

Dalit Assertion and Democratic Transition

Uddhab P. Pyakurel

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Nepal is now in the transitional phase towards a democratic change. This transition is the outcome of the 19-Day uprising by people from all walks of life. This time is important to all because we are going to decide several very important issues like the decision for a new setup of the Nepali state, the fate of monarchy, the appropriate electoral system, introducing a new state mechanism to secure the interests of all groups of plural society. Therefore, not only the political parties and players but also the people based on caste/ethnicity, region, religion, and gender are now busy in the debates and discussion to influence and intervene in the transition to making it into their favor. Some of the groups organized various protest programs as a means to reach their voices to the authority easily. The ongoing Tarai unrest, ethnic movement and Dalit movement are the examples of such intervening activities of various groups.

This paper deals with what the Dalits are doing to capitalize the transitional phase in their favor. To deal with this main theme, it analyzes the demands submitted to the government by various Dalit alliances, and the strengths and shortcomings of the Dalits for their collective effort. Before going to cover the above-mentioned themes, I want to present a brief overview of the situation of Dalits in Nepal.

Situation of Dalits in Nepal

The caste system which is closely associated with Hinduism in South Asia is considered the oldest surviving social hierarchy in the world, with a 2,000 years old¹ history. Though it is dominant in India and Nepal, the caste system permeates, to varying degrees, across all major religions in the Indian subcontinent. It orders persons into caste categories or *Varnas* on the basis of ritual purity². It is considered one of the rigid stratification systems without any possibility to change one's caste or move between caste categories. Caste of a person is determined by his/her birth into a particular social group.

In the Nepalese history, an account of the institutionalizing of exploitation of the Dalit communities by the state dates back to the mediaeval period in the 13th century when King Jayasthiti Malla introduced the caste system. Jung Bahadur Rana further formalized the caste system by introducing the Muluki Ain (Civil Code) in 1853³. In the Muluki Ain, the Brahmins, holding highest position in Hindu caste hierarchy, were excluded from capital punishment; while the other castes of people, including the Dalits were subject to such punishment. Accordingly, the atrocities against the Dalit caste people were intensified. Dalits were denied the right to education and they were denied the right to acquire property. They were discouraged from constructing good house and touch persons of higher castes. So much so that certain sections of the Dalits were almost forced to live either in the outskirts of the villages or in the filthy slums.

The hallmark of the caste system and discrimination against Dalits is the practice of "untouchability." Based on the belief that Dalits are "polluted," Dalits are typically restricted to tasks and occupations that are deemed too "filthy" or "polluting" for "upper-caste" communities. Dalits are segregated from members of other castes and are prohibited from touching non-Dalits and their possessions. In Nepal's rural areas, upper-caste individuals still practice ritual bathing in order to purify themselves following

1 For an overview of caste discrimination in the Indian context, see Human Rights Watch, *Broken People: Caste Violence against India's 'Untouchables'* 23-41 (1999).

2 See generally Human Rights Watch, *Caste Discrimination: A Global Concern* 22-24 (2001) available at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/globalcaste/index.htm#TopOfPage>.

3 See Andras Hoffer, 2004, *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Kathmandu: Himal Books (Reprint)

contact with a Dalit or a Dalits' belongings. The sprinkling of drops of water on impure objects or individuals is also practiced. Dalits are also denied entry into public places, such as hotels, shops, and restaurants. When they are able to enter public restaurants, they are made to drink water from separate glasses, tea from separate tumblers, and eat *daal bhat* (rice and lentils) from separate plates. Still, Dalits have to wash the pots, which they used or touched in the houses of the “upper-caste people”, hotels and restaurants.

There is a debate about the number of Dalits in Nepal. Dalit activists and NGOs have claimed that the Dalits comprise between 20 and 25 percent of the population⁴. The government census of 2001, in contrast, has estimated the Dalit population at 11.66 percent. Whether it is 11.66 percent or 25 percent; it is not a negligible size but constitutes a substantial portion of population of Nepal. However, it is a known fact that the Dalits remain in misery and abject poverty and are socially downtrodden. The following table illustrates the situation of Nepali Dalit.

Table 1: Comparison of Data of Dalit with the National Average.

Subject	National average	Dalit	Source
Population	100%	11.66%	CBS.2003. <i>Population Monograph of Nepal</i> . (NPC), Kathmandu, Nepal, Vol. I& II
Poverty	31%	47%	CBS 2004.NLSS I, II, CBS: HMGN
Household income from remittance	Rs.34700	Less than Rs.11000	CBS 2004.NLSS I, II, CBS: HMGN
Under 5 years mortality rate	104.8 per 1000	171.2 per 1000	UNDP 2001: Nepal Human Development Report; Govinda Pariyar 2007 ⁵
Infant Mortality Rate	75.2	116.5	Govinda Pariyar 2007
Life expectancy	59	50.8	Govinda Pariyar 2007
Never attended number in school	44%	Hill Dalit: 43.3% Tarai Dalit: 76.4%	CBS 2004.NLSS I, II, CBS: HMGN
Attainment in SLC and above	6.7%	Hill Dalit: 1.7% Tarai Dalit: 1.2%	CBS 2004.NLSS I, II, CBS: HMGN
Education received BA and above	3.4%	0.4%	Govinda Pariyar 2007

4 CDO 2005. “A Study on Empowerment Strategy of Madhesi Dalits in Tarai,” A Study Report Submitted to SNV Nepal, Community Development Organization, Kathmandu, Nepal

5 Govinda Pariyar. Dalit Yuba: Chunausangai Abasar (Dalit Youth: Opportunity with Challenge)”, Paper presented to Dalit Citizen’s Assembly held in Kathmandu on June 16-17, 2007. (text in Nepali)

Per capita income	Rs. 20689	Rs. 13340	Govinda Pariyar 2007
Landlessness	10%	Hill Dalit: 15.5 Tarai Dalit: 44.5	Pariyar 2007; Trikhatri 2007 ⁶
Candidacy in 1999's general election	2238	82	WB/DFID 2006, <i>Unequal Citizens, Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal</i> . Kathmandu: World Bank and DFID.
Winners in 1999's general election	205	0	WB/DFID 2006
Mp in interim parliament, 2007	329	18	Govinda Pariyar 2007
Numbers of Dalit Officers Civil Service		22	Arjun Khadka 2007 ⁷
Dalits in the Central committee's major political parties	NC D: 37 NC: CPN UML: 68 CPN (Maoist):33	NC D: 1 NC: 1 CPN UML: 1 CPN (Maoist): 1	Rampriti Paswwan, "Madhesh/Madhesi," Paper presented to Dalit Citizen's Assembly held in Kathmandu on June 16-17, 2007. (Text in Nepali)

Going into the details of the situation of Dalits in Nepal, we find more disturbing trends. Dalits occupies only one percent of the nation's wealth. Collectively, Dalits represent 80 percent of the "ultra poor" in Nepal⁸. While a great number of Nepal's agricultural laborers are Dalits, just one percent of Nepal's Dalits own arable land. Only three percent of Dalits own more than a hectare of land. In addition, approximately 71 percent of individuals reported that they are paid lower wages and salaries in both the private and informal sectors. At the time of the study, Dalits received an average of NRs. 96 (about US \$1.23) for a day's work. The mean wage for a female worker was approximately NRs. 78 (about US \$1) while the mean wage for a male worker was approximately NRs. 99. By contrast, the mean market wage rate for the same kind of job in the general population was around NRs. 105, with women receiving an average of NRs. 88 and men receiving NRs. 111.⁹

Going to the educational sector, it is often reported that not only Dalit students but also Dalit teachers are themselves socially segregated from their non-Dalit colleagues. In rural areas, Dalits are often made to sit in the back of the classroom and are treated as "untouchable" even by their teachers¹⁰ that effected in the literacy rate of Dalits (only 24.2 percent of all Dalits were literate as of 2001 where 50 percent of the average literacy rate for Nepalese) as education is basic requirement of the empowerment. According to a 1997 report, there were only two Dalit medical doctors and fifteen

6 Raj Kumar Trikhatri, "Tathyankama Dalit ko Chitra (Picture of Dalits in Statistic), Paper presented to Dalit Citizen's Assembly held in Kathmandu on June 16-17, 2007. (text in Nepali)

7 Arjun Khadka, 2007, "Nijamati Sewama Samabesi (Inclusion in Civil Service)", Posted under [Perspectives / Analysis, Focus](#) on Monday 30 July 2007, available at <http://nepaldalinfo.net/2007/07/30/271/>

8 Raj Kumar Trikhatri, "Tathyankama Dalit ko Chitra (Picture of Dalits in Statistic), Paper presented to Dalit Citizen's Assembly held in Kathmandu on June 16-17, 2007. (text in Nepali)

9 International Labor Organization, *Discrimination And Forced Labour Of Occupational Castes In Nepal* (undated), available at <http://www.idsn.org/ILONepal.doc> (last visited July 25, 2007),pp. 72-73

10 *THE MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE: Caste Discrimination and the Conflict in Nepal*, a report prepared by The Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ), 2005, available at <http://www.chrgj.org>

Dalit engineers in Nepal¹¹. As of 2002, neither a single Dalit has held a leadership position in the Science and Technology field nor do any Dalits hold an academic or administrative leadership position at Tribhuvan University (one of the country's premier universities)¹². The situation of Tarai Dalits is worse than that of hill Dalits in terms of caste discrimination, poverty and other human development related indexes. For example, the literacy rate of the Tarai Dalits is only half (21.6 percent) than that of hill Dalits (41.93 percent)¹³.

Similarly, since 1958, only 14 Dalits in Nepal have become Members of Parliament (upper house). Only one Dalit from Nepali Congress party has been elected to the House of Representatives during four parliamentary elections after 1959. This pattern of exclusion is repeated at the local government level, where Dalits are severely underrepresented. Among the more than 3,900 Village Development Committee chairmen, only handfuls are Dalits. An ILO study which analyses the 1997 election results from 735 village development committees revealed that Bahun/Chhetri and Janajati represented "54.42% and 39.86% of the VDC Chairpersons respectively. The Dalits constituted only 1.63% of the 735 VDC Chairpersons. The caste/ethnic composition of the VDC Vice-Chairpersons followed similar proportions (Bahun/Chhetri: 52.11%; Janajati: 37.82%) except that the proportion of the Dalit Vice Chairpersons constitutes 3.95% of the 735 Vice Chairpersons."¹⁴

Likewise, Nepal Human Development Report 2004 states that Dalits share less than one percent of senior officials, managerial and professional occupation; around a half percent of technical and assistant level profession; and one and half percent of clerk and office assistance kind of profession¹⁵. According to a 2001 study, while *Brahmins* constitute only 16 percent of the population, they represent 57 percent of parliament and 89 percent of the judiciary¹⁶. In an International Labor Organization (ILO) study on Nepal, approximately 48 percent of the surveyed Dalits claimed that they would be denied employment due to their caste status even if job openings were available; Twenty-one percent of the respondents reported that they had been refused jobs based on their caste status¹⁷. Discrimination also persists in the Nepal Army. Historically, the Nepal army was built around caste lines. In 1768, Nepal's first monarch, King Prithvi Narayan Shah, built an army whose senior ranks were composed almost entirely of "upper-caste" *Chetris* – the warrior caste. "Lower-caste" community members, including Dalits, were excluded. Only lower service units contain Dalits now a days. According to one estimate, the "upper castes," constituting only thirty five percent of the general population, occupy 98 percent of all army officers.¹⁸

On the contrary, Dalit women and girls in Nepal endure the double burden of caste and gender discrimination. According to Durga Sob, a feminist Dalit activist of Nepal, "Dalit women's disproportionate and extreme poverty stems from illiteracy, untouchability, physical violence and lack of empowerment"¹⁹. Among the Dalit women, the literacy rate is merely 3.2 per cent. Life expectancy

11 Hira Vishwakarma, *Reservations for Nepal's Dalits*, KATHMANDU POST REV. OF BOOKS, July 27, 1997, available at <http://www.asianstudies.emory.edu/sinhas/kprb0207.html>.

12 International Labor Organization, *Discrimination And Forced Labour Of Occupational Castes In Nepal* (undated), available at <http://www.idsn.org/ILONepal.doc> (last visited July 31, 2007)

13 Uddhab P. Pyakurel, 2007. *Maoist Movement in Nepal: A Sociological Perspectives*, Delhi: Adroit Publishers

14 International Labor Organization, *Discrimination And Forced Labour Of Occupational Castes In Nepal* (undated), available at <http://www.idsn.org/ILONepal.doc> (last visited July 31, 2007), p.53

15 *Nepal Human Development Report 2004*, Kathmandu: UNDP

16 International Labor Organization, *Discrimination And Forced Labour Of Occupational Castes In Nepal* (undated), available at <http://www.idsn.org/ILONepal.doc> (last visited July 31, 2007)

17 Ibid

18 Thomas A. Marks, *Insurgency in Nepal*, FAULTLINES, Feb. 2004, available at <http://www.satp.org/satporctp/publication/faultlines/volume15/Article1.htm>

19 DURGA SOB, Feminist Dalit Organization (Fedo), Dalit Women In Nepal: Issues And Challenges 3 (Working Paper Presented at International Consultation on Caste based Discrimination, Nov. 29-Dec. 1, 2004), available at www.idsn.org/c_Sob.pdf

of the Dalits is as low as 42 percent.²⁰ Among the minimal numbers who got opportunities to become Members of Parliament (upper house) or medical doctors or engineers in the name of Dalits in Nepal, all of them men.

After the Janalandolan II there are some substantial changes seen in the situation of Dalit. Credit should be given to the Maoist party which sent a good number of number of Dalit members in the parliament and compelled other political forces to nominate Dalits in the government and parliament as well. For the first time in history of Nepal, two members from the Dalits, with full ministerial portfolio are at the present interim government led by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.²¹ Earlier in the Seven Party Alliance government, there was also a minister from Dalits having the state ministerial portfolio. Parties have started giving some representation to Dalits by nominating Members of Parliament which is a good initiation. Among the new nominees in the interim parliament, Dalit constitutes 13.74 percent share of total. Dalit in Jana Morcha occupy 66 percent share, which is 14.47 percent in Maoist party, 10 percent in Nepali Congress (NC) and in 20 percent in CPN-UML. Though NC (D), Nepal Sadhbhawana Party (NSP) and Nepal Majdur, Kisan Party (NMKP) did not nominate even one member from Dalits in the interim parliament, all will have compulsion to follow the trend in the future if they want to save their face. It seems that no one will stop Dalits from being in the government mechanism if there is the continuation of the democratic system of government and Dalit assertion. When the eight-party formed the constitution draft commission without including any Dalits or women, pressure from these excluded groups compelled the eight-party alliance to reshuffle the commission and nominate members from those communities. This is a good example about how society can compel political leadership to go with people's aspiration.

History of Dalit Assertion in Nepal

Dalit movement had also begun alongside Nepal's democratic struggle since 1950s. However, it is interesting that the history of Dalit assertion neither originated in urban areas or from the capital city. It started in a village of Baglung district, the western part of Nepal. Sarbajit Biswakarma, an inhabitant of Thadaswara, Baglung was the person who challenged the caste based discrimination and untouchability at the village level. Later on, in 1947 he formed an organization named *Viswa Sarvajan Sangh* in his village to fight against caste-based discrimination. The Sangh is considered the first Dalit organization to be established.²² Successful Pashupatinath Temple Entrance Campaign, 1954 was the first Dalit assertion in Kathmandu valley. It was a forceful temple entrance movement of untouchable community from where they got inspiration and continued attempting such actions in the other parts of the country.

Following the establishment of *Viswa Sarvajan Sangh*, Tailor's Union, 1947, *Nepal Samaj Sudhar Samgh*, 1947 and *Nepal Harijan Sangh*, 1950 were the organizations which were established along with the democratic struggles of 1950s. Organizations such as *Nimna Samaj Sudhar Sangh*, 1951, *Jat Tor Mandal*, 1951, *Samaj Sudhar Sangh* 1952, *Pichadieka-Barga Sangathan*, *Pariganit Nari Sangh*, 1955, *Achhut Mukti Morcha*, 1958 *Rastriya Achhut Mukti Parisad*, 1958, were established during 1950-60,²³ the first tenure of democracy in the Nepalese history.

Institutionally, for the first time in the history, Interim Government of Nepal Act 1951 recognized the people as 'citizen' with civil and political rights. However, the Dalit movement also got affected after the derailment of democratic system in 1960. Since the Panchayat system was an autocratic political system, not only the Dalits but also all others faced difficulties to form organizations and organize the program during the 30-years (1960-90). Only nine Dalit organizations were established²⁴ during the

20 Hari Bansh Jha, "The Dalits and Dalit Women of the Terai" available at http://www.nepaldemocracy.org/ethnicity/dalit_women.htm

21 *Gorkhapatra*, 2 April 2007

22 Yam Bahadur Kisan, 2005. *The Nepali Dalit Social Movement*, Kathmandu, LRPS Nepal

23 *Ibid*

24 *Ibid*

Panchayat tenure.

When Democracy was restored in 1990 after *Janaandolan I*, hundreds of NGOs and other organizations came into the fore with the slogan of Dalit emancipation. It is considered that the second tenure of Democracy (1990-2002) has become the productive period for Dalits in terms of their assertion. It is because the then governments were compelled not only to form Dalit Commission in 2002 but also to initiate other affirmative action programs like scholarship for higher education for backward community students, reservation in scholarship and in admission in educational institutes, quota for foreign employment, etc. Though these initiations were not enough to end all sorts of exploitations and marginalization, they helped Dalits to increase their confidence towards further assertion.

Today, we find many more Dalit and pro-Dalit organizations working in Nepal. Every political party has their Dalit wings under which there are also Dalit student wings. Hundreds of NGOs are there to work on Dalit issues. There are at least three umbrella organizations of Dalit NGOs—Dalit NGO Federation, Dalit NGO Federation-Nepal and Nepal Dalit NGO Confederation. There is a Dalit Citizen Movement Central Coordination Committee (DCMCCC) formed after the decision taken by the Dalit Citizens' Assembly, which was held in June-16-17, 2007. The assembly was organized with the support of almost two dozens Dalit organizations to strengthen the Dalit emancipation movement more assertively.

Dalit assertion after the *Janaandolan II*

Dalit participation in the last year uprising was very active though they remain curtailed from participating in social, economic, political, administrative affairs. People amassed in the streets believing that their individual grievances would be addressed with the change in the government. But unfortunately, both the interim constitution and twice-amended Nepali Constitution are unable to address the core agenda and issues of the Dalits.

Dalit frustration came to a head on June 14, 2007 when the Nepalese parliament decided on an allocation of seats for the new Constituent Assembly that will be held in November 2007. The constitution, after its second amendment has proposed that 240 of the 497 Assembly seats go to those with the highest votes ("first past the post"), and there will be the proportional share to Nepal's minorities, including the Dalit, and the country's isolated areas only in the rest 240 seats. The cabinet will appoint the remaining 17 seats²⁵. Calculating the allocation, Dalits reached a consensus that there are only 6 percent seats for Dalits, though the constitution provisioned 13% reservation to Dalit in upcoming assembly.

As mentioned earlier, Dalits were having a belief that their individual grievances would be addressed by the government which has come in the existence after the *Janaandolan II*. In the early days, they used very democratic weapons in raising their issues by bringing their agenda in debate through writing and getting these write-ups published in newspapers, journals and books. In between this, when the Madhesi and ethnic community movement went into a different kind of protest programs like bandh, vehicle strike, sit-in program, protest rallies and so on, and started getting a quick responses from the government, Dalits were also compelled to think otherwise. Most of them started getting an impression that until and unless one announces bandh, vehicle strike, protest rallies and so on which usually invite violent activities though these are also considered facets of non-violent movement, no one will hear the voice of the organizer. In this point, the direction of the movement in which Dalits was organizing, received a question mark saying that the manner is very passive for launching a movement. Political leaders, media, academicians etc. also started assuming the Dalit weakness or loophole behind the passive movement in comparison to the Madhesi and Janajati assertion. Such assumption made Dalits rethink over the united and effective movement of all Dalits. Great disappointment overcame the Dalits when there were no leaders or political parties raising their voice of concern for Dalit issues and agendas.

25 Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu

Dalit Alliances and their Demands

All Dalit organizations state that they are working for Dalit upliftment, proportional participation and for an inclusive society. When the Dalit leadership was criticized by ordinary Dalits, Dalit leaders of different political parties and organizations started organizing for a united Dalit assertion. Till date, there are mainly three alliances which according to them are in the struggle to capitalize the ongoing transition into Dalit favor.

1. United Republican Dalit Front, Nepal (URDFN) has formed in October 2006 under the leadership of Tilak Pariyar with the participation of Nepal Dalit Mukti Morcha (united) affiliated with the Maoist, Rastriya Dalit Mukti Sangathan, Nepal Utpidit Jatiya Utthan Sangh (united), two groups of Nepal Swatantra Vidhyarthi Sangathan and independent Dalit personalities. URDFN has announced a fresh protest program submitting a 10-points demands by July 25, 2007²⁶ .

2. Again, in making an united effort for Dalit assertion, six Dalit wings of major political parties of Nepal-- Nepal Dalit Mukti Morcha (United), Nepal Udpidit Jatiya Mukti Samaj, Nepal Dalit Sangh, Nepal Dalit Sangh (Democratic), Nepal Rastriya Dalit Mukti Sangathan, Nepal Dalit Utthan Manch— had organized a joint meeting in February 18, 2007 and come up with a 9-Point Common Minimum Understanding. The [joint] meeting decided to present the 9-points memorandum on the above mentioned demands to the government, eight parties and legislature-parliament, and to make further decisions on the programs of joint struggle based on common understanding as may be necessary. It had formulated a joint committee for struggle and dialogue. However, the alliance could not continue when four organizations quit the alliance.

Those four sister organizations of major parliamentary political parties, after a couple of days of the break up of the alliance of a six-Dalit wings of major political parties, formed another alliance for struggle and dialogue This alliance is holding several discussions about the nature of struggle, common demand of Dalits before launching a united and fresh movement. Since this is a alliance of the sister organizations of ruling political parties, it is having dialogue with the government regarding the Dalit issues, and is trying to lobby within the party and government for Dalit upliftment programs, policies and so on.

3. When political leadership failed to get united to form a united alliance in launching a united and assertive movement, rights-based Dalit organizations came in the fore to capitalize Dalit sentiment and to compel the government to hear Dalit voice. Some 19-Dalit organizations sat together and decided to organize a Dalit Citizens' Assembly (DCA) to show a united Dalit voice. The objectives of DCA was to initiate discussion on the model of New Nepal, to discuss on Dalit's core agenda, to put pressure on political parties, to fashion the state model into a federal government system, to collect a multitude of perspectives in order to facilitate an inclusive and proportional state model, and to gather ordinary people for creation of vivid discussions on the Dalits' agendas.²⁷ The DCA organizers criticized the Dalit movement and its leaders as incompetent to announce a united and effective protest program like those of Madhesi and Janajati. Another reservation towards the leaders of the movement was the continued practice of the culture of sycophancy or loyalty to their mother parties and donors as the Dalits has been doing for a long time. The stated objective of the assembly, according to the organizers was to break the trend of sycophancy, to end the frustrations seen within the Dalit members and to pressurize the parties to do needful in establishing Dalit rights.²⁸ In short, this assembly was organized to forge a common agenda through discussion of individual issues, and to strategize for a unified Dalit movement.²⁹

The assembly decided to form a new coordinating group, the Dalit Citizen Movement Central Coordination Committee (DCMCCC), to promote the conference agenda and forge unity. The assembly which was able to amass over 2000 Dalits from approximately 61 districts of Nepal held

26 *Gorkhapatra*, July 25, 2007

27 *Citizens Assembly Bulletin*, June 16, 2007

28 Suvash Darnal, "Why the Assembly?" *Citizens Assembly Bulletin*, June 16, 2007

29 (voice...)web

discussions on 17 different topics through parallel sessions which brought out the following 15-points to present to the Eight Political Parties along with the Interim Government. The DCMCCC is given the responsibility for announcing future programs on citizen assemblies and mobilizing the people around the country through publicity, mobilizing support, and pressuring political and governmental bodies through sit-ins, and other actions as needed.

Demands of the alliances

As mentioned earlier, six Dalit organizations affiliated with major political parties of Nepal organized through a joint meeting in February 18, 2006 reached into consensus to a 9-Point Common Minimum Understanding as a way forward to move towards fulfilling the basic demands and aspirations of Dalits in the current extraordinary circumstances of Nepalese society. **The 9-points of understanding are:**

1. In the context of the declaration of Nepal as an untouchability-free nation made on Jestha 21, 2063 BS by the parliament following the peoples' movement (Jana Andolan 2062/63), untouchability-discrimination must be made a social crime of serious nature by the constitution [the main statute] itself, and hard laws must be enacted against untouchability-discrimination and enforced immediately.
2. Implementing the agreement and understanding made among eight political parties, an interim government including Maoists must be formed, and the date of Constituent Assembly (CA) election must be declared immediately.
3. The election of CA must be held based on the system of inclusive proportional representation. A minimum of 20 percent CA representatives must be allocated to Dalit representatives on the ground of proportional representation as well as a means of additional rights for compensation to Dalits. Similarly, a provision of 20% representation from Dalits at all levels from top to bottom of the state machinery, governmental and private agencies must be made on the ground of proportional representation as well as a means of additional rights for compensation to Dalits.
4. Nepal as a state must be restructured establishing a federal democratic system of state governance based on caste, language and regional autonomy.
5. Rayamajhi Commission Report must be made public, and culprits of suppressing the Jana Andolan must be booked, and stern action must be taken against them.
6. An effective step must be taken to bring the declaration of a secular state and its system into practice.
7. Dalit Rights Commission must be made a constitutional body.
8. Identifying all problems of Dalits, the state must make a [concrete] plan to resolve the problems in all associated sectors.
9. The genuine demands of Madheshi, indigenous nationalities, women must be fulfilled.

The 9-points memorandum was the first consensus agenda of different Dalit organizations though it got legitimacy for a short period. When four members of out of total six quit the alliance, the memorandum lacked authenticity. Realizing the vacuum of a united Dalit voice, after the tremendous pressure from civil society and from the grass root level, through a DCA, Dalit NGOs came out with a 15-points decision as demands to present to the eight political parties and the government.

The points are:

1. Issues relating to Nepal's Dalits remain in the corner as the country faces a great change. Recent amendments in the constitution failed to meet the demands of the Dalits giving Dalits only 6% participation in the Constituent Assembly (CA). It is strongly recommended that the constitution is amended once again.
2. There should be proportional representation of Dalits in every sector of the state. It should be guaranteed that 20% of representatives in the Constitution Assembly (CA) election are Dalits. This is a strong focus and commitment of this assembly.
3. This assembly urges the 8 political parties and Nepali government to provide a date for the CA

elections. The monarchy should be abolished along with the declaration of the Federal government system from the parliament.

4. Dalits are currently unable to gain access to social, cultural and political sectors because they don't have access to natural resources. Dalits should be provided with a justifiable mass of land.

5. The major political parties have shown only surface level interest in Dalit empowerment. We aspire for their strong and reliable support for Dalits' liberation and upliftment.

6. The country is heading towards a federal system of government. We hope that Dalits' agendas and issues will be central to the forthcoming government.

7. Because of the globalization and marketization, Dalits are economically sidelined in terms of their professional expertise. Dalits are also curtailed from water resources, electricity and other resources. This assembly strongly demands economic protection for the Dalits. A collective declaration should be presented to economic organizations, multinational companies etc.

8. Due to landlessness, Dalits are forced to migrate and work in dangerous areas. This is affecting their health status and causing social problems. This assembly urges that proper health and livelihood facilities be provided to Dalits.

9. Land related exploitation systems such as the Haliya, Kamaiya, Balighare, Khali, Harawa-Charawa (Bonded Labor systems often associated with the agricultural sector) systems should be abolished as soon as possible.

10. The interim constitution has provided women with 33% representation in government, but there is currently no specified inclusion for Dalit women. The new constitution should include measures which address the social, economic, political, and cultural hindrances that Dalit women suffer. The government should seek to provide special policies and programs for the rehabilitation of Badi women.

11. There should be special policies to include Dalits in the state and private media. This assembly urges for this representation.

12. Organizational bodies in Nepal currently only provide representation for segments of the Dalits. Dalits in their entirety (including all sub-castes) should be provided with opportunities within governmental, private and non-governmental organizations.

13. A new Dalit commission named "The Constitutional Dalit Rights Commission" should be established along with the amendment in the interim constitution.

14. Untouchability and discrimination should be condemned as a serious social crime, and the culprits should be punished severely within the new constitution.

15. Dalit students should be given scholarships with free education till higher education level.

Similarly, United Republican Dalit Front, Nepal (URDFN) on July 25, 2007 put a 10-point memorandum, and has submitted it to the government. "We frequently submitted memorandum to the PM and interim drafting committee to provide the chance of proportional representation to the Dalits in the state mechanism but we get no response" Tilak Pariar coordinator of URDFN said after submitting memorandum at the official residence of the Prime Minister³⁰. The 10-points³¹ demands are:

1. Holding the CA elections in time.
2. Ending all types of conspiracies which obstruct elections.
3. Abolishing monarchy and announcing the country a republic.
4. The provision of 20 per cent reservation in state organs for Dalits, which according the memorandum should also be provisioned in the interim constitution.
5. Provision of stern punishment against those practicing untouchability.
6. Making public the report of Rayamajhi Commission and taking action against those indicted by the report.
7. Provisioning the Dalit Rights Commission as a constitutional organ.

30 *Gorkhapatra*, July 26, 2006

31 *Ibid*

8. Implementing the announcement of secular state in reality.
9. Scholarship and free education up to high-level education for the Dalits and;
10. Fulfilling all the just demands of agitating groups are also included in their demands.

Demanding the fulfillment of the mentioned demands, now two different protest programs are being carried out by the DCMCCC and the URDFN. The first had announced a phase-wise protest program to fulfill the demands raised in June at the National Dalit Assembly. In the first phase of strategy, a regional citizen assembly and mass mobilization program is scheduled to pressure the eight political parties, the government, and the diplomatic missions. The second phase of action includes demonstrations in Kathmandu, circling Singha Durbar, Baluwatar, and locations around the country for the first time in Nepal's history.³²

The URDFN, by?? July 25, 2007 has announced a protest program putting some demands for uplifting the Dalits. It has announced that the protest programmes would have different stages. The first stage include submitting memorandum letter to the Prime Minister, delegation to the offices of the political parties, protest rally, sit-in and torch rally in Kathmandu, pamphlating, organizing interaction and awakening meetings throughout the country, nationwide torch rally, vehicle strike, valley bandha and Chitwan bandh etc .³³

Since the main demands of the DCMCCC and URDEN are similar, the first has expressed its solidarity to the program organized by the latter³⁴. Sit-in, hunger strike and arrests/release of Dalit activists by the police have become normal phenomena nowadays. On August 7, 2007, when the Dalit activists had just started their sit-in protest at 10 am, the police intervened and arrested 24 of its activists³⁵. Again in August 9, some four-dozen Dalit activists were arrested from the sit-in program. Now, the protest program has converted into a relay hunger strike. Earlier, the URDEN organized one-hour long vehicles strike in Kathmandu valley on August 12 followed by a torch rally on August 10, 2007³⁶.

Here, one can raise several queries regarding the Dalit initiation to capitalize the transitional phase into their favor. Will the Dalits who comprise about one-fifth of the population, spread all over the country, in a position to mobilize enough resources from the INGOs, be able to make an assertive movement to co-opt the present situation or not? Though Dalits are always placed in the bottom by all other groups, why is it losing its unity time and again? Why did the alliance of six political party Dalit wings break in this crucial period? Why are DCA and DCMCCC mired in controversy³⁷? Leaders of the Dalit movement have to respond to such questions until they reach a common understanding for the agenda of Dalits.

Assessment of the Dalit Assertion

While writing this paper, I conducted unstructured interviews and had personal talks with the different Dalit leaders, trying to understand time and again the division within the Dalits which seems a weakness of the community. The respondents were very serious in this regard and want a united Dalit voice to fulfill the agenda. While I talked to the leading figures of Dalit movement, I found that the blame politics is there within the Dalits; politicians criticize NGO workers on their sophisticated life and blame them for diverting Dalit activists from revolutionary stream to the luxurious life. The

32 <http://www.jagaranmedia.org.np/jagaran-media-nepal-dalit-news.php?id=43>

33 *Gorkhapatra* July 26, 2007

34 press release by DCMCCC, July 28, 2007 available at <http://nepaldalitinfo.net/2007/07/30/270/>

35 <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2007/aug/aug09/news09.php>

36 For details, see <http://nepaldalitinfo.net/2007/08/12/283/> and <http://nepaldalitinfo.net/2007/08/11/280/>

37 One of the participants of DCA from Dang, citing the Dadeldhura program as parallel program (which was a regional conference organized by UNDP Constitutional advisory Support Unit (CASU), Nepal), commented that that assembly also failed to unite all Dalits. He states, “when we were in the assembly others were busy in organizing another program in Dadeldhura”. Another one states, “most the participants of the assembly were Maoist and Nepali Congress sympathizers” in the assembly.

counter argument of the NGO activists is that whatever is being done is due to the NGOs, “nothing has been done by the political leadership except surrounding the leadership”.

“NGOs are the brokers of the Dalit which collapsed the Dalit movement,” one of the members of the interim parliament who belongs to Dalits says. “we have a short history through which our leadership has emerged. However, the fraud Dalit members with enough foreign aid have weakened the leadership”, he says. The Dalit elites who jumped to NGO sector after international community come with the program of social reform are the main actors to divide Dalits which has resulted in a weaker assertion than that of the demand of this time, he adds. He blames them as champion in making the money by selling the naked pictures of Dalit which is captured after offering a peace of candy. He blames that the dual role UML affiliated Dalit wings is responsible for the break-up of the negotiation team which was formed by six major Dalit wings of the political parties in February, this year.

A Dalit intellectual and activist who recently got an appointment as a member of Dalit Commission also agreed regarding the division and debate between the Dalit NGOs and political leadership and argued that the agenda “abolishing the monarchy and announcing the country a republic” was only the cause in breaking the six Dalit wings alliance. Here, he sees a high-level party interference to those who quit the alliance and formed another dialogue team. Regarding the assertion of Dalit, he is happy of the way used by the Dalits and argues that whatever the style Janajati and Madhesi have applied was not the only means of assertion. He is satisfied by the achievements whatever has come up by the Dalit assertion.

Another member of Interim legislature from the Maoist party argues that Dalit emancipation is not possible through NGOs which are influenced by the international organizations. He realizes the present influential role of NGOs but argues that they will undermine the Dalit movement if there is the reluctance of political leadership. He credits the Maoist party for bringing the Dalits into the present situation and argues that so long the feudal and unitary state exists, Dalits have to be assertive to deconstruct the structure.

Going to the assessment from the activists of NGO sectors regarding Dalit assertion and loopholes, I find the same acceptance that Dalits have failed to capitalize the transition into their favor due to their division. “Unity of all Dalit organization was essential to have a united Dalit voice for compelling the government to hear Dalit grievances which could not happen in Nepal”, they say. “We are trying to get Dalit NGOs and the political leadership united however it could not happen due to the Maoist party affiliated political wing” one of the Dalit NGO activists who was in the organizing committee of DCMCCC says. He further states that Nepal Dalit Mukti Morcha, the Dalit wing of the Maoist party which claims itself as most popular Dalit organization in Nepal is responsible in breaking the alliance of the six Dalit wings of the political parties. “Morcha which is very new in the open Dalit movement tries to impose not only its political agenda but also everything to others that led the dissatisfaction to those who are in the movement for a long from the beginning,” he quotes leaders of other Dalit political wings regarding the split of six Dalit wings alliance. “We had accepted the republican agenda put forth by the Morcha but could not compromise everything” he again quotes the leaders of Dalit political wings. He accepts the controversy over DCMCCC, NGOs and political wings and states that they are regularly in touch with every sector Dalit leaders and trying to formulate a united forum of Dalit youths to pressurize all Dalit leaders to be united and announce a common program.

In the meantime, another NGO activist from Dalits blamed Nepal Dalit Sangh, NC affiliated Dalit wing, and the Nepal Udpidit Jatiya Mukti Samaj, and the UML affiliated organization as main culprit to break the six- Dalit wing alliance. “NC compelled Sangh to quit the alliance showing its reservation over the republican agenda”, he says. His reservation over the Samaj was on its “opportunistic steps”. Samaj also accompanied with Sangh after it got the signal from the latter to lead forthcoming alliance”, he further says. “It could be better if they had organized an intense discussion regarding the agenda and leadership rather than forming another alliance,” he suggests.

Though the NGO activists were denounced by politicians, the Dalit NGO activists still have their soft corner towards the political leadership accepting the say, “parties are the ultimate force in democracy to run the country through people’s vote.” A prominent NGO activist, who is a Dalit woman argue that she is trying to bring all sorts of Dalit leaders into a forum to make a common understanding

accepting the fragmentation within the Dalit based organizations that hamper the assertion of Dalit to bring qualitative change of Dalit through the intervention in the ongoing transition. For her, the main cause of lack of unity is due to the hegemonic behavior of some of the NGOs and party leaders. “Our demands are almost the same but there is ego within us which makes us fragmented time and again,” she says.

While reading the above-mentioned versions of different Dalit leaders, one get to know that there is the division and other modes of thinking within the Dalits. It is obvious in democracy because the beauty of democracy is that where everyone is entitled to have his/her own belief, idea and aspiration in different subject matter. However, the question is whether such a division really hampers the Dalit assertion to capitalize the transition into their favor or make the process easier? Along with that, whether Dalits are busy in the core and pro-Dalit agenda or diluted from there may be another question to be raised.

One hope has come out from the fresh protest, relay hunger strike. Though the striking participants have affiliations with over 30 different Dalit advocacy organizations, none of these organizations claim to be sponsoring the demonstration. Suvash Darnal, Chairman of the Jagaran Media Center (JMC) explained that this unified effort goes beyond the agendas of individual institutions. He articulated that he is participating, not as a leader of the JMC, but as a “well informed Dalit citizen.”³⁸ Darnal’s comment indicates that they are now opting a different way to make the protest program of ‘all Dalits’ rather than the program of an alliance or an individual institutions out of more in the same field. It may be an alternative way in co-opting the fragmented situation.

Some observations

As per the demands of assertive Dalit movement concern, I list the following agendas on which the effort should be concentrated.

1. Since restructuring the state is a much debated agenda of present Nepal, Dalit effort should be focused mainly in two areas; structure of the state and the electoral system. Dalits should be clear about the pro-Dalit state structure which gives more spaces to Dalit in each and every sector. Along with the state structure, electoral system is another important mechanism which assures the share of the political participation of individual and groups. Electoral system will decide about the implementation and relevance of much talked reservation policy in the political constituencies.
2. Another focus should be given to the proposal for other kinds of reservation like in education, opportunity etc. which has not/can not cover by the electoral system. Focus should be given to have a deep study of the societies which already have practiced the reservation policy. Such study would help to avoid the loopholes of the reservation system, and help to reach the benefit of reservation at the grass root level and diminish the “creamy layer” beneficiaries since these are the main arguments made by those anti-reservationists in India.
3. Along with the nil shares in opportunities, Dalits has been facing a practice of untouchability which leads them to be isolated or excluded from others in having day-to-day relation, conjugal relation etc. In this regard, we should recommend a concrete program and policies to abolish it as soon as possible. Discussion should be done whether only the legal provision is enough to eliminate it or other supplementary programs and policies are needed. If additional program and policies are needed, we need to be clear about the detail of the program.

Considering these three as main concerns I would like to examine the demands submitted on different dates by different alliances of Dalit wings of different political parties and the DCMCCC. While reviewing the demands submitted by different Dalit alliances, we find a common voice regarding the

38 Prakash Mohara’s report on “Hunger Strike for Dalit Demands” available at <http://nepaldalitinfor.net/2007/08/14/292/>

federal setup but not any further details of it³⁹. Along with others, Dalits also started talking about the state restructure as one of the agendas of their upliftment. However they are not clear about what sort of state restructuring are they talking about. And, which kind of setup is fit in making Nepal a real inclusive state and Dalit emancipation in particular? Two alliances which are now in the protest program has focused more into the agenda of republican setup which become the main hindrance to bring the third alliance together and present an united voice for the movement. All of the demands somehow cover the agenda of federal setup against the unitary setup of future Nepal. However it seems that they followed the agenda of federal setup like as a fashion since they have not made it clear how Dalit gets benefited by the set up.

They could not focus whether the setup of the state is problematic for Dalits or the rooted social beliefs and practices. They need to think that if federal setup is only the solution, why such problem has not been over in India? There are person-to-person different views in this regard; most of them take the agenda because it is the agenda of their parties. The idea of federal setup has ethnic domination in Nepal.⁴⁰ Most of Dalits not only bluntly accept the ethnicity and region based federal setup lobbied by other scholars but also accept the argument which logically tries to convince impossibility in creating any federal setup to Dalits.

There is a question which is not answered by those who talk about the restructuring the state and federal setup for inclusion but argue against the Dalit based setups. What is the Federal setup for? If it is for inclusiveness of most suppressed, marginalized or excluded group in Nepal the, focus should be made to identify and define the most suppressed, marginalized or excluded groups. Here, most people accept that the Dalits are the most marginalized and suppressed group who are excluded not only in terms of political and other kinds of participation but also in having a day to day relation in the society, but avoid to form a pro-Dalit state. Why? If Dalits are the most marginalized groups, focus should be given for pro-Dalit state restructuring. Yes, there are other marginalized communities but they never experienced such brutality and exclusion as Dalits have.

We are talking about federal setup for the community which has less than two percent of total population and only 23 percent population in the given area. If an ethnicity-based state is possible to the community, Dalit states are not possible in those areas where Dalit share 13 percent of total population and 16-18 percent population in the specific areas. The Dalits in 13 mid and far western districts--Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Dadeldhura, Darchula, Dailekh, Doti, Jajarkot, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Surkhet --constitute 17.87 percents of out of total population. Likewise, the size of Dalit population are 15.44 percents in the 12 western districts which are Lamjung, Syangja, Palpa, Parbat, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Gulmi, Kapilbastu, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Arghakhanchi and Baglung. In the middle, nine Tarai districts--Bara, Rautahat, Dhanusa, Mahottari, Morand, Saptari, Sarlahi, Sirah and Sunsari--constitute 15.83 percent Dalit population⁴¹. If there are some Dalit states, there would be a change to get something for the community through bargaining with other states.

Otherwise, either Brahmins or other high caste or even the ethnic community and Muslims, all⁴² are same in terms of exploiting Dalits; no matter whoever rules. Therefore, either Dalits should take initiative to convince others in making some Dalit states under the federal setups or give up the

39 The 9-points agenda made by six Dalit wings of major political parties states, "Nepal as a state must be restructured establishing a federal democratic system of state governance based on caste, language and regional autonomy." DCMCCC's view in this regard is, "the monarchy should be abolished along with the declaration of the Federal government system from the Parliament. It further states, "The country is heading towards a federal system of government. We hope that Dalits' agendas and issues will be central to the forthcoming government". Likewise URDFN in the issue states in abolishing the monarchy and announcing the country a republic.

40 Uddhab P. Pyakurel. 2007, "Dalit and the issue of state restructuring" *Dalit Solidarity*, Vol. 9 (4), July-September

41 NDC 2006, *Dalits in Nepal*. Kathmandu: National Dalit Commission (computed by the author)

42 JMC 2005, E-Bulletin, Issue No. 3, September 2005, Jagaran Media Centre

support to the agenda of ethnicity based federal setup since it does not help in Dalit upliftment⁴³ .

Regarding the electoral system, all the Dalit organization and alliances are in consensus though they are fragmented in movement. The one and only pro-Dalit election system, for them is proportional representation system with the guarantee of 20 percent reservation for Dalit.

In the issue of reservation in other opportunity sectors, they have only the surface level demand--20 percent share at all level. They fail to see the loopholes of these kind of system if implemented blindly. There is a small voice in providing free education and scholarship but no focus on getting competitive or quality education. While talking on the reservation policy, we should have both the short-term and long-term plan together. Numerical inclusion is enough for the time being which gives a positive message to the marginalized community that a member of such a community can be a doctor, engineer, professor, Village Development Committee chairperson, District Development Committee president, party president, minister even the prime minister. However, we have to have a long-term policy to avoid the criticism in the future which basically comes through questioning the qualification, merit and quality of the included person through reservation. Here, I subscribe to Amartya Sen who considers educational opportunities as basic capabilities to lead a life with elementary freedom and says that exclusion from this basic capability further contributes to make the process of economic growth less participatory. He praises Japan's emphasis on basic education which helps in minimizing the exclusion. He says that Japan become the model of market economy in the world only because of the priority given on education by the Meiji Era (1868-1911) though it was economically still quite underdeveloped.⁴⁴

Why I subscribe to Sen's argument is that there is an important correlation between opportunity and education. Educated person search the opportunity in any case; if they do not get it or they feel discriminated in getting the opportunity, they not only protest on the spot but also raise the issue through media, academic writings etc. I mean, an uneducated person easily internalizes the same thing considering the thing as a fate or fortune but an educated would see it differently, consider the same thing as discrimination, unequal practice etc. rather than a fate. By the time, if such practice of disparity and discrimination continue, educated people have capacity to convert it into the movement as Gandhi and Ambedkar did.

Talking about education, we have our own past experiences towards the educational institutions since we have two types of educational institutions; private educational institutions are those which offer quality education in English medium, and public or government funded educational institution meant that which provides a poor education in local or national language. In this juncture, our focus should be either to deconstruct the image of two different educational institutions or to provide more and more opportunities in educating Dalit children from private institutions. Otherwise, one who gets educated from the public school can never be as assertive as his counterpart who comes from private school. It is due to the inequality in the access of resource materials, command in language and other kinds of knowledge.

I am raising the issue here on the basis of my own experience which I got during my two years long student life in Delhi. Though one has knowledge, (s)he can't make a good presentation due to the lack of command in the particular language. Most of those who get admission in higher education from the window of reservation in India have been suffering language problem. Language is becoming the leading cause in their case for further exclusion like in accessing the resource materials, isolating them from day today interaction with their counterparts and friends. Such exclusion and isolation further declines the self-confidence of the person.

43 MP Mitharam BK argues that Dalit will get no benefit from the federal structure but get the tendency of "divide and rule." It is because Dalit community seems a large as a whole but see a small group in the region. He argues that he is intact with this agenda even if he becomes a 329th Mp in the Parliament to argue against the federal setup. (Personal conversation with the author which held in Kathmandu on July 10, 2007)

44 Amartya Sen., *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application & Scrutiny*, (Social Development Paper No.1) Manila: Asian Development Bank 2000:25

The last fiscal year budget of Nepal after the *Janaandolan II* tried to initiate the scholarship provision in every private school in the name of Public-Private Partnership Program putting Dalit into the high priority list to enjoy the facility. One out of every 15 students of every private school was entitled to get education there with scholarship.⁴⁵ It was not enough but a good initiation for offering competent education for the marginalized groups in the long-term. However, this year's budget has failed to continue such an excellent provision. It may be because of a little concern of Dalits over the provision. Dalits and the government should focus to get more Dalit student educated from private school until and unless the gap of quality education between the private and public school ends. Quality education is the more powerful instrument in minimizing the exclusion rather than provisioning scholarship to those who study in the public schools⁴⁶.

Regarding the issue of untouchability, all the alliances demanded in their memorandum but it seems only a formality since there is no clear-cut recommendation of policies and programs to end it. Dalits should have done more study and come up with a proposal to end untouchability as soon as possible since it is a real human tragedy and is practiced on and within the Dalits. I raise the issue here because, there are a litany of laws passed to end caste discrimination and against the Dalits in India but, in practice, these laws are poorly implemented⁴⁷. Balakrishnan Rajagopalal⁴⁸ mentions the causes of continuing the practice of caste discrimination and says, "caste discrimination exists because people believe in caste". He blames the Indian democracy which encourages the formation of democratic participation along the lines of identity as a culprit to continue the caste system. Arguing the laws only as insufficient means to eliminate the practice of caste discrimination, he says, "caste discrimination against the Dalit is deep-rooted in the society and the economy and quick-fix solutions through the law alone will not help".

In conclusion, I appreciate the sincerity and belief of Dalit leaders who avoid in announcing a "strong protest program" like going to the streets to vandalize public or private property; neither they generally call for Bandas⁴⁹ which directly and indirectly effects the announced Constituent Assembly (CA) election. They are sincere in their efforts because they are the ones who need the CA election most for getting their proportion in each and every sector.

Though Dalits are trying their best to capitalize on this transition, its effort seems a bit slow. This is mainly due to two reasons; one is the modus operandi of the government which is used to facing violent pressure before hearing a voice; and the second is due to the Dalits themselves who never present a single and clear voice to negotiate with the authority. The second reason always gives a pretext to those who want to adjourn those agenda of inclusion for a long time. They have to search a mechanism for a common understanding within their diversity to answer the second concern. I want to end with a quote to tackle the differences which seems relevant to the Dalit assertion in Nepal, "we are a democracy and differences in views are inevitable but informed debates and discussions in views are the answer."⁵⁰ Effective Dalit assertion will be productive when all Dalits come to a consensus on a common pro-Dalit understanding, leaving all their partisan political agendas, biases and prejudices behind.

45 Budget Speech 2063/64, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu, 2006

46 The budgets of fiscal year 2007/2208 provisioned scholarships with the amount of 350 per year to all Dalit who are in the primary level education.

47 See Balakrishnan Rajagopalal, "The Caste system-India's apartheid", *The Hindu*, August 18, 2007

48 *Ibid*

49 However, in the fresh protest program of URDFN, there are the programs of Chitwan and valley band.

50 *The Hindu*, August 15, 2007