

**From Class Struggle to Identity Politics: Paradox in Ideology and Practice of
Nepali Left Politics**

A Dissertation of M. Phil

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Abstract

This research has gauged out how Nepali left political parties are gradually shifting from class struggle to identity politics. It has also showed the paradox of left parties so far as identity politics is concerned. Formal political documents of left parties including their discourses on the identity politics and class struggle through News papers and Television interviews have led this dissertation to claim that they are gradually shifting from class struggle to identity politics creating a grand narrative of paradox.

In fact, Nepali left political parties are shifting to identity politics by what appears to be the abandonment of the basic ideology that they have espoused long. They use their basic ideology only for identifying themselves and motivating their cadres in time of need rather applying it rigidly in practice. It leads them to abandon their basic principles on practical fronts. Their basic ideology of class struggle remains silent whereas identity politics becomes dominant.

The politics of identity that became a dominant discourse during the 1990s surfaced strongly in Nepali politics after the 2006 April Movement which became more intense after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (CA) on May 27, 2012. The CA apparently got dissolved after political parties failed to make consensus on identity-based federalism. So, the issue of identity remains a bone of contention among parties, which widens polarization with possible long-run impacts in the national politics.

Actually, identity politics always hangs in between rights and recognition where it tilts more to the latter. Political parties can neither oppose nor support identity politics openly on the pretext of ballot box politics, which leads them to follow the principle of "if you cannot convince them, confuse them". The result is they hang in the 'in-between situation' regarding identity-based federalism. Federalism becomes more vulnerable where identity politics persists since identity politics, on practical fronts, tends to give second priority to the rights of

the marginalized communities in the name of focusing on identity. If identity politics is for evoking sense of rights to the exploited and the marginalized, it will focus the most on the issues of the oppressed Dalits since there is no one who meets the degree of oppression in Nepal than a Dalit. Nepali left political parties which claim themselves as heir to class struggle gradually succumb to identity politics without any strong ideological basis.

Undoubtedly, economic backwardness of some identity groups can be attributed to the identity-based oppressions especially on language and culture. Identity will be used as a tool for counter mobilization if there are oppressions based on it. Therefore, identity be a basis for oppressions nor a mere tool for a ballot-box politics.

Acknowledgement

This study has tried to break the iceberg of the hidden objectives of the left political parties on identity politics especially on caste and ethnic discourses. I hoped this research has opened a fresh ground for discussion about left political parties' perspectives towards caste and ethnicity as no other studies so far have challenged ideological bases of them. I think this study has led to the rethinking of the basic ideology of left political parties that have changed over a course of time. However, since it has covered the certain left parties and their discourses within certain period of time, it has its own limitation.

Actually, this dissertation is the outcome of constant help and surveillance of my families, friends and the persons with whom I have consulted much. I owe a large debt to the political leaders and right activists with whom I personally conducted Live Television Talk Show on ABC Television which became the basic ground for this research. Indeed, much credit goes to Professor Dr. Abhi Subedi who went through the every pages of this research as a supervisor. Critical suggestions and feedback from my friend, Columnist and Political Analyst, Rajendra Maharjan has been screened throughout this paper. I am highly grateful to Prof Dr Amma Raj Joshi, who helped me take correct direction while inscribing it. Precious thanks go to my external supervisor Dr Dharma Adhikari who especially helped me on Research Approach including others.

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Letter of Recommendation

This dissertation entitled "**From Class Struggle to Identity Politics: Paradox in Ideology and Practice of Nepali Left Politics**" has been completed by **Sushil Chandra Pandey** under my guidance and supervision for the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the M. Phil. in English. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final evaluation and acceptance.

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Letter of Approval

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