand and work towards developing a connection with them. I tried hard to help them awaken abilities in themselves and raise their level of self-confidence.

In Nepal, as in my own country, many people are unable to develop their capacity for respect, freedom and love. A close human connection, however, can only be possible if these elements, as well as maturity, self-knowledge and courage are present.

Almost forty years have passed since my first encounter with Nepal. My love and respect for this beautiful country has not diminished, but has transformed due to the deep connections I have developed with some people there. We have learned to be aware of ourselves, and our future. We have shared happiness and grie. This kind of friendship ends only with death.

(Elsbeth is a child psychologist based in Zurich, Switzerland - elsbeth.wetzel@bluewin.ch)
Asian floods displace 25 million

Nearly 25 million people have been displaced by flooding and 1400 killed in South Asia as the worst monsoon rains to hit the region in decades continued to wreak havoc on Saturday.

Northern India, Bangladesh and Nepal are the worst affected according to officials dealing with the crisis, with many people falling victim to disease.

In India alone, the number of dead topped 1100 by late Friday, the United Nations' child welfare agency said in a statement. “According to government estimates, the cumulative number of human casualties stands at 1103 in 138 affected districts,” said UNICEF.

Northern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states and north-eastern Assam were among the worst off, with 10 million people hit by floods in Bihar alone, according to a Press Trust of India news agency report on Saturday.

In Uttar Pradesh, 10 more deaths were reported overnight taking the toll there to 119, state relief commissioner Umesh Sinha, said.

Some 2400 villages are under water, he said, adding that boats were put into service to deliver aid.

Downstream in West Bengal state, “Large swathes of land were flooded Saturday as two rivers breached their embankments,” relief minister Moratza Hossain said.

Almost 16 000 people were suffering from water-borne diseases, he said.

The monsoon, which lasts from June to September, regularly brings flooding to South Asia but this year has witnessed some of the worst conditions in living memory with the north and east particularly hard hit.

“The situation we have now is unprecedented in the past 30 years,” A.K. Chowdhury, Bihar chief secretary, told AFP by phone.

Two Indian Air Force helicopters started airdropping food to villagers marooned in Bihar’s worst-hit Darbhanga district.

As many as 24 people died in the state on Friday, PTI said, and early estimates from officials suggest losses of 450-million rupees ($11-million) to the state exchequer.

Bangladesh said the situation this year appeared to be worse than floods in 2004, which inundated more than a third of the country.

“In the last 15 days, all major rivers rose above danger levels and their water has already inundated some 40 percent of the country’s total land area,” said Saiful Hossain of Bangladesh’s Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre.

Deaths from monsoon rains there topped 200 on Saturday, with at least 16 more fatalities reported overnight, according to the Bangladesh food and disaster management ministry, taking the monsoon toll this year to 138.

“It’s a major flood and one of the worst in years. In some places the situation is far worse than in 2004,” said Hossain, referring to floods three years ago when 38 percent of land was inundated, forcing millions to flee their homes.

This year, 7.5-million people have been either displaced or marooned in villages as the floods washed away or damaged about 89-million mud-built or tin-roofed houses.

Of those an estimated 255 000 have been moved to government shelters.

The government has mobilised thousands of military, public and private volunteers to distribute relief supplies including dry food and water purification tablets, but a lack of boats has hampered their efforts.

In Nepal, the home ministry said the toll from monsoon-triggered flooding and landslides stood at 91 on Saturday, with most of the deaths in the Terai plains region on Nepal’s southern border with India.

Karzai, Bush to meet amid S Korea hostage standoff

South Korea said Sunday it hoped a meeting between the Afghan and US presidents could break the apparent deadlock in negotiations for the release of 24 aid workers held hostage by the Taliban.

President Hamid Karzai left early Sunday for two days of meetings with George W. Bush to discuss a range of issues -- from the US-led “war on terror” being played out in Afghanistan to the country’s booming opium production.

But the Camp David meeting risks being overshadowed by the South Korean hostage drama in which Kabul, apparently backed by Washington, is refusing the Taliban’s demand for the release of jailed militants.

The hardline Islamic militia has murdered two men in the group of church aid workers kidnapped in volatile southern Ghazni province on July 19 and has warned more risks being overshadowed by the volatile southern Ghazni province.

The insurgents have grown stronger each year since it was launched soon after the hardliners were driven from power in a US-led invasion in late 2001 for sheltering the Al-Qaeda group behind the 9/11 attacks.

Islamabad has been approached for assistance, he said, but refused to comment on an allegation by Ghani governor Mirajuddin Patann that Pakistan’s powerful state intelligence agency was “interfering” in the crisis.

Afghan officials have long alleged that Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence agency is involved in the Taliban insurgency, having helped the Islamic organisation to power in 1996.

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Crowds greet release of Musharraf foe

Hundreds of jubilant supporters of a top Pakistani opposition leader yesterday chanted slogans against President Pervez Musharraf as they greeted him on release from prison after serving around four years for sedition.

Javed Hashmi, a member of the National Assembly and acting president of Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), was sentenced to a consolidated jail term of 23 years in 2004 on treason charges for criticising the army. He had initially been accused of distributing a letter which he said was from army officers against Musharraf.

A three-member panel of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, on Friday granted him bail, saying that he had served enough time to qualify for release under prison rules. Hashmi’s supporters showered rose petals on him and released pigeons in the air as he walked out of the Kot Lakhpat prison in Lahore, capital of central Punjab province. They also chanted slogans such as “Go Musharraf, go.”

“Our struggle for the freedom of 150mn Pakistanis will continue till we get rid of the military dictator ship,” Hashmi told the crowd. “The prison bars cannot shake our resolve to restore democracy in the country.”

He was scheduled to lead a rally travelling through PML-N dominated areas of Lahore, which is regarded as the power centre of Pakistan politics.

Hashmi’s release is read many as a sign of the growing independence of the Supreme Court, which recently reconstituted Chaudhry by overturning his suspension ordered by Musharraf.

The court can pose further challenges to the embattled president, whose authority is constantly being challenged by the growing Islamic militancy in the country, particularly in the North-West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan.

The apex court is scheduled to hear several petitions challenging the legitimacy of Musharraf’s rule in the coming months. In addition, Musharraf’s opponents say they plan to consult the court on the president’s controversial plan for re-election for the next term from the current assemblies.

The rejuvenated judiciary has also encouraged exiled former premier Nawaz Sharif — whom Musharraf ousted in a bloodless military coup in 1999 — to petition the court to rule him eligible so he can return home to contest next year’s general elections.

(Brisbane Times)
A truck driver hits a scooter and the lady driver falls, recovers from the shock and tries to stand up. The truck driver reverses and runs her over and gets away. In another case, a man driving a motorcycle gets hit by a water tanker and falls down. Lucky for the man, there are students in a nearby college watching the incident. The driver is quickly spotted by the students as he tries to reverse and the police called. The motorcyclist escapes with no death.

These are true incidents that took place in different parts of Kathmandu just a few years ago, seen by witnesses. In yet another recent case, a young man riding a scooter back home late night was hit by a car. The car ran away leaving the victim unconscious. The driver is unidentified till date. The victim, a 30-year-old man has already undergone four threat operations in a hospital in N. Delhi since his case could not be handled by doctors here. He has a silicon pipe inside his throat to help him breathe and is unable to speak. Regularly, the accident caused his voice box.

Accidents like these where number of lives are lost or damaged; untold sufferings caused to the surviving victims and their families are common stories that are made on the highways of Nepal and roads of Kathmandu. Though these stories do not hit the headlines and the surviving victims of such accidents did not take out rallies and call for Bandh, the facts remain that precious lives were lost or impacted adversely due to carelessness and callousness of the drivers.

Why are such drivers of bigger vehicles known to kill and not leave the victim’s family alone? Because the drivers believe that if you kill, then you pay a fine of Rs.17,000. But if the victim is hurt you have to repay the hospital bills and pay for the maintenance of the person if maintained for life. Since killing works out cheaper, they opt for it. After all, life seems to have no value here. Letting them survive would be expensive. Just to go show how direly we Nepalis are in need of reviewing our justice system, the existing laws. We lack humanitarian laws that value life.

Accidents do happen and it is not always the fault of the bigger vehicle, as is assumed here. But no matter whose fault the accident is, pre-mediated murder it is when someone comes back to kill a fallen victim. But these instances of cold-blooded murder will not stop unless and until the law is changed. A thorough investigation as to whose fault it is needed to be carried out and the guilty duly charged, depending on the circumstances and severity of such cases.

Drivers who reverse and kill must be punished for deliberate murder. Simplicistic laws lacking foresight, such as those we have now, have huge loopholes through which many murders have been and will be committed. Violous roots of corruption that has its grips at all levels is another major factor that hinders justice. Fear and intimidation keeps witnesses from speaking out or testifying.

Drivers of any vehicle, big or small, public or private, must be made aware of value of life before they are given the permission to drive on the roads. It is imperative that they have full appreciation for lives of others out on the roads as well as those they may be carrying in their vehicles. Without this sense of responsibility and without a sound training in traffic rules, it is left to let loose ignorant, unrained drivers out on the roads.

Rampant corruption prevailing in granting of driving permit must be stopped. Stingent rules must be imposed to stop license from being sold or obtained through the back doors. Violators of traffic rules must be brought to justice and the law has to remain above muscle or money power. License of traffic rule violators should be revoked, withheld or their drivers disqualified as is practiced in western countries. It must be made into the citizens’ minds that in case of accidents, no matter whose fault, the first step is to rush the victim to the nearest hospital. Only by implementing firm measures can sanity in our roads be regained.

Crime that has taken place deserves a just pay back from the attitude of the majority but there has to be a beginning to redeem what is lost before it is too late. This starts with taking small steps. Just talking about it is not going to help. Starting by learning to treasure other’s lives as much as one’s own is the first step.
DNA testing on about a dozen people who claim soul singer James Brown was their father has found at least two of them are telling the truth.

The numbers may rise as although several tests have come back negative, others are still pending, said Buddy Dallas, a former adviser to the music legend.

Dallas refused to identify the two people whose DNA showed they were Brown's children but LaRhonda Petitt, a 45-year-old retired flight attendant and teacher from Houston, showed newspapers a report that says there is a 99.99% probability she is Brown's daughter. She would be the oldest of Brown's children.

Brown picked out Petitt's mother from the crowd at a show in Los Angeles in the early 1960s, and she became the singer's girlfriend, sometimes ironing his shirts before shows, Petitt said. But she became pregnant, split up with Brown and moved back to Houston. She would point to the television when Brown was performing and tell her daughter the singer was her father, Petitt revealed.

She added she had met Brown at concerts and spoke to him over the phone, but he never acknowledged being her father. "I was angry that he was out there making all this money, and he wasn't doing anything for my mother and me," Petitt said. "I could have had a better life." Brown died on Christmas Day last year of heart failure, aged 73. His body was entombed in a crypt at the home of one of his daughters in March. Brown's will, which is being disputed in court, names six children.

One possible child of Brown's who has not undergone a DNA test is six-year-old James Brown II, the son of Tomi Rae Hynie. Hynie was one of Brown's backup singers and said she is the singer's fourth wife. But Brown's attorneys continue to dispute that claim, and the boy and his mother are not in the singer's will.

Whether Petitt makes a claim to Brown's estate will depend whether the will holds up, said her lawyer, Jim Griffin. He would at least like Petitt's two daughters to be eligible for a trust the singer set up to pay for his grandchildren's education, he said. Petitt said she has grown less bitter about Brown as the years have passed.

(NEWS.scotsman.com)