

Tribhuvan University

Political Transformation and Media Representation of Nepali Subaltern Political Persona

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By  
Rajendra Dhital

Central Department of English  
Kirtipur, Kathmandu  
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Tribhuvan University  
Central Department of English

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This is to certify that Mr. Rajendra Dhital has completed his thesis entitled "Political Transformation and Media Representation of Nepali Subaltern Political Persona" under my supervision and guidance. He carried out his research from Mid-March 2008 to Mid-June 2008 A.D. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voice.

.....

Dr. Shiva Rijal

Supervisor

Central Department of English

Tribhuvan University  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This thesis titled "Political Transformation and Media Representation of Nepali Subaltern Political Persona" is submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Rajendra Dhital, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

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Internal Examiner

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External Examiner

.....

.....

Head

Central Department of English

Date:.....

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## **Abstract**

Nepal's Constituent Assembly (CA) election marked a major step forward in the process of Nepalese political transformation. It is made milestone for far more representation of minority and subaltern group in the current Nepali politics. The representation of minority group, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis in CA has made a Nepali political structure more inclusive. Proportional representation system in CA election and their involvement in political process made them political persona. This thesis paper depicts the representation of those minorities and subaltern political personas in national news papers. Basically, it includes some photographs and illustrations of political persona published in the *The Kathmandu Post* and *Kantipur Daily* during CA election period Mid-March to Mid-June 2008.

The example of given photographs in this thesis work is like a scene of peripety. It is seen in Nepali politics now. The media coverage, with photographs, of the new faces of minority group, women, Dalit, Madhesi and Adivasi that was not seen in politics before like old established politicians. Media representation of those faces also indicates the political transformation and inclusive system in political structure of Nepal.

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## **Chapter I**

### **A Glimpse of Nepal: A Country of Diversity**

Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia. It is bordered to the north by the People's Republic of China, and to the south, east, and west by the Republic of India. With an area of 147,181 square kilometers and a population of approximately 30 million, Nepal is the world's 93rd largest country by land mass and the 41st most populous country. It is a 'small' country when compared with the size of its neighbors, China and India. Nepal is a country of highly diverse however it is a small country in the world.

In terms of its geography, elevation changes drastically in a short span due to its unique and varying physiographic regions, that includes high Himalayas, high mountains, middle mountains, Siwalik and the Terai. Nepal is indeed very rich in bio-diversity and socio-cultural diversity due to its unique and varying physiographic regions, Culture, religions and scores of indigenous peoples. "Nepal is proud of owning 5,400 species of higher plants (2.2 percent of the world figure), 850 birds (9.4 percent of Nepal's share of world's record), Fish fauna amount to 170 species, mammals 175 species dragon fly 180 species, moths 50 species, the butterflies over 600 species, 7,000 vascular plants, lichen 500, Fungi 1,700" (Shrestha and Gupta 3).

Nepal is indeed poor as indicated by indicators of development. The World Bank has categorized Nepal as one of the 12 poor countries of the world since the publication of the World Development Reports (WDR) in the early eighties. According to the WDR 2008, Nepal belongs to low Income countries. Gross National Income is US\$ 8.1 and per capita income is US\$ 290, life expectancy at birth of female is 63 years and of male is 62 year, under-5 mortality rate per 1,000 is 105, adult literacy rate of people 15 and above is 49%, population below poverty line is 41.8. Furthermore, in terms of international poverty

line, the report reveals that population below \$ 1 a day is 24% and below \$ 2 a day is 68.5%. According to the Human Development Report of 2007/08, Nepal Human Development Index (HDI) rank is 142, HDI value of 2005 is 0.534, Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM) Rank is 86, and GEM value is 0.351.

Before completion of the project of Gorkha expansion of internal colonialism or territorial unification of Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769, it was divided into 22 and 24 principalities and other independent nation-states of indigenous peoples. Nepal was never a colony of any colonial power, including the British of the world. Jung Bahadur Rana and his brothers ruled from 1856 to 1950. After the fall of the autocratic Rana rule in 1950, the Nepalese people experienced democracy for some years. King Mahendra dismissed 18-months old parliament and cabinet led by Prime Minister B.P. Koirala of the Nepali Congress (NC) party by introducing autocratic party-less Panchayat political system with his direct leadership. This system collapsed in 1990 due the people's movement jointly launched by the Nepali Congress party and United Left Front. Thus, democracy was reinstated and absolute king was turned into constitutional monarchy in 1990 and west-minister style of parliamentary, multiparty political system was reintroduced.

### **Political Transformation and Contemporary Situation in Nepal**

As many democratic political leaders indulged in heavy corruption by misusing their power and authority, bad governance, doing business as usual, and dillydallying in reducing economic and socio-cultural inequalities and discrimination, the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) initiated peoples war on February 13, 1996. Nepal went through a violent internal war and about 13,000 precious lives were lost. After the royal massacre of June 2001, King Gyanendra became a King and his ambition for absolute rule

began to flourish. Journey to King Gyanendra's absolute rule started after dissolution of the House of Representative in 2002, and finally he took all executive power in his hand in 2004. The tri-polar conflict among the King, parliamentary political parties and the Maoist insurgents transformed in to bi-polar conflict between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and Nepal Communist Party Maoist with declaration of their 12 point agreement to end absolute rule of King by reinstating the parliament in case of the SPA and holding political conference in the case of the Maoist, and leading to making of new constitution with inclusive restructuring of the state through the Constituent Assembly (CA) due to intense pressure from the civil society.

The four day nationwide strike called by the SPA and supported by the civil society expanded to 19 days and millions of peoples belonging to all strata of the Nepalese society marched in the streets. "As per advice of Indian government (in alliance with the British and the American governments as perceived by the Nepalese public) the King gave television address twice and reinstated the House of Representatives to move in the road map of 12-point agreement between the SPA, including Nepali Congress (NC) and Communist Party of Nepal (UML), and the Maoist insurgents" (Bhattachan 15). Since then, Nepal is going through yet another democratic transition. The Nepalese people have given mandate to the CA to restructure the state in an inclusive way to established everlasting peace in Nepal. The interim constitution has a provision that the CA should prepare the new constitution within two years period and it could extend up to six months if needed.

Until four or five years ago, it would be considered a weird idea to think that Nepal would turn into a republic. For many people, Nepal without a king was unthinkable. For them, the institution of monarchy was a symbol of national unity, an embodiment of

nationalism and patriotism. Like their king, they lived in an imaginary world inundated with illusions. Gloried by sycophants as an incarnation of lord Vishnu, the king swayed temporal power and pretended to be a benevolent king who acted as savior of all Nepali's delivering false promises.

With a rapid transformation of polity, Nepal is now embracing all kinds of social change that have not been seen or heard before. Political wrangling that we have witnessed at the moment speaks volume about the mentality of our politicians who have tenacity to glue to power. Lessons that history taught us about power are like bank notes which keep on passing from one to another. If any party or person fails to deliver the good governance to the people, there is no alternative but to handover the baton to more competent people.

In April 2008, Nepal held its first national election. The elections were a key milestone in implementing the 2006 peace accord between the government and Maoist rebels. The newly elected CA inherits severe unrest in the big expectations for political inclusion by historically marginalized groups and the need to negotiate new political arrangements after a socially and politically destabilizing civil war.

On November 21, 2006, Nepal's government and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists signed the comprehensive peace agreement, officially ending a decade-long civil war. The agreement incorporated the rebels into an appointed interim government and committed the parties to hold elections to a CA, tasked with drafting a constitution, by the end of June 2007.

On the way of developing the political circumstances, on May 28, 2008, the CA abolished the 240-years old Hindu monarchy and declared Nepal a secular republic. The CA is responsible for developing a new constitution within two and a half years, in

addition to carrying out legislative functions. Meanwhile, political violence and unrest continue to disrupt life and governance in the Terai region. More broadly, the political parties-long dominated by upper-caste men- are now faced with the challenge of making good on their commitments to deepen democratic participation by women and marginalized ethnic, caste, religious and regional groups.

### **Political Transformation: Milestone for far more Representation**

Political transformation mainly involves the tasks of transforming the mindset of political players. Total transformation in the society becomes an empty talk in absence of political, economic and social transformation. John Rawls remarks:

Building up healthy and morally cultured political players is an alienable concern with the process of political transformation. Educating, re-educating and continuously refining political minds are essential for transforming political mindset. (4)

Political culture is a vital ingredient of political transformation. A set of thought and behavioral codes can shape up political culture.

Political parties genuinely get engaged in these recent days in the process of transforming themselves, its positive impact will be seen on their regional, district and village units, which are people's political channels. Thus, political transformations within political parties are closely related to the country's overall transformation process.

Nepal's Constituent Assembly (CA) election marked a major step forward in the process of Nepalese political transformation. In the declaration of federal democratic republic and the broad political breakdown, CA is a remarkably inclusive body. Asia report 2008 stated:

CA is made milestone for far more representation of Nepalese caste, ethnic, religious and regional diversity in the current political system than any past parliament in the period of constitutional monarchy system. One third of its member are women, catapulting the country in to regional leadership on gender representation and some representation from dalits, janajatis and other marginalized groups. (155)

Some resounding constituency results have embarrassed the more modest political bosses who engineer realistic-looking margins of victory.

A political structure based on the principle of inclusion would possess many benefits. It would help to promote equality and justice, consolidate and deepen democracy, and mitigate violent ethnic conflicts. Moreover, it would address the concerns of Maoists, Adivasis-Janajatis, Madhesis, and Muslims all of whom are angry with the present set up. The ideal structure to replace the existing one would draw or many influences but essentially be consensus-building in outlook rather than majoritarian. "The philosophical foundations for such a model come from the work of John Rawls, who advocated a system blind to an individual's racial, gender, ethnic, caste, religious and class when making decision" (Lawoti 20-52).

The constitutional guarantee of education and employment for each citizen can be another vital infrastructure for political, economic and social transformation. In fact, real empowerment of citizen becomes possible with the state-guaranteed education and employment. This responsibility of the state towards citizens will equate with citizen's accountability towards their duties. Equally, unforgettable in this context is the fact that education and employment are both human rights set in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet the present approach at educational policy has made education

something to buy with money. But when education really becomes a human right by means of its constitutional guarantee, people will be able to accelerate their progress. This is how they can transform themselves and their society.

Another equally crucial question is how much the people of Nepal and members of the CA are educated about the present political transformation and the most critical issues involved. The CA has made a forum where people of diverse or even quite opposite views, beliefs and cultures meet and interact without resorting to violence. It is such an involvement of women and men at the grassroots level gives the constitution-making process legitimacy and the constitution becomes a true re-election of the people's vision, concerns and aspirations.

The most important aspect is that the people of Nepal should be well informed and well educated about the issues and they should actively involve themselves in debates about the new constitution. It is such involvement of women and men at the grassroots level from all parts of Nepal that gives the constitution-making process legitimacy and the constitution becomes a true re-election of the people's vision, concerns and aspirations. An empowered citizenry becomes instrumental in filling the marginalized groups of society do not find proper expression in the articulation of political parties.

## Chapter II

### Minority/ Subaltern Group: A Study

There is general agreement on the definition of the term 'minorities.' So far as the scope of discussion is concerned and they are to be 'minority' based on religious language, ethnic origin, caste and sex. It is also agreed to leave out the question of minorities group based on political ideologies or parties as they are not 'permanent' minorities and would raise question regarding forms of government.

The correlation between religion, caste, and poverty also needs to be considered if we are to be injected a new perspective in our thinking on special privilege and measures for minorities. Ranjit Guha notes:

The term 'subaltern' refers to subordination in terms of the class, caste, gender, race, language and culture and was used to signify the centrality of dominant/dominated relationship in history. Subaltern studies plunged in to this historiographical context over the representation of the culture and politics of the people. (2-3)

'Minority group' is a group of citizen which is numerically inferior to the rest of the population of state and in non-dominant position, whose numbers possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the rest of the population and who, if only implicitly, maintain a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language (Saksena 249-250). Sociologist Anthony Giddens states:

Minorities cannot be identified on the basis of statistical terms because factors other than mere number are involved. Minority group means a group of people, in a minority in a minority in a given society

who, because of their distinct physical or cultural characteristics, find themselves in situations of inequality within that society. (757)

In the South Asian context, the following definition of minority in the UN sub-commission's Resolution 1985/6 adopted in its 38th sessions is considered to be more appropriate:

A group of citizens of the state, constituting a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that state, endowed with ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority population having a sense of solidarity with one another, if only implicitly by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law. (8-9)

The dissemination of minority study or the subaltern studies, beginning in 1982 as an intervention in South Asian historiography and developing in to a vigorous post colonial critique, must be placed in such a complex, catachrestic reworking of knowledge. "The challenge it poses to the existing historical scholarship has been felt not only in South Asian Studies but also in the historiography of other regions and in disciplines other than history. The term 'subaltern' now appears with growing frequency and subaltern activist's analysis has become a recognizable mode of critical scholarship in history, literature and anthropology" (Bhabha 22-26).

The formation of subaltern studies and intervention in south Asian historiography occurred in the wake of the growing crisis of the Indian state in the 1970s. The dominance of the nation-state, cobbled together through compromises and coercion during the nationalist struggle against British rule, became precious as its program of capitalist modernity sharpened social and political inequalities and conflicts. Faced with the

outbreak of powerful movements of different ideological hues that challenged its claim to represent the people, the state resorted increasingly to repression to preserve its dominance. But repression was not the only means adopted. The state combined coercive measures with the powers of patronage and money, on the one hand, and the appeal of populist slogan and programs, the other, to make a fresh bid for its legitimacy. Deepesh Chakrabarty states:

Debates on multiculturalism in the western democracies have often fuelled discussions of minority histories. As the writing of history has increasingly become entangled with the so-called 'politics and production of identity' after the second world war, the question has arisen in all democracies of including in the history of the nation the histories of groups previously left out from it. In the 1960s, this list usually contained names of subaltern social groups and classes - viz, former slaves, working-classes, convicts, women, etc. This came to be known in the 1970s as 'history from below.' Under pressure from the debates on multi-culturalism, this list was expanded in the 1970s and 1980s to include the minority groups. (473)

Historiography has dealt with the peasant rebel merely as an entity whose will and reason constituted the praxis called rebellion. "Historians were apt to depict peasant rebellions as spontaneous eruptions that 'break out like thunder storms, heave like earthquake, spread like wildfires. Alternatively, they attributed rebellions as a relax action to economic and political oppression" (Guha 2-3).

### **Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Genre**

To note the ferment created by subaltern studies in discipline as diverse as history, anthropology and literature is to recognize the force of recent postcolonial genre. This

genre has compelled a radical rethinking of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and Western domination.

"The establishment of subaltern studies is aimed to promote the study and discussion of subalternist themes, and is to rectify the elitist bias characteristics of much research and academic work. Subaltern has acted in history on their own, which is independently of the elite, their politics constituted an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter"(Guha 3-4).

This move is a familiar one for post colonial genre and should not be confused with approaches that insist simply on the social construction of knowledge and identities. "It delves the history of colonialism not only to document its record of domination but also to identify its failures, silences and impasses; not only to chronicle the career of dominant discourses but to track subaltern positions that could not be properly recognized and named only 'normalized'. The aim of such a strategy is not to unmask dominant discourses but to explore their fault line in order to provide different accounts to describe histories revealed in the cracks of the colonial archeology of knowledge" (Bhabba 85-92).

Oppositions such as East/West and colonizer/colonized are suspected not only because these distort the history of engagements but also because they edit, suppress, and marginalized everything that upsets founding values. It is in this respect that Jacques Derrida's strategy to undo the implacable oppositions of Western dominance is of some relevance.

The subaltern studies relocation of subalternity in the operation of dominant discourses leads it necessarily to the critique of the modern West. For if the marginalization of 'other' sources of knowledge and agency occurred in the functioning of colonialism and its derivative, nationalism, then the weapon or critique must turn against

Europe and the modes of knowledge it instituted. It is in this context that there emerges a certain convergence between subaltern studies and postcolonial critiques originating in literary and cultural studies. Edward Said writes an appreciative foreword to a collection of subaltern studies essays. "It is important to recognize that the critique of the West is not confined to the colonial record of exploitation and profiteering but extends to the disciplinary knowledge and procedures it authorized-above all, the discipline of history" (Chatterjee 36-39).

"In so far as the academic discourse of history that is, 'history' as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university is concerned, 'Europe' remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the Asian countries like China, India, Nepal, Bhutan and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called 'the history of Europe'"(Chakrabarty 37).

### **Minorities and Subaltern Peoples of Nepal**

Social scientists in Nepal have made efforts to define the term 'minority' as lately as the mid-nineties. Krishna B. Bhattachan notes:

Anthropologist Dilli Ram Dahal defines minority relying on statistical criticism such as numerical size of different populations in terms of caste/ethnicity, language and religion and on achievement of specific caste/ethnic group in specific fields such as political decision-making position and economic prosperity. It was because of such misconception, indigenous peoples and minorities hesitated until early nineties to refer to themselves as minority as they claimed to form about 70 percent of the total population of Nepal. (28)

Especially, in Nepalese context, indigenous people, Dalits, Madhesis are categorized as minority group. In terms of domination and discrimination, following six categories of people asserted that they belong to minorities in Nepalese context.

Indigenous peoples or nationalities, linguistic group, religion group, dalits and regional groups and gender (Bhattachan 34-38).

"Minority group has some characteristics. Its members are disadvantaged, as a result of discrimination against them by others. Discrimination exists when rights and opportunities open to one-set of people are denied to another group. For instant, a landlord may refuse to rent a room to someone because she/he is of West India background" (Giddens 254).

Members of the minority have some sense of group solidarity, of belonging together. Experience of being the subject of prejudice and discrimination usually heightens feeling of common loyalty and interests. Member of minority groups often tend to see themselves as 'a people apart' from the majority. Minorities are usually to some degree physically and socially isolated from the larger community. They tend to be concentrated in certain neighborhoods, cities, or regions of a country. There is little inter-marriage of the minority group. People in the minority group might actively promote endogamy (marriage within the group) in order to keep alive their cultural distinctiveness.

### **Short Definition of Different Minority Groups in Nepal**

#### **Dalit:**

Dalit refers to those 'low caste' Hindus who are treated by the 'upper caste' Hindus as untouchables. The definition of Dalit is contested at different times, levels and communities. There are many synonymous terms such as 'Pariganit' 'Achhut' or 'Pani nachalne' or 'Aprisya' (untouchable), 'Harijan' (peoples of god), 'Sudra' (untouchable),

'utpidit jat' (depressed caste) and so on. National Dalit Commission's (NDC) proposed Bill, 2003 states:

Dalit community' refers to caste- community, who have been left far behind in social, economic, educational, political and religious spheres and deprived from human dignity and social justice due to caste based discrimination and untouchably. (239)

### **Indigenous nationalities/ peoples:**

Indigenous peoples/ nationalities refer to those ethnic group or community who has their own mother tongue and traditional customs, different cultural identity, different social structure and written and oral history (HMG-N 170).

According to the Article 1 (1. b) of the ILO Convention 169, indigenous peoples refers to those 'peoples' in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

### **Madhesi:**

The term 'Madhesi' is also one of the contested and controversial terms in Nepal. Many Nepalese peoples wrongly refer them as 'Marsya' 'Madhise' 'Madise' but they consider that uses of all these terms are insulting for them (Bhattachan 34). The Madhesi scholars differentiate between the terms, 'Madhesi' and 'Teraibasi' (Dweller of all Terai region), the former is a historical, political, and sociological concept that refers to a groups where as the latter refers to any caste or ethnic group, including the dominant caste or group, who lives in the Terai region.

During the recent Madhesi movement and subsequent agreement between Nepal government and the MPRF, Nepal Sadvabana Party and Terai-Madhes Democratic Party used the word Madhes inclusive of the entire Terai region including the Tharuhat region of the Tharus. The Tharus protested against blanket use of such terms arguing that indigenous peoples of Terai do not belong to Madhes and Madhes as such does not exist in Terai though Madhesi live in the Terai. Madhesi refers to those peoples living in Terai who belong to four Varna, namely Brahman (excluding Hill Bahun), Kshyatriys (excluding Hill Chetri), Vaisya and Sudra.

## **Chapter III**

### **Representation of Minority as Political Persona in Nepali Politics**

The constituent Assembly (CA) election was a milestone in the political transformation of Nepal. It is the body of representatives authorized by the interim constitution to draft a new constitution for Nepal. This CA is directly elected by the people of Nepal in order to make it representative of Nepali society and ensure that all groups in Nepal can participate in this process. The interim constitution legislates for the creation of a 601 member in CA with 575 of these members being directly elected (335 through proportional representation and 240 through first-past-the-post) and 26 being appointed by the cabinet.

Minority/ethnic issues were one of the major slogans of April 2006 movement in Nepal that resulted in an end to the monarchy and restored parliamentary democracy. Later, the April movement was backed, shaped, strengthened and renewed by demonstrations of consequences of this was that the term 'proportional' was recognized as a means of equal sharing of power in state structures with full recognition of identity of minority groups in Nepalese politics.

#### **Proportional Representation System**

There exist wholesale numbers of possible election procedures. A basic characterization has been made of these into 'Plurality system' and 'Proportional representation systems. Molf Linder defines:

Proportional Representation is a universal key to power sharing in double sense. It opens many doors to political participation and it can be used by new groups arising from new cleavages. (14)

In a plurality system an elector usually casts one vote for the candidate or the (party) list of the candidates of his or her choice in some election district, and the candidate of list receiving a majority or plurality is elected. Such systems are based on a notion of geographical representation. Mid-nineteenth century Europe saw an increasing dissatisfaction with plurality system as unfair to minorities, for small political parties were effectively barred from having any representation whenever their adherents were distributed throughout many single-member election districts.

"This led to the idea of proportional representation, which, in its pure form, has electors cast one vote for a party or party list in a multi-member district and then, by some rules, metes numbers of seats 'proportionally' among the parties according to their respective vote totals. Of course, variants of both types of system exist, as do complex mixture of both" (Balinski 29).

The 335 proportional representation seats are elected using one ballot which all voters receive, and with Nepal being a single electoral constituency. Only political parties registered with the Election Commission can stand for election under the proportional representation system no independents can run.

When submitting lists of candidates to the Election Commission, political parties are required to ensure a certain level of representation on these lists for women, dalits, oppressed casts/indigenous ethnic groups, backward regions, Madhesis and Others. Lists which do not comply with these quotas can be rejected by the Election Commission and must be corrected by the party within seven days and submitted again to the Election Commission.

The type of proportional system being used for the Constituent Assembly is a 'closed list' system, meaning that voters cast a vote for their party of choice but do not

have control over which individuals the party selects to become members of the Constituent Assembly. Each voter can cast one vote for one party on the Proportional Representation ballot.

The votes cast for each party are totaled for the entire country. This determines how many seats out of 335 each party will be allocated the seats are allocated to the parties according to the proportion of the total votes that each political party receives.

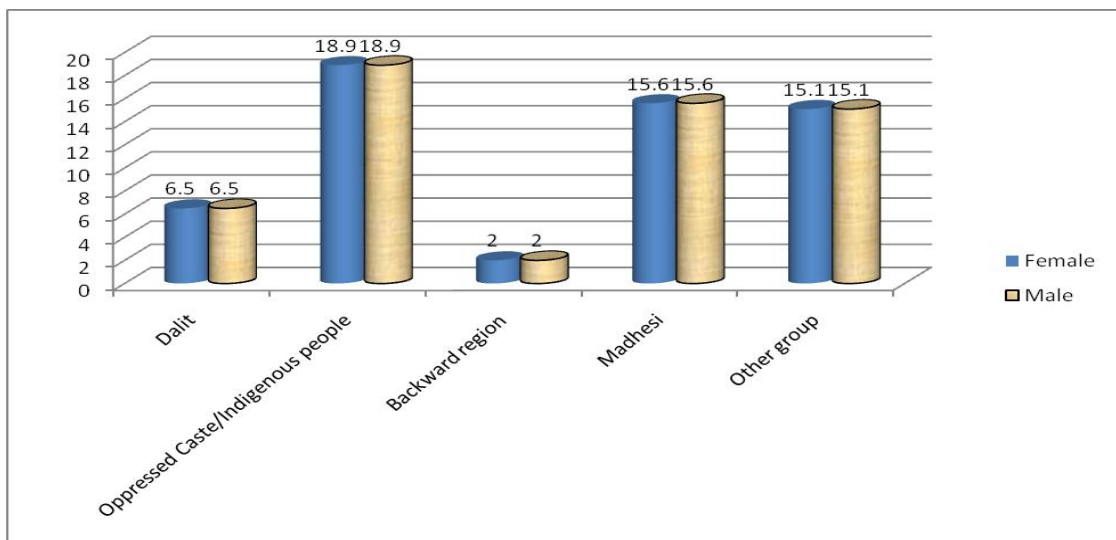
While preparing a proportional list, all political parties participating in the election made arrangements to ensure representation of each of the listed Madhesi, Dalit, Janajati and other minority communities. The given table depicts whole proportional representation in CA from different political parties.

#### Major Political Party's Proportional Representation Status in CA election

	Madhesi		Janajati		Dalit		Disadvantage area		Others	
	Male	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
CPN Maoist	16	17	20	18	7	6	2	2	14	16
NC	11	10	14	13	4	5	1	1	12	12
CPN-UML	11	10	12	13	5	4	1	1	12	11
MPRF	10	11	2	2	0	3	0	0	1	0
TMDP	6	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
RPP	1	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	1
CPN-Male	2	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	2
Sadvabana	2	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	2
Janamorcha Nepal	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
CPN(samyukta)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
RPP-N	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Rastriya Janamorcha	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Rastriya Janashakti	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Nepal Majdur Kisan	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Sanghiya loktantrik	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sadvabana (Aa)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Rastriya Janamukti	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nepali Janata Dal	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CPN(akikrit)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dalit Janajati	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Newa Rastriya Muk	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Samajbadi Prajatantra	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Chure Vabar Rastriya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Nepal Loktantrik Samajbadi	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pariwar Dal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

According to the Constituent Assembly Members Election Act 2007, candidate lists submitted by political parties for the proportional representation election must cover at least 10% of the seats to be elected under the proportional representation system i.e. there must be at least 34 candidates submitted on a candidates list. The candidate lists are also required to consist of at least one-third women and to have the following minimum representation from the groups displayed;



It is possible however for candidates to meet than one of the categories meaning the party can meet several quotas by having for example a Madhesi, Dalit, female as their candidates.

The category 'Backward region refers to nine districts in Nepal: Achham, Kalikot, Jajarkot, Jumla, Dolpa, Bajhang, Bajura, Mugu and Humla. These areas were chosen as they are at the bottom of the development index for Nepal's 75 districts.

It should be noted that these reserved seats (with the exception of the female quota) were originally only applicable to closed lists submitted by political parties covering more than 20% of the seats to be elected under the proportional representation election i.e. lists with 67 or more candidates. However, the 1 March 2008 agreement between the government of Nepal and some of the Terai parties saw this percentage being increased to 30%, such that the quotas were only applicable to candidate lists with 101 candidates or more. The requirement for one-third of the candidates to be women is still applicable to all lists under the proportional representation election.

The Government of Nepal has agreed in principle that all groups, genders, communities, castes and ethnicities should be represented in political parties at all levels. A fully representative task-force has formed to conduct a study in order to ensure inclusive participation and proportional representation of all castes, ethnicities, groups, communities, genders and regions in all bodies and levels of the state.

A state restructuring commission has been formed to prepare recommendations to the constituent assembly regarding a federal state structure based on ethnicity, language, geographic region, economic indicators and cultural distinctiveness while keeping national unity, integrity and sovereignty of Nepal at the forefront. The commission has included

indigenous janajatis, Madhesis, dalits, women and eminent experts from various groups, regions and communities.

While so far only Nepali has been recognized as the government's official language, the constituent assembly also made arrangements to give recognition to locally spoken mother tongues along with Nepali. The government has remained committed towards ensuring linguistic rights of its citizens.

Arrangements have made for the general public to seek and receive information on matters of public importance, including the constituent assembly, in their respective mother tongues. All sectors have taken initiatives to practically implement their legal and policy-level commitments to ensuring inclusive and proportional representation of all genders, classes, regions and communities, including indigenous janajatis in all bodies and levels of state. A system is developing to receive advice and consultation from concerned groups and bodies while making important decisions regarding various groups, regions, genders and communities, including indigenous janajatis.

In keeping with the spirit and sentiment of gender mainstreaming in development plans and programs, including interim planning, and paying attention to women and diversity in program implementation and profit sharing, emphasis is laid upon participation of women from indigenous janajati, dalit and Madhesi groups.

## Chapter IV

### Media Studies: An Introduction

Media studies cover an academic discipline that deals with the content, history and effects of various media, in particular mass media. Media scholars vary in the theoretical and methodological focus they bring to mass media topics, including the media's political, social, economic and cultural roles and impact.

Media studies draw on traditions from both the social sciences and the humanities, and overlap in interests with related disciplines like mass communication, communication sciences and communication studies. Researchers develop and employ theories and methods from disciplines including cultural studies, rhetoric, philosophy, literary theory, psychology, political science, political economy, economics, sociology, social theory, art history and criticism, film theory, and information theory.

Scholars may focus on the constitution of media and question how they shape what is regarded as knowledge and as communicable. The related field of media psychology concerns itself with the psychological impact of the media on individual and cultures.

In media studies, thinkers like Marshall McLuhan treat “the medium is the message.” (47) or the medium of a given social object (such as a book, CD, or television show) as the touchstone for both the cultural and material elements of the society in which this object exists. McLuhan is famous for critiquing the different types of cultural and material processes that are made available between print-based media (like books, newspapers and magazines) and electronic mediums like television, radio, and film. While print requires thinking that is linear, chronological, and separate from the thinking of others, electronic media are considered more organic, simultaneous, and interdependent on other media and on other users of that media.

Well known media theorists, McLuhan is famous for his dictum that “the medium is the message.” (47) For McLuhan, then, the central mediating factor in any society is the medium of communication itself. In this way, media occupy for McLuhan what labor or capital did for Marx. Thus, by claiming that the “medium is the message”, McLuhan means that “the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology” (47). For McLuhan, the introduction of any new form of media into a given culture radically alters the way that members of that culture mediate between the material world and the given values available to them.

### **Marxist Theory and Media Studies (Mediation)**

Mediation in Marxist theory refers to the reconciliation of two opposing forces within a given society (i.e. the cultural and material realms, or the superstructure and base) by a mediating object. Similar to this, within media studies the central mediating factor of a given culture is the medium of communication itself. The popular conception of mediation refers to the reconciliation of two opposing parties by a third, and this is similar to its meaning in both Marxist theory and media studies. For Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, this mediating factor is capital or alternately labor, depending on how one views capitalist society (capital is the dominant mediating factor, but labor is another mediating factor that could overthrow capital as the most important one).

Marxists view capitalist society as being one of class domination; the media are seen as part of an ideological arena in which various class views are fought out, although within the context of the dominance of certain classes; ultimate control is increasingly concentrated in monopoly capital; media professionals, while enjoying the illusion of

autonomy, are socialized into and internalize the norms of the dominant culture; the media taken as a whole, relay interpretive frameworks consonant with the interests of the dominant classes, and media audiences, while sometimes negotiating and contesting these frameworks, lack ready access to alternative meaning systems that would enable them to reject the definitions offered by the media in favor of consistently oppositional definitions.

### **Base and Superstructure**

Economism (also called 'vulgar Marxism') is a key feature of 'classical Marxism' (orthodox or fundamentalist Marxism). "In economism, the economic base of society is seen as determining everything else in the superstructure, including social, political and intellectual consciousness. Theories positing economic relations as the basic cause of social phenomena are also called materialist theories, and Marx's version is also known as historical materialism. Mass media research in this fundamentalist tradition interprets the culture industries in terms of their economic determination. According to this view, 'the contents of the media and the meanings carried by their messages are primarily determined by the economic base of the organizations in which they are produced' (Curran 18).

Consequently, commercial media organizations must cater to the needs of advertisers and produce audience-maximizing products (hence the heavy doses of sex-and-violence content) while those media institutions whose revenues are controlled by the dominant political institutions or by the state gravitate towards a middle ground, or towards the heartland of the prevailing consensus. Marxists of the 'political economy' variety (such as Graham Murdock) still see ideology as subordinate to the economic base.

The base/superstructure model as applied to the mass media is associated with a concern with the ownership and control of the media.

"Critics regard economism as reductionist, failing to account for diversity.

Althusserian Marxists propose the relative autonomy of the superstructure with respect to the base and the reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base. Under the influence of Althusser, Stuart Hall and other 'culturalist' Marxists reject the base/superstructure formulation, arguing that there is a dialectic between what Marx termed social being and social consciousness" (Curran 27).

### **Media as Means of Production**

The mass media are, in classical Marxist terms, a 'means of production' which in capitalist society are in the ownership of the ruling class. According to the classical Marxist position, the mass media simply disseminate the ideas and world views of the ruling class, and deny or defuse alternative ideas. This is very much in accord with Marx's argument that is cited by Curran:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (22)

According to this stance, the mass media functioned to produce 'false consciousness' in the working-classes. This leads to an extreme stance whereby media products are seen as monolithic expressions of ruling class values, which ignores any diversity of values within the ruling class and within the media, and the possibility of oppositional readings by media audiences.

### **Media as Amplifiers**

In Marxist media analysis, media institutions are regarded as being locked into the power structure, and consequently as acting largely in tandem with the dominant institutions in society. "The media thus reproduced the viewpoints of dominant institutions not as one among a number of alternative perspectives, but as the central and obvious or natural perspective" (Curran 21).

According to adherents of Marxist political economy, in the mass media there is a tendency to avoid the unpopular and unconventional and to draw on values and assumptions which are most valuable and most widely legitimated.

Similarly, some Marxist commentators have contended that media portrayals of elections constitute dramatized rituals that legitimate the power structure in liberal democracies; voting is seen as an ideological practice that helps to sustain the myth of representative democracy, political equality and collective self-determination. The impact of election coverage is thus conceived in terms of reinforcing political values that are widely shared in Western democracies and are actively endorsed by the education system, the principal political organizations and the apparatus of the state.

### **Limitations of Marxist Analysis**

Critics argue that Marxism is just another ideology (despite claims by some that historical materialism is an objective science). Some Marxists are accused of being 'too doctrinaire'. "Fundamentalist Marxism is crudely deterministic, and also reductionist in its 'materialism', allowing little scope for human agency and subjectivity. Marxism is often seen as 'grand theory', eschewing empirical research. However, research in the Marxist 'political economy' tradition in particular does employ empirical methods. And the analysis of media representations does include close studies of particular texts" (Westlake and Lapsley 5).

The orthodox Marxist notion of false consciousness misleadingly suggests the existence of a reality undistorted by mediation. The associated notion that such consciousness is irresistibly induced in mass audiences does not allow for oppositional readings. Marxist perspectives should not lead us to ignore the various ways in which audiences use the mass media.

Neo-Marxist stances have in fact sought to avoid these pitfalls. The primary Marxist emphasis on class needs to be (and had increasingly been) related to other divisions, such as gender and ethnicity.

### **Strengths of Marxist Analysis**

Unlike many approaches to the mass media Marxism acknowledges the importance of explicit theory. Marxist critical theory exposes the myth of social science. Marxist perspectives draw our attention to the issue of political and economic interests in the mass media and highlight social inequalities in media representations. Marxism helps to situate media texts within the larger social formation. Its focus on the nature of ideology helps us to deconstruct taken-for granted values. Ideological analysis helps us to expose whose reality we are being offered in a media text. Whilst Althusserian Marxism helps to undermine the myth of the autonomous individual, other neo-Marxist stances see the mass media as a 'site of struggle' for ideological meaning, opening up the possibility of oppositional readings.

Marxist theory emphasizes the importance of social class in relation to both media ownership and audience interpretation of media texts: this remains an important factor in media analysis. Whilst content analysis and semiotics may shed light on media content, "Marxist theory highlights the material conditions of media production and reception. Critical political economists study the ownership and control of the media and the

influence of media ownership on media content cannot be ignored. It also remains important to consider such issues as differential access and modes of interpretation which are shaped by socio-economic groupings. Marxist media research includes the analysis of representation in the mass media (e.g. political coverage or social groups) in order to reveal underlying ideologies. We still need such analyses: however oppositional it may sometimes be, audience interpretation continues to operate in relation to such content. Because of the distribution of power in society, some versions of reality have more influence than others" (Westlake and Lapsley 5).

Marxist theorists emphasize the role of the mass media in the reproduction of the status quo, in contrast to liberal pluralists who emphasize the role of the media in promoting freedom of speech.

Pluralists see society as a complex of competing groups and interests, none of them predominant all of the time. Media organizations are seen as bounded organizational systems, enjoying an important degree of autonomy from the state, political parties and institutionalized pressure groups. Control of the media is said to be in the hands of an autonomous managerial elite who allow a considerable degree of flexibility to media professionals. "A basic symmetry is seen to exist between media institutions and their audiences, since in McQuail's words the relationship is generally entered into voluntarily and on apparently equal terms and audiences are seen as capable of manipulating the media in an infinite variety of ways according to their prior needs and dispositions, and as having access to what Halloran calls the plural values of society enabling them to 'conform, accommodate, challenge or reject" (Gurevitch 1).

Stuart Hall has also addressed theoretically the issue of how people make sense of media texts. He parts from Althusser in emphasizing more scope for diversity of response to media texts. In a key paper 'Encoding/Decoding', Stuart Hall argues:

The dominant ideology is typically inscribed as the 'preferred reading' in a media text, but that this is not automatically adopted by readers. The social situations of readers/viewers/listeners may lead them to adopt different stances. Dominant readings are produced by those whose social situation favors the preferred reading; negotiated readings are produced by those who inflect the preferred reading to take account of their social position; and oppositional readings are produced by those whose social position puts them into direct conflict with the preferred reading. (135)

## Chapter V

### Media Representation of Nepali Subaltern Political Persona

Media representation refers to the ways in which members of society /groups based on age, gender, sexual orientation, religious, visible minorities are presented in the media and the ways audiences perceive and respond to these representation.

Media representation may be in speech or writing as well as still or moving pictures. Representation involves not only how identities are represented within the text but also how they are constructed in the process of reception by people whose identities are also differentially marked in relation to such demographic factors. Manuel, Alvarado, Robin Gutch and Jane Woolen remarks:

Many groups in society experience representations that are not accurate. This is problematic because in addition to perpetuating stereotypes, misrepresentation can erode the self-image of people from these groups. Audiences need to think critically about the ways in which certain members of society are represented, misrepresented or absent in the media they consume. (153)

The proportional representation system in CA allocates seats to the minorities to ensure their right in every aspect of national and local issues. This thesis paper tries to depict the representation of minorities and subaltern political persona in national news paper. Basically, it includes some photographs and illustrations of political persona published in the *The Kathmandu Post* and *Kantipur Daily* during CA election period Mid-March to Mid-June 2008. Some Photographs are given below as example,

## Photographs in Media

Photo: 1, Babulal Paswan nominated to the CA by Maoist under PR seats. Paswan, who has passed fourth grade, recalled how he was compelled to quit studios due to poverty and social discrimination.



*The Kathmandu Post*

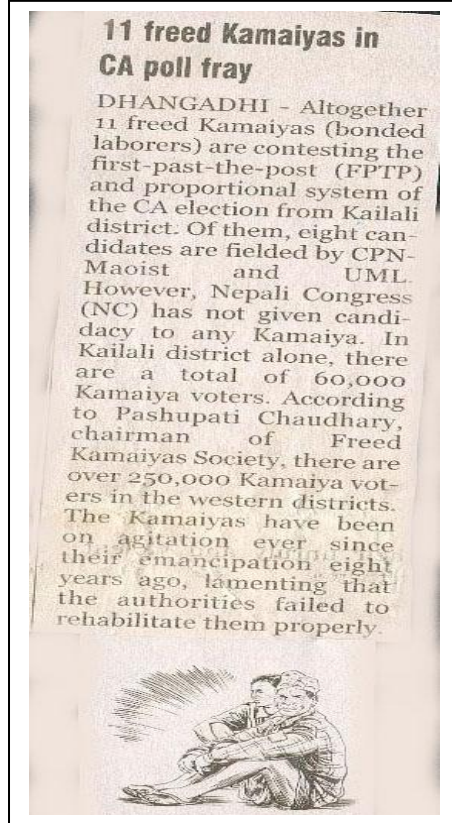
Photo: 2, Sebaki Devi Das, a representative from Madhesi People's Rights Forum, (MPRF), she heard her nomination in CA during washing kitchen pots.



*Kantipur*

Photo:3

11 free Kamaiyas are contesting the First-past-the-post and proportional System of the CA election from Kailali district.



The Kathmandu Post

Photo 4: Hasian Miya, Tanahun based bangle entrepreneur, a CPN-UML representative in CA. She is nominated from PR system.



Kantipur

Photo 5: CPN-UML representative Govinda Ram Chepang(Makawanpur) and Maoist representative Maya Chepang (Gorkha)are nominated to the CA from Chepang (minority group of Nepal) community.



*Kantipur*

The given photographs depict the representation of minorities in the media due to the inclusive policy in CA member election process. Proportional representation system in CA has made a key point to introduce the minorities in different media. In the photographs Dalit, Madhesi, Janajati and other minority group like Lepcha, Chepang, Tharu Kamaiyas have made an important news for broadsheet. The photographs have covered a news story of minorities/subaltern group that represent in the CA.

In this period, media highlights those faces that were not in the Nepali politics before. It is possible due to the the proportional representation system in CA. Such system gives the people equal opportunities to involve in the decision making level. The example

of Sevaki Devi, a housewife, Hasina Miya, a Bangladeshi entrepreneur, free Kamaiyas, Rikshaw puller and other minority/subaltern groups showed that the CA stands as a milestone for the representation of such group in policy making level and got to participate in different national issues. Media also focused them as political persona.

### **Scene of Peripety**

Peripety is a reversal of circumstances or turning point. Aristotle defines it as "a chance by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity" (7). According to Aristotle peripety means the change of the kind described from one state of things within the play to its opposite, and that too in the way we are saying, in the probable or necessary sequences of events (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

In 1961 Peter Szondi, one of the most distinguished recent German literary critics, explains his tragic dialectic in an abstract sort, peripety is 'a mode of action which follows on a unity of opposites', and 'conversion of one state of affairs to its opposite' a principle which, in its dramatic realization, may take on many different forms and shape.' But having said this, one must insist that the two concepts have a common denominator they both emphasize the importance of a paradoxical yet inevitable shift of a (dramatic) movement to its exact opposite (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Peripety includes change of characters but also move external changes. A character who becomes rich and famous from poverty and obscurity has undergone peripetia, even if his character remains the same. When a character learns something he had been previously ignorant about all of the circumstances. Aristotle identified Oedipus the king, as the principle work demonstrating peripety.

Peripety, in politics, means dissolve of the established political faces and raises of the marginalized or subaltern faces. In the broadsheet, there is seen the faces of the political players whose involvement was not in politics before. The new faces are more highlighted than the old faces. The example of given photographs in this thesis work is a scene of peripety in Nepalese politics. The coverage of the new faces of minority groups, women and other faces that were not in politics before is a change of circumstances in Nepalese politics. The change of the political character shows that the proportional representation system in CA is election is a core point. In this way, media turned and covered those faces who stood as Nepalese political persona.

In Nepalese political system-long dominated by upper-caste men-is now mingled by the participation of women and marginalized ethnic, caste, religious and regional groups that they are not involved in politics before. But, the proportional representation made them as political persona in this recent political transformation in Nepal.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusion**

With a rapid transformation of polity, Nepal is now embracing all kinds of social changes that have been not seen in the history of Nepal before. Political wrangling that we have witnessed at the moment speaks volume about the mentality of our politicians who have tenacity to glue to power. Lessons that history taught us about power are like own commodity which keep on passing from one to another.

Nepalese people have never obtained an opportunity to draft their constitution by themselves. So far they have been ruled by the constitution designed by individual elites and traditional power-wielders. In other words, feudal forces in different forms have ruled the Nepali society for centuries. From such system, the minority group of Nepal had not been getting their rights properly.

The historical mass movement of 2006 has created to Nepalese people a bright hope for total transformation of their lives. It is believed that the constituent assembly could be utilized for the long-awaited transformation of the Nepali society. Nepalese constituent assembly election marked a major step forward in the process of Nepalese political transformation. In the declaration of federal democratic republic and the broad political breakdown, CA is a remarkably inclusive body.

CA is made milestone for the far more representation of Nepali different caste/ethnic, religious and regional diversity in the current political system. The representation of minority group, dalits, janajatis, madhesis in CA, is made a Nepali political structure more inclusive.

The people who control policy of nation are not extraordinary people. Just like the minorities who are constantly in fear and suffer a feeling of insecurity, politicians

journalists and bureaucrats too live in varying degree in the same conditions. The sad fact is that the minority and the media are so far away from each other that unless the communication and credibility gap is lessened, no amount of cosmetic change will suffice.

Media representation of minorities refers to the ways in which the minority group based on gender, religious, caste etc are presented in the different kinds of media like electronic and print media. The representation of media has yet to get a proper feel of what is happening in the countryside. Their understanding of the social and economic forces at work at the village level is inadequate, incomplete and based on preconceived notions of what is meant by rural development.

In this age of information technology media plays very crucial role in projecting images. What appears in media - print or visual - is widely accepted by people as true. There are very few discerning readers or watchers who would critically look at what appears in the media. It is also true that media plays very important role in modern democratic society. It is a vehicle for opinion making. Hence its role has to be very careful in projecting images. Unfortunately, it is not, at least, in majority of cases. There are very few papers - if we refer to print media - which take pains to write about minorities after thorough study and with positive and constructive attitude.

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