Ethnic Mobilization towards Democracy and Autonomy: The Magar Perspective at the Local Level

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Democracy and Ethnic Mobilization

There is no long history on Ethnic Politics in Nepal; rather it has been manifestly enlightening since the 1990's movement to restore democracy. Ethnic mobilizations in all fields began to flourish through their ethnic organizations in terms of activism, that for identity and recognition, particularly cultural revitalization during post-democracy and the democratic constitution of 1990. The open democratic environment, along with provisions of basic human rights, favoured to articulate marginalized and excluded voices from oppressed and deprived strata of Dalits, women and the ethnic population. Hachhethu rightly remarks that "the restoration of democracy with the principles of popular sovereignty, equality, freedom and cultural rights has provided a platform for ethnic activism" (2003: 233). Hence, ethnic agendas have gained much weight in the centre of Nepalese politics as marginalized and deprived ethnic grievances, which were rooted in the Maoist peoples' war in February, 1996. After two years, Maoists urged the ethnic people for co-operation with the war, through the slogan of 'liberation from centuries long of exploitation, oppression and suppression, while seeking an ethnic autonomous republic with the right of self determination'. Maoists strategically catalyzed the grievances of the exploited, oppressed and marginalized strata of the population, like ethnic and Dalits, in favour of their peoples' war, by ensuring them ethnic autonomy; however, these events not only succeeded in the fueling of the war, but also increased the Maoists' influence nationwide. Moreover, ethnic mobilization turned into an ethnic conflict, where new challenges in contemporary politics arose. Undoubtedly, the ethnic cleavages, as with other excluded voices, sprang up due to the open environment and human rights, through the re-establishment of multi-party democracy in 1990, but it could not change the traditional excluded structures of the state, deprivation and the poverty; rather they continued to affect the lives of the ethnic, Dalits, Madheshi, women and the poor. These groups of people continued to suffer and are deprived from many kinds of political, social and economic power and opportunities, due to the domination of a few elites from the so-called high caste and exclusionary structure of the state (Neupane 2000; Gurung 2004; Khanal 2004; Baral 2004; Lawati 2005; Baral 2006).

In Nepal, in the late '90s, ethnicity has been regarded comprehensively as an unavoidable political phenomena fuelled by the ethnic populations of Magar and Kirant involved in the west and east hills, and of Tharu and Madheshi shared in the west and east Tarai, respectively through Maoist's peoples' war, which had an affect throughout the country. People at the grass roots, particularly the ethnic strata and Dalits, have been largely mobilized in favour of war. Hence, the mass movement succeeded in April, 2006 to establish full democracy and human rights. This overthrew the King's direct rule in democracy and authoritarian monarchy. This movement was initiated by seven political parties and the Maoists, with full and active support from civil society including ethnic organizations. Millions of people, including ethnic strata, had joined their hands and marched on the streets for full and true democracy during the movement. In the post April revolution, the ethnic movements succeeded to mobilize ethnic organizations and people in favour of the protest for seeking rational and proportional political rights in state affairs. The agitation and violence that

occurred a few months earlier in Tarai, was set as a bed rock for articulating extremely deprived voices of Madhesh as regional and marginal identity/sector of the state. This resulted out of the existing political system of state, as an injustice for not giving the space in state authority, in proportion to their population. Along with these events, the ethnic agenda had also been introduced in the political discourses, whether in the state, political parties and civil society. Now the agenda of ethnic and regional autonomy turned to one of the main demand of ethnic organizations and the regional side.

Undoubtedly, if societies have deep ethnic cleavages then democracy is inherently difficult. Many events in contemporary politics, particularly in the third world, seem to justify that the scale of ethnic conflict is closely related to the degree of democracy. Hence, a number of cross-national statistical analyses indicate that 'ethnic cleavages are negatively related to democracy' (Hadenius 1992: 114). In the multiethnic countries, particularly since the 1980s, similar to Nigeria, Lebanon, and Sir Lanka, democratic regimes have broken down as a result of a sense of ethnic conflict in the form of a civil war. In east European countries, democracy has made more progress in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, where ethnic cleavages have been less important; and have made less progress in Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia where ethnic conflicts have been strong (Horowitz 1994: 36). Along with Sri Lanka other South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and even now Nepal, are also widely experiencing crises and violence in its state of democracy due to ethnic conflict and sectarian identity. In Nepal, it has been adopted a majoritarian democracy and it tries to solve its ethnic cleavages through the dominated group's policies without rational consideration towards inclusion for deprived and excluded groups. However, there is an unwillingness to share the power and authority with excluded strata of the population rather than stress rationally and properly manage the ethnic conflict as an inclusive process for participation in politics and state affaires. The forms of ethnic conflict and its mobilizations basically depend on the deals and the management by power holders in the state. In the view of an institutional school, the same degree of ethnic conflict may result in different levels of democracy. Therefore, institutional arrangements, such as the regulation and management of ethnic cleavages, may facilitate or obstruct democracy. However, in multiethnic countries, institutional engineering can influence the prospects for democracy in terms of a resolution of ethnic conflicts through a rational and inclusive process by consociationlism as advocated by institutionalists[1].

Although many castes and ethnic groups have diverse rituals, traditions, and cultural practices, 'the Hindus and the various cultural groups in the hills and the Tarai of Nepal have co-existed for centuries' (Sharma, 2004). Indeed, ethnic and caste groups have homogeneously and heterogeneously settled and tolerance of each others' conventions, even in many societies' cultural life styles, are much or less similar among the various groups of population due to the fluid interaction of cross-cultural practices. But the traditional tendency of the state and authority is towards national building, through so-called integration as one language and one religion, which made the identity a crisis amongst ethnic groups. Hence, these groups are excluded in the power and resources of the state, where dominant only the elites from so-called high caste, i.e. Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar ethnic group; therefore they are deprived from political, socio-economic and cultural privileges. Due to this bitterness, ethnic activists have been forwarding their activism as a revitalized identity through various means amongst the ethnic strata of the population before and after 1990. Almost all ethnic organizations in post 1990 democracy were seeking reformative and informative processes to recognize their identity and ethnic issues through their activism. Such activism has now turned to political ground as a movement which demands comprehensive ethnic rights for

seeking roles in power and resources in proportion to their identity and population, through inclusion and ethnic autonomy, after succeeding in the people's movement in April. Since that movement, political environments are in favour of such demands and supports, as inputs for inclusive democracy, particularly initiated by ethnic, Madheshi, women, and Dalits organizations. Therefore, ethnic activists and their organizations have been forwarding and pressuring their agendas of participation to the state and government in order to the benefit of the ethnic people in general. Unfortunately, beside the some ruling classes, people of various strata, as sovereign citizens in democracy, are underprivileged, without any say over their rights to rule, to access resources and to the power of state and society.

Ethnic groups (*janjatis*) make up the majority, comprising 8.4 million people or 37.19 per cent of the total population of the country. However, although 59 ethnic groups together form the majority of the population, they are still scattered all over the country and no single one of them exceed 7.2 percent, though there is NEFIN (The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities) as an umbrella of various ethnic organizations in order to unite them for solidarity, identity and ethnic mobilization. Now, NEFIN, which is regarded as a federation of 50 various indigenous nationalities and ethnic organizations out of 59 such groups, has been forwarding ethnic movements jointly with Madheshi Forum nationwide. By mobilising their organizations and activists with respect to their three demands, namely, proportional election system, representation in state authority and affaires with justice, and the ethnic and federal structure of the state. Most of the ethnic civil /society and activists were giving much more stress on their demands while the Nepalese state continues on the path of interim constitution for the election of the Constituent Assembly and State Restructuring. Democracy is only a system where oppressed and exploited grievances could arise as the input towards traditional authority for seeking power and resources is in proportion to the strength of their population. Therefore, in multiethnic states, ethnic conflict depends on the process of democratic institutionalization and power sharing in between ruling group(s) and subordinate or excluded groups. However, in this perspective, Kohli rightly remarks that two dimensions of the political context appear to be especially relevant with ethnic mobilization, namely, how well state authority is institutionalized within the multicultural democracy and the willingness of the ruling groups to share some power and resources with mobilized groups (Kohli 1997: 37). In Nepal, the ethnic mobilizations initiated by NEFIN and Madheshi groups were extremely violent. Unfortunately, several people were casualties in the demonstrations and agitations of the Tarai people initiated by Madheshi Liberation Front, Madheshi Peoples' Rights Forum, and other Tarai's rebellion groups a few months earlier. Moreover, some riots and violence are continuously occurring by some armed groups in Tarai, particularly that which splinted from Maoists' Tarai wings called the Madheshi Liberation Front. Actually such events have occurred due to illiberal policies of dominant groups that are unwilling to share power and resources with subordinate and excluded groups, particularly ethnic and Madheshi groups**.** Those groups, along with the people of Dalits and very less developed areas, are deprived and excluded in the state's power and resources because of very nominal or nil involvement in the state in proportion to their population even in the democratic era of post 1990. According to democratic concepts, the more the subordinate group increases its ethnic power, the more likely the prospects for democracy is increased; and the more the dominant group increases its ethnic power, the more likely the prospect for democracy is diminished. In ethnically divided countries, the concentration of power resources in an ethnic group does not facilitate democracy, but instead their dispersion favors democracy (Esman 1994, 1996). Thus, the forms of conflict in ethnic mobilization towards civic culture depend on the institutionalization and distribution of power, authority and resources in the multiethnic democracy like, Nepal. In order to resolve the ethnic and Tarai conflicts, the Interim Constitution-2007 has got second amendment and mentioned that

restructuring the Nepali state will be based on federal system. In the meantime, NEFIN has postponed the movement and submitted second round talks with the present government for reconciliation and settlements of resolution to ethnic conflict. Recently, the resolution has made in between the ethnic groups and the State for to solve the ethnic conflict[2].

Indeed, ethnic leaders succeeded to stress the attention from authority and civil society towards their issues and demands in the weak institutionalization of state and where a democracy is in a transitional phase since the post revolution. Moreover, ethnic activism led by NEFIN and other ethnic organizations has been prevailing in politics as a movement for their well participation in polity in order to seek ethnic rights in the post April (2006) revolution which succeeded to create an arena for deprived and marginalized voices as equality and liberty for all sectors of society and state. Whether the people from the ethnic sectors at local level are acquainted with the ongoing movements in the name of their empowerment, or how far has ethnic mobilization been extended amongst the grass roots people at ethnic strata? is one of a major query in the ethnic politics of Nepal. Without a participating political culture and empowered citizens, democracy could not be sustained and stable. For this, it could be queried as to how far the people are informed and mobilized about the democracy and the issues that have been raised by their activists. Whether people at the local level of ethnic strata, either rural or urban, are acquainted with the cosmic terminology of democracy, autonomy, and the issues mobilized and related with it, about how they think of themselves on state restructuring for their well participation in polity and decision making as regarding fundamental issues in Nepalese democracy, are the major queries in this paper. In this perspective, I have discussed ethnic politics in view of the Magar ethnic group at a grass roots level[3].

The Magar Ethnic Group

Nepal is a diversified state not only in its geography, but also its multiculturalism, in terms of castes, ethnicities, linguistic and religious groups. In view of culture and ethnicity, Nepal is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society. Ethnically, it is a 'cultural mosaic inhabited as it is by an amazingly diverse array of ethnic, caste, linguistic and religious communities' (Pradhan, 2002:1). The 2001 national census reported 101 castes and ethnic groups, 92 languages and dialects, and 9 religious groups (CBS 2001). The population in general may be described as belonging to two racial and cultural groups: Caucasoid from the southwest and Mongoloid from the north east. Caucasoid are Indo-Aryan speakers and mainly Hindu whether of Highland (Hill) or lowland (Tarai) variant, while the Mongoloid are ethnic groups with their own mother tongue as Tibeto-Burman speakers, with Buddhistic and shamanistic inclination (Gurung 2001: 108).

Magar is one of the major ethnic groups which is placed in third position among the 101 caste and ethnic groups, and first position among the 59 ethnic and indigenous groups, which represents 7.1 percent of the total population found in the 2001 census. The Magar community has spread throughout the country since the conquest of Nepal and are today the main dwellers and proper habitant of its western part, where 'undoubtedly the best and purest Magar are found to this day in large numbers' (Vansittart, 1993: 82). The Western region has the highest Magar population, which secures 16.43 per cent of the total population of this area. More than 50 per cent of the total Magar population reside in this place. Western and mid western regions, especially the Lumbini, Gandaki, Dhaulagiri, Rapti, and Bheri zones, are known as the 'Magarat region', where 71 per cent of the entire Magar population of Nepal live (Baral Magar 2060: 8). Although Hamilton (1971) thinks that some of the Magar

were migrated from northern India but many scholars agree that Magar, as Mongoloid stock, were originally from Tibet – China, during the early history of Nepal (Thapa 2036BS; Baral Magar 2050; Budha Magar 1993; Ahearn 2004). Hitchcock has divided Magar into two broad sub-groups, 'the southern and the northern Magar – representing two waves of migration from north and east' (1966: 4). But there is no written history on when, and from where, they had migrated to Nepal. Adhikari suggests that 'Magar must have come from their place of origin by way of Tibet and since they show no traces of Buddhism in their religious activities, they most likely arrived in Nepal before Buddhism was introduced to Tibet in the seventh century' (1993: 11).

Magar as an ethnic stock must have come to Nepal from Tibet- China, or northeast India early in the history of Nepal. Within Nepal, the Magar are believed to spread out from 'Yoma Khar' of 'Hukam-Maikot Village Development Committee in Rukum' west-central Nepal. The main settlements of Magar are divided into two parts, namely to Barha Magrant and Athara Magrant regions where seven main clans and more than a thousand sub-clans and sub-titles of Magar are traditionally inhabited (Baral Magar 2050; Vansittart 1993; Gautam & Thapa-Magar 1994; Budha Magar 2005; Baral 2062). The Magar from Athara use the Athara Magaranti language with in this group Kham, Chantel, and Kaike are included[4]. The main clans of Magar in this region are Pun, Roka, Budha, and Gharti. These groups of Magar are settled in the northern and western hills, i.e. Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Baglung, Mygdi and other parts of nearby areas. There are four main communities; 'Thabang, Lubang, Taka and Maikot' in the Kham Magar settlement in the districts of Rolpa, Rukum, and in the western part of Dhaulagiri along the Bhuji and Nishi rivers (Molnar 1984: 22-4). It is supposed that Nishi and Bhuji are such distinct rivers from where Athar and Barha Magarant regions are divided as west and east respectively. Magar in the Barah Magarant region speak a Magar language called 'Magar Dhut'. The main Magar clans from this region are Thapa, Rana, and Ale, who are settled in the periphery of the Kali River in south.

It seems that the original home of the Magar was in the Gandaki and Rapti regions where Magar had their own small state called *baraha thum* and were part of the Baisi-Chaubisi principalities era before the alleged migration of Hindu Rajputs from India. This pit territory was divided into twelve areas (Barha Thum) although there was not a strong and unified Magrant principality. The residents of the same time came to be spoken of as the Magar of the Barah Magrant and 'this part was in the centre and lower parts in between the River Rapti and Marichangdi' (Gimlette 1993: 23; Vansittart, 1993: 84). According to H. B. Budha Magar, the Gorkha principality, was located within this Magarant region; therefore 'Prithwi Narayan Shaha had said that he was the King of Magarant' (Budha Magar, 2054: 85). Although the Magar lost their own petty states, they played a significant role in the militia of *Baise* principalities in the Gandaki region and some of them also had state authority, particularly in Gorkha. According to Riccardi, "Magar was among the six ruling houses in Gorkha before 'unification' which lost their prerogatives in the course of the consolidation period" (quoted in Pfaff Czamecka 1997: 430). Likewise, Whelpton says that King Prithvi Narayan Shah claimed that he was the King of Magarant and 'some of Prithvi Narayan's contemporaries regarded him as a Magar' (1997: 73). Hamilton states that 'the family of Gorkha which now governs Nepal, although in pretends to come from Chitaur (India), is in reality, of the Magar tribe' (Hamilton 1971: 26).

Magar have played a significant role not only in the establishment of the Shah dynasty in the Gandaki region, but also in the unification of Nepal. During the unification period, Magar, particularly those from the *Barha Magarant* region Thapa and Rana clans, contributed significantly to the nation-building process by their participation in regiments, especially in *purano gorakh gan*. Thus, some Magar have a much longer tradition of state and army

service and few of their elites consequently are close to the King and state authority. Furthermore, various clans and sub-clans, much influenced by Hindu religion, in their religious and cultural practices, and the supposed blood relation with Shaha dynasty (King), are such factors which make the identity of Magar, particularly from the Barha Magrant region, complex. As Ahearn says, 'Magar have a complicated history and ethnic identity' (Ahearn 2004). But on the other, it can be concluded that Magar, as an ethnic group, are excluded and deprived by the state and authority in many ways. Most of the Magar in the central west have lost their language, and consequently the invasion of Hinduism during their animistic and shamanistic inclinations toward religious and ritualistic practices, eroded their ethnic identity. Undoubtedly, there was great contribution from the Magar side, which were involved in the militia during the unification period, but they have lost their role in decision making since that era, particularly beginning with the Rana regime.

Thus, Magar as a larger ethnic group, and along with their great history, have been playing a major role in the ethnic movement since it established its institutional practices in order to revitalize ethnic identity and to seek their proper role in authority and the state. Magar have been mobilized by different ethnic organizations in different parts of the country. They became organized at a national level under the Langhali Pariwar since the end of the 1970s and then under the Nepal Magar Association (NMA) since 1992. The restoration of the multiparty democracy in 1990 paved the way for the guarantee of basic human rights to Nepalese citizens, so that they were able to articulate and integrate themselves within mainstream society and represent the various interests of the excluded strata and groups. As a consequence, various political and non-political organizations, including ethnic groups, have flourished. In this environment, Magar organizations have fostered socio-cultural changes and more or less have succeeded to mobilize for the ethnic rights of the Magar communities. Hence, post April revolution, they have demanded further ethnic rights and proper representation as inclusion in decision making and resources, so that their communities will be strengthened.

The Role of the Magar in State affairs

Rights of access in resources and representation in decision making for the people without any exclusion are the bed rock of democracy in connection with the ethnic group/s and state. Most of the theories in contemporary politics are oriented to institutionalize democracy through wider participation and through an inclusion process that can cover all strata of population. People's attitudes towards politics and the political system are catalysts for active participation in politics and elections in modern democracy. In Nepal, besides the Newar, almost all ethnic strata of the population, including Magar' attitudes towards politics, do not seem very encouraging. As mentioned earlier, Magar are the third largest ethnic group in Nepal, but along with politics as Laura M. Ahearn writes, 'Magar are still discriminated against and are at a disadvantage in most social and economic arenas in Nepal' (Ahearn 2004: 15).

In spite of the need for representation, the participation of Magar in both national and local politics is either negligible or nil in proportion to their population. There was only 1.8 percent MPs representing the Magar population, out of 109 of the total MPs in the first democratic parliament in 1959. Also, during the Panchayat era (1960-1990), in the legislative body Rastriya Panchayat, 2.9 percent, out of 511 of the total MPs, were Magar (Baral 2063). They have only comprised 1.5%, 1.9%, and 2.4% of the House of Representatives in 1991, 1994, and 1999's general elections, respectively in the post 1990 democratic period (Gurung 2001).

During the interim legislature, which was organized a few months earlier, with the consent among and between seven political parties and Maoists, Magar received 3 percent out of 329 total members. Among the total 11 Magar MPs eight are significantly represented through the Maoist political party as legislators. Unfortunately, there has not been any Magar in the executive government either in the post April revolution or in the interim government that constituted the body of 26 ministers, few months earlier with the consent and mandate from eight political parties. Among 248 judges in the judiciary (District, Appellate and Supreme Court) only 2 (1 supreme and 1 district) are representing the Magar. It is supposed that Magar are significantly represented in the state army and police forces, but they have possessed very few high posts in such forces. Out of 926 total police officers, (above police inspector), only 2.4 percent are Magar. They also have only 1.8 percent above the post of colonel out of 454 total Army officers (Baral 2063BS; NLMS 2063BS). The representation in various state organizations, since the post 1990 democracy, i.e. Attorney General, Public Service Commission, Election Commission and National Planning Commission are from both so-called high caste-Brahamin and Chhetri or from Newar. It seems there is no any involvement from the Magar side, whereas even a few representatives are from the Gurung, Rai and Madheshi population (IIDS 2002, Thapa 2006).

In addition to the representation in the central structure of the state, participation of the Magar in mainstream political parties, at central organizations, either is nil or is very negligible. Except in the Maoist party, there isn't any representation from the Magar population in the Nepali Congress and CPN UML, as major political parties of Nepal. Likewise, their participation in district level party organizations has followed the same trends as those at the central level (See in detail -Appendix: B). The political parties in Kaski, Myagdi and Palpa, except the Maoists, either is nil or very few in proportion to their population in respective districts while, in these districts Magar are remains as major ethnic and population group[5]. In recent surveys for academic study, most of the Magar activists alleged that the excluded policy of state and authority is the main cause of such low participation. On the other hand, they also think that lack of proper political socialization and some other internal factors, i.e. uneducated, stress about money and foreign jobs, illiteracy and other some bad trends are also the internal factors for non participation in bureaucracy and politics of the state (Baral 2063BS).

Popular participation, along with the guarantee of basic human rights, through which people or their representatives can be directly involved in decision making processes, are central features of democracy. The post 1990 period in Nepal, with its open political environment, presented an opportunity for all sorts of mobilizing and campaigning with the rise of various political, quasi-political, and ethnic organizations. These conditions gave rise to the perception of inequality and exclusion in mainstream politics. Although people could express their dissatisfaction in these circumstances, they could not affect any changes in the absence of legitimate power and authoritative representation (Baral 2004; Lawoti 2005). Ethnic mobilizations in Nepal became effective only after the restoration of democracy. The Maoists' armed revolt that began in February 1996, in order to seek a new democracy along with assuring the ethnic autonomy and equality among the various strata of society, has only drawn more attention to ethnic issues. Therefore, the advent of democracy has been followed with the rise of ethnic consciousness and awareness. The ethnic issue has gained a new weight and strength because of the impact of the Maoist's armed insurgency (Hachhethu 2003: 233).

Maoists' people's war was based in rural parts and their settlements in the central west part of Nepal, particularly Magar villages. Maoists have settled in Magar dominated areas, and tried

to establish their base areas there, in hopes of fighting the government. They do have some support for the People's War from this community, having assured them that they will establish a political Magrant autonomous region (de Sales 2002). Gellner stresses that, "Maoists have cleverly exploited the ethnic issue, by standing up for ethnic rights and holding out the prospect of autonomous regions" (Gellner 2002: 22), and Anne De Sales points out that, "there is an irony in the fact that as many Magar have been killed and half of all victims have been found Magar in the Maoists people's war" (2002: 341). An unofficial publication declares that the total casualties of Magar in the Maoist People's War in 2000 is 24.2 per cent, which is the largest number of any caste and ethnic groups in Nepal (Ekkaisau Satabdi 2000: 26). In addition, the leader in-charge of the Gandaki Region of Magar Liberation Front, describes that 'out of twelve thousand which supposed casualties during the Maoist peoples' war, around three thousand Magar were killed' (1996-2006). Out of 3000 Magar casualties, around 150 activists were from the Gandaki region and among them the major numbers were from Palpa and Myagdi districts' (Shrish Magar, 2063: 53-55). The Maoist movement affected mostly the Magar, especially in Rolpa and Rukum which are the Magar dominant districts; and it is supposed that Magar has greater numbers of militia in Maoists' force. The movement has extended from western to eastern parts, particularly through the villages of Nepal and most of the rural parts are under influence by Maoists.[6]

The Views of the Magar on Democracy

Although application of democracy over the last hundred years has been both patchy in reality and difficult to define in constitutional terms (Madgewick, 1981: 10-17), however, it has defined as the universal political phenomenon of modern civilization. 'Democracy' is a concept exposed to multiple uses, interpreted as something to be cherished, either for its own unquestioned status or as a metaphorical alternative to the threat of other more dictatorial practices. It is often used as symbol of associated concepts like freedom and liberty. It is also a term that is understood in different ways according to the past of the world in which it is involved. During the present international conflicts it is a word of political significance, with alternative associations in ethnic violence and war, world wide. The term 'democracy' is supposed a key issue in any political debate particularly, in terms of democratic politics. The potency of the term is demonstrated in Nepal's two movements against the authoritative regimes of monarchy. The ethnic people have been mobilizing by their organizations towards Democracy and autonomy has the great significance in the ethnic politics since the post April revolution in Nepal.

In Nepalese context, the term democracy, following the dominant discourses, tended to imply for and against certain types of regimes and governance for the last six decades (1951-2007). Democracy in Nepal traditionally means 'prajatantra' and many people still use this word because it became popular after it was introduced in the political lexicon in South Asia around 1950. But, since the April movement, this word has been changing widely by using 'loktantra'. Literally, both words substantively represent Democracy but the previous word is symbolized as a subject or a less than sovereign citizen as 'subject political culture' as is found in monarchy and authoritarian regime instead of 'participant political culture (civic culture)' (Almond & Powell 1966). However, the word 'loktantra' has been becoming a popular term in contemporary Nepali in day to day democracy with the concept of sovereign citizens in order to seek proper representation in resources and authority through inclusive democracy from all segments of population. Hence, the traditional type of democracy is not adequate for providing the ethnic rights and giving the representation in state affairs in proportion to their strength of votes.

In traditional liberal democracy as a majoritarian rule, the dominated group will monopolize the use of authority and resources instead of consensus for power sharing (consociation democracy) providing inclusion to other excluded and minority ethnic groups that are regarded as power seekers in any given polity of multiethnic and multicultural state. Indeed, the political power in majoritarian democracy is limited or concentrated in the hands of the majority, while the consociational model "is to share power, to diffuse and decentralize power, to divide power proportionally, and to limit power" (Lijphart 1995: 857). While in liberal democracy it has narrowly been defined as democracy means rule of majority and people's government that prevail in the time to time elections. But in multiethnic and heterogeneous societies it does not mean that all have access in such a process due to excluded nature of institutional practices like centralized and unitary nature of authority with continuous privileged dominate group and the first –past –the post system, which is appropriate for only two or three contesting ethnic groups. In multiethnic countries, through this method, the dominate group or groups dominate over the resources and the authority and subordinate groups do not have adequate access to the polity of state and they are excluded from power and resources, therefore, it has been given a platform for political conflict and violence. This process creates obstacles to the democratization of democracy in society and state. Thus, democracy is revisited as inclusive, participatory and strong. Democracy would be substantively meaningful when all strata of population have good access in the resource and affairs in the state in terms of the empowerment of people. This is why in multiculturalism, democracy prevails to apply as a consensus as consociationlism or power sharing, instead of hegemony and monopoly ruling by the few elites from the dominated group/s in the state. Since a few decades 'inclusive democracy' as a consociational model has been exercising in the multiethnic and multicultural states in orders to share power and resources from various strata of population, which can be applied in Nepal for accommodate the interests of diverse groups.

Perhaps the world's political history is that democracy can be established or perceived only by the peoples' movement. And this story has been repeated many times throughout the world. The Nepalese people are also witnesses of this truth. The years 1950, 1990 and 2006 are great dates that succeeded the movement for democracy. Early in the movement of 1950, armed revolution opened the door for democracy for the first time in Nepal. However, it could not sustain and stabilize this due to not democratizing the society under the tyranny and feudal rule over the century long Ranas' oligarchy and autocratic rule. Therefore, Nepal again went under a 'closed society' for the next 30 years. In and around 1990, during the favorable worldwide democratization trends, people again stepped up to the movement for democracy. Democracy was established during a 59 day long mass movement. However, the King captured the state power and became an active monarch due to the conflicts among and between political parties in 2002, particularly in February, 2005. This created weak institutionalized democracy, King stepped an active monarch due to the weakened political parties, which are supposed as an agents and safeguards for democracy, becoming corrupted and powerless. Again people from all sectors and strata came out on the streets for the reestablishment of a true and real democracy through the April (2006) revolution. They hoped that there was no need for a movement for democracy to sustain an ever lasting democracy with peace, tranquility and development. Nobody really knew if democracy would work smoothly and through a natural process, but contemporary generations were well informed about the value of democracy and gradually the positive thinking sprang up due to the April movement. Undoubtedly, this was the bedrock for democratizing in Nepal.

In this process of democratization, the Magar held several beliefs around democratization and autonomy. They also held other beliefs about the Monarchy. Ideally, these beliefs did not go hand-in-hand in this country. Political cultures develop through the well means of political socialization and education. People in general obtain political knowledge and perception through the means of political mobilization and education. Undoubtedly, political education and mobilization are the well means of political socialization which assist in developing the process of information-interest-interaction-and recruitment of the people in politics. In this regards, the people at the local or village level are relatively well informed about the existing political situation with the capital and urban centre of state. Although, in most of the villages there was not adequate access to newspapers and TV, but they had radios and some phones from a solar system that allowed some communication between them. They would obtain and share the news through any means available such as radio and telephone calls. Schools, tea shops, public clubs/societies and other local level organizations of political parties, and various communities based organizations, like mother groups, user groups and cooperative societies, were a means of gathering the people. Consequently, local level organizations have been increasingly able to construct and communicate ideas and meanings about socio-economic and political issues. We can observed significant roles of such local level organizations through which assist to improve the life styles of people in one hand and to aware about their socio-economic, political and ethnic rights in the other. Indeed, through these processes various types of socio-political mobilizations are under constructed. Undoubtedly, on these grounds people were increasing their voices against different forms of exclusions and discriminations, particularly based on caste, ethnicity, gender, and so on.

On the bases of local level organizations, teachers, local political and social elites, and activists are the agents of popular means of communications. People disseminate the idea and ideology to the other members as the give-and-take through informal ways of political socialization. Most of the people, either voters or activists, both are much worried with the institutionalisation of democracy and the contemporary agendas associated with democracy. They expect peace and development along with insuring liberties and equalities for the people at the local level, particularly the deprived ethnic and Dalits strata of the population. Hence, the current issues of debate among the people from grass roots are the constitution assembly and future of the King. What does the constituent assembly mean and will the election to assembly be held in proper time? How will the King react if the people give a verdict in favour of the republic state? And, how the state manages the ethnic and Madhesh conflicts through institutionalized processes, are the major issues among the people at the local and village levels. These ideologies are found in heterogeneous and homogeneous Magar societies in various parts of the Western region.

Magar people have positive beliefs towards democracy, and consequently some were involved in the April movement. At this time, those Magar villagers who participated in the movement were interested in sharing their experiences and views on democracy. Through the quantitative data, around 48 percent of the people state that they had participated in the April movement (Appendix: A, Table- 1). Most of the processions and mass meetings were held in the urban and district centers of various districts. Therefore, people relatively close to such centers, and who were politically active, participated in the movement. Indeed most of the processions and mass meetings were initiated by seven political parties where people from caste and ethnic strata at the urban centers actively participated. In addition, Maoists were also a main cause of the processions of huge mass rallies, and they forced the villagers close by to join the revolution. In some urban centers, ethnic organizations, including Magar associations, also initiated the mobilization of ethnic people towards the movement. Most people at the local level believed that democracy was a solution for all types of conflict and

violence, and it was also the way to peace and development along with progress and prosperity. Due to transparent and basic human rights, it is only a system where people express their voices and grievances. Although there was much conflict and violence in democracy, and even in Nepal, the Nepali people experienced the corruption, mis-governance and the unconstitutional power games conducted by political parties, which are regarded as the nerves of democracy that weaken the institutionalization of democracy in post 1990 era. But people at local level are expected and hoped that political parties only the means of ruling the country and all types of issue as conflicts resolve only in democracy. 'Nevertheless, the concept of democracy is held to justify all the short-term difficulties and assumed to become an inevitable solution all over the world' (Huntington, 1996: 96) as such experiences have been shared by the people in general, even in Nepal.

When encountering individuals that participated in the April movement, most of them said the inspiring factor for the involvement in the movement was the system of democracy in terms of Peace and Development. The perception of People at the local level is that only a democracy and its processes layout the solution to the Maoist and ethnic conflicts. In addition, some are involved in those processes due to the request made by the political parties followed by Magar ethnic organization, sent by the Maoists, showing preferences for their friends' requests respectively (Table- 2). If democracy is not stable, it will remain a transitional phase. It is almost defined in the sense of principle characteristics and immediate expectations are favoured rather than deliberately conceptualized terms. However, a value-laden concept like democracy empirically may mean different things to different people. A recent survey, by the State of Democracy in Nepal, reveals that 'democracy is still an elusive and also fragile concept to most of the common Nepalese' (Hachhethu 2004, 2007). In comparison to this study, large numbers of Magar define democracy as a principle in terms of liberty and equality. Others define it as the people's government and party system, followed by terms of peace and security, employment and development, rule of law and a form of inclusion. On the contrary, some think democracy means a republic system and some others understand it in a negative sense, in terms of conflict and instability (Table: 3-5).

 So far, in connection with Democracy and Monarchy, the Magar in general are strongly in favour of democracy instead of a Monarchy and Kingship, because they think the Monarchy is negligible in the price of democracy. Almost all Magar said that democracy is needed in a country rather than monarchy and a King. On the view of Monarchy, more than 62 percent of the majority favoured a Republic Democracy, instead of a Ceremonial (16.8 percent) and Absolute Monarchy (1.9 percent), whereas 19.2 percent stated as either they don't know or they don't want to say (Table-6). It was found that the people at the local and village level had very negative images of the King and monarchy. Some believed that the King and his son had a role in Royal massacre of the immediate King Briendra, while some others think that the King and his relatives are the smugglers involved in many legal and illegal businesses. Some thought that there was much conflict and violence during the direct rule of the King and that those who respected the King became depressed due to inefficiency to control and maintain peace and security in the state. Likewise, some leaders at local level argued that the King is a symbol of centralized unitary and excluded structure of the state, while the politics of contemporary Nepal straight ahead to the federal republic autonomy in terms of empower and inclusion to ethnic minority, that is why the King will be sided in the commencing era as after the restructuring of the state through Constituent Assembly. On the contrary, in the next part of the world, the output of research shows that the King is associated with the term democracy, articulated even by university students[7]. In Nepal, democracy has been victimized time after time mainly due to the intervention by the Kings since its store in 1950 or restore in 1990. That is why not only the activists even the people at

grass root suppose that the King is the main obstacle for success and stable democracy in Nepal. Therefore, majority of them denied any role and position of the King and monarchy as supposed an authoritative and feudal form of structure which is discarded by sovereign citizens in a republic democracy.

However, most of the Magar activists at the local level define democracy as the system of liberty and equality in terms of justice for participation and involvement in the power and resources without excluded policies of state. It is the system that only recognizes and provides each group of rights to rule over them. Democracy is regarded as institutional form, along with the process as 'aggregative and deliberative concepts' (Young 2000) that are found in the views of Magar activists. They gave the credit to democracy which helped to mobilize the Magar people towards their demands in seeking proper participation in the state affairs through the process of inclusion. Hence, they expected that the change could be mentioned as to accommodate the ongoing ethnic conflict within the system, for seeking inclusiveness in the authority and resources from the traditional excluded nature of the state and authority through the management of democratic means. Accordingly in an ethnically divided state, conflict management is only possible when the minority community has adopted a set of demands negotiable within the existing political system, and the majority community- or at least its leadership- is prepared to accommodate to some degree the demands of its ethno political minorities (Rudolph, 2006: 15).

The Views of the Magar on Autonomy

The ethnic activism has centred on a political agenda in terms of demanding an equal share in the state and authority, by means of ethnic autonomy and rights to self decision since the post April revolution. Indeed, without the ethnic group having its own influences with representations in decision making bodies and resources, there will be no progress made in the empowerment of the people of that group. Moreover, it is associated with political liberties that each stratum of citizens has the right to representation and to access in governance and resources for taking decision into its affairs within the state. Therefore, Autonomy has been demanding form various strata of the society in order decide own affairs with access over the resources and power. According to Yash Ghai, Autonomy is a device to allow ethnic or other groups, claiming a distinct identity, to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them, while allowing the larger entity of those powers which cover common interests. There are different ways to define the term Autonomy. He has used 'autonomy' as a generic term, being used to designate particular types of arrangements. The best known is federalism, where all regions enjoy equal powers and have an identical relationship to the central government (Ghai, 2000: 8). Various ethnic movements have over the years confronted the state in where as the demands for more control and power by a variety of ethnic groups, that is self-determination movements, ought to be expected in multicultural democracies, especially developing country's democracies. A democratic polity in a developing country encourages groups' mobilizations, heightening groups' identities and facilitating a sense of increased group efficacy. Mobilized groups then confront state authority, followed by a more-or-less prolonged process of power negation, and such movements eventually decline as exhaustion sets in. Some leaders are repressed, others are co-opted, and a modicum of genuine power sharing and mutual accommodation between the movement and the central state authorities is reached. Understood in this manner, self-determination movements constitute a political process whereby the central state and a verity of ethnic groups discover their relative power balances in developing country democracies (Kohli, 1997).

In Nepal, at the local level, the movement of ethnic autonomy has not much disseminated among the ethnic people than in between ethnic activists and their organizations in the urban centre. Like the Magar in a village, they have not mobilized in favour of ethnic autonomy, therefore, most of them have no idea about the agenda, whereas, some know it as the *Magrant Rajya,* a state for Magar people as they understood it. Such type of articulation is found in the Maoists dominant areas. Furthermore, Magar Liberation Front, as a strong ethnic wing of Maoists for mobilizing the Magar at the local level, have been considering and practicing towards Magrant autonomous regions since a few years back. The Magrant autonomous council and executive body are implemented in Magar dominated areas, particularly in rural areas and villages. Therefore, the Magar from rural parts of Myagdi, are in favour of Magar autonomy or a Magar state rather than other parts of Kaski and Palpa district. Besides, some views of activists in Pokhara and Tansen city are that Magar in general either know but do not support or there is no knowledge on ethnic autonomy. The activities of NEFIN are for seeking proportional representation in accordance with ethnic population in states and are more centered among the ethnic activists and in some cities, particularly in the capital city. It is because at village and district headquarters, ethnic mobilization for the ethnic demands remains nil or nominal due to the nature of power at the centre of authority, where human rights and civil society are also present. Along with this, the presence of strong media recognizes the demand of ethnic mobilization which pressures the state.

However, if we suppose that the respondents represent the entire Magar Voters, then it shows that more than 53 percent of Magar voters had knowledge regarding autonomy. But if we go through cross tables' analysis, it seems that activists were more informed as over 93 percent in comparison with general voters as 43 percent that had information in this perspective. Of those who know about the autonomy, 47 percent persistently support the agenda of ethnic (Magar) autonomy that based on Magar tribe while 43 percent believe on federal autonomy based on the geographical and population diversity. Activists, particularly in urban sectors are in favour of this political agenda rather than that of the rural parts and general people (Appendix: A, Table: 7-10). Furthermore, those Magar who show support, majority of them (29.5 Percent) see ethnic autonomy as an autonomous ethnic republic state, where the right of self determination is preserved as if needs with time and situation then the autonomous federal will remains as an independent state. Those who supported Magar autonomy, most of them are from particularly homogeneous societies and activists from urban parts, argued that it is the only means for the Magar to create a real sovereign and belongs the native territory as their historical identity, which could be developed along with gaining various ethnic rights. Some Magars think that it is the process for seeking various ethnic rights related to education, social, economic, cultural and political development. On the grounds of various variables, like education, age and place of residence, it shows that respondents relatively from a younger age group, education from high school to campus levels and a homogeneous society are in support of ethnic autonomy, rather than that the respondents of the elder age group, less educated and heterogeneous society. But the views from highly educated Magar are divided fifty-fifty, where some are in favour to autonomy of ethnic structure and some are in favour of a federal structure as a regional geographical basis instead of ethnic character only. On the contrary, major numbers, such as 38 percent of the Magar, denied the ethnic autonomy particularly, from heterogeneous settlements. Most of them supposed that the ethnic autonomy takes the path of disorder, instability and ultimately threats to the national integration whereas, hundred of ethnic and caste groups have been living with co-existence since the formation of Nepali society. Moreover, the majority of them stress regional autonomy as the provinces or counties that are based on geographical and ethnic population

settlements as being appropriate, rather than ethnic autonomy which is based on tribe, language, religion as the only ethnic characters. However, most of the ethnic conflicts springing out with the right of self-determination movements occurred when the state and its institution were fragile and these were deeply threatening to the weak institutionalized state. (Prasad 1994; Kohli 1997; Ghai 2000).

Since few months, many programmes have been organizing initiated by different Magar organizations at local to national level in order to mobilize the activists towards the autonomy and state restructuring for addressing the Magar demands. Most of them have not presented any clear picture on this regards. Some Magar activists respond me that they are principally accepted ethnic autonomy but they have not made the forms in restructuring the state in the Magar perspective due to diverse settlement, culture and various ideologies carried out by the different Magar organizations. However, they have tried to give a structure in favour to Magar people with making consensus among the Magar organizations. However, some proposed the Swiss model of autonomy as a county as an autonomous district (with restructure) in Nepali character for the welfare of Magar people (Thapa Magar 2064BS). In this regards, some activists from heterogeneous society said that, we denied and went against the Hindu state in order to get the secular state, then support to particular ethnic group's autonomy in given territory, whereas many other ethnic and caste groups are also existing will be a debatable issue. Another consideration is how people from other ethnic and caste groups will admit to any particular ethnic name belonging to the region, when no single ethnic group has a majority within that given territory. Like, in the Magrant Autonomous Region as proposed by NCP Maoists, the population is composed as 35.7 percent Magar, 12.4 percent Dalit, and 51.7 percent hill Brahmin and Chhetri. Along with this whole other proposed ethnic regions that based on ethnic composition are 'highly heterogeneous' (Baral, 2007: 15).

The majority of the Magar people think that ethnic autonomy is very complex in order to manage and may disintegrate the social harmony and national integration that exists in Nepal. An advisor of Nepal Magar Association said in his interview that 'undoubtedly, the Magrant autonomous region is the best form of structure for welfare and empower the Magar people in general, but it is very difficult to mange among the heterogeneous settlements that we have, and moreover, most of the Magar and Gurung activists of ethnic movements at local levels are misunderstood as they think themselves that they have hegemony authority and power in their ethnic federal autonomous state' (A 55 year old Senior Magar activist and Intellectual). He further said, proportional election system for national level, federal structure based on restructuring of the geographical boundary at regional level and local autonomy for village and municipal are the better options for all caste and ethnic groups, including management to the on going ethnic and Tarai conflict. There are two examples in my experiences that I obtained during my field study. First, a Magar activists in Lume VDC shared with me that a few weeks previous to my arrival to this village, there was a gathering of Tamu Liberation Front for Tamuwan Autonomous region and Maoist cadre gave a speech that the territory of the village is under the Tamuwan and they are going to establish the Tamu government through Gurung representatives. Then a Magar himself, an activist at a local village, asked that Maoist "if the territory remains a place of the Gurung people and under control by them, then where shall we go with other people like we Magar? Should we leave the village and go to Magar dominant villages?" He further told me, but the Maoist leader did not make any comments just he replied that he will forward this view to his upper level (A 45 year old Magar Activist at Tolka of Lumle VDC). The next example from a gathering of Magar Liberation Front held in Pokhara at the regional level on March 7, 2007. One senior Gurung

activist raised a question that if "there is a Brahamin Judge instead of Gurung in our Tamu Autonomous Region, what is the Maoist's policy towards ethnic autonomy? Is it just an illusion and only an exploited sentiment of Gurung and Magar people for the Maoists' interest as power seeking?" (A 50 Years Old Senior Gurung Activist). Although there is no confusion among the Maoist's leaders (as supposed themselves) at high level on ethnic autonomy, but it seems that most of the ethnic activists at the local level are in dilemmas around these sorts of ideas and the authority allows the hegemony only to the ethnic strata of the population within their ethnic autonomous region and government.

In sum, it seems that a demand as an ethnic autonomy with rights of self-determination has been forwarded by ethnic activists for seeking various ethnic rights and representation. As one of the Maoist-Magar leaders who are holding the leadership in the Magar Liberation Front stated in his interview, if they (ruling elites) can ensure that ethnic rights and representations in proportion to their population will be provided to ethnic (Magar) groups through restructuring of the state along with the distribution of authority and resources in federal structure , then they will leave the slogan of ethnic autonomy and rights to self determination (as right to separation) as a negotiation. It seems, however, the state is unable to escape from the federal autonomy as provinces or county in terms of accommodate to geographical and cultural diversity. On the contrary, the Magrant ethnic autonomous region that is running under control by the Maoists party through its wing as Magar Liberation Front, there is still confusion in executing their ethnic government within state jurisdiction as they are also a part of the existing Nepal government. Hence, they have publicly committed that they accepted the multiparty democracy and are involved in the on-going democratization process to try to leave the One Party Dictatorship that executed during the war against the state. Undoubtedly, if the state remains under own full control then Maoists and its ethnic wings could be implemented their policies, whether, it would be strengthened or fragmented national integrity. On the contrary, Nepal is remaining a multiethnic, multicultural with democratic pluralism; therefore the peace accord will only succeed through consensus and mutual trust among the political forces. Nevertheless, ethnic conflicts only resolve along with the guarantee of ethnic rights as political representation, language, culture, etc., in Nepal, which are going to accommodate in restructuring the state through the constituent assembly.

The Agenda of the State Restructuring

The existing structure of state is not appropriate for addressing the diverse nature of Nepali society in terms of geography and composition of human settlements. Hence, restructuring the state is becoming an unavoidable phenomenon for resolving the ethnic and Madheshi conflicts along with address the interest of minorities and excluded groups, like Dalits, women and other regional/marginal groups/people. Therefore, almost all political parties are favoured to rethinking on existing structures of the state in order to distribute power and resources in regions and people of various strata with breaking the traditional character of centralized, feudal and unitary state. There are two versions of this, namely federalism and decentralization. Since the aftermath of the post 1990 democracy, the political parties, like Janamukti party and Sadbhavan party, and ethnic organizations, have been advocating the ethnic and linguistic divisions of the state into various federal units. This sort of idea has been gaining new weight when initiated by Maoists that they plead the state would be divided into

autonomous federal structures with the rights of self- decision on the grounds of ethnicity and regionalism for oppressed and deprived people. Through this policy, Maoists have exercised seven ethnic autonomies i.e., Magrant, Tharuwan, Tamuwan, Tamang, Newa, Madhes and Kirant and two less developed regions as Bheri-Karnali and Seti-Mahakali on the ground of homelands and native concepts. They have forwarded those autonomies as granted to the oppressed and marginalized nationalities and regions. In the hills area of the western region, two ethnic autonomies Tamuwan and Magrant are implemented under the Maoists party. Therefore, the Magar Mukti Morcha (Magar Liberation Front) has been extending among the Magar people in Magar dominated regions in order to seek Magrant federal autonomy.

The next opinion for restructuring the state is decentralization that has been argued and practiced by the main political parties: NC and UML since the post 1990 elections. Local self-governments, as political and developmental units, have been established under the concept of the devolution of power, which are mentioned by the Local-Self Governance Act, (1997) 1999 for the mobilization of the grass roots people at local governance. Although "NC's interest for a broader decentralization is still intact" (Chamlgai 2006: 81), the demands from overall sectors are pressurizing the state to move towards federal structure. Therefore, UML now turned its policy towards the federal structure while NC has not publicly stated its latest position. It is widely believed that the NC established, is based on a broader decentralization, whereas, some leaders at a central level are in favour of federal structures based on regions and geography[8]. It seems that the overall ecology favours the federal structure which is an unavoidable phenomenon of contemporary Nepalese polity, believing that the resolution of all types of grievances and conflicts 'can not be left pending as it is obviously a rejection of some historically inherent characteristics-built in from the time of unification of the country in 1768-of the Nepali state, viz., monarchical rule, Hindu state, unitary form of government, primacy of one language, domination of hill *Brahmins, Chhetris* and *Newars*, centrality of Kathmandu, centralized administration, feudalism and patron-client based authoritarian administration' (Hachhethu, 2006: 121).

The attitude of the Magar people, at the local level, has not been encouraging to their role in democracy. Due to the excluded nature of the state and hegemony by the elites from the so-called high caste, the Dalits and ethnic strata of the population are deprived from resources and power of the state. Along with many other ethnic groups, Magar are also marginalized in the mainstream of the democratic polity. Their role in state affaires is found either very negligible or nil in proportion to their strength of population. Therefore, 85 percent of the Magar people think that the Magar's involvement in state affaires of the democratic era is very low (Appendix: A, Table: 11). Most allege that the exclusionary nature of the state is the main cause for unequivocal and active participation in polity. For proper participation of ethnic and other excluded groups of people, the excluded nature of state could be turned to inclusive process, which is the only way for resolve the on going regional and ethnic conflict. Accordingly, 'democratic inclusion means that all members of the given polity should have effectively equal influence over debate and decision-making within that polity' (Young, 2000:8). Equal representation and accession over the polity with inclusive democracy is manifestly privileged for active participation. In addition, the socio-political quality has the crucial role for empower the people in order to catch the opportunities for their further development. Likewise, some social, cultural, and economic factors have rooted in improper socialization towards politics. Therefore, education and political awareness are significantly necessary for full participation in democratic politics (Table: 12). As a major ethnic group among the ethnic strata of the population, likewise, both activists and Magar in general state that belonging to a strong ethnic identity, unity and solidarity among the Magar people are

also essential for seeking their decisive role in democracy. Nepal is now turning towards state restructuring through the constitutional assembly for the inclusion of deprived and marginalized regions and groups of people into power and resources. The Magar Association along with NEFIN has forwarded its agenda, on this matter of proportional representation, in accordance with the population of caste and ethnic groups; reasonable representation in state affaires; and ethnic autonomy for empowering the ethnic population politically. So far, the majority of the Magar people at the local level, both activists and not-activists, prefer proportional representation according to the population of each caste and ethnic group and federal structure of the state based on geographical and cultural diversity (Also see: Appendix, Table- 13, 14).

In addition, some stress that local autonomy, as much as power and resources, be devolved at the local governance, through constitutional provision. Therefore, the people at the local level could be privileged politically and economically. Undoubtedly, this is only a process of empowering the citizens, without discrimination, at a bottom up, grass roots level Hence, it seems that if the authority is distributed through the devolution of power towards the local governance, as VDC and Municipality, as well as at the ward level, then this is the realistic approach for the empowerment of the people in order to achieve the ethnic and political rights. It would also be very helpful for the all strata of populations including most marginalized and excluded groups whether they are in large or small size, to rule themselves. It is the only means for making powerful and sovereign citizens of all the marginalized and excluded strata of the population in terms of seeking political identity, recognition and authority which are the bedrock for the consolidation of democracy in order to address multicultural and multiethnic character of Nepalese society. Nation Building processes persist when almost all the groups of population has access to resources and participates in the decision making body along with recognition to their identity and culture in order to achieve the democratic norms and value without any discrimination among the population.

Some other Magar people point out that ethnic autonomy is essential for uplifting the ethnic people, in order for political, economic, cultural and social development. Some perceive the reservation and quota systems as being appropriate for the welfare of the Magar along with the ethnic population. Likewise, reservation is also the affirmative action for addressing the ongoing ethnic and regional conflicts. Few of them argue that the executive head of state should be represented by ethnic people from the Magar ethnic strata, to work in favour of the ethnic people. Although most of the activists and leaders of the Magar principally supported the agenda of ethnic and federal autonomy, with the rights of self-determination, but no one among them has strongly proposed the forms of restructure on the base of ethnic settlements and geographical demarcations. Besides, the Magar Liberation Front, no Magar organization has proposed the structure of ethnic or Magar autonomy. Even the Front has not mentioned any clear picture of management with the various ethnic and caste groups, which are natively residing since the century long heterogeneous settlements. The Magar Liberation Front, who is disseminating in rural settlements among the Magar, may act with ease in areas under Maoist's influence, however, it may be difficult to exist where the Maoist are acting as a major part of the government, within a multiparty democracy with varying ideologies and political forces.

Magar are more associated with political parties at local level rather with their ethnic organization due to not existence and extend such organization at local level. Therefore, most of the activists at grass roots level are guided by their affiliated political parties' ideology rather then ethnic (Magar) identity. Moreover, Magar ethnic group itself has diverse

characters in terms of culture, religion, language, clans and geography. It has divided into two major groups as west and east as Athar and Bhara Magarant regions with different languages, clans and culture. Hence, such diversities are found with in Bhara Magrant region as the Magar from north and south as Dhaulagiri and Gandaki region. Therefore, most of the Magar activists those who are supported Magar autonomy could not mention the forms of the structure. During my interview and discussion with the activists from intellectual wings, most of they griped the reality. It would be a myopic to make the one Magar state, how it could be possible with distinct nature of Magar settlements, whereas there is very difficulty to access on region to other as the geographical diversity. Therefore, some senior activists told me at least three districts structure is needed in order to cover three regions of Magar i. e. Ganadaki region, Dhaulagiri Region and Rapti Region with in one Magar federal structure. In addition to this, many village levels autonomous governance should be formed for empower the Magar in the many districts like, Humla, Udayapur, Bardiya and other. In brief, with the views of the Magar ethnic groups, federal structure and proportional representation system with strong local autonomy in adequate for accommodate the interests and diversities of all the strata of population including Magar ethnic group and its geographical regions.

Conclusion

Through the available data, it is found that Magars, as an ethnic stratum of the population, participate less in politics. Hence, their participation and representation in various organs and structures of the state at a local to central level are either very poor or nil in proportion to their population and in comparison with caste groups, i.e. Brahamin, Chhetri and other ethnic groups, i.e. Newar. However, it is common for Magar people in rural areas to be relatively conscious and considerate towards politics, which is similar to the people in the urban sectors. The political awareness and consciousness are prevailed only through political education and mobilization which have been occurring in most of the Magar settlements by different local level organizations and political parties. The general Magar voters are more or less well informed on various agendas of politics, but they do not absolutely support the agendas of their activists. It seems that there is gap between activists and general Magar people. However, both are in favour of a democratic system and see it as more essential then monarchy. That is why they like to stress that a republic democracy is more important than Kingship. The majority of the Magar defines the democracy as first, the principle of liberty and equality; followed by a representative government and party system as second; and thirdly, peace, security and development. Though miss-governance and corruption of past regimes tried to decrease the importance of democracy, people at the local level think that a democratic system is needed for freedom and equality in the political, social, and economic sectors of society and the state. In democracy, it seems like an inherent part of their daily life as they do not want any type of imposing value from either the state or the non-state level. It is undoubtedly the positive effects of democracy that have been achieved in post 1990 Nepal and more so, after the April (2006) movement which are the paths toward political culture to inclusive and consolidate democracy. Although Magar feel that the political parties and their leaders do not have a positive image due to their past performances, however they do not deny them the right to rule and govern the country. These are only the bridges in between the people and the government, and in between society and the state. Therefore, the majorities are actively involved in or at least, support various political parties at local level rather ethnic (Magar) organizations which are more limited within districts' headquarters. Although, Nepal Magar Association along with NEFIN, and other many Magar organizations, i.e., Magar

National Liberation Front, Nepal Democratic Magar Organization, Nepal Magar Republic Organization, have been established at different phases, for empowering the Magar groups in order to mobilize and organize them in favour to democracy and ethnic rights.

Nepal is a homeland of around one hundred castes and ethnic peoples as the multiculturalism, if federal policy may only be tempted to recognize this wider cultural variety. A constitutional experience, that was gained during the last fifty years, with five constitutions, was not in favour of allocating the representation/ accession in decision making/resources of the state to the deprived and marginalized strata of the population, as recognition by Nepal's multicultural heritage. The constitution of 1990 only principally recognized its multiculturalism and multiethnic characters, but no affirmative action had been implemented in the last 15 years of its practice for inclusion of the excluded groups like Dalits, Ethnic, Women, Madheshi and other people from less developed areas. With the demands of ethnic and regional forces, through the interim constitution, it has now mentioned the word like 'federal structure' and 'mixed representative system' (majority and proportional) as an inclusion process in order to participate the people from various strata and groups. Mixed representative system will be applied in the election for constituent assembly, whereas most of the ethnic organizations and left political parties have forwarded their reservation for a full proportional system. However, the forms of federal structure of state will be designed through the Constituent Assembly as the process of state restructuring, and the election for assembly will be held on the Nov. 22, 2007. One of the principal reasons for the adoption of a federal system is to accommodate the differences among various ethnic and cultural groups. This multiculturalism has been both the motivating force to maintain a viable federal system and, at the same time, the root cause of the pressures through some extremists forces that might lead to disintegration. In addition, no single unit of territory as the province or federal structure can survive as independently without cooperation and closed relation with other units due to the diverse geographical, cultural and demographic characteristics of Nepalese society. Therefore, 'quasi-federalism' and 'cooperative federalism' as advocates by Khanal (2007) and Baral (2007) is not only a way for resolving the ethnic and regional conflicts that has been under going since few month earlier, moreover for accommodating the diversity in order to enable different groups to live together and to consolidate democracy in Nepal.

Endnotes

[1]. In the institutional school of thought, the most prominent model is consociational democracy (consociationlism) as power-sharing democracy. This architectural model is discovered by Arend Lijpart in 1969 through his article in world politics, 'Consociational Democracy'. The consociationalism, define as a success to the political stability for some smaller European Countries as Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Lijpart has given following four major aspects for success institutionalized democracy in these countries (Lijpart 1977, 2001):

  i.   joint decision making in the form of inclusive grand coalitions;
  ii. a high degree of autonomy for ethnic groups;
  iii. minority veto usually restricted to the most vital matters;
  iv. proportionality as the basic standard of the allocation in political representation, civil service, and other public resources among ethnic groups.

All those features of consociational democracy as according to Lijpart contrast and contradict with that of majority-rule or majoritarian democracy.

2. The government, the agitating NEFIN and the ruling eight-party aligned Indigenous Nationalities joint Struggle Committee finally inked a 20-point deal on August 8, 2007 The major negotiations in between them are follows: 240 Constituent Assembly seats under First-Past-the Post system to be "proportionately inclusive", Constitutional guarantee of at least one representative from all 59 indigenous groups in the CA, Alternative arrangement for representation of groups failing to get elected through either the proportional or first- past –the post system, Formation of State Restructuring Commission (SRC) soon, Government to adopt ILO convention number 169; ratify UN declarations on the rights of indigenous people, Women form indigenous nationalities to get priority in development plans and programs, Recognition of local languages as official language in government offices (The Kathmandu Post, August 8, 2007).

3. This study is dependent on quantitative and qualitative data that is acquired through primary sources of information. As a primary source of information, structured questionnaires have been completed through the systematic random sampling method with 300 respondents as general voters at six different villages from three districts: Kaski, Myagdi and Palpa. In addition to this, 75 political activists through snow ball sampling have completed the questionnaires at respected areas. In addition, as a qualitative method, many interviews have been conducted with 30 Magar leaders and activists from the arena of politics. This study is divided mainly into six parts. The first part deals with the conceptual frame work on ethnic mobilization and ethnic politics in democracy. The introduction to the Magar ethnic group is mentioned in the second part. The involvement of the Magar in state polity, their views and perception towards democracy, autonomy, and state restructuring are dealt with by the third, fourth, fifth, and six parts respectively.

4. Now, Chantel activists claim that they constituted a distinct ethnic group and have separated from Magar organizations to establish the Chantel organization for Chantel people.

5. Palpa is a dense Magar district among the 75 districts of Nepal, where it has the first position with 51 percent out of the total population. Likewise, the Magar is a major group in Myagdi district, which has around 42 percent among the total caste and ethnic population. So far, in Kaski district, Magar remains the fifth largest group with a 6.2 percent population out of the total caste and ethnic groups (CBS-2001).

6. About Maoists' people war, see in detail: de sales 2002; Karki and Bhattarai 2003; Thapa 2004; Hutt 2004; Baral 2006, etc.

7. Out of 1000 students that were interviewed at Jordan University in Jordan, 555 said that democracy means their King Abdullah (Al-Jarrah and Cullingford, 2007).

8. Since a few years back NC's central leaders as Narahari Acharya and Krishna Khanal have been initiating to make a proposal for a federal structure of Nepal for resolving the ethnic and regional conflict through inclusive democracy.

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Appendix A: Some out puts of Survey Study on Democracy, Autonomy and State Restructuring

Table: 1, Participate in the people's movement- April, 2006

Participate	Frequency	Percent
Yes	179	47.7
No	196	52.3
Total	375	100.0

Table: 2, Reasons for participation in Democratic Movement

Participate in Movement	Frequency	Percent
Called by political party For democracy	113	30.1/63.1
Request made by friends/relatives	5	1.3/2.8
Sent by Maoist	41	10.9/22.9
Requested by ethnic organization	16	4.3/8.9
Don't know	4	1.1/2.2
Sub-Total	179	47.7/100.0
Missing System	196	52.3
Total	375	100.0

Table: 3, Meaning of democracy

Democracy Mean	Frequency	Percent
Liberty and equality	201	53.6
People's representative government and party system	61	16.3
Rule of law	10	2.7
Inclusiveness	12	3.2
Peace, security and development	26	6.9
Republic system	1	.3
Conflict and instability (negative sense)	7	1.9
Don't know	57	15.2
Total	375	100.0

Table: 4, the meaning of democracy

Democracy Mean	Activist	Non-activis	Total
Liberty and equality	42 56.0%	159 53.0%	201 53.6%
Representative government and party system	21 28.0%	40 13.3%	61 16.3%
Rule of law	3 4.0%	7 2.3%	10 2.7%
Inclusiveness	2 2.7%	10 3.3%	12 3.2%
Peace, security and development	7 9.3%	19 6.3%	26 6.9%
Republic system	-	1 0.3%	1 0.3%
Conflict and instability (negative sense)	-	7 2.3%	7 1.9%
Don't know	-	57 19.0%	57 15.2%
Total	75 100%	300 100.0%	375 100%

Table: 5, the meaning of democracy

Democracy mean	Rural	Urban	Total

Liberty and equality	151 56.8%	50 45.9%	201 53.6%
People's representative government and party system	34 12.8%	27 24.8%	61 16.3%
Rule of law	7 2.6%	3 2.8%	10 2.7%
Inclusiveness	7 2.6%	5 4.6%	12 3.2%
Peace, security and development	22 8.3%	4 3.7%	26 6.9%
Republic system	1 0.4%	-	1 0.3%
Conflict and instability (negative sense)	4 1.5%	3 2.8%	7 1.9%
Don't know	40 5.0%	17 15.6%	57 15.2%
Total	266 100%	109 100%	375 100%

Table: 6, View on Monarchy

Monarchy	Frequency	Percent
Ceremonial monarchy	63	16.8
Absolute monarchy	7	1.9
Republic democracy	233	62.1
Don't know	72	19.2
Total	375	100.0

Table – 7: Do you know autonomy?

Knowledge on Autonomy	Frequency	Percent
Yes	200	53.3
No	175	46.7
Total	375	100.0

Table: 8, Informed on autonomy

Activists	Yes	No	Total
Kaski	23	2	25
	92.0%	8.0%	100.0%
Myagdi	25		25
	100.0%		100.0%
Palpa	22	3	25
	88.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Total	70	5	75
	93.3%	6.7%	100.0%
Non-activists	Yes	No	Total
Kaski	43	57	100
Myagdi	47	53	100
Palpa	40	60	100
Total	130	170	300
	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%

Table – 9: Which form of Autonomy Do you support?

Form of Autonomy	Frequency	Percent
Ethnic (Magar) autonomy	94	25.1/47.0

Federal (regional) autonomy	86	22.9/43.0
Don't know	20	5.3/10.0
Sub-Total	200	53.3/100.0
Missing System	175	46.7
Total	375	100.0

Local autonomy	65	17.4
Quota/Reservation system	30	8.0
Magar executive head of the state	11	2.9
Federal Autonomy based on Proportional representative system	179	47.7
Don't know	56	14.9
Total	375	100.0

Table – 10: What do you mean by the Magar (ethnic) autonomy?

Magar Autonomy Mean	Frequency	Percent
Gain of ethnic rights	21	10.5
Educational, social, economic and political development	8	4.0
Development of Magar culture and language	4	2.0
Magar autonomous republic	59	29.5
Against social harmony and national integration	77	38.5
Don't know	31	15.5
Total	200	100.0

Table: 11, Participation of the Magar in democratic State

Magar involvement in State Affairs	Frequency	Percent
Well	3	.8
Few	317	84.5
Don't know	55	14.7
Total	375	100.0

Table: 12, How to increase the Magar's participation in Democracy

For Magar's Participation	Frequency	Percent
Educational/political awareness	254	67.7
Unity among the Magars	41	10.9
Give off bad practices and bad trends	8	2.1
Reservation	9	2.4
End of ethnic indiscrimination and policy for upliftment	9	2.4
Employment and development for Magar regions	3	.8
Proportional representation in accordance with population	14	3.7
Don't know	37	9.9
Total	375	100.0

Table – 14: State Restructuring
(Districts and Activists/Non- activists).

Activists	Kaski	Myagdi	Palpa	Total
Ethnic autonomy	5	5	2	12
	20.0%	20.0%	8.0%	16.0%
Local autonomy	8	1	2	11
	32.0%	4.0%	8.0%	14.6%
Quota/Res. system		1		1
		4.0%		1.3%
Proportional Representative and Federal system	12	18	21	51
	48.0%	72.0%	84.0%	68.0%
Total	25	25	25	75
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Non-activists	Kaski	Myagdi	Palpa	Total
Ethnic autonomy	6	8	8	22
	6.0%	8.0%	8.0%	7.3%
Local autonomy	17	11	26	54
	17.0%	11.0%	26.0%	18.0%
Quota/Res. system	15	7	7	29
	15.0%	7.0%	7.0%	9.7%
Magar head of the state	6		5	11
	6.0%		5.0%	3.7%
Proportional Representation and Federal system	35	56	37	128
	35.0%	56.0%	37.0%	42.6%
Don't know	21	18	17	56
	21.0%	18.0%	17.0%	18.7%
Total	100	100	100	300
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Ta   Table - 13: Preferences form on the State restructuring

Forms of the State Restructuring	Frequency	Percent
Ethnic autonomy	34	9.1

Appendix: B, Caste and Ethnic Composition in District level Structure of Major Political Parties

Description	Brahamin	Chhetri /Thakuri	Synasi /giri	Newar	Gurung	Magar	Thakali	Tamang	Chhan tyal	Dalits	Muslim	Total
NC-Kaski	14 (64%)	6 (27%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22 (100%)
NCD-Kaski	13 (52%)	2 (8%)	-	3 (12%)	4 (16%)	-	1 (4%)	-	-	2 (8%)	-	25 (100%)
NCPMaoist -Kaski	8 (30%)	3 (11%)	-	-	6 (22%)	3 (11%)	-	-	-	7 (26%)	-	27 (100%)
NCP-UML- Kaski	24 (65%)	3 (8%)	-	2 (5.5%)	6 (16%)	-	-	-	-	2 (5.5%)	-	37 (100%)
People Front (M)#	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	-	-	2 (17%)	-	-	-	1 (8%)	-	12 (100%)
People Front (E)#	4 (44.5%)	1 (11%)	-	-	-	-	-	2 (22.2%)	-	2(22.2 %)	-	9 (100%)
RPP-Kaski	5 (18%)	12 (43%)	-	-	10 (36%)	1 (3%)	-	-	-	-	-	28 (100%)
Total	**74 46.2%**	**29 18.1%**	**2 1.2%**	**6 3.7%**	**26 16.2%**	**6 3.7%**	**1 0.6%**	**2 1.2%**	**-**	**14 8.7%**	**-**	**160 (100%)**
Percentage of Population	**30.2%**	**16%**	**1%**	**5.3%**	**18.1%**	**6.2%**	**0.5%**	**2%**	**-**	**15.9%**	**0.7%**	**380527**
NC-Myagdi	1 (5.5%)	9 (50%)	-	2 (11%)	-	2 (11%)	2 (11%)		1 (5.5%)	1 (5.5%)	-	18 (100%)
NCD- Mygdi	1 (4.7%%	11 (52%)	-	3 (14%)	-	3 (14%)	1 (4.7%)		1 (4.7%)	1 (4.7%)	-	21 (100%)
NCP-M- Myagdi	3 (17.6%)	2 (11.7%)	1 (5.8%)	-	-	7 (41%)	-		-	4(23.5 %)	-	17 (100%)
NCP-UML- Mygdi	3 (14%)	11 (52%)	1 (4.7%)	1 (4.7%)	1 (4.7%)	4 (19%)	-		-	-	-	21 (100%)
PeopleFront	3 (14%)	3 (14%)	-	1 (7.7%)	-	5 (23.8%)	-		-	1 (7.7%)	-	13 (100%)
RPPMyagdi	2 (13.3%)	5 (33.3%)	-	-	-	3 (20%)	4(26.6 %)			1 (6.6%)	-	15 (100%)
Total	**13 12.4%**	**41 39%**	**2 1.9%**	**7 6.6%**	**1 0.9%**	**24 22.9%**	**7 6.7%**		**2 1.9%**	**8 7.6%**	**-**	**105 (100%)**
Percentage of population	**7.8%**	**18.5%**	**0.4%**	**1.4%**	**1%**	**41.8%**	**1.2%**		**3.9%**	**22.3%**	**-**	**114447**
NC-Palpa	10 (47.6%)	3 (14.3%)	1 (4.7%)	3(14.3 %)	-	3 (14.3)	-		-	1 (4.7%)	-	21 (100%)
NCD-Palpa	16 (59%)	4 (14.8%)	-	2 (7.4%)	-	4 (14.8%)	-		-	-	1 (3.7%)	27 (100%)
NCPMaoist -Palpa	6 (31.5%)	3 (15.7%)	-	1 (5.2%)	-	5 (26.3%)	-		-	4 (21%)	-	19 (100%)
NCP-UML- Palpa	18 (69%)	2 (7.7%)	-	1 (3.8%)	-	4 (15.3%)	-		-	1 (3.8%)	-	26 (100%)
PeopleFront	4 (30.7%)	2 (15.4%)	-	-	-	7 (53.8%)	-		-	-	-	13 (100%)
RPP-Palpa	7 (24%)	9 (31%)	-	9 (31%)	-	4 (13.8%)	-		-	-	-	29 (100%)
Total	**61 45.2%**	**23 17%**	**1 0.7%**	**16 12%**	**-**	**27 20%**	**- -**		**-**	**6 4.4%**	**1 0.7%**	**135 (100%)**
Percentage of Population	**19.2%**	**9.4%**	**0.9%**	**3.6%**	**-**	**50.9%**	**-**		**-**	**5.9%**	**0.3%**	**268558**

Source: Field Study: June-July, 2006 / Population Census 2001 (Caste/Ethnicity, Mother Tongue & Religion – District Level)