Despite the tall claims by the ruling seven party leaders about Nepal’s irreversible march to democracy, Nepal is almost headed not only towards bankruptcy, but is being categorised as a fragile state by many friendly countries.

The ‘fragile category’ includes country with the level of anarchy prevailing high as a result of poor governance and bad law and order situation. This indirectly brings into question the legitimacy of the government and its delivery capability.

According to a senior government official, Japan which has always been forthright in giving generous grants with least interference in the country’s internal affairs, has put Nepal in the category of fragile states. That, in other words, means Nepal being treated at par with countries like Afghanistan and Sudan. As a result, the ministry of foreign affairs expects a drastic cut or withdrawal of grants from Japan unless the situation miraculously improves in the country.

According to the indication available, the worsening law and order situation, government’s failure to enforce the rule of law, erosion in people’s hope for the peace process moving on track, and high level of corruption in the government, all have contributed to the growing negative feeling of various countries towards Nepal. The ‘fragile’ status, sources say, may create a situation for ‘humanitarian intervention’ as elsewhere.

While the US and European Union countries are still favouring that Nepal must hold election in a credible manner, with improved law and order situation as one more crucial condition, they have not gone to the extent of treating Nepal as a ‘fragile state’. They have however, raised serious concern about the government’s commitment, or lack of it to the human right violation cases.

Similarly, India, which officially encourages Nepal to hold election to the constituent assembly in April, has made it clear that the legitimacy of the entire political system and that of the government cannot be established if it is postponed once again. The current Indian position vis à vis Nepal has a lot of ambiguity with a veil of warning that its way of dealing with Nepal would be drastically different if Nepal fails to hold the election.

But for countries like Japan, the legitimacy factor alone would not be sufficient for review of its current position. For that, the government should have a strong law and order machinery and enforcement of the rule of law.
Sujata crowned
Long live ‘Loktantrik’ dynasty

af correspondent

The Congress circle was expecting it at any moment. Given Prime Minister G.P. Koirala’s known weakness for his only daughter, Sujata Koirala, being brought into the centre stage of the national politics had ceased to be a matter of speculation. It was only a question of when it would happen.

Koirala chose to make her the all-powerful minister without portfolio on January 9, barely three days after he declared that the country will have a woman prime minister soon.

Sujata’s inclusion in the cabinet also settles the leadership issue in the extended Koirala family. While the BP family suffers a total eclipse with his sons – Prakash Koirala and Shashank, totally marginalised, PM’s another rising nephew, Dr. Shekhar Koirala, has been sidelined once again.

The PM had nominated Sujata as a member of the interim parliament a year ago. “Sujata’s elevation as a cabinet rank minister is an insult to the Congress party. The PM knows that almost all the leaders are like his slaves and they cannot oppose to what he has done,” a senior functionary of the party said. “But there is a much deeper game yet to unfold.”

Sujata’s inclusion in the cabinet took place after her series of statements in favour of the ‘monarchy’ even after the party adopted a resolution in favour of the republic. “She is tutored to do that by her father. Otherwise, there will be no guarantee from GP Koirala that the promised Terai province will have an autonomous status with the right to self-determination. These groups are to launch their movement soon; and minorities and the people of hill origin who have been living there for generations are under threat of attack from the majority groups.”

Seasoned politicians like Surya Bahadur Thapa have been questioning the intention of the parliament and the government behind declaring Nepal a republic, dictating what the future constituent assembly election should do on the issue. “This is not the sign that the government is sincere and serious about election,” Thapa said in a public meeting recently.

“I think election will take place in April. The seven parties appear more determined than ever before, and even the Maoists have no other option now,” Shekhar Koirala, Central committee member of the Nepali Congress, told newswire.

That does not seem to be disputing the doubts. The disbursement of funds from the state exchequer to the sitting MPs at the rate of rupees one million each is being questioned by many individuals and groups. “This is unfair and violates the spirit and essence of the law of equality,” a Congress member tutored to do that by her father. Otherwise, if he fails to hold election once again, he might step down in his daughter’s favour, and if elections are held, the elder Koirala would want to be the first ‘president of the republic’ with his daughter as the PM.

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One more date
Skepticism over election grow

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Sujata Koirala
Prime Minister GP Koirala has of late been revealing his years of political adventurism. He has admitted having been involved in counterfeiting Indian currency notes while in exile in India. He also recently admitted that he was lured towards gold smuggling to raise money for 'struggle for democracy in Nepal' but had to give it up on BP Koirala’s advice. Koirala however, has claimed that he got into the fake currency business with the consent and knowledge of the legendary BP Koirala.

GP Koirala has however, withdrawn the content of his version regarding his involvement in the hijacking of Royal Nepali Aircraft in 1975 and robbery of Rs. 40 lakhs. Koirala had stated that the hijacking of the aircraft that took off from Kathmandu was done after the then Chief of RAW cleared his move.

Although the interviewee has taken the blame for the content saying, “It was wrong translation of what GP Koirala had said in Hindi,” there are repeated references of the event in Nepal in which the PM quotes BP Koirala categorically asking what the government of India would do after the hijacking.

GP’s answer to BP, in his own words was that government of India would not do anything to the hijackers. There are reports that a senior official of the Indian embassy in Kathmandu approached the PM, about the damage that his confession could cause to the image of RAW as an outfit that encouraged terrorist activities like plane hijacking.

No to impunity

The international community has taken serious note of the government’s move to grant general amnesty to the Maoists in cases involving violation of the human rights of serious nature and that of the international humanitarian laws.

The issue was taken up by a delegation of diplomats comprising British, US and Danish Ambassador; the French Chargé representing the EU Presidency; and a representative of the European Commission with Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel.

The government, following a 23-point agreement among the members of the ruling alliance, is going to withdraw all cases against the Maoists leaving the proposed Truth and Reconciliation commission without jurisdiction to reopen those cases. The embassy of Norway has also endorsed the plea.

Although there was no categorical response from the Minister, the delegation said that some of the provisions of the proposed TRC bill did not meet the international standards and, “will not advance democratic principles.” “This is of particular concern in regard to the potential granting of amnesty for serious violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law. This is not the basis on which lasting peace can be built,” the delegation said.

Bispot in police net

Bispot Singh, leader of the Samyukta Jananatrik Terai Morcha, has been arrested. Singh, wanted in several cases of murder, abduction and possession of illegal arms was arrested by the Armed Police Force from a hotel in Lahan on December 11. They have also recovered some arms and ammunitions from him.

The police said that along with one set of revolver and rifle each, they also recovered ration cards issued in his real name, Ram Shankar Shah, by the Bihar government. Singh who was associated with Jaliratna Goli - now heading a separatist group, broke away from Goli to form his own outfit.

Sujata speaks

While there are intense debates over what happens if elections are not held by April, the newly appointed minister without portfolio, Sujata is clear about the outcome. “The constitution of 1990 will return,” she asserts. In her interaction with Press Union in Biratnagar on January 11, Sujata said, "If new hurdles come in the election, the old constitution has to be revived," she said. She was equally candid and forthright that now that she has become a minister, she would not be reiterating her earlier demand for resigation of Home Minister KP Oli. "I have kept that in abeyance for now." But she has managed to have her loyalists appointed as Minister of State for Home. Ram Kumar Choudhary, the new Minister of State for Home is a Sujata loyalist.

COAS firm

Chief of Army Staff, Rookmangad Katawal has asserted that Nepal Army (NA) is firmly committed to sovereignty and supremacy of the Nepali people, besides country’s independence, territorial integrity and democracy.

He said it is an army that belongs to an integrated Nepal, and will be functioning under a legitimate national government. “Please keep it away from politics," he said during his brief chat with the media representatives on his return from China, at the end of his week long official visit, barely a month after a similar trip to India.

“The army belongs to the whole country.” He reiterated that it should have no place for politically indoctrinated and politically motivated people. Asked if he was still opposed to integration of the Maoists’ combatants in NA, he said his views were clear and, “no attempt by any quarter to bring Nepal Army into controversy would succeed.”

In response to a query by newsfront about the outcome of his visit to China, Gen Katawal said that it was a visit in deference to a long tradition of friendly relations and added, “China’s understanding and good will for Nepal deserves appreciation.”

Bankruptcy

As the government of Nepal demonstrates unparalleled generosity in opening its coffers, there are signs that the country is headed more towards bankruptcy. A highly placed government official forecasts tough days ahead in which disbursement of regular salary to government employees would be another problem. The government needs to allocate nearly rupees two billion for the election proposed in April, and is in urgent need to make arrangement for payment to the Maoist combatants -both qualified and unqualified. As its coffers are getting emptier, the government may have to raise some bonds,” said a senior government official. There are already moves to sell shares of government undertakings to the private sector.

In addition, the government is hard pressed to clear debts to the Indian Oil Corporation that almost runs to an amount of rupees six billion, without which the normal supply of fuel including petrol may be hampered in the days to come. “The government may have to raise some bonds,” said a senior government official.

A generous government with a begging bowl
**Integration debate**

Nepal's peace process and its journey have suffered many hiccups. The latest one is the position that the Maoists and the Nepal Army (NA) have taken on the issue of Maoists combatants' reintegration in NA.

General Rookmangad Kataria has said he is opposed to induction of 'any' 'ism' or politically indoctrinated and motivated cadres in the army. Prime Minister GP Koirala, known for taking convenient position on any given issue, depending on whether that comes to his personal political advantage or not, has swung from, "You are right, Gen Kataria", in less than 48 hours.

Effective democracy based governance envisages its army to work under its parliament, but the assumption that it shuts its mouth when it is constantly vilified or is being targeted by one and all, has been proven wrong. Ever since the peace process began, NA is being constantly needled, beginning with Prachanda's public accusation that, "It is a bunch of rapists", right in the presence of House Minister KP Siwal at the official residence of the Prime Minister who also happens to be the Defense Minister. Koirala has never stated clearly where the issue of integration lies among the priority issues of the peace process. Is it an altogether isolated issue, or related with sincere implementation of other provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and adherence to the code of conduct by the two sides of the conflict? This is not an issue that can be unilaterally dictated just because Maoists or Koirala want it.

Army speaks rarely, but it does. That is what the US army and NATO alliance did in deference to the order of US parliament and the Iraq in 2003 and in Kosovo a few years ago, and Indian Army acted and spoke out in public when it carried the order of its political masters in Punjab in 1984 during the Operation Blue Star. One sees people in uniform speaking frequently about their determination to defeat their enemies in Kashmir, or when places of worship and people in uniform speaking frequently about their determination to defeat their enemies in Kashmir, or when places of worship and ordinary public have been targeted in Gujarat and elsewhere. Unfortunately, Koirala and his political clans who ruled this country during the height of Maoist insurgency are not owning up their role, but simply making the army and the security agencies the scapegoats. Koirala quit in July 2002 because King Gyanendra turned down his proposal to let NA to be used against the Maoists. He was the one himself is a republican but simply making the army and the security agencies the scapegoats. Koirala quit in July 2002 because King Gyanendra turned down his proposal to let NA to be used against the Maoists. He was the one

It would be prudent not to engage outside agencies in the name of Security Reform which if done would invite dangerous consequences. It needs to be totally indigenous as the past 18 months have shown. Mere arrival of agencies like UNMIN will have no magic effect on peace process and the related issues. It needs to be utterly indigenous and completed within itself.

**Letters**

Citizen speak

Former Speaker Daman Nath Dhungana's interview published last week reflects the current political crisis andSeven Party's leaders autocratic rule. I want Nepal to be republican but not in that way. I wish that all Nepal citizens should take part in the decision so that we can feel and play our role as citizens.

The Interim House of Representatives approved the Seven Party's decision to write in interim constitution that Nepal is a republic now, but in a strange way they put the line in the constitution. They wrote that the decision will be implemented after the first meeting of constituent assembly. I, as a Nepali citizen, feel that the leaders are taking us and our country for a ride.

Dhungana himself is a republican but he condemns the path the leaders have taken. The Seven Party has forgotten the people's mandate and proven themselves to be no different from the autocratic King Gyanendra.

UNMIN - beyond its mandate

UNMIN has, under the very difficult and confusing context of Nepal, has a mixed record in tackling its job. It is unlikely that UNMIN is going to deliver miracles anytime soon. The Maoist combatants are still being used as the final blackmailing point and UNMIN can do little more than pay lip service to curbing the YCL lawlessness. Mr. Martin and crew came to Nepal with a limited mandate and are at the fag end of their given tasks. In this context, Mr. Martin is lobbying hard to do what UN missions do the world over, elongate and expand his mandate and survive. UN mission experience is nothing new to the Nepalis. We too, along with our military and police, have served in the hot spots of Africa, Asia and elsewhere in many capacities, myself as a UNV. But nowhere I have seen or heard of a UNMIN type mission seeking to take over the entire gamut of the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDR).

In other places, the missions themselves focus primarily on the first two D's - Disarmament and Demobilisation. The Rehabilitation and Reintegration aspects take much longer, a decade at least, and fall under the realm of the other agencies. Does the track record of Mr. Martin and his crew give us any gimmer of hope that UNMIN that could not even deliver on its original limited mandate, is going to succeed in an impossibility larger mandate?

Dipsu Niraula

New Baneshwor, Kathmandu

Readers, your reactions, criticisms, comments, suggestions are most welcome. Please address it to:

newsfront@bhrikutikom

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**Spiritual Corner**

The word is the guru

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was one of the greatest religious innovators of all time and the founder of the Sikh religion. Intrinsic to the Sikh faith is the holy book Guru Granth Sahib. It is founded on the teaching of Guru Nanak and the nine Sikh gurus who followed him. This book is treated with the greatest of respect and is the cornerstone of the religion.

"There is one reality, the unmanifested-manifested Ever-existent, he is Naam (conscious spirit). He existeth now, O soul. The lord can never be established nor the creator of all and he himself existeth now. He existeth now, O master in Punjab in 1984 during the Operation Blue Star. One sees people in uniform speaking frequently about their determination to defeat their enemies in Kashmir, or when places of worship and people in uniform speaking frequently about their determination to defeat their enemies in Kashmir, or when places of worship and ordinary public have been targeted in Gujarat and elsewhere. Unfortunately, Koirala and his political clans who ruled this country during the height of Maoist insurgency are not owning up their role, but simply making the army and the security agencies the scapegoats. Koirala quit in July 2002 because King Gyanendra turned down his proposal to let NA to be used against the Maoists. He was the one who chaired the government when the Nepal police was used against the Maoists in the name of the Operation Kilo Sera Two. It would be prudent not to engage outside agencies in the name of Security Sector Reform which if done would invite dangerous consequences. It needs to be totally indigenous as the past 18 months have shown. Mere arrival of agencies like UNMIN will have no magic effect on peace process and the related issues. It must be decided by an elected government answerable to the legislature, not by the one without people's mandate. The issue of integration can be settled easily if the Maoists and GP Koirala go in for serious implementation of the provisions of the CPA.

Let no man in the world live in delusion. Without a guru none can cross over to the other shore.

The word is the guru, the guru is the word, for all nectar is enshrined in the world. Blessed is the word which reveal the lord's name. God is one, but he has innumerable forms. He is the creator of all and he himself existeth now. The lord can never be established nor the creator of all and he himself

- From Guru Granth Sahib

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**Editorial**

CA Polls to be held on...

April 08

May 19

November 07

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Trust only movement. Life happens at the level of events, not of words. Trust movement.

- Alfred Adler
In an act of quiet sensibility, Finance Ministry has committed an unscrupulous act. This is far more tragic since it happened when Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat presides over the ministry. All the sitting 330 odd members of the current parliament - a body that does not represent people - have collectively robbed the state exchequer. The nation is poorer because of such an unscrupulous act. This is far more rampant plunder than this exercise of the government which is nothing but the robbery of the nation.

The Election Commission, which is packed with members of the major political parties, with the notable exception of Chief Commissioner Bhoj Raj Pokhrel and another member - Dolaish Gurung, can only react to it with mute helplessness.

There could be no better example of rampant plunder than this exercise of the government in which Prime Minister GP Koirala and Maoist leader Prachanda besides Madhav Nepal are involved in.

A bizarre practice of Nepali parliament chaired by Subhash Nemlobang, a professor of law, is in the process of seeing three new members who are to be nominated by leaders to fill up the vacancies caused by various reasons. Even those nominees would be entitled to Rs. one million each during the coming four months now that the CA poll date has been fixed for April 10.

The government’s decision is not only morally and constitutionally flawed, but is also a test case for the independence and impartiality of the election commission. Its silence when the members are walking away with their pockets filled would only means it is just a rubber stamp of the executive.

The Finance Secretary simply said the decision was taken by the previous government. Which previous government was that? This is a clear violation of the law or equality as it gives clear advantage to the sitting MPs over their political rivals when they go to the poll for CA.

Why should the state be favouring a set of politicians against another when fairness is the ground rule for election? Even the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists is a party to this mass plunder. They justify the deed on the plea that in any case, the fund is not going directly to the Member of Parliament, but is being routed through the ministry of local development and the district development committees.

This feeble defense ignores the fact that more than Rs. two billion are still unaccounted for as the report of the Auditor General of Nepal would suggest. This is clearly a politics that will give birth to new feudalism, which is something the Maoists had pledged they would fight against. The state is giving birth to new patrons of the politics and political system above rule and accountability.

In George Orwell’s term, they are an emerging breed who is more equal than others. The government has also taken advantage of the existing situation as it knows that the Supreme Court has been substantially brought under the influence of the executive, and the chances of such decisions being nullified are far less than when the country has a free and fair judiciary.

A brief history of the situation reveals the parliament that was elected in 1999 and dissolved in 2002 was revived purely as an ad hoc body in 2008, almost two years after its normal tenure of five years was over. It was later converted into an interim parliament nominating all the sitting MPs, with addition of 83 Maoist MPs, with the honourable exception of PL Singh who refused to be a part of it on moral grounds.

None of these MPs have faced the electorate. People have already resented the size of the proposed CA which will have 601 members; since the poor country cannot afford the luxury of these MPs. All the sitting members now who are lavishly drawing their allowances and salary have already become liable to the people. This is a mega version of the institutional corruption in the past.

This is also an opportunity for any member or party to turn it down and win people’s respect when the country goes to the poll.

Although Rs. 33 crores look much smaller compared to Rs two billion that the government has promised to pay to the disqualified Maoist combatants; this will establish a new feudal rule in the country. Of course, the country is not at all unfamiliar with similar exercises in which donos do select like minded people and create a group to implement their agenda through their money. Civil society has acted as such a tool. And so have many NGOs.

The only difference between the donor patronised NGOs and civil society; and the state patronised MPs is that with the former, the targeted groups benefited largely by weakening the apparatus of institutions of the state; and in the latter, the state has assumed the role of all powerful and an instrument above the law.

The state that is not accountable to any law or institutions like the parliament can only be authoritarian by definition and conduct. However, given the fact that both lack transparency, it is unlikely that such civil societies and NGOs, perhaps with some notable exceptions, will oppose the State’s arbitrary en masse ‘Bukshish’ system - a modern revival of what the Ranas used to do.

This arbitrary bungling of the state exchequer without even a rubber stamp parliament debating it, should not go unchallenged. This case of brazen corruption among the Congress, UML and Maoists and their top leaders in this plunder shows they have a remarkable meeting of the minds - that plundering the state for narrow partisan interests is fine if it suits them. Does the foundation of new Nepal lie on such deplorable mind-set?
What went right?

Saving a huge number of women from the death risks arising from pregnancy and childbirth.

Dr. Rita Thapa

Amidst the chaos of social and political transitions occurring in Nepal, a few bright ones can be spotted. The decline of the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) for the first time is one of such bright spots. As reported by the 2006 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, the number of women’s death occurring in the life giving process has declined from 539 in 1996 to 281 per 100 000 live births.

This is no small gain for a country marred by poverty, internal conflict and difficult terrain. It has earned Nepal a prestigious place among the countries that are more likely to achieve the health objectives of the Millennium Development Goals. The recently held Sixth Conference of the Perinatal Society of Nepal had rightly devoted its scientific deliberations on this important subject with the theme, “Reduction of Maternal and Neonatal Deaths: A Critical Look.”

What is more interesting is that Nepal was able to cut down its appallingly high maternal mortality to almost half within a span of ten years with only 19% of births attended by skilled health personnel (SBA). When viewed against the existing epidemiological norm, this decline seems a bit paradoxical. For a 20% SBA births is associated with maternal mortality ranging from 400 to 1500 per 100 000 live births. To this effect, Nepal’s model presents a new paradigm of maternal mortality reduction.

The question is how such reductions could be achieved with only 19% births attended by skilled health workers? True, the presence of skilled health personnel at birth is central, but this is not the only determinant of maternal mortality reduction. Historical and recent evidence show that reduction of maternal mortality is a multi-sectoral entity. No specific factor can be pinpointed to its decline.

Several interacting health and social factors come into play to influence the fertility i.e. the exposure to the risk of becoming pregnant and the maternity factor - the risk of dying of complications of pregnancy & childbirth after becoming pregnant. A reduction in either component or both can effect a reduction of maternal deaths.

As reported by the 2006 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, the number of women’s death occurring in the life giving process has declined from 539 in 1996 to 281 per 100 000 live births.

Subrat Shrestha

It is the characteristic of humans to ‘struggle for existence’ that creates the status of livelihood. Poverty is beyond cultural diversity, economical wellbeing and social conditions. When identifying etiologies of poverty, often mental health (psychological) features are not contemplated.

Depression is the mental disorder that creates havoc in a poor person’s psychological wellbeing; be that self-confidence, self-esteem, delusional guilt for being poor, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts.

A person struggling at least for a period of weeks with depressed moods or loss of interest or pleasure in nearly all activities is likely to be diagnosed with depression. The person can be experiencing changes in appetite, sleep, decrease in energy, feeling of worthlessness or guilt; difficulty in thinking, concentrating or making decisions, and recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal plans or suicidal attempts.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV), depression can be identified, analysed, and divided into depressive disorders, the bipolar disorders, depression due to general medical conditions, and depression due to substance abuse.

The significant point to observe for depression with poverty is the substances induced features. It is more likely for a person who is poor and depressed to be addictive to alcohol or drugs. The addiction may manifest defense mechanism and denial of poverty. There are many types of defense mechanism such as irrational beliefs, avoidance, rational guilt, and social disorientations to name a few that a poor depressed person can manifest.

Such defense mechanism can be channeled into coping mechanism with professional consultation and help from clinical counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, and psychiatric social workers. These professionals can help depressed persons to identify possible coping mechanisms, install hope, reach out for support, and build self-confidence and self-esteem.

Carl Rogers person centered approach is genuinely humanistic which help a poor person assimilate that he/she is a person first. It supports in gaining human dignity. Cognitive behavior therapy when applied can facilitate a patient in dealing with irrational beliefs through tools such supportive confrontations. Solution focused brief therapy can be a very effective intervention for depressive issues as it helps in install positive thinking, and is solution oriented. It has encouraging techniques and tools such as miracle questioning and scaling question. When in need the depressed patients can be referred for generic or non-generic anti-depressive psychiatric medications.

Culturally and gender wise, depression may be associated differently with men, women and children. As most of the Nepali communities struggling with poverty are patriarchal, men may often tend to take immediate liabilities for poverty. Therefore they end with risks of being addictive to alcohol or drugs and at times take their own life.

Women may notably observe poverty and internalise it feelings of helplessness, fatalism, pessimism, and delusional guilt. Children may realise being poor with their own world views and from their peers. Finding self-vulnerability they may as well internalise their depressive feelings. Therapeutic approaches and interventions such as art and play therapy can be effective with depressed children.

Therapeutic approaches and interventions such as art and play therapy can be effective...

To address the issues of poor and depressed men, women and children; multi-system family sessions, group sessions, as well as individual sessions can be implemented in retreats and treatment plan designing. Depression is an unseen pain of the communities struggling with poverty, and it is clearly noteworthy that poverty is a deep root cause of depression.

For these reasons, poverty of Nepal needs to be addressed to alleviated depression and the associated disorders. A holistic approach for poverty eradication should be designed and implemented by the government or non-government organisations. Mental health indicator needs to be integrated along with economical, social, cultural, and political measurements.

(14-20 Jan, 2008)

Dr. Subrat Shrestha

Rudra khadka

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Such defense mechanism can be channeled into coping mechanism with professional consultation and help from clinical counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, and psychiatric social workers. These professionals can help depressed persons to identify possible coping mechanisms, install hope, reach out for support, and build self-confidence and self-esteem.

Carl Rogers person centered approach is genuinely humanistic which help a poor person assimilate that he/she is a person first. It supports in gaining human dignity. Cognitive behavior therapy when applied can facilitate a patient in dealing with irrational beliefs through tools such supportive confrontations. Solution focused brief therapy can be a very effective intervention for depressive issues as it helps in install positive thinking, and is solution oriented. It has encouraging techniques and tools such as miracle questioning and scaling question. When in need the depressed patients can be referred for generic or non-generic anti-depressive psychiatric medications.

Culturally and gender wise, depression may be associated differently with men, women and children. As most of the Nepali communities struggling with poverty are patriarchal, men may often tend to take immediate liabilities for poverty. Therefore they end with risks of being addictive to alcohol or drugs and at times take their own life.

Women may notably observe poverty and internalise it feelings of helplessness, fatalism, pessimism, and delusional guilt. Children may realise being poor with their own world views and from their peers. Finding self-vulnerability they may as well internalise their depressive feelings. Therapeutic approaches and interventions such as art and play therapy can be effective with depressed children.

To address the issues of poor and depressed men, women and children; multi-system family sessions, group sessions, as well as individual sessions can be implemented in retreats and treatment plan designing. Depression is an unseen pain of the communities struggling with poverty, and it is clearly noteworthy that poverty is a deep root cause of depression.

For these reasons, poverty of Nepal needs to be addressed to alleviated depression and the associated disorders. A holistic approach for poverty eradication should be designed and implemented by the government or non-government organisations. Mental health indicator needs to be integrated along with economical, social, cultural, and political measurements.

(14-20 Jan, 2008)
WHAT HILLARY MEANT TO US

Tashi Jangbu Sherpa
Executive Director, Everest Trekking & former President of Nepal Mountaineering Association.

My association with Sir Edmund Hillary goes back to 1962. I saw him first as a little boy that year at Khumjung in Solu district where he had set up a primary school. He was perhaps attached with the village as some people from the village had worked for him during his expedition. He opened more schools in the area later. This injected some awareness in other villages that education was the key to overall development.

I recall one incident. In 1963, residents of Thame village, about three hours walk from Khumjung, petitioned to Hillary saying, “We are people who have eyes but are unable to see.” What they meant was that one needs to be educated to see things around. Hillary, who we used to call Bada Sahib then, responded positively. He used to visit the area and those schools almost every time he came to Kathmandu. We used to line up to offer him Khata during his visit to the school.

I completed class six in Khumjung. Since there were no high schools in the area, Kathmandu was the only option for higher education. Edmund began sponsoring students who stood first, second and third in the class for higher studies in the capital. I was one of those lucky ones. I was admitted to Anandkuti Vidyapeeth.

He used to come there sometimes to find out how we were doing. In fact, he had made some arrangements with the British embassy and Brig. Richardson would often visit the school to clear our dues. There was one understanding with Edmund when I was admitted to Anandkuti; that once I pass out, I will go back to Khumjung and teach there. I went back and took over as a headmaster of the school that Hillary had founded.

My association with him grew deeper here. It was during that period that an idea to make Khumbu area the national park was mooted. Hillary’s role in having roads, schools, health centres and the airport at Lukla was well known, but not too many know that his was the mind and spirit behind creation of Sagarmatha National Park.

The construction of the airport

Energy and spirit behind creation of Sagarmatha National Park.

Hillary was the mind and spirit behind creation of Sagarmatha National Park.

I was one of those drafted to study the National Park Management in New Zealand under a scholarship programme. Once in his home country, Hillary was host to many students from Nepal. He would invite all of us during Christmas and other occasions. I met him last in April 2007 in Kathmandu. As always, he would mostly talk about tourism and activities in other areas that he loved so much. For the past few years, every time we met him, we thought it is going to be his last visit in the country he loved. We were happy to be proved wrong so often.

But last time he said, “You know, actually I am not in very good shape.” Sadly, his words turned out to be prophetic. I accompanied him up to the airport, spent few moments at the VVIP lounge at the airport before saying goodbye. All that he achieved and all that he gave, appears so impossible for one person to do in one life time.

He was possessive about us, especially the Sherpas. I met Helen in college in New Zealand. When we were married, I think Hillary was not very pleased. His fear, that since I am married to a foreigner, I will settle down abroad and forget Nepal, was understandable and so touching. We owe a lot to him.

He has created one institution - Himalayan Trust with his chapter in Nepal and some other countries. Hopefully, it will give continuity to his dream and mission. His demise, no doubt, will create a big gap, hard to fill. We will definitely miss him. It is a big loss. He has helped raise our livelihood and life standard. We the Sherpas have also become more resourceful now and we will give continuity to all that, but we have lost a powerful ally of international repute. We have lost a guide.

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After the promulgation of the interim constitution, basically engineered by the Maoists with helping hand coming from unexpected agencies and nations, Nepal’s statecraft gained a good momentum. The coalition government of Nepal, with or without the Maoists in it but having full representation in the parliament, has remained a little short of dictatorial and sometimes even more in nature. By bringing the judiciary within the ambit of executive, and the un-elected parliament backing every act of the government, this has been an unprecedented moment for the present leaders in power if they had chosen to transform Nepal into an enlightened nation.

Since the only argument that gives some credence to one party system lies in its swiftness in decision making compared to useful but lengthy process of majority participation, resolving differences between political parties and other such processes that, sometimes in nascent democracies, lose the very purpose of discussion. Nepal should have enjoyed the best of both. Unfortunately, most of the time of the government and the leaders was spent on matters either assigned to an agreed national commitment such as the constituent assembly elections or securing continuity of the present members of the government represented from major political parties.

In fact, the present government can be termed as a three party government with the communist parties having an upper hand over the Nepal Congress party, formed as a socialist democratic party by its prominent founder members, BP Koirala, KP Bhattarai and GM Singh. As it stands, the upcoming elections of the constituent assembly in April will be a face saving event for many domestic as well as foreign actors. The law and order situation that hardly improved, despite the repeated promises and commitment of the government, particularly the prime minister and the home minister, remains the main cause of a likely failure of the elections.

With the present mind set of the people, it would be unreasonable to assume that people will take even a slightest risk as long as they are not convinced of their government’s ability to ensure their physical safety and security. Closely linked to personal security is the matter of fairness of the present government in the conduct of elections.

The minority parties represented in the coalition government as well as in the parliament appear to be highly skeptical on the conduct and outcome of elections. Since the political parties excepting the Maoists have done very little to fulfill their pledge to the people in matters yet unresolved such as the issue of inclusiveness, peace and reconciliation commission, it would be now up to the Maoists to lead.

At this stage, Maoists are not only the best choice because the people have yet to experience their legitimate form of governance but they have also extracted almost all their demands from the political parties of Nepal. In order to steer, they have to prove their worth by reforming themselves.

Some of the critical areas are: full observance of law and order, facing the peace and reconciliation commission for the criminal acts perpetrated by their militias, full adherence to the democratic norms of which they have become a part. They should also avoid deliberately irritating the friendly countries and risking great tragedy to the nation simply to prove their point, and so on. They must now learn to behave as a legitimate civil political party which is also in power.
Pakistan's president has called for the body of Benazir Bhutto to be exhumed to confirm exactly how she died. Pervez Musharraf's comments come amid growing accusations that the government was complicit in her assassination on December 27, but while he rejected the charges, he stopped short of ordering the exhumation.

Her supporters insist she was shot before a suicide bomber blew himself up, but the government says she died when she hit her head on her car's sunroof as she waved to supporters after a campaign rally. "Exhumation, 100 per cent," Musharraf told Newsweek magazine, "would like it to be exhumed."

However he ruled out using his executive power to order a post-mortem examination without the agreement of Bhutto's family. "Everything is not black and white here," he said. "It would have very big political ramifications."

"If I just ordered the body exhumed, it would be careless, unless [Bhutto's] son agreed, but they will not... because they know it's a fact there is nothing wrong." However Bhutto's family said it would only agree to an exhumation if Musharraf allows the UN to lead the inquiry into her murder, something he has ruled out. No autopsy was ever carried out. "There cannot be a UN investigation," Musharraf said. "There are not two or three countries involved. Why should there be a UN investigation? This is ridiculous."

No trust

Benazir Bhutto's son backed the UN investigation, saying he does not trust officials in Pakistan. "We do not believe that an investigation under the authority of the Pakistani government has the necessary transparency," Bilawal Bhutto Zardari told reporters in London. "Already so much forensic evidence has been destroyed."

The Oxford University student was chosen to succeed his mother as leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), but day-to-day leadership is currently in the hands of his father, Asif Ali Zardari. The party wants an international investigation similar to the probe into the killing of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri. Bilawal criticised the US administration's support of Musharraf as a key ally in its "war on terror". He said: "I believe that the problem is that dictatorships feed extremism, and once the United States stops supporting-dictators we can successfully tackle the extremist problem as well. Blaawad pleaded for privacy as he pursued his studies at Oxford, where he is in his first year.

Musharraf's pledge

Meanwhile, Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president, has said his government is committed to finding the truth behind the assassination of Bhutto and vowed to punish her killers. At the beginning of January, Musharraf asked the UK to assist in the investigation of the murder and a team of British police officers was sent to Larkana. Musharraf met the Scotland Yard detectives and said the Pakistani government was committed to "unearthing the evidence, finding out the truth and bringing those responsible for this heinous atrocity to justice". The British police said they were thoroughly sifting the evidence to ascertain the facts. At the same time it was announced that the Pakistani detective who solved the 2002 murder of Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter, had joined the Bhutto killing inquiry. A senior Pakistan government official said: "He has joined the investigation and will co-ordinate with the Scotland Yard team."

Fighting kills 67 ahead of peace envoy

Thirty-six hours of intense fighting across Sri Lanka's north left at least 66 rebels and one soldier dead, a day ahead of a visit by a Japanese special peace envoy. Heavy fighting in northern Sri Lanka where Tamil Tiger rebels said they lost a key leader, as Norwegian-led monitors began pulling out before the formal end of a tattered truce.

Fukuda gets anti-terror law approved

Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's government Friday won approval for an anti-terrorism refueling law through a special legislative procedure. Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force will now be able to resume its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in support of the U.S.-led anti-terrorism operations in and near Afghanistan, Kyodo news service reported. Fukuda's coalition government, which had made the issue a high priority to strengthen ties with the United States, planned to resume the operation in a few weeks, the report said.

The measure was defeated Thursday in Japan's non-elected-controlled upper house. It passed Friday with a two-thirds majority in the lower house which is controlled by the coalition government's parties. Under a special legislative provision that allows the bill to become law despite its defeat in the upper house, "Terrorism is the bane of our time. By passing this legislation, Japan has demonstrated its willingness to stand with those who are trying to create a safer, more tolerant world," U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer was quoted as saying, (earthtimes)
Acharya Mahayogi
Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Whatever differences there are, are in the finer interpretation of these things and not in the basic tenets themselves. No forms of Buddhism believe in a god who created the universe, no forms of Buddhism believe in an eternal soul or Atma. No forms of Buddhism believe in an unchanging entity that transmigrates from one life to another. No forms of Buddhism believe that karma is given to one by some super power/energy/deity and can be changed by the grace of such a power.

No forms of Buddhism believe that this universe, was created at a certain time but rather samsara is beginning less and endless. Actually this is intimately related to the principle that there is no creator – god. I use the word creator – god because nowadays many theistic systems have also been re-interpreted in a more mystical, experiential way by some of their supporters – especially those who practice meditation in one form or the other. But it must be said that such interpretation of god is not accepted by the mainstream theistic religious systems.

While it could be said is a stray few in all religious system had always interpreted god in a more mystical sense, it must also be said that those who interpret god in this way were either considered heretics or in some cases even put to the sword. Although such an interpretation of god is a step towards the Buddhist concept of enlightenment, it must still be said all such mystical interpretation of god still falls short of the Buddhist enlightenment.

Even if god was considered more a mystical – experiential experience, this god would still be an eternally existing entity which is very far from the Buddhist enlightenment which is the experience of the emptiness of all entities/ dharmas. It must be said clearly that this emptiness is not the same as the emptiness found in many Hindu texts like the Vidyana Bhairaba Tantra etc.

Within Buddhism there are infinite and beginning-less cycles of beginning and ending. We can only talk of a cycle beginning (created) but that is not the beginning of samsara/ universe itself but the beginning of one small unit of samsara. One unit of samsara (may be a galaxy in modern term) called Lokadhatu begins and ends but there are endless such Lokadhatus beginning and ending at any one time.

And even these Lokadhatus are not created by any creator of a sort but appear and disappear based on various principles/laws called Niyams which includes karma – Niyams. When the power of the pull of the karmas of sentient beings and the other niyams synchronise then a world – system (Lokadhatu) appears (rather than created) etc. These niyams are more like the principles of gravity etc. which no one created.

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)
The Poet and the vision

Surdas as a poet is an enduring metaphor here.

A poet’s vision turned out to be the focus of the first Irish Literary Festival of the subcontinent opening this week in New Delhi. The festival began with a performance by internationally acclaimed soprano Judith Mok, and with a lecture on early Irish mythology and Hindu mythology by distinguished folklorist and writer Daithi O’Hogan.

Mok’s dramatic recital, Molly says No! was awe-inspiring. Written by Irish Poet Michael O Laughlin, now writing in-residence in Galway, the performance was originally commissioned for the Joyce Centenary celebrations in 2004. The performance aims to show a different side of Molly Bloom. Only a Nepali shaman’s performance could be a match for Mok’s vibrant show as she sang songs from the era of James Joyce, electrifying her audience.

The event also displayed the affinity that fiction has with poetry. In South Asia today, poetry and fiction seem to be two different things and the sacred link seems to have been severed. As Irish Ambassador Kieran Dowling pointed out, “Music was very important for Joyce, both personally - he had a good tenor voice - and in his works.” He quotes Richard Ellmann to whom Joyce gave garlands or dried corns hanging from simple and quintessentially Newari. They are decorated with red chilly stems and have numerous grains de¬corating the festive hues.

This coincides with the view Islam has about the poets. In the holy Koran a poet is not consid¬ered worth an attention at all. The poets tell lies and present what’s not there. In early times they were considered to be the people with a devil or a sinister spirit as a pet. This led to the negation of the poets as dangerous people in Islam. Like Plato’s view, the poets should be banished from the polls for they tell lies and are twice removed from reality.

In the Irish and Hindu mythol¬ogy, the poet/prophet image serves to dignify poet as a legislator’ of the world.

Especially significant remained his discourse on poet’s vision, how in the Irish traditions a blind person was considered a better candidates for the vocation. As poetry opens the inner eye, the notion of a blind man as awaken¬ed identity, a seer seems relevant. The one who sees the inner reality remains the one who can’t see. Paradox of a seer as blind person is a striking similarity that Irish-tradition shares with our continent. Sursad as a poet is an enduring metaphor here.

Hogan also discussed the tradition of poets using poetry to make things literally happen. The poets have been known to have sent signals to benefit or harm the people around them. Like shamans in Nepal, they can cause havoc on the enemy by sending an evil agent or help a friend by sending good omens. Like their Asian counterparts, they can cause rain, raise alarm, light fire or send rats to the enemy’s house.

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HERITAGE SITE

in the valley in the form of a bee, to save the valley from drought, was born as the valley’s protector-rain maker deity. The deity is taken around the city of Patan and it is one of the most celebrated festivals. The deity is then taken in a tall wooden chariot decorated with green leaves. Once in every twelve years, the chariot with the deity is pulled from Bungamati and taken back.

An imposing temple of Hyangriha Bhairav, a Shiva manifestation is within the main square. A gigantic face of Bhairav is worshipped by the Buddhists as well. There are a few nice but unfortunately dirty ponds in the village with religious importance including Dyo Pukhu (pond of god) in the centre of the village where Bungya-dyo takes bath during religious festivals. In a walking distance lies yet another important temple of Kanya Vinayaka (Ganesh – the god of luck and accomplishment).

Yet another important village nearby Bungamati is the Khokana village. Most of the farmers in these villages are either involved in spinning or oil pressing business. The mustard oil of Khokana is one of the best taste marks of a Nepali kitchen. Sheshidai Mai temple - a massive three storied pagoda temple of nature goddess is the main attraction of the village. Aryan in character, Khokana is smaller than Bungamati. Some of the best one day hiking places in Kathmandu valley would be around Bungamati and Khokana for its unmodernised setting reptiles with culture and faith.
Prakash Sarangi has passed through the kind of tragedies and disappointments normally only seen in theatres or movies. He is the main actor in the life-like radio drama, Katha Mitho Sarangiko, which is being produced by the BBC World Service Trust.

Prakash still does not know who his father is. His mother eloped with another man when he was only one and a half years old, leaving him with his maternal grandparents. All he knows about his father is that he was in the Indian army and of a higher caste. Not wanting to marry a woman from a Gandharba family, he paid his mother off with 1,000 rupees, abandoning her when she was eight months pregnant.

Prakash picked up the art of playing the Sarangi from his mother's brother, himself a Gandharba, and subsequently took the surname of Gandharba. He was brought up by his loving maternal grandmother, but didn't go to school until he was ten years old. "When I moved up from grade four to five, I was second in the class. I started grade five but had to leave after five days. The singing I did on Saturdays didn't pay enough for me to stay on at school," From an early age he wanted to join the army, but because he didn't have citizenship - and still doesn't - he had no chance of being considered. "You need parents to get a citizenship," I had none. I knew who my mother was, but she couldn't be bothered to provide the documentary proof needed for my citizenship; as for my father, I didn't know where to begin to look for him."

Prakash is now 21 and after leaving school, he has been wandering around the mountains in the regions of Dhaulagiri and Gandaki, singing for his living. But now his situation has changed radically. His voice and musical talent was valued to buy millions, both inside the country and outside. Two months ago, Prakash Gandharba was chosen to be the narrator and leading actor in the life-like radio drama, Katha Mitho Sarangiko, combining international expertise with a regionally sensitive approach, the drama avoids the radio jargon along with characters and settings outside the country and outside. Two months ago, Prakash Gandharba was chosen to be the narrator and leading actor in the life-like radio drama, Katha Mitho Sarangiko, combining international expertise with a regionally sensitive approach, the drama avoids the radio jargon along with characters and settings outside the country and outside.

Prakash has always tried to turn round the misfortunes in his life, and this reflects one of the central themes of the drama which explores the idea that conflict can be transformed into harmony, confrontation into collaboration.

"Reading a radio script is as a highly skilled business, generally the gift of very educated, Kathmandu based actors," says Fiona. "Improvisation enables a whole range of people from very different educational and ethnic backgrounds to take part in our drama. In this way we hope to be giving a voice to a whole range of people who are not usually heard on the radio."

Music is woven throughout the drama. Stories and relationships will be explored through the musical medium of Prakash's Sarangi. Prakash adapts traditional Sarangi rhythms to Matlabi songs performed by Smriti Mishra who plays 17 year old Manju, a lively girl who decides to leave her traditional life in Kathmandu. Her brother Ujjwal Mishra joins Prakash with his Dholak. Mile Gurung brings his guitar to the mix and Suresh Chand adds his Deuta singing.

Katha Mitho Sarangiko brings some landmark changes to radio drama production in Nepal: the recording of the drama takes place, not in the confines of a radio drama studio, but on location with three different casts of actors, many of them non-professionals. All dialogue is improvised. This is a new thing in Nepal, introduced by Fiona. "Art imitating life by the right actor, high and low," said director-producer Deepak Rauniyar, "auditioning over 14 Gandharbas in the villages of Kaski and surrounding areas. Just as we were about to return to Kathmandu, we got a call from Prakash. Returning from his travels, he had sent us a message that we left with his wife some days back. He said he would like to stay in the country and outside."

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Keshav Sharan Lamichhane
His voice and musical talent will be listened to by millions, both inside the country and outside.

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