The Question of Inclusion and Exclusion in Nepal
Interface Between State and Ethnicity

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I. Discourse

This paper attempts to address a couple of questions, which draw greater attention for public discourse in Nepal in the post-1990 period. Whether Nepali state – which gained a new image as a democratic state after the restoration of multiparty system in 1990 – is potentially inclusive or not? How has it responded to demands and struggles of the excluded groups?[1] What are the main contents/agendas of backwards and ethnic groups of Nepal? Is there any possibility of forging an alliance of all kinds of excluded groups? How Nepali democratic system could be made an inclusive and participatory? These questions arise in consideration of three major factors. One, Nepal is a diversified and pluralistic state in terms of caste/ethnic, linguistic and religious composition of population. The 2001 census of Nepal recorded 103 caste and ethnic groups (including two unidentified groups), 93 languages and dialects, and 9 religious groups (CBS, 2002). Two, the advent of democracy has in its wake raised the voices of different groups of people hitherto silent. Three, democracy generates hope of minorities and deprived sections of society that the state, unlike in the past authoritarian regime, would become responsive to their needs and interests.

Discourse on ethnicity in Nepal has been developing with conflicting views on three major subjects: conceptual framework, definition of dominant and minority groups, and understanding and interpretation of caste-ethnic relations. Opinions among the native scholars are generally divided in line with one's belongingness to a particular group. This

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[1] This paper takes macro level approach and identifies *janajati* (of both hill and tarai), *madheshi* (of both caste and *janjati* groups) and dalit (of both hill and tarai) as the excluded groups on two major grounds: one is their disadvantage position in national human development index and, the other, lower representation in integrated national governance index (see table 1. A and B) vis-à-vis hill Bahun-Chhetri. Each of them has own' specific ethnic identity – culture based identity of *janajati*, region based identity of *madheshi*, and dalit as the most backward, oppressed and suppressed group. For their shared interest/position vis-à-vis hill Bahun-Chhetri, they are commonly treated as the excluded groups. Some other words used to indicate the excluded groups in general discourse and also in this paper are: backward, deprived, discriminated, marginalized, unprivileged, ethnic, minority etc. Though some of these qualifier words/phrases may not suit to micro level analysis about the positions (political and economic) of some communities, i.e. Newar, Marwari, Thakali, Manenga etc., except their subordinate position in prevailing dominant culture (language and religion) of hill high caste Hindus.

paper covers the representative ideas and thoughts of both native and foreign experts. To capture the emerging ethnic movement in Nepal in conceptual framework, few observe in primordialist line that it is quest for identity; others, particularly those belonging to hill Bahun-Chhetri, take instrumentalist stand that ethnic upsurge is motivated to gain some political and economic advantages.[2] The opinions of many scholars, both native and foreigner, are close to what Prayag Raj Sharma states, "The ethnic politics of Nepal in the 1990s seems to have elements conforming with both the primordialists and the instrumentalists models (1997: 483). It is, however, interesting to note that foreign scholars observe – without mentioning explicitly but indicating the elitist nature of such movement[3] and its relevance to the interest of the masses of the ethnic groups – that the ethnic activism in Nepal has greater elements of instrumentalism and lesser primordialism. For instance, David Gellner is of the opinion, "One should not assume that ethnic activists and ordinary people share the same agenda" (2001: 5). Scholars from ethnic group discard instrumentalist and primordialist model and urge to see the ethnic movement of Nepal from the perspective of the principles of equality and struggle against discrimination (Bhattachan, 1998) Ganesh M. Gurung's opinion could be a representative of one set of argument, "Ethnic movements in Nepal are a natural outcome of age old suppression through the imposition of stratified hierarchical model by the Hindu rulers of Nepal, which needs to be removed with a view to making the hitherto deprived ethnic groups equal partners in the development of a single territorial Nepalese nation-state" (1999, 81).

To see the ethnic issue of Nepal from particular conceptual angle – principle of equality and struggle against discrimination – has its own relevance in defining dominant group and minority group. Numerically, all groups are minorities in Nepal and the largest one, Chhetri, constitutes 15.80 percent. The combined strength of hill Bahun and Chhetri is 28. 54 percent. They (including hill low castes) have, however, long been treated as the majority group, because the people identified with Nepali language and Hindu religion are in majority, 48.61 and 80.6 percent respectively, according to 2001 census. Nepali language and Hindu religion are closely associated with hill Bahun-Chhetri identity, and on later case the tarai castes also share a common identity. Yet *madheshi* is a minority group since the majority population of the country are inhabitant of hill region. The *janjati*s are also a minority group, because they are originally neither Hindu nor Nepali speaking people. So culturally, the majority-minority division has already been shaped as superior-inferior groups. Recently, such a division is reformulated into 'dominant group and minority group'. Hill Bahuns-Chhetris are considered as dominant group because of their dominant position in power structure of the country; others who have been historically 'discriminated' are treated as minorities. This is widely accepted and adopted approach to the study of ethnicity in Nepal (Neupane, 2000; Serchan, 2001). The division

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[2] I got this impression through participation in several seminars/workshops on issues directly or indirectly related to ethnic question.

[3] The elitist nature of ethnic movement is reflected in composition of its leaders/activists, not 'frustrated middle class' but elites, as observed by one foreign scholar, "At present among the promoters of 'cultural politics' are many prominent politicians, parliamentarians and intellectuals employed in key positions, entrepreneurs, highly regarded priests and religious leaders, and even government officials'. Jonna Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1999: 77).

of groups in line with dominant and minority is mostly used in dealing with the question of inclusion and exclusion.

Richard Burghart finds the systematic exclusion of minorities in nation building process since the post- unification period (1996). Harka Gurung has played with a number of statistical data projecting hill Bahun-Chhetri as the dominant group and the others i.e. *janajati*, dalit and *madhesi* as marginalized groups in all the social, economic and political spheres of the country. He, therefore, argues that the country has not yet been integrated in a way of multicultural nationalism (1998, 2001). Mahendra Lawati points out intrinsic nuisance of the majoritarian democracy – what Nepal adopted in the post-1990 period – and concludes that Westminister model is unsuitable to pluralistic society of Nepal, and so, contributing for contentious exclusion of numerous socio-cultural groups (2002). As the situation remains unchanged even after a decade long exercise of multiparty democracy, Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan predicts "ethnic insurgency" in "predatory unitary Hindu state" on two grounds. One, the structure of political opportunities in Nepal is unduly favourable to Bahauns-Chhetris but unfavourable to other groups. The other is the strength of Federation of Nepali Nationalities (FENNA) constituting of 48 *janajati* organizations at present. (1995, 1999, 2000). Dilli Ram Dahal counters that the prevailing ethnic politics could hardly pose any threat to political stability and national integration due to two major reasons – one is the lack of base of ethnic activism at the grass-roots level and the other is heterogeneity within and among the various *janajati* groups in culture, tradition, language and religion (1995, 2000).

Moreover, Dahal challenges the validity of the most used approach – hill Bahun-Chhjetri as dominant and the rest minorities – while making argument that distribution of economic and political power do not strictly follow the line with caste and ethnic division.[4] Giving an account of the historical pattern of elite formation in Nepal, he rather formulates a thesis of "dominant individuals" against the most common used concept of "dominant caste" (2000). Dahal's argument, particularly on question of dominant group in terms of wealth, seems valid while linking the issue of development and regional disparity. The people of mountain regions and mid-west and far-west regions are more excluded from development. Seventeen out of twenty-two districts in which Chhetris – considered as one of the dominant groups – constitute as the majority or the largest group of district population – are below the standard of national human development index (NESAC, 1998: 264-265). The poverty index also shows Chhetris's position, marginally better than Rai, Magar and Limbu but slightly worse than Gurungs and Tharus (Gurung, 2003: 7).

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[4] Dahal states, "Historically those involved in trans-Himaliyan trade, i.e. Byansi of Darchula, Thakalis of Thakkhola, Manangbasi of Manag, Sherpas of Solkhumbu, Bhotiyas of Olangchunggola, Newars of Kathmandu valley, though they hold little cultivable land, are the most prosperous groups. Taking an isolated case of the result of 1991 general election, Dahal argued that it is not only the hill Bahun and Chhetri but also Newar, Thakali, Limbu, Gurung and Tharu were over represented in parliament than the size of their population (1995: 159).

Differences of opinions are reflected in understanding and interpretation of relations among different groups of Nepal. Based on caste, ethnic, regional, cultural and linguistic cleavages, Nepali population can be broadly classified into three major groups: *pahadi* (hill people) and *madheshya* (plain people); *jat* (caste groups) and *janajati* (ethnic/tribal groups); and high caste and low caste Hindus (within *jat*). Inter groups relations in pluralistic and diversified society may be complementary or conflicting or mixed of both types. In Nepal relations between diverse groups of society is harmonious and free of tension and violence, some argue (Sharma, 1997; Dahal, 1995, 2000; Pradhan, 1995, 2002). Based on her study on Humla district, Nancey E. Levine generalises, "Models of ethnicity in Nepal stress, on the one hand, unlimited ethnic diversity and, on the other, a rather limited set of ethnic contrasts … ethnic relations …are characterized more by interaction, interdependence, and mobility than contrasts and boundaries between groups (1987: 71). Disagreement to such views are expressed, "The ethnic harmony may have been exaggerated" (Gellener, 1997: 6) and, to the extreme, it is "blatantly manufactured myth" (Bhattachan, 1995: 125). Even those taking position of harmonious relations among different groups of Nepal consider the case of *madhesh* as an exception. Frederick H. Gaige is the pioneer author who explores regional conflicts between hill and plain groups on issues of language, citizenship and land ownership (1975). The native scholars from Bahun caste conform his finding and perceive the tarai as vulnerable area.[5] Its geographical proximity with India and ethnic affinity with the people across the border area are additional reasons behind the anxiety of disintegration. But the relations between other groups (caste and *janajati* of hill, and high caste and low caste Hindus) have long been seen as harmonious. Nevertheless, Lionel Caplan's studies, done in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, reveal conflict between hill high caste and hill ethnic groups, and tension between hill high caste and low caste Hindus (1970, 1975). These parts of conflict have received prominence since Dor Bahadur Bista pin points "Bahaunbad' as obstacle for development in Nepal (1991).

The exchange of hated words in recent discourse make both Bahun and *janajati* scholars more rigid in their stand. For instance Prayag Raj Sharma, who showed his sympathy to the problems of exclusion in his early writings[6], asserts to accept the foundation of Hindu state as a hard reality of history while expressing it bluntly, "Weaker groups and weaker powers have always been overrun by stronger powers and groups" (1994: 44). While retaliating to climbing up of harsh opinions coming from ethnic scholars and leaders, Sharma has turned his position from moderate to conservative camp and pleads for the continuation of age-long tradition of Nepali nationalism based on monarchy, Hindu religion and Nepali language, if otherwise, he warns the birth of "Bahun ethnicity" (1994, 1995, 1997). At the other extreme, Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan blatantly depicts Bahuns-Chhetris as "exploiters, oppressors, and internal colonizers" and

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[5] P. R. Sharma views, "The rigid attitudes which divide the Pahades and Madhesiyas indicates an ethnic conflict of explosive potential which could well engulf Nepal in fugure (1992: 9). Similarly Dilli Ram Dahal expresses "If there is one area of the Himalaya that is simmering with ethnic discontent, it is the Tarai" (1992:17).

[6] P.R. Sharma's sympathy to the problems of minorities is reflected in sentences, like, "…need of time is to accord other languages a meaningful place in national life". "…the cultural rights of the different communities were not recognized by the old state". "Modern states are based on the newer values of democracy, human rights, minority rights, equality and social justice" (1992).

provokes the excluded groups to wage zero-sum struggles against the Bahhun-Chhetri (2000: 157). Making of particular group, instead of state, as target of struggle may lead to degenerate the ethnic movement into communal politics. The ethnic upsurge will remain ethnic so long as the target is state but it gives more flavour of communalism if target is made against particular group. Perhaps Bhattachan is aware of it and has consciously indicated to the characteristics of South Asian states that they have always been insensitive to the ethnic problem unless the ethnic tension turn into communal violence between two groups. In fact, ethnic relation has been changing rapidly towards the greater degree of discord, conflict and tension. The root of problems lies in history.

II. Looking back to history

The monarchy has played a central role in the unification and evolution of Nepali state. Prithvi Narayan Shah, the king of Gorkha principality, established modern unified Nepal by conquest. He, thus, introduced the Shah regime based on the right of sword. The utility of sword for territorial expansion was, however, effectively blocked following the end of war with British-India in 1816 and demarcation of the political territory of the Kingdom. Hence, the legitimacy of sword was confined to and symbolized with the royal army, which was, however, significant to retain control in conquered areas. But the symbol of sword was not sufficient to establish legitimacy among the people of vanquished lands. Absolute control in political authority, monopolization of economic resources, and penetration and expansion of social value systems of the victorious groups in vanquished areas were some of the mechanisms the Shah rulers and the subsequent Rana rulers bestowed to consolidate their respective regimes. It was, as one critic observed, an "empire model" of national integration (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997: 421).

Prithvi Narayan Shah is rated differently from his successors so far the state's designed national integration is concerned. Some of the points highlighted are: Gorkhali army had a multi-ethnic character, comprised of hill castes and tribal groups (Sharma, 1997: 477; Gurung, 1997: 499); Magars and Gurungs were found among the ruling elite of Gorkha House (Whelpton, 1997: 43; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997: 430); "I (P.N. Shah) am the King of Magarant" (quoted in Gurung, 2001: 19); "Prithvi Narayan Shah gave internal autonomy to Limbu" (Bhattachan, 1995: 137); and "King respected the customs of a country in the tenurial administration of his possessions" (Burghet, 1996: 238). All these statements have some meaning with what P. N. Shah said about Nepal, "a garden of four *varnas* and thirty-six *jats*". This famous quotation has frequently been used to defend that the Shah dynasty respected pluralistic characteristics of Nepali state. But it seems contradictory to another version and motto of the same unifier king about Nepal, *asli hindustan* (pure Hindu state). The balance between respect to diversity and imposition of the ruling value system was changed in favour of later soon after the unification of the country.

For the successors of P.N. Shah, Nepal as *asli hindustan* had become *mul mantra* in the state-designed project of national integration. It also manifested the source of legitimacy of the Hindu king, derived from divine right. The Shah monarch, as a hereditary institution, was enforced by the traditional Hindu view of the nobility of birth,

as it was an accepted tradition all through the ancient and the medieval times. The Hindu polity places the king as a sovereign lord, a protector of territory and subjects, a guardian of moral order, an upholder of traditions, and the source of all spiritual and temporal power (Sharma, 1997: 475). As the ideology of Hindu religion and polity provided legitimacy to the Shah regime, the rulers tried their best to spread Hinduism all over the country. In the post-unification period, "the process of Hinduization was intensified" (Baral, 1991: 56). So the kingship along with the Hindu religion played a key role in the construction of Nepali state and identity.

The Hindu polity – in which monarchy and religion have decisive role – was further enacted more rigidly during the Rana period (1846-1951). The Rana prime ministers were also monarchs by title (*Shree Tin Maharaj,* king of Kaski and Lamjung) and by authority they enjoyed. Jung Bahadur Rana, founder of the Rana regime, promulgated a Civil Code 1854 providing legal framework to Vedic prescription of social order in hierarchical caste society. In fact, Hinduisation process in Nepal followed with casteism. Jaisthiti Malla (king of Kathmandu valley in 1382-95) and Ram Shah (king of Gorkha principality in 1603-36) are generally regarded as protagonists for the introduction of caste system in their own respective territory. The caste system was, however, regulated largely by *hukum* of the king and *bachan* of the priests. The contribution of Jung Bahadur was providing of legal framework to such practices. The Civil Code 1854 classified the people in three broader categories in ascendancy order: (a) *Tagadhari* (scared-thread wearing castes) at the top (b) *matwali* (alcohol drinking castes and ethnic groups) in the middle, and (c) 1. *Sudra* (impure but touchable) and 2. *Acchut* (impure and untouchable castes) at the lowest position. A scholar appreciated the Civil Code of 1854 as "the historical solution to the problem of cultural diversity" and "worked more in the spirit of inclusion" (Sharma, 1987: 26, 1997: 481). This view could be considered, in one perspective, as the state' conscious attempt of integration through bringing all the *prajas* (subjects) of the country into the fold of one rule. But the Code violated the very notion of national integration – that is equality among the people of given territory, state. The Code discriminated the people of different caste hierarchy in judicial system and in distribution of the state resources. By putting ethnic groups into the fold of Hindu based hierarchical caste system, the Code translated diversity into inequality. Since inequality is source of all kind of conflicts, the Civil Code of 1854 contributed negatively to the national integration of Nepal.

The partyless Panchayat system under absolute monarchy (1960-1990) upheld the old symbols and practices, though the new Civil Code 1963 is a radical departure from the past as it recognizes universal principal of equality of people. The legal abolition of caste discrimination was/is, however, hardly translated into practice because of self-contradiction of the value system what the state ushered. The Hindu religion and caste system is complementary and the ruler's adherence to Hindu religion was well reflected in late king Birendra's perception of the source of legitimacy of monarchy. He said, "In Nepal, the monarchy and his subjects have been governed by Dharma, a system drawn from the Hindu religion. The King can not change this value system" (quoted in Shaha, 1975: 7). His predecessor king Mahendra, the founder of Panchayat regime, legally identified Nepal as a Hindu state as it was explicitly mentioned in the Constitution of

Nepal 1962 for the first time, unlike the previous constitutions. So the king and Hindu religion were/are retained as the core components of Nepali nationalism.

The Panchayat system spread Nepali language, which has already received a status of official language since the 1930. Even before the introduction of Panchayat system, the state took a policy of promotion of Nepali language at the cost of other languages. Here, recommendations made by Nepal National Education Planning Commission (1955) are worthwhile to mention. "Nepali should be the medium of education, exclusively from the third grade on, and as much as possible in the first two grades. No other languages should be taught even optionally, in the primary school because few children will have need for them, they would hinder the reaching of Nepali…other language will gradually disappear and greater national strength and unity will result (quoted in Bhattachan, 2003: 26-27; Whelpton, 1997: 49).

With state protection and promotion, Nepali language – being the official language and medium of education as well – has increasingly received prominence with the development of infrastructure, particularly in education, media, transportation and communication. Internal migration also contributed to developing Nepali as lingua franca of the country, and so, as a powerful means of national integration. The dominant trend of migration in the pre-1990 period was from the west hills (original homeland of Khas/Nepali speaking people) to the east hills (*janjati* dominated area) and later from north (hill) to south (plain tarai). The migration of hill people in tarai – a traditional homeland of tribal people and the people of Indian origin – led to change its demography. At present, nearly one-thirds of the total tarai population is those from hill migrants, mostly Nepali speaking people.

Centralization of politics and administration was another instrument of the state's project of national integration. The independent principalities of the pre-unification time were later integrated into administrative unit of the country. The administration during the Shah and the Rana period was confined to two jobs – maintenance of law and order, and collection of revenue – by centrally deputed elites and or local elites co-opted by the government. Division of the country in 35 districts by the Rana regime was done mainly for extraction of revenues and distribution of belief, value and culture of the ruling class/caste. The old revenue-based administration – shaped in the form of tenants-local chiefs' relations – was modernized by the Panchayat system introducing a uniform administration system. The Panchyat regime revised the administrative units into 5 development regions, 14 zones and 75 districts. Decentralization, balanced regional development, and people's participation are some of the buzz words the Panchayat regime propagated in seeking development legitimacy, what the previous Shah and Rana rulers did not feel it necessary. As the system itself was highly centralized, the objective set in the decentralization project was largely confined to paperwork, which obviously had adverse impact on national integration in real sense and also to the survival of the regime itself. The model of national integration what the Panchayat system prescribed was homogenisation and assimilation of diverse groups into the fold of *parbatiya* Hindu culture. Disregard to pluralism was expressed in slogans, like "our king, our country" and "one language, one dress, and one culture." In sum, the Panchayat system upheld and

espoused traditional components, i.e. kingship, Hindu religion, and Nepali language, and added new contents like decentralization, development and coexistence in the state-designed scheme of national integration.

Since the time of unification of Nepal, the rulers – Shahs, Ranas and Panchas – had tried to develop Nepal as a homogeneous, monolithic and unitary state providing protection to one language (Nepali), one caste group (hill Bahun-Chhetri), and one religion (Hindu), ignoring the reality of diversified and pluralistic character of the Nepali society. Besides, the state-designed 'Nepalization' process – through Hinduisation, spread of the *parbatiya*'s culture, institutionalization of caste system converting separate identity of ethnic groups into caste structures, and centralization of politics and administration – had led to increase disparity among different social groups. The hill high caste Brahmin-Chhetri and Newar have long been in privileged position. Other groups, i.e. *janajati*, *madheshya* and dalit are generally marginalized. The legacy of history is well reflected in unequal distribution of socio-economic resources of the country and in representation of political power structure of the country.

Table 1. (A) Human Development by Caste and Ethnicity, 1996

		Dominant Groups			Marginal Groups			
		Bahun	chhetri	Newar	Madhesi	Janajati	Dalit	Nepal
1	Life Expectancy	60.8	5603	62.2	58.4	53.0	50.3	55.0
2	Adult Literacy rate %	58.00	42.00	54.80	27.50	35.20	23.80	36.27
3	Means years of schooling	4.4647	2.786	4.370	1.700	2.021	1.228	2.254
4	Per capita income Nrs	9921	7744	11953	6911	6607	4940	7673
5	Per capita PPP income US$	1533	1197	1848	1068	1021	764	1186
6	Life Expectancy Index	0.957	0.522	0.620	0.557	0.467	0.422	0.500
7	Educational Attainment index	0.490	0.342	0.462	0.221	0.280	0.186	0.295
8	Income index	0.237	0.181	0.289	0.160	0.152	0.110	0.179
9	Human development index	0.441	0.348	0.457	0.313	0.299	0.239	0.325
10	Ration to HDI Nepal = 100	135.87	107.31	140.73	96.28	92.21	73.62	100.00

Source: NESAC. 1998. *Nepal: Human Development Report 1998*. Kathmandu: Nepal South Asia Centre.

Table 1 (B) Integrated National Index of Governance, 1999

		Dominant Groups		Marginalized Groups				
		Bahun/ Chhetri	Newar	Madhesi	Janajati	Dalit	Other	Total
1	Court	77	13.6	7.6	1.7	0	0	235
2	Constitutional Bodies	56	24	12	2.8	0	0	25
3	Cabinet	62.5	9.4	15.6	12.5	0	0	32
4	Parliament	60	7.6	17.4	13.6	1.5	0	265
5	Public Administration	77.6	17.6	3.7	1.2	0	0	245
6	Party Leadership	58.8	10.9	15.8	15.2	0	0	165
7	Leadership: local elected bodies	55.5	15.7	16.2	12	0	0	191
8	Leadership: Commerce and Industry	16.7	47.6	35.7	0	0	0	42
9	Leadership: Educational arena	77.3	11.3	7.2	2.1	1	1	97
10	Leadership: cultural arena	69.1	17.9	0	4.9	0	0	123
11	Science/technology	58.1	29	9.7	3.2	0	0	62
12	Civil society leadership	75.9	14.8	7.4	1.9	0	0	54

	Total	66.5	15.2	11.2	7.1	0.3	1	
	Population %	31.6	5.6	30.9	22.2	8.7	1	
	Difference with population %	+ 34. 9	+9.6	- 19.7	- 15.1	- 8.4	-1	

Source: Neupane, Govinda. 2000. *Nepalko Jatiya Prasana* (Question of Caste/Ethnicity in Nepal). Kathmandu: Centre for Development Studies

In retrospect, the inequality between dominant group (hill Bahau-Chhetri, and Newar) and minority group (*madheshya, anajati* and dalits) is byproduct of the legacy of the historical process of national integration in Nepal. That process occurred under the absolute regimes, except for a short experience of multiparty system in interregnum (1951-1960). All types of non-democratic regime – whatever names and forms – are, by nature, exclusionary as they generally prohibit and discourage people's participation. Nepal had long been under patrimonial system and the king was at the apex of the power structure and those who received palace's favour only had chance to become members of elites. On this ground, Dilli Ram Dahal brings out the thesis of "dominant individuals" against the most common used concept of "dominant caste" (2000). Of course, being a member of the high caste group alone is not adequate for political fortunes, but the history shows overlapping of dominant individuals and dominant caste, and economic elite and political elite. The reduction of *bhardars* from that of *Chha thar ghar* (six family linage) of Gorkha palace to four families (Shah, Thapa, Basnet and Pandey) in the post-unification period was evident of the exclusion of ethnic groups from and monopoly of twice-born hill high castes in power structure of the country. Till the end of Rana regime, the ethnic groups were completely out from the composition of central elites, though some from non-hill high castes were found in the local elite structure as *Mukhiya, jimalwal, talukdar* etc. The family networking of high castes is extensive and the culture of *afno manche*, long upheld by the state itself, has contributed to retaining broader alliance of privileged castes and their domination in power structure of the country. Referring to the skill of Bahun-Chhetri to cultivate connection for own' benefit, there is one Nepali proverb, *goru bechheko saino*. The hill high caste domination was also explained by overlapping of economic elite and political elite in the past under the patrimonial and feudal system. Dahal himself wrote, "Historically, land ownership in Nepal is closely and systematically tied to the hierarchical caste framework; the higher the caste status of a family, the larger its landownership and vice versa (1995: 159).

Exploring reasons for the domination of hill high castes, one needs to see other part of story. Unlike the present tendency of keeping the ethnic groups away from the *parbatiya* culture, the dominant trend in the past was to accept the culture of the hill high caste people as a model for one's upliftment and enhancement. The process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribe or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twiceborn caste is popularized as Sanskritisation by M.N. Shrinivas (quoted in Shaha, 1975: 19). In the past, Sanskritisation was a model followed by a number of hill and tarai ethnic groups of Nepal for their upward mobility and status under prevailing patron-client culture and system. In given culture and system the elites – from Rana rulers at the center to the local notables at the village level – distributed *jagir* (job), conducted *pajani* (annual reshuffling of service personnel), granted *baksis* (gift and reward), solely on their own discretion, to their own clients and sub-clients. A commoner received material and other benefits by demonstrating his

loyalty, obedience, submission through *Chakari* (obsequious attendance) to his respective patrons. The reasons to opt for Sanskritisation and Hinduisation might be beyond the factor of material benefit. The perception of status upgrade also motivated the non-caste groups to follow the habit and custom of the hill high caste groups. The recent social history of Nepal is the active adoption and adaptation of Nepali language, *parbatiya* culture and symbols of those in power by the ethnic mass in general and ethnic elites in particular (Gellner, 1997: 19; Paff-Czarnecka et al, 1999: 53).

As *parbatiya* culture was adopted as model by the ethnic groups, there was absence of resistance against the Bahaun-Chhetri's domination in power structure of the country. "Only a subdued ethnic feeling was observed within the regional (Tarai) and hill communities" (Baral, 1998: 84). The Panchayat system restricted the fundamental rights of the people to speak and to organize against its ideology and value system. The dominant issue for oppositional politics in the pre-1990 period was multiparty democracy not the ethnic question. Ethnic politics was banned as party politics, thus, voices of ethnic groups so far their group identity and interest was concerned were suppressed. Democracy – reinstated in April 1990 – has provided outlet to the needs and interest of the excluded groups.

III. State Ideology and Ethnicity

The 1990 mass movement ended the Panchyat regime and restored democracy. The new Constitution brought out fundamental changes in the political system of the country – from partyless to multiparty system, reduction of king's position from absolute to constitutional monarchy, and promotion of people's status from subject to citizen. The newly established democratic regime is associated with the principles of popular sovereignty, fundamental and human rights of the citizen, representative government, and independent judiciary. Do such changes are significant to reset the state's ideology vis-à-vis ethnicity? To what extent the new political system is different from past regimes vis-à-vis grievances of the excluded groups. Considering the constitution as mirror of the state's goal, the table below shows a comparative picture of the state ideology under different regimes (constitutions) related to the questions of national integration.

Table 2. **Constitutions and Ethnicity**

	Nation/ State
1990	1. King, symbol of Nepalese nationality and the unity of the Nepalese people 2. Nation, constitute of people irrespective of religion, race, caste or tribe 3. Strengthen national unity and harmony amongst various religious, castes, tribes, language, race and communities 4. Multiethnic, multilingual , democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign Hindu, and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom
1962	1. Nation, constitute of people irrespective of religion, race, caste or tribe 2. Common aspirations and united by the common bond of allegiance to the crown 3. Maintain national unity with due regard to existing mutual harmonious tolerance 4. Monarchical Hindu Kingdom
1959	Monarchical Kingdom
1951	Monarchical Kingdom
	Citizen/Ethnicity
1990	1. All citizens are equal before law; no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe

	2. Eliminate all types of economic and social inequalities 3. Maintain cultural diversity 4. Promotion of language, literature, scripts, arts and culture of different groups
1962	1. All citizens are equal before law; no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe 2. Establish exploitation-less society
1959	1. All citizens are equal before law; no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe
1951	1. All citizens are equal before law; no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, etc.
Religion	
1990	1. Hindu kingdom 2. Freedom to profess and practice own religious and to protect religion places and trust 3. Prohibit to convert another person from one religion to another
1962	1. Hindu kingdom 2. Freedom to profess and practice own religion 3. Prohibit to convert another person from one religion to another
1959	1. Freedom to profess and practice one's own religion 2. Prohibit to convert another person from one religion to another
1951	Freedom to profess and practice own religion
Language	
1990	1. Nepali: national and official language; 2. Mother tongue: national languages of Nepal
1962	Nepali: national language
1959	Nepali: national language
1951	-

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 upheld a number of features of Nepali nationalism adopted since the 1951 and before. Particularly from the end of the Rana regime in 1951, the components like kingship, Hindu religion, and Nepali language, and the concepts of citizen, equality, and unity and harmony of different social groups have been adopted as ingredients of nation-state of Nepal. Though, Nepali language and Hindu religion were not mentioned in the 1951 Constitution and the 1959 Constitution was also salient on religious identity of Nepal, secular or Hindu state. These two constitutions were relatively less pro-Hindu and pro-*parbatiya* in comparison to succeeding 1962 and 1990 constitutions. As the 1990 Constitution recognized Nepal as a unitary, Hindu, and monarchical state, and Nepali as official language as before, many things remained unchanged in the basic characteristics of Nepali state. National symbols – crown, scepter, royal crest, royal standard, coat-of arms, cow, national flag, rhododendron, and red blob – set by Panchayat and most of them associated with monarchy and Hindu religion (Gurung, 1997: 505) and national anthem (phrased in a way equating patriotism with worship to king) retained without any change.

The 1990 Constitution does not recognize the existence of inequality and discrimination on caste/ethnic, linguistic and religious lines – except for the consideration of women and dalit as marginalized groups deserving to get special treatment from the state in education, health and employment sectors. It, therefore, does not provide provisions for state's protection, promotion and affirmative actions to the excluded and marginalized groups. Besides, the Constitution separates politics from ethnicity by a provision prohibiting to form political party on the basis of religion, community, caste, tribe and region. This provision was, however, implemented loosely and flexibly.

What are the new things that the 1990 Constitution provides for the cause of ethnic groups? It recognizes pluralistic character of Nepali society consisting of diverse cultural and linguistic groups. Such a constitutional recognition of Nepali as a state of diverse

cultural groups comes for the first time in the history of Nepal. The constitutional commitment to "maintain cultural diversity", right "to promote literature, scripts, arts and culture of different groups", freedom "to protect religious places and trust" and recognition of other than Nepali (language of the nation) as "languages of nationalities" are certainly new contents which were not found in previous constitutions. The inclusion of words multiethnic and multilingual in identification of Nepali state is widely appreciated as a major departure from the historical model of national integration (Sharma, 1992: 7; Fisher, 1993: 14; Gurung, 1997: 502; Pffa-Czarnecka, 1997: 419).

More significantly, democracy has provided space for the excluded groups to organize and mobilize themselves to promote their interests. Though the 1990 Constitution gives continuity to a number of traditional contents and symbols of nationalism set previously by the Panchayat regime, one could notice change in state's behaviour vis-à-vis ethnicity following the restoration of multiparty democracy. It is because of change of political system from absolute to liberal that led to bring changes in state-ethnic relations. The post-1990 governments are, by all means and standard, relatively progressive and responsive to ethnic pressures. In fact, the origin and evolution of ethnic movements have been closely associated with history of democracy in Nepal.

Ethnic activism was first noticed with the dawn of democracy in 1951. The 1959 general elections to parliament brought out the hill ethnic groups and *madheshi* community from complete exclusion in the past under the Shah and the Rana regimes. In 1959, their representation was 26.3 and 15.5 in the government and 15.6 and 22.0 percent in parliament respectively (DREFDON, 1992: 7). Hence their representation continued – 14-21 percent of hill ethnic groups and 11-18 percent of *madheshi* community – in legislature throughout the Panchyat period despite the regime was highly tilted to the hill high castes, Chhetri in particular. The ethnic activism was revived as Panchayat politics appeared flexible following the announcement of referendum in 1979 (held in 1980) to choose one between multiparty system and partyless Panchayat system. The elections of *Rastriya Panchayat* (national legislature) in the post-referendum period were noticed as successful assertion by backward groups of *madheshi* community (Shah, 1982: 205-206). Particularly after the end of Panchayat system and the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, ethnic movements are accelerating and gaining a momentum.

IV. Ethnic Movement

Ethnic upsurge is inevitable in Nepal as the historical process of national integration is exclusionary. The restoration of democracy with the principles of popular sovereignty, equality, freedom and cultural rights has provided platform for ethnic activism. The advent of democracy has, therefore, 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. Of course, the Maoist party has ethnic contents, i.e. secular state and ethnic autonomy, but it could be simply overridden by the communist principle of "democratic centralism". Experiences of other communist countries show that autonomy is limited to the paper only. However, it is generally perceived – particularly by the Western media, academia and diplomats – that the Maoist

succeeded to capitalise the psyche of alienation and frustration of the excluded groups, dalit and *janajati* in particular, in escalating their armed insurgency. In coming years the ethnic problems of Nepal is likely to address at greater level by the donor countries in their much-weighted scheme of "conflict management" in Nepal. The ethnic activism of Nepal has already been internationalised. The international environment, particularly UN declaration of 1994-2003 as a decade of indigenous people, has provided additional imputes to highlight the problems of ethnic groups within the country and also to link the local initiative as a part of the global movement.

Among the ethnic groups of Nepal, the largest groups are *janajati*, *madheshya* and dalit. There are many forums championing the cause of such different ethnic groups. The FENNA and its member organizations have focused more on the problems of *janajati*. Dalit activism has largely been expediting as the NGO movement having link with INGOs and backed by several donors. There are about 150 dalit NGOs (Bishowkarma, 2001: 269) and the Dalit NGO Federation is an umbrella organization of 102 NGOs. The problem of *Madheshya* is more addressed by the Nepal Sadbhabana Party (NSP), a tarai based regional party.

The demands of ethnic groups can broadly be categorised into three areas: quest for identity, sharing of national resources, and greater representation in the political structure. The *janajatis*' assertion for cultural identity is mainly based on rights of indigenous nationalities; *madheshyas* stress on regional identity; and dalits focus against the practice of untouchability. Dalit movement is highly tied up with its demand of sharing national resources and representation in the governmental structures. *Madheshi* activism is also directed to the same purpose but in different context and shape. Ethnic demands of *janajati* have naturally geared up over time and the focus changed from the issues related to identity to sharing of resources and more representation in political structures. The volume of *Janajati*'s demands has increased that embodied in the NEFNA's 27-point recommendations for the amendment to the Constitution (full text in Onta et al., 2001: 190-214). The suggestions covered wide range of issues – from respect to minorities' language and religion to reservation in governance. The demands for federalism, ethnic autonomy, and proportional representation in political structures on the basis of the size of population of *janajati* and dalits are also included.

The question of sharing of economic resources and political power has always been problematic. Bhattachan, while referring to the core thoughts of Harbermas and Foucault, states, "knowledge serves interest and yields power." This explains why the minorities of Nepal are marginalized, because they are far behind the dominant Bahun-Chhetri and Newar in knowledge industry (Bhattachan, 2001). This logic is very close to agglutination theory of elite formation as it considers education, wealth, and social status as 'political resources' (quoted in Baral et al., 2001: 19). So beyond historical reasons, some points need to be highlighted to understand the problems of equality and power sharing in Nepal. Bahun, Chhetri and Newar are in better position than any other groups of Nepal in educational attainment.[7] Hill Bahuns are relatively more elegance and

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[7] The literacy rate of Bahun, Newar and Chhetri is 58, 55 and 42 percent respectively but for *Janajati*, madheshi and dalit the figure of literacy rate goes down to 35, 27 and 23 percent respectively. Similarly

adaptable to the changing needs and situations of society. A study done in the mid-1990s found the minority groups politically less articulate (Hachhethu, 2002: 91). One of the ways of accumulating ethnic capital is to overcome one's shortcomings and to adopt selective qualities of other groups. Irrespective of disadvantage position vis-à-vis sources of power, the logic of justice provides the minorities strength to fight against state. Reservation in education, employment and government is invariably included in the ethnic movements. To reduce the possibility of reproduction of the dominant class within the ethnic groups, reservation and other policies should be blended with class factor – i.e. poverty, illiteracy and underdevelopment within the groups – in ethnic contents. This will serve more the purpose of masses than that of elites of the minority groups.

The ethnic groups' quest for identity, sharing of national resources, and greater representations in the political structure naturally contend against the hill Bahun-Chhetri domination. Inserting some issues concerning of dalits as well in its agendas, the NEFNA has sought to forge an alliance with other minorities and broaden the scope of ethnic movement. At once, the language activists crossed *pahadi* (ethnic)-*madheshi* division while protesting against the Supreme Court decision of barring the use mother tongues in local government. The NSP also – particularly in election times – appealed to have a unity between *madheshyas* and *janajatis* against the domination of hill Bahun-Chhetri. The target was to cash in the votes of *janajati* migrants in tarai.

Though *janajati, madheshi* and dalit have a common target to shift the prevailing balance of power, their destination is different. The issues, i.e. language, religion, and culture etc., related to *janajati*'s identity have nothing to do with the dalits as they are part of *parbatiya* Hindu culture. For dalits, both the high caste groups and non-caste *janajati* are exploiters so long as the practice of untouchablity remains unchanged. The objective of dalit movements is social justice so the questions of *saha bhoj* (mealing together with non-dalits), refusal to throw dead animal bodies, and entry in Hindu temples are its key agendas and activities. *Madheshi* hardly distinguish between *pahadi* caste groups and *pahadi Janajatis* so far its regional identity, language and culture are concerned. So, the unity among the three largest ethnic groups is hard to achieve.

Division within each of the three largest ethnic groups is another bitter truth. Within dalits, there is hierarchy of upper and lower castes. The day-to-day life of tarai is affected more by internal division of *madheshyas* themselves into the backward and forward groups than distinction between *pahadi* and *madheshi*. The Tharu shares a common identity with hill ethnic groups as *janajati* and as a member of FENNA. But community specific demand, agenda, and priority make them different. Rise of consciousness among the *Tharu* community is invariably linked with their fight for the liberation from bonded labour system and land to *sukumbasi*. The hill *Janajati* movements are taking up the questions of language and culture as priority areas.

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among the graduates of Nepal, Bahun constitutes 44 percent, followed by Newar's 31 percent and Chhetri's 14 percent. Such figure for *Janajati, Madheshi and dalit* is 2, 11, and 0.2 percent respectively (Gurung: 1998, 121).

Ethnic mobilization is another problem, though dalit and Tharu activism are visible at grass roots level. Tharu's movements (in Bake, Bardiya, Kailali, Kanchanpur, and Dang) for ending bonded labour system, refusal to throw dead bodies of animals by Chamar of Siraha and Saptari, and entry of dalits into Hindu temples of different parts of the country are a few to mention successful struggles. The dominant trend is the establishment of the organization, involvement in advocacy, and running after donors for fund. Ethnic mobilization and launching of movements are noticed least. The FENNA is fat of 48 organizations but the dominants are those already known as SETAMAGURALI (Sherpa, Tamang, Magar Gurung, Rai and Limbu). Those who are actively involving in ethnic politics are educated, intellectuals employed in government, university and NGOs/INGOs, entrepreneurs, ex-Gurkha soldiers, politicians etc. So the ethnic mobilizers are "dominant class' of the minority groups.

The ethnic movements are largely educated middle class-based and their activities are mainly concentrated in the capital of the country. Besides, many leaders and activists of ethnic organizations are affiliated with political parties, particularly with communist parties (Bhattachan, 1995); their individual vested interest has led them to be in proximity with power structure; and they have been co-opted and collaborated by the government – all these factors have influenced in shaping minorities' struggle as mainly an elitist movement. At the grass-roots level the existence of ethnic activism displayed only in signboard of their own respective organization in district headquarter and ethnic content mattered only if the researcher provoked the respondents to talk some things on ethnic problems. The absence of ethnic movements at grass-roots level is also reflected in the results of elections. The parties that contested elections on ethnic and regional basis failed to gain any seat in parliament except the NSP, which gained 3-6 seats in the last three parliamentary elections. The Rashtriya Jan Mukti Party and the Jan Mukti Party obtained only 1.06 and 0.10 percent respectively in the 1999 parliamentary election.

Ethnic movement emerging since the restoration of democracy in 1990 is, till now, largely limited in bringing out alternative ideas and exerting pressure tactics politics. Despite several limitations and constraints, the movement is earning ethnic capitals, and gaining something, particularly sensitising the political institutions of the country.

V. State's responses

Of several demands of the minority groups – that broadly generalized into three categories: 1) identity, 2) sharing of resources, and 3) representation in government – the democratic state, by and large, appeared responsive to the question of identity. Inclusion of caste/ethnic content in census, separate section to each of *janajati* and dalit in plan documents, news broadcast in mother tongues by the government run radio and television, setting up of commissions and committees to address the problems of *janajati*, dalit and *madheshi* can be considered as the state's positive responses to the ethnic's assertion for identity. All these developments have taken place since the restoration of multiparty system in 1990.

The Indigenous/Nationalities Act 2002 stated, "Indigenous nationalities refers to

those ethnic group or community which has their own mother tongue and traditional customs, different cultural identity, different social structure and written or oral history." This, however, differs with the NEFNA's main thrust and approach of *janajati*'s identity as non-Hindu and exploited groups. The state's refusal to give title of *janajati* as discriminated and exploited matches with its hesitation to initiate affirmative action for them. Even about the issues related to identity question, the state machinery took contradictory measures. The government and parliament's liberal initiative to address the citizenship problem facing mainly by *madheshyas* has been halted by the Supreme Court. The court appeared as the most conservative body in other issues as well, particularly on the use of ethnic language in local government, as the Supreme Court decided it as anti-constitutional.

Most of the government decisions related to the ethnic's concerns have come in form of executive orders and some of them were taken under the pretext of the Maoist's armed insurgency. The state's pronouncement in the form of executive order is generally taken to tackle the immediate issues rather than provide long-term policy measures to concerned subjects. In the last 12 years, parliament had not pass a single bill, except Indigenous/Nationalities Act 2002, related to the interest of minorities and deprived groups. So whatever have been done by the government in the last thirteen years it is viewed as the state 'conservative responses" to the problems of diversity and plurality of society. Nevertheless, the society and state have acknowledged to the shifting identity of *janajati* respectably from that of 'Matwali' during the Rana period (1846 to 1951), to 'MAGARALI or SETAMAGARALI' during the Panchayat period (1960-1990) and to 'indigenous nationalities' from 1990 onwards.

As stated above the state has not yet come up with substantial policy and programme to address the ethnic problems especially on their demands related to sharing of resources and representation in the government. Have political parties – one of the part of state's several components – done something in this regard? In multiparty democracy, parties are vital institutions that tend to address the ethnic problems mainly through policy platform and accommodation in leadership structure.

Table 3 **Caste/Ethnic Composition of Members of House of Representatives and Members of parties' Central Committee**

	House of Representatives*			Parties' Central Committee**					
Caste/ethnicity total number	1991 205	1994 205	1999 205	NC 29	UML 46	RPP 41	JM 38	NSP 29	NWPP 9
Bahun	37.6	42.0	37.6	62.06	65.21	19.51	44.73	-	22.22
Chhetri	19.1	19.5	20.5	10.34	10.86	31.70	7.84	-	11.11
Newar	06.8	06.3	06.8	3.44	13.04	4.87	10.52	-	66.66
Hill Ethnic Groups	15.2	12.2	14.7	13.79	6.52	26.82	21.05	-	-
Tarai Communities	21.0	20.0	19.5	10.34	4.34	17.07	5.26	100	-
Others	2.9	2.0	2.5	-	-	-	10.52	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source:* IIDS. 2000. *The Fourth parliamentary Election*. Kathmandu: Institute for Integrated Development Studies. ** Lok Raj Baral, Krishna P. Khanal and Krishna Hachhethu. 2002. "Responsiveness of Nepali Political System". (Unpublished Report)

Leadership at central level in both parties and parliament, except the NSP and the NWPP, corresponded to the paradigm of 'dominant hill Bahun-Cheetri' and 'minorities *janajati*, *madheshi* and dalit'. But there is some deviation in social composition of party leadership at local level. One study found that though leadership in Nepali political parties at the highest level are elitist, it is broad-based and representative of diverse social elements at local level (Hachhethu, 2002: 92). This suggests the existence of ethnic politics in party politics, more at the local level. The parties' workers have a tendency to use ethnic card as a means of lobbying, especially during election times, to enhance their status within the party structure and to get tickets in elections. The last three general elections suggested that political parties had, more or less, maintained a balance of caste/ethnic composition of constituencies/districts while selecting their own' candidates. The overriding concern was to maximize votes. The absence of dalit in the House of Representatives explained a fact that in none of the 205 parliamentary constituencies the dalit constitutes a majority or the largest group. The case of *Janajati and Madheshi* is different as they are in majority population in several constituencies; and ethnic factor also counted in candidate selection process even though ethnicity did not yet appear as a dominating factor in voting pattern. A number of studies found that the issue of infrastructure development had continued to remain the central issue of election campaign and voting behaviour. Voters were more interested in problems of schools, roads, drinking water and electricity and less on other issues (Gaige and Scholz, 1991; Baral, 1995; Khanal and Hachhethu, 1999). The ethnic factor had, however, its role to play in electoral politics, albeit less in voting behaviour but more in party leaders' mind and perception. Leaders' perception of ethnicity and election made them imperative in giving due weight to caste/ethnic factors of electoral constituencies. Parties' accommodation to minorities through elections is reflected by a fact that the *Janajati* and *Madheshi* had greater representation in parliament than in the parties' Central Committees.

Aside from the electoral interest, parties are now appeared a little bit sensitive, at least since the mid 1990s, to the need of accommodation of the marginalized groups in the party apparatus. The amendment of the Nepali Congress (NC) constitution in 1995 makes it mandatory to have at least 10 percent representation of the excluded groups (including women and dalit) in the party committee at all levels, from village to the centre. Similarly the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) constitution provides a provision that the head of party organization of all levels should give priority to the minority and unprivileged groups while nominating 50 percent of the total committee members. Parties' increasing sensitivity to the problems of minorities is also manifested with amplification of their own policy platforms related to ethnic issues in each succeeding elections of parliament.

Table 4 **Parties' Election Manifestos and Ethnicity**

Janajati	
NC	Preservation and promotion of different language, culture and tradition existing in the country; elimination of regional and community disparity in development **Add in 1994** Use of mother tongues in education and communication; establishment of institute relating to culture of different communities **Add in 1999** Set up culture centres to promote songs, dance and cultures of different communities; set up an

	independent council of janjati; protect and promote knowledge, skill, art and culture of indigenous groups; empowerment of indigenous groups in education and health programme
UML	Secular state; abolish constitutional/legal provisions of discrimination on caste/ethnicity, language, religion, and culture; make constitutional provision for the representation of backward janjati to National Assembly; autonomy to local elected body for the promotion of caste/ethnic, language, religion and culture; primary education by mother tongue **Add in 1999:** Set up academy for ethnic, language, religion and cultural development
RPP	Protection and promotion of language, culture, tradition and religion of Janjati; promote interest of janajati on social, economic and political spheres; representation of janjati in governance **Add in 1994** Introduce language course of different mother tongue up to secondary school; special provision to include in education and job; representation in leadership at social, economic and political spheres; restructure National Assembly as a representative body of Janjati, dalit and Madhesi **Add in 1999** Follow UN provisions related to indigenous concerned; include in National Planning Commission; equal respect to languages of all nationalities like that of national language; respect to right of education in mother tongue; public holiday for festival of all communities
UPF	Secular state; equal status to all languages; Right to use mother tongue in education, court and legislature; reservation for dalit and ethnic groups in National Assembly; **Add in 1994** Ethnic autonomy **Add in 1999** End of domination of one particular caste, linguistic, religious group; make National Assembly as Ethnic House
NWPP	Freedom of religion and protection of tradition of religious tolerance **Add in 1999** Protection and promotion of language, literature and culture of different communities
NSP	Freedom of religion; primary education on mother tongue **Add in 1994** Reservation of 30 percent seat to hill ethnic people in government and semi government jobs
Tarai	
NC	Equal opportunity for job in police, army and civil service without discrimination; distribution of citizenship certificate
UML	End region based discrimination in recruitment in army
RPP	Respect to causes/demands of tarai people; equal opportunity to tarai people in military, police and civil services; end of citizenship problem **Add in 1999** Representation in Public Service Commission; respect Madheshi sentiment in local leadership in both parties and in elected bodies
NWPP	Resolve citizenship problem
NSP	Reservation of 50 percent seat to tarai people in government and semi government jobs; set up a separate battalion of army for tarai people; Making voter list of 1980 referendum as cut of year for distribution of citizenship; recognize Hindi as second national language; federal government
Dalit	
NC	**Add in 1994** Special provisions in education and law to marginalized groups; scholarship for Dalit students; **Add in 1999** Representation of Dalits and backward communities in party, parliament and others; set up an independent council for dalit; utilization of Dalit's skill and knowledge
UML	**Add in 1994** Abolition of untouchability; reservation for backward communities and areas in education, health and civil service
RPP	Priority to overall development of dalit and backward communities **Add in 1999** Strict implementation of Muliki Ain; protection and promotion of traditional skill and profession of

	dalits; representation in party
UPF	End of untouchability; reservation for dalit and backward communities in education, health, and employment
NWPP	-
NSP	Free education and scholarship to Dalit

Source: Election Manifestos (1991, 1994, 1999) of NC, UML, RPP, UPF, NWPP and NSP.

Parties' policy platform on ethnic issues, embodied in their own election manifestos, climbed up over time. Exception is small parties, like Nepal Workers and Peasant's party (NWPP), which had almost no content on ethnic question; and the NSP highly concentrated itself on *madheshi*'s demands, i.e. recognition of Hindi as a second national language, reservation for *madheshyas* in administration, police, army and other state organizations, and restructuring of Nepal as a federal state. The case is different for largest parties. The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist or UML), like other left party United People's Front (UPF), had long been championing for the problems of minorities. Its ideological stand for secular state and equal treatment and opportunities for all language put it closer to the concerns of minority communities. Its 1991 election manifesto included agendas for the end of discrimination against minority communities and representation of *janajati* and backward communities in the Upper House. The UML's constant persuasion for realistic and pragmatic policies has made it different from its past radical image, including on issues related to minority groups. Nevertheless, it had upheld the ethnic contents, what it proposed in the 1991, in its manifestos of the 1994 and the 1999 elections. The NC, like the RPP, climbed up adding several ethnic contents, i.e. provision of special programme to promote language, art and culture of minorities, empowerment of dalit and *janajati* ensuring their representation and participation in governance and decision-making etc. in its election manifestos for 1994 and 1999 elections. Sensitisation to the problems of excluded group is also evident that the problem of dalit was almost left out by parties in their election manifestos of 1991 but later this agenda was invariably placed in parties' manifestos for the 1994 and the 1999 general elections. The emerging trend indicates entry of caste, ethnicity, language, religion and other issues of exclusion in parties' policy platform despite ethnicity remained low weighted issue in electoral politics in comparison to other significant issues.

VI. Conclusion

Recent political developments along with emerging ethnic assertion have been leading the country towards a new direction/destination different from the past. The decade of 1990s and the following years will be recalled as a transitional phase characterized by breaking of some major traditional ingredients of nationalism and building of new values and systems for national unity and integration. The project of national restructuring will undergo following changes.

From mono-cultural to multicultural nationalism: The census reports of 1991 and 2001 showed that the people identified with Hindu religion and Nepali language (as mother tongue) decreased from 86.5 to 80.6 and from 50.31 to 48.61 respectively. This is a result of the ethnic assertion to disassociate *janajatis* from the history of the post-

unification period. The central thrust of *janajatis'* movements for their distinct identity is to get recognized themselves as non-Hindus that contend against the historical process of Sanskritisation and Hinduisation. Boycott of Hindu festivals, including Dashain and Tihar, is a clear rejection of the domination of the *parbatiya* culture associated with Hindu religion and Nepali language. The emerging trend of identity movement demands the change of national identity from Hindu state to secular state. It also seeks the meaning of the constitutional provision of mother tongues as "languages of nationalities" in application for education, media, administration and other areas, though the primacy of Nepali language as lingua franca is objectively uncontested and unchallenged. Nepali society has increasingly undergone a process of differentiation that naturally leads to go forward towards multicultural nationalism.

From central to peripheral position of monarchy: The foreseeable change in the cultural domain of the country – that is obviously against domination of hill caste Bahun-Chhetri and supremacy of Hindu religion – would have natural repercussion to the legitimacy of Hindu king. The demand for change in king's position and threat to the survival of monarchy has come from political sector. Before 1990, the historical process of national integration was closely tied up with absolute power and authority of the king. The 1990 Constitution formally reduced the role of monarchy from substance to symbol of nationality and unity of people. The new king's assertion for active monarchy – as evident by taking back of executive power by a proclamation of October 4, 2002 and subsequent decisions – has led to increase republican sentiment among the critical masses of the society. Parties are forced to rethink on their own ideology and strategy – i.e. NC's principle of constitutional monarchy and the UML's strategy of adjourning its ideology of republic – vis-à-vis monarchy. Moreover, the Maoist party is the catalyst in bringing about a new political and ideological equation and it has a clear republican agenda. The emerging political and ideological scenario has its own impact on social bases of the monarchy. The revival of ethnicity in the past, particularly during the 1980 referendum, was capitalized for the survival of the then Panchayat regime (Gurung, 1997: 526; Shaha, 1982: 160). But the monarchy's clout among the ethnic groups has been changed by parliamentary parties in the post-1990 *jan anodal* period – if not in the form of zero-sum-game – and recently by the Maoist party in hostile way. The Maoist party, whose presence is felt all over the country, has succeeded to stop singing of national anthem and teaching of Sanskrit language– symbolized with monarchy and Hindu religion – in its controlled areas. The future of Nepali politics and position of monarchy is uncertain, but the challenge against the survival and stability of monarchy has never been so serious as it is at present. This indicates possibility of major departure from the traditional model of national integration. The emerging trend contradicts with conventional thinking of non-separation of monarchy from state and nation.

From majoritarian to consensual democracy: Reviews are being undertaken in multiple perspectives in seeking answers to a question – why democracy is not consolidated in Nepal despite 13 years experiences and exercises of party system. The political system Nepal has adopted since the end of partyless sytem is known as Westminister system. The basic characteristics of operational parts of Nepali political system – some inherited from the past and others introduced after 1990 political change –

are unitary structure, first-past-the-post system, rule of majority, centralization of Kathmandu, centralized administration and centralized party structure. It has been increasingly realized that such features of Nepali political system and structures are unsuitable to pluralistic society of Nepal. So the voices for inclusive democracy with demands for proportional electoral system and federal structure are increasing. The quest for federalism is significant in advancing democracy in Nepal from that of conventional plebiscite structure to inclusive governance. Federal state, by any standard, is more inclusive than unitary one. As division of power on territory basis is the core of federalism, it naturally provides greater space to the minorities in sharing of social, economic and political power of the country.

The foreseeable changes, described above, at present, largely exist as alternative ideas pushing forward by *janajati* and other minority groups, civil society and advocacy groups, and small political parties. Considering multiple factors – i.e. merit of issues, increase of public opinion and pressure for restructuring political institutions to promote inclusive democracy, the Maoist's pressing for radical change, and increasing sensitivity of the largest parties to the issues of minorities concerned – the thought of alternative model of national integration, as suggested above, will certainly turn into reality. Only the question is timing, how near and how far, of translating proposal of restructuring of the state into the project of national integration. As the politics is heading towards restructuring of state, either through constitutional reform or election of constituent assembly, it is high time to intervene and exert pressure for consensual/inclusive democracy that definitely opens up new horizon of national unity and integration.

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