

Representation of Maoists in Nepal Television News, 1st Feb.2005 to 1st Feb.2006

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Abstract

This dissertation is about the control and reflection of ruling ideology in state owned and government run television. This research presents the argument that the government ideology reflects in the state owned television. Nepal television (NTV); a state owned television station broadcasts the news favorable to the governments ideology. The research selects texts from Nepal Television news about the Maoists first one year authoritarian regime of King Gyanendra's direct rule from 1st Feb 2005 to 1st Feb 2006. NTV depends upon government in terms of regulation and funding. The contemporary government declared Maoists as 'terrorist' and NTV represented them as terrorist in its news. Representing Maoists as terrorists, NTV reflects the Ideology of the then government. With the support of wide range of theories, concerning ideology, power and discourse the study proves that NTV simply becomes a Ideological State Apparatus of the government.

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I. Introduction

Politics and Television News

Television has great influence and is enormously significant to viewers. Television is still a comparatively a new technology though a generation has grown up with it. Television viewing has become the dominant leisure activity for the majority of the population. In developed societies, virtually every household possesses at least one television, with ownership of a set per member becoming commonplace. But ownership in developing countries societies lags behind; both societies have already been targeted as the major areas of growth for the global television industry during the twenty-first century.

Television plays a central role in most people's everyday life. In the public sphere it has become the venue for political debate and the exchange of news as the major medium for motivation because, "A new form of 'politics' is emerging, and in ways we haven't yet noticed. The living room has become a voting booth. Participation via television in freedom marches, in war, revolution, pollution and other events is changing everything" (McLuhan, 22). Therefore, television has been lauded for raising political consciousness on issues as diverse as sexual health to global poverty. Television news has helped people become aware of their national, gender and even the human identity because, "news is a window to the world. Through its frame people learn of themselves and others and of their own institution" (Tuchman 1). It can draw the attention of nearly every human who comes within its orbit. What is clear is that television as a bombardment of images in news and programs, as a technology and as a worldwide industry, touches social life in profound ways. It has done nothing less than change the cultural landscape.

A new form of politics has already developed through television news. People prefer television news rather than print version of the same coverage. Television critic W. Lence Bennett says, “We live in television age and people have grown up with a preference of visual over print information” (illusion 23). It depicts people’s problems, draws their attention and has the power to change their consent accordingly. Therefore, main aim of politicians is to control over “political images in the news” because:

Political themes and slogan encourage people to imagine things about situation. An image is not some entity that exists out there in the world; it is the product of human mind and shaped by the suggestive symbolism of political message. The symbolic component of an image is so simplistic, abstract and free of detail that the only way it can make sense for people to add their own interpretation, fantasies and concerns. Thus, an image is an impression anchored partly in symbolic suggestion and partly in the feelings and assumption that people have in response and suggestion. (Illusion 23-82)

The television news coverage of political image and violence can create empathy as people feel the pain and grief of other people as their own. But the television coverage of violence is not the violence but the representation of violence. So, television has become an opinion leader now. A successful politician always tries to maintain good relation with the newsman because “failure to control news is often equated with political failure...it is clear that controlling political images in the news is a primary goal of politics” (illusion, 81).

News reporting in television is the ‘surveillance’ function of mass communication; the task of surveying the trends and events occurring in society and

reporting those that seems to be most important and consequential to the society's well-being. Without such information people would be seriously hindered in their ability to participate in the political affair or to professional and personal decision. Obviously, thousand of events and activities take place through out the world, but only "a miniscule fraction of them are reported through national and local media" (Wilson and Gutierrez 150). The most important characteristic of news is 'consequence' (importance). In other word, "Those who make decisions about news media content first consider the importance of the events to the audience" (Wilson and Gutierrez 150). If news media reporting does expand to encompass wider representation, it will have to rededicate itself "to the principle that meeting the substantive communication needs of society" (Wilson and Gutierrez 159) is its first priority. The news media's obligation is to provide information and interpretation of issues and events to society is essential to the development and maintenance of an enlightened citizenry.

It seems unarguable and appropriate, that television as the major, global, contemporary mass medium should be subject to academic investigation. The emergence of television studies, as an area of intellectual inquiry, to mirror like literature, has been hesitant and, in certain quarters, resisted as a sigh of the encroachment of popular culture on academic and the arts. Nevertheless, the last twenty years have seen the genesis of a recognizable, legitimate body of research on television as a cultural phenomenon. Academics and cultural critic had been interested in television its inception and particularly so once were more widely available. But, the analysis of television tended to be subsumed under the study of mass communications and then, after that media studies. For some the study 'the box in the corner' should have been straightforward but there is very little which is obvious

about the television of television studies. It was drawn from a broadly social scientific perspective, stimulated by diverse anxieties about the effects and influence of television, be they cultural, (behavioral) literary, political or ideological.

Nepal Television

Nepal television (NTV) is perhaps the one of the youngest television stations in Asia, it started as a project under the sixth development plan (1980-1985) in which a provision was made “to undertake feasibility study of the establishment of television in the country and to begin TV transmission service at selected places if found feasible from economic and technical standpoints” (K. C. 2). Despite doubts felt by many, “Nepal Television owned and controlled by the government, formally came in to being in January 1985” (K.C. 129) as experimental transmission for Kathmandu valley. A hundred watt transmitter was then set up to cover Kathmandu valley during this experimental transmission, Regular transmission of two hours commenced by the end of 1985. In February of 1986, it became a full fledged corporation under the communication act of the then His majesty’s Government.

NTV started its transmission in such a time when country was ruled by autocratic Panchayat system. Political parties were banned and government curbed press freedom. There was not any independent media. Government has run two national dailies: ‘GorkhaPatra’ and ‘The Rising Nepal’ and radio stations ‘Radio Nepal’. Their work was just to make propaganda of government. Starting a television in a restrictive system:

[It] was also unthinkable that a restrictive political system like the Panchayat system, despite its universal adult franchise, would survive the constant bombardment of Western political ideals that are subtly woven into every western media broadcasts. The government had no

option but to most the idea of introducing television in Nepal. (KC 128)

The Panchayati government had started television just to distract people from the growing western democratic influence through the satellite channels.

NTV had put the Royal family at first priority in its broadcast. Though it had started its transmission in January 1985, it had started first news in December 1985 by the then king Birendra's Australia visit coverage. In those days there were only about four hundred television sets, the majority of which were used basically for video purposes. But, "not all those fortunate enough to own television sets at that time were aware that there was a broadcast by Nepal television every evening" (KC, 129). Time has changed now. Almost all family in urban and suburban areas of country have a television sets rather than a flush toilet. A hundred watt transmitter that covered Kathmandu valley now transmitted through satellite that cover almost all part of the country and more than forty two countries abroad. NTV has changed in terms of transmission hours and technologically but it does not change its policy that it earlier put the royals in first priority now the ruling parties of government have replaced it.

It has been two decades NTV first transmitted, it has two channels and hundreds of staff in its advance but the standard of its news and programs are still very poor. NTV, "news is without spine, its tele-dramas hark back to the early days of melodramatic theatre, and a feudal mentality keeps good producers alienated and of the air" (Pradhan, 1). Most programs are stale and lengthy. NTV has not given up its amateurish airing of 'educational programs' which include sleepy development documentaries and current affairs programs run by unappealing anchors. NTV says it is obliged to do development broadcasts to meet its 'social obligation', but it is these programs that some think are anti-social for their inability to respect the viewer.

The result is that Nepali audience has abandoned NTV as hopeless but what is unique is its inability to respond. The result is that only a couple of humor shows gather few viewers whereas others program watch by none. Its news coverage is ‘without spine’ that shows only the government ministers and only “the odd ministers probably still watches to see himself garlanding some statue or other but the public is elsewhere tuning into MTV, Star Plus or even FTV” (Pradhan 1).

The responsibility of such deteriorating condition of NTV goes to the government. Every successive government made NTV a center for recruitment of their cadres and mouthpiece of their own; in Panchayat era government directly control it by imposing content censorship. The condition in democratic period was also the same. Though there was no censorship at the then but the general manager appointed by the government used to be a supporter of the ruling party and he did not allowed the proper representation of opposition voices. When king Gyanendra took his royal move of February 2005, he controlled all the media, press censorship was in action and all fundamental rights were suspended. NTV the only state owned television become the mouthpiece of king again.

Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)

The communist party of Nepal- Maoist (CPN-M) is one of the largest and most potent communist insurgent groups in the world. In little over a decade, the CPN-M has been responsible for hundreds of attacks on government and civilian targets.

Although Nepal has been an absolute monarchy for many years, peoples movement first in 1990 forced then king Birendra to reinstitute constitutional monarchy and revoke an earlier ban on political parties. In short order a new constitution was drawn up and parliamentary elections were scheduled. Among over

twenty parties on the election race, communist party of Nepal (Unity Center), an umbrella party of the left, ran in the 1991 general elections and emerged as the third largest party in the parliament, next to Nepali congress and communist party of Nepal (UML). However, the Unity Center's Maoist wing (the CPN-M) performed extremely poorly, and was excluded from the next election in 1994.

Ideological confrontation and dissatisfaction over the multi-party democratic system under constitutional monarchy among the CPN (Unity Centre) leaders led to the disintegration of the revolutionary and political front split into two factions. Two different faction led by Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai at one end and Nirmal Lama and Nirajan Govinda Vaidya on the other end. The faction led by Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai decided not to take part in the general election. Thapa and Sijapati in their book '*A Kingdom under Siege: Nepali Maoist insurgency, 1996 to 2003*' address Maoist position among other communist party:

They [CPN-M] decided that for the 'true liberation of people' all efforts must be concentrated for the development of a 'people's democratic form of government', and decided to give up its policy of taking part in parliamentary election. Further it analyzed the other left parties position [as renegades and revisionist due to their participations in the parliamentary process] in order to justify its extremist position.

(23)

The rejection of the election commission to contest in 1994 election and the revolutionary zeal in the minds of the rebel leaders led to the formation of communist party Nepal- Maoist (CPN-M) and go underground.

On the February 4, 1996, Maoist political wing leader Baburam Bhattarai led a three-member delegation submitted a 40-point memorandum to the then prime

minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. In a broader sense the memorandum included demands concerning nationality, people's democracy and question of livelihood. The other demands included abolition of special privileges of the king and the royal family and the promulgation of a new republican constitution by the constituent assembly consisting of elected representatives of the people. Maoist gave three days deadline for the government to fulfill their demands, unless they threatened to start armed struggle. They claimed the government's failure to respond to implement their 40 point memorandum was the immediate reason for the declaration of armed struggle against the government known as 'People's war' on February 13, 1996 and conducted raids in the police check posts at Holeri in Rolpa, Atbistkot in Rukum and Sindhuligadi in Sindhuli district and looted explosives and other weapons which was indicated by Thapa and Sijapati; "Something out of ordinary was taking place in the hills of Nepal" (85). The Maoists, for the first time, surfaced with violent activities in the most visible and tangible form, on the same day, a group of around three hundred Maoists attacked Farmers Development bank at Chayangli in Gorkha district and set fire the accounts document.

With no outlet in electoral politics, the Maoist turned to insurgency to reach their goal of overthrowing Nepal's parliamentary democracy and transforming Nepalese society. Such a 'transformation' would likely include a purge of the nation's elite class, a state takeover of private industrial, and the collectivization of agriculture. The very slogan helped the insurgents win the supports of peasants and the working class people.

The armed struggle from the mid-western hilly districts became more vigorous especially after the government initiated police operation during the late 1995 'Operation Romeo' in Rolpa and Rukum districts, and operation kilo Sierra II, which

were aimed to restrict the growing radical communist movement in this region. The governments' ineffectiveness to address the fundamental issues of the people and the security forces repressive operation against the Maoist Cadre resulted in civil war in Nepal.

The CPN-M strategy and tactics are based on traditional Maoist guerilla war principles. As part of its struggle against the current regime, Maoists have targeted Nepali parliamentarians, the prime minister, government ministries, judiciary and a number of educational institutions. The insurgents had killed several lawmakers and number of cadres of other parliamentary parties due to the ideological differences with them. They had attacked former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and the chief justice in Shurkhet district, The then speaker of the house of representatives also been targeted by the rebel in Kavre district, the speaker was lucky enough to save his life but five policemen had been killed in this attack. The most shameful and inhuman attack carried out by the insurgent was a passenger bus in Bandermude of Madi in Chitwan district. This attack claimed thirty-nine lives of women, old people and children including three security persons.

Thousand of people were displaced form their home and their land, properties and houses had been controlled by the Maoists because of their ideological differences with them. These displaced people were forced to live as internal refugee in their won country. Several factories and hotels were forced to shut down as the Maoist labor-wing put difficult demand to fulfill. International targets have occasionally been hit as well, largely in an effort to isolate the government. The Maoists assassinated two United Stats embassy guards in 2002, allegedly for anti-maoist spying activities. Further attacks against diplomatic targets have been threatened in CPN-M press releases. Foreign commercial targets are also fair game

for the Maoists, as they demonstrated several attacks on coca-cola and Uniliver factories and one attack on Pepsi-cola truck.

The Maoist insurgency initially commenced in the three districts of Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot in the Midwestern region of Nepal and eventually spread throughout the country with varying degree of influence. Commonly, western region, mid-western region and partially in eastern region considered as Maoist strong base areas. By February 2006, almost all districts had come under their direct control. The military activities of the Maoist movement began to increase both in scale and scope, and in frequency. The capacity of the Maoist to wage their people's war across a significant area of the countryside was become increasing evident through their attacks on several major attacks on districts headquarters and army barracks. This had led to the creation of numerous ward, village, area and district- level "people's Committees", which were generally known as "People's government" (Sharma, 367). By February 2003, "district people's government [had] been formed in twenty one districts" (Sharma, 368) which were increased in later years of insurgency. They had set up "People's court which looks into cases and giving verdicts, suggesting local commanders to take judicial action" (Sharma, 379) where security forces had deprived of any such activity against the insurgents.

In general, CPN-M has its own traditional structure based on the communist ideology. It has "the most powerful standing committee at the top, followed by the politburo, central committee, regional bureaus, district committees, areas committees and cell committees" (Sharma, 379). The central committee assists politburo to issue directives to the standing committee and the party. The committees at village areas and district levels assists the regional bureaus i.e., eastern, central, Kathmandu, valley, western and international department in every issue. The politburo and standing

committee reportedly formulates most of the political and strategic policies. The party has “two separate wings as military and political divisions” (Sharma, 379). The military wing known as people’s liberation Army (PLA) has its “central military commission to coordinate its military operation, will be assisted by the regional sub-regional and district level commissions” (Sharma, 379). The maoist political wing, United People’s front (UPF)” has different committees from the district level to the ward level” (Sharma, 379).

Despite a massive effort from the then Royal Nepal Army at the behest of current king Gyanendra to crackdown on the CPN-M, the group enjoyed widespread support and was believed to control an estimated 70% of Nepali countryside. The CPN-M has strength of more than thirty thousand armed cadres with an arsenal that has in both size and sophistication in recent years. In addition to receiving funds and support from the expatriate Nepali living in India, the group funds its operation through extortion, taxation, and bank robberies.

In February 2005, ostensibly due to his inability to crush the rebels, king Gyanendra issued a state of emergency and dismissed the coalition government with an army coup. Although this move was done purportedly to crush the maoist, Gyanendra’s power grab seem to have only strengthened the rebel’s position. Widespread opposition to the king’s move amongst the Nepali people has lent the credence to the rebel movement and has served to improve ties between CPN-M and other legitimate political parties with an eight-point pact in November this year. In April 2006, massive people’s movement, king Gyanendra forced to give up absolute power and re-instate the dissolved parliament.

There are four chapters in this thesis .The first chapter includes a discussion concerning the hypothesis that state owned television reflect the ideology of the

existing government. In the second Chapter, discussion of theoretical modality will be prepared. The underlying facts can be exemplified by the discussion of tools such as ideology, power, discourse and encoding/decoding process of television news.

Chapter three will include textual analysis of the selected texts through the application of the theoretical tools that are discussed in chapter two. The texts will be analyzed through an application of these tools. Concluding section of the research will be included in fourth chapter.

II. News Making Process of Television

Television news is a genre of great significance for both television itself and the students of media studies. Its general importance emerges from a range of factors. For instance, television news provides audience with information about what are matters of worldly consequences, including the issues beyond our immediate realm. It tends to be central to the identity of television networks, with news bulletin sometimes referred to as 'flagship programs'. News also constitutes part of a daily ritual for many people. The centrality of television news at key cultural moments, such as the Royal takeover, eight point pacts between seven party alliances (SPA) and CPN-Maoist would add credence to this.

In media studies, however, the analysis of television news has centered on question surrounding its supposed accuracy and the political implications of the version of the world generated by news bulletins. Many analysts have argued, that the news cannot simply reflect reality as it occurs, but most inevitably represent events and ideas in particular ways. This is because news, like any other text, is "socially constructed" (Tuchman 2) that produces versions of any reality. Therefore, news is manufactured according to the rituals and routines of news production rather than a set of spontaneous events.

Thus, television news emerges from complex process of construction and reconstruction. News producers and journalist tend to argue that, in line with political and legal constraints, television news provides audiences with the truth, and indeed a window onto the world. But, news constructs a particular version of event, where the version is shaped by a wider context. The state explicitly controls news output and is able to disseminate what is, in fact, propaganda. Critics like Herman and Chomsky argue that governing parties are able, through structure of news reporting, to ensure

that certain views prevail, “the powerful are able to fix the premises of discourse, to decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear and think about, and to ‘manage’ public opinion by regular propaganda campaigns” (Manufacturing Consent XI). News thus becomes a means for the ruling group to control ideas in society. It collects, selects, presents and constitutes dominant ideology, and serves ruling political interests and the use of language favoring the government and employer. Media faces more or less explicit state regulation in addition long-term exposure to such regulation eventually results in a notable degree of self-censorship in agenda setting among news personnel.

The process of agenda-setting in the field television news is able to set the agenda in choice and ordering of items, by the privileging one voice before another. News programs have become dependent on an agenda set by the agencies such as government or concerned authority. It seems natural but the selection, construction and presentation of news veils efforts to promulgate a dominant ideology. So news coverage might set an agenda concentrating merely on the events rather than its political origin. The result is seen as the perpetuation of an agenda sympathetic to the ruling group.

News coverage of certain political groups are over or under-represented on television, compared to their occurrence in population, can provide insight into the way dominant ideologies and values are reflected and reinforced by mainstream television. Nepal Television, a government funding television, often puts the ruling party at first priority in news coverage. It has been run according to government policy since its establishment. Because government policy towards media and mass communications generally encompasses two forms of intervention: regulation and funding. These can be used to shape a media system in order to promote ideals or

objectives of their own. Government run television or media systems are extremely common, particularly in the developing countries like Nepal. In this system the control of content and policy in general is handled directly by government. The system is clearly advantageous for authoritarian governments wishing to control information and create state-sanctioned forms of politics. In other words, government tries to create hegemony by controlling information.

The concept of hegemony extensively used in media has come to be of central theoretical importance. It is a concept linked to the notion of power and ideology. The hegemonic model argues that television has the capacity to construct a limited range of views of the world. More specifically, television promotes a set of views based on the ideas of a ruling block or alliance. Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, introduced the term and several others followed him as Gramscians. They believe that the role of media is important because journalism is dominated by a particular worldview, which affectively wipes out other ways of seeing and presenting things. Nepal television too put the king and his royal family members as prime importance over other politicians and common peoples. By giving prime coverage to the king and his allies Nepal television deify the king. It created an image of divine king during his direct rule, an image which was dominant ideology for news 'code' of the then.

The news 'code' is used to refer to a range of audio-visual systems, which have the capacity to construct and organize meaning in television news. The types of news code which television uses, nothing then conceptual separation but actual interrelationship. The reality of news is already politically encoded- that is, while there may be an empirical reality, such reality is then encoded by electronically also by technical codes, including camera, lighting, editing, sound. Close-up shot of news

has come to signify intimacy. But, reality encoded by dominant ideology create powerful discourse than the electronically encoded reality.

'Encoding/decoding' model of media production and reception was developed by Stuart Hall- at the center for contemporary cultural studies in England. The model was an attempt to move beyond linear, transmission theories of mass communication; ideology and representation. It has been extremely influential in providing a general framework for the analysis of media power. Encoding refers to the ideological process that informs how the world is represented in television news. So, the decision to lead the news with a publicity stunt by a leading politician is ideological because, "the visual sign is probably a more universal than the linguistic [one]" (Hall, 31). In the sense, politics is seen as defined and informed by political elites. So that "The majority of the television audience had much difficulty in literally or denotatively identifying what the visual signs they see on the screen refer to" (Hall, 30) due to professionalism in the form and style of coverage of politicians is the routines of news journalism.

Government run television channels financially depends upon the government and do not have independent financial policy of their own. They are funded and economically supported by the government. Therefore, government takes all their overhead costs and determines financial policy as well. Because of their dependency to the government, the government run television is likely to be tailored the needs and interests of government in its news. In other words, government control television either subtly or overtly reflects the interests of those in power. This has an ideological consequence. It is in interests of government-fund media to favor politicians rather than interest of common citizens and to exclude negative messages about government officials and those politicians in power. Therefore, aim of the government funded

television is to identify frame works and interests likely to promote certain kinds of message or forms of representation that support the government policy at the expense of others non favorable to them. Therefore, the head of those media organization is likely to have political views commensurate with their position as a member of ruling party. They are, in turn, likely to appoint senior executives broadly sympathetic to those views, there by establishing a chain of command in which governments interest will be represented without their direct intervention in agenda-setting and program-making.

In television and media studies, 'ideology' is generally understood to refer to a system of ideas, assumption and beliefs. In his essay "Ideology and ideological state Apparatus" Louis Althusser argues that the popular use of the term carries negative connotation, ideology being associated with particularly doctrinaire or inflexible sets of usually political-beliefs. But in television studies, ideology is neither good nor bad, merely necessary. Louis Althusser describes television radio and press as "the communication ideological state Apparatus" (111). He conceived the mass media – along institutions like "the school and the church as ideological state apparatuses" (112) crucial to the maintenance of a society's support for one set of ideological beliefs over another.

The communication apparatus tend to express the ideological positions of those with power, suggesting the notion of 'dominant ideology' that serves the needs and interest of a powerful elite "by cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc. by means of the press, the radio and television" (Althusser, 117). Powerful elite tries to indoctrinate people through the means of television because:

Many people spend most of their time watching television, but watching television does not benefit the ruling class, it may not be chiefly because it helps to convey its own ideology to a docile populace. What is politically important about television is probably (less) its ideological content than the act of watching it. Watching television for long stretches confirms individuals as passive, isolated, privatized roles and consumes a good deal of time that could be put to productive political uses. It is more a form of social control than an ideological apparatus. (Eagleton 34-35)

Whether it is an ideological apparatus or a social control, television has the power to control people's thought and motivate them according to its own version of presentation.

Television provides the arena for struggle to dominant ideologies because the function of television is to shape the ruling world view over the mass. World view is ideology that becomes the instrument of rule for government. Government "needs instrumental knowledge because [it] need[s] to control our environment" (Eagleton, 131). So, the states of apparatus are helpful to control the environment because;

the ideological state apparatus 'functions' massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, in so far as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified despite its diversity and its contradictions, beneath the ruling ideology, which is the ideology of the ruling class. (Althusser, 112)

Therefore, being a part of ideological state apparatus, television also tries to indoctrinate people according to the ruling ideology.

Issues of representation are key component in ideological struggle. In representation “what matters is not so much what is said, but who says it to whom for what purpose” (Eagleton 110) is important. Representation is central in television study because it is closely linked to issues of depicting reality. Although not all media text set out to be ‘realistic’, many of them do set out to do so, and there is historic and specific connection between television and the idea of ‘reflecting reality’. However, whether a television program sets out to be realistic or not, is always engages in a process of representation.

Understanding representation takes us into an exploration of power and ideology. Representation or ‘to represent’ can mean ‘to present or depict something’. In other words, it is a process of construction of reality or the ‘re-presentation of the world because it emphasizes the process of construction within television news. The process of construction of reality is a social phenomenon because, “the truth value of a proposition is entirely a matter of its social function, a reflex of power interests it promotes” (110). In essence, by virtue of the very process of making television news, what we see can never provide viewer with a simple, unmediated access to the ‘real world’. No matter how ‘realistic’ the presentation might be, what we see on screen will be a construction, involving decisions about what to select for recording, where to place camera and how to edit the material.

We can understand representation in another way too, from this perspective a statesperson or politician is a ‘representative’ of the people. Thinking of it this way, television images can be seen to represent or ‘stand in for’ us, the citizens. Such an understanding of the term leads us to think how social groups are shown on television and in particular how stereotypical representations may come about. This is the way of conceptualizing representation about the relationship of representation to reality. It

implies that television representations are a reflection or may be a distortion of something 'true' or 'real'. It is the idea that something 'real' is or was there already, through television, has been reflected or distorted. Therefore, "The communications media [television] are often felt to be a potent means by which a dominant ideology is disseminated: but this assumption should not go unquestioned" (Eagleton 84). Then, we can all understand and grasp what is real, and we can measure how far media images are true to that reality or how far they distorted that reality.

The important point here is that representations are produced and circulated within a context of meanings but this is governed by a system of power, offering legitimacy to some meanings and marginalizing others. So some ideas and meanings come to dominate while others are left out. In other words, what is being represented is not 'the truth' but a representation of the truth as seen by the ruling elite. Therefore, power is exercised by creating discourse.

Michael Foucault, a post-structuralist critic, developed a theory of discourse in relation to the power structures operating in society. Foucault's main thesis is that discourse is involved in power. He views that discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social and political power operate through discourse. The discourse, therefore, is inseparable from power because discourse is the ordering force that governs every institution. The discursive formations have enabled institutions to wield power and domination by defining and excluding 'the other'. For this purpose, certain set standards and their dichotomies are produced and imposed on society as definitive of human existence and are operated in such a way, which have real effects on society's institutions. Discourses, according to Foucault, are produced in such a way that the concepts of madness, criminality, sexual abnormality, and so on are defined in relation to sanity, justice and sexual normality. Such discursive formulation

massively determine and constrain the forms of knowledge, the type of normality and the nature of subjectivity which prevail a particular period. Foucault argues that the rules and procedures, which determine what is, considered normal or rational, have the power to silence what they exclude. His main point, here, is that meaning of any discourse depends on who controls it. Foucault, “simply identifies truth with power so that whatever discursive practices are operative or have powers in a given society are true or constitute a regime of truth” (102). For example, people recognize particular piece of philosophy or scientific theory as true only if it fits the descriptions of truth laid down by the intellectuals or the political authorities of the day, by members of the ruling elite or by the prevailing ideologies of knowledge.

Finally, television news can be decoded to show its ideological role in representation. The process of decoding helps to question, “That representation are a reflection or distortion of something real- we need to go beyond this, to see representation as constitutive” (Hall 1997). We need to ask question whether events in the world really do have one essential fixed or true meaning against which distortion could be measured. In Stuart Hall’s perspective, there will never be any final fixed meaning. Representation cannot capture the real event because what is being represented- that is, the initial event- is dubious in the first place. Reality is slippery, not fixed or known at all. Hall thus argues that reality does not exist meaningfully until it has been represented because it has no meaning at the then. Representation does not occur after the event but becomes part of the event itself. What we call ‘reality does not exist outside the process of representation. Hall says, “Nothing meaningful exists outside of discourse” (1997). The task of television studies is not simply to try to measure the gap between reality and representation, but to try to understand how meanings are produced through practices. To do this, we have to

unpick images, get inside them and interrogate them. We communicate meaning through system of representation. In so doing, make and re-make the world through its representation.

News, like any other text, is constructed from an infinite range of 'would be versions' in terms of potential stories, resources, modes of delivery and languages.

The result is that news stories and bulletins develop a particular narrative and meaning form multiple possibilities.

III. Representation of Maoists in Nepal Television News, 1st Feb. 2005 to 1st Feb. 2006

On February 1, 2005, Nepal Television (NTV) telecast live the highly awaited Royal proclamation of king Gyanendra. In his proclamation, king Gyanendra took all state power in his own hand. He dismissed the then government under the Prime ministership of Sher Bahadur Deuba; declared state of emergency; and seized all fundamental rights of people. The security forces remanded political leaders, and independent press was taken into control by the army. In a word, this was a 'Royal Coup' assisted by army. Though king Gyanendra said this move was for "restoration of sustainable peace and exercise in meaningful democracy" (Feb 1, 2005), his real intention behind the 'coup' was overtly political ambition. He said the move was mandatory and blamed all the leaders of political parties for "bloodshed, violence and devastation [that] have pushed the country to the brink of destruction, those engaged in politics in the name of people continue to shot their eyes to their welfare" (Feb, 1 2005). He was referring to the Maoist insurgency that hit the country since February 13, 1996. Successive governments failed to tackle the insurgency and the political process of the nation had been obstructed. The then government could not conduct parliamentary election and the insurgents went back from the two level talks with the government when the latter killed twenty-one unarmed cadres of the former's at Doramba of Ramechhap district. These all circumstances made the government ill function and gave way to the king for 'Royal Coup'.

King Gyanendra rationalized his move by pointing its necessity for effective tackling the Maoists "terrorist" who, in his own words, "missed the way taking up arms against the nation and people, and are engaged in criminal activity against democracy" (Feb 1, 2005). As expected by many, he was committed to crush Maoist

by deploying the army. Though in his proclamation he called them “to return to the mainstream of national politics peacefully” (Feb 1, 2005), at the same moment he declared them “terrorist” and warned “Nepal is committed to eliminating terrorism in her own interest as well as in the interest of democracies around the world. Nepal aspires for peace- for herself, her neighbors and south Asia and to rid the world the threat to peace” (Feb 1, 2005). King Gyanendra claimed the impact of Nepali Maoist insurgency was tied to the global threat of terrorism, and caused by some international terrorist group. But, what he forgot, however, is though they had picked up arms; Nepali Maoists were political insurgents who believe in violent means of politics to overthrow monarchy through ‘people’s war’. Because of their direct confrontation with the monarchy, king Gyanendra accused they were whimsical and represented an “In furious habit of an individual or group negating the wishes of the Nepali people as well as the national interest and acting through sponsored mobs can not form our national agenda” (Feb 1, 2005). Negating Maoist agenda as sponsored mobs, king Gyanendra declared another ‘war on terrorism’ to tackle them.

Nepal Television always performs its duty of state owned television channel. King and his royal family and the ruling party were in first priority on NTV news coverage. On his February 1st, ‘coup’ king declared himself as the chairman of council of ministers besides being head of the state. NTV therefore came under the scrutiny of king to fight against Maoist insurgency. Some state run television channel makes ruling ideology as their directive principle for agenda setting in news; NTV too put king’s declaration as its directive ideology. It took for granted the King’s statement that the Maoists ‘missed the way’ are ‘engaged in criminal activity against democracy’, ‘took up arms against the nation, people, and therefore were ‘terrorists’.

NTV had become 'Ideological State Apparatus' for king to exercise his anti-Maoist propaganda.

Following the King's Royal proclamation Nepal Television authority changed their editorial policy and began to represent Maoists as 'terrorist' group instead of political insurgents in its news. Newspersons and correspondents loyal to the king came to foreground and those who were loyal to the democratic political parties and Maoist insurgents were relieved from duty. Form February 1, 2005 NTV news became king's news and Maoists became 'terrorists'. Meanwhile, Maoists were successful in keeping themselves in NTV news' agenda though the latter declared them 'terrorist'. A massive change had occurred in the way of representation. Earlier they were presented as a political insurgents or rebel organization but later they were presented as 'terrorist'. King Gyanendra and Maoist were the two who were covered in NTV news-primarily, the former as a hero or savior, while the latter as villains or 'terrorists'. Since the aforementioned date, NTV defamed Maoists as engaged in terrorist activity while the security forces that supported the king's government became adventurous heroes.

Soon after the king's Royal Proclamation all the media of country were controlled by the then Royal Nepal army (RNA)'s gunmen. Censorship on press was in action and all publishing materials were effected by the army. On February 2, 2005 NTV news showed king Gyanendra "form[ed] ten members' cabinet chaired by himself and Tanka Dhakal, a long time supporter of the king was appointed minister for Information and Communication" (NTV news). After his appointment, talking to the journalists he said, "His duty will be to work as per the guidelines set by the Royal Proclamation" (NTV news).

Newsroom policy is often a hidden phenomenon that is effective in maintaining political control of the news. Because, the media [television] used the power to push forward their frames as the ballent ones that conditions and limits public discussion. News mainly relies on official sources. NTV solely relies on the Public Relation Directorate (PRD) of the then RNA on Maoist related news coverage. Government paralyzed independent reporting of news by issuing a notice on Feb 1, 2005; “News supporting terrorist acts to be punished”:

The ministry of information and communication has made it clear that unless any publication or broadcasting houses acquires information along with the sources from security bodies, the publication or broadcasting house publishing or broadcasting interview, article, news, information, reading materials, opinion or personal views that directly or indirectly instigate or support terrorist and destructive activities and terrorism will be punished. (NTV news)

This notice aired on NTV news read that Maoists related news curtailed only to the Public Relation Directorate of Royal Nepal Army. NTV becomes the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and RNA, Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) to the government. One was exercised through ideology while the other depended upon using force.

News coverage of Maoist in NTV is not only the news about Maoist insurgents but representation of Maoist and they were represented according to the ruling ideology set by Royal Proclamation. NTV’s first news coverage about Maoist after Royal Coup was a press release of Ministry of Defense which read; “five Maoist terrorists were killed in the latest operation carried out by the security forces in various parts of the country” (Feb 3, 2005). But, the press release was vague in itself

because it did not specify where those operations were carried out, and identities of the dead insurgents were not disclosed. It labeled them as terrorists and this became their identity.

NTV broadcast news of government ministers as if they had magical solution concerning Maoist movement. Government minister for Civil Aviation, Tourism and Culture Buddhi Raj Bajracharya said, “Committee would be formed soon for talks with Maoist” and he blamed other democratic political parties that they “lacked seriousness when thousand lost their lives” (Feb 6, 2005). As many ministers as there were so was the proliferation of ideas to cope with Maoist. King Gyanendra appointed two former punchayat Prime Ministers- Dr. Tulsi Giri and Kirtinidhi Bista- as vice chairman for council of ministers on February 14, 2005. NTV showed Dr. Giri talking to the journalists in the western entrance of royal palace; telling them that there was no possibility of talk with the ‘terrorists’ and that they would be demolished by force. With Dr. Giri’s remark, the earlier claim of talk by minister Bajracharya also shattered.

NTV set newsroom policy to frame Maoist’s ‘people’s war’ was nothing but a losing battle with the government army. They were so weak to the security forces to fight. On Feb 17, 2005, NTV read a news story:

Maoist suffer heavy casualties in Rolpa at eight hundred Maoist terrorist who had gathered at Kureli Kharikot area of Rolpa district yesterday were forced to disperse after the security personnel launched operation there. According to eyewitness, over twenty five terrorist might have been killed and a large number of others wounded in the operation. (NTV news)

This press release by PRD of RNA also turned into a merely propaganda influenced by publicity stunt. Security forces carried out the operation, they also took control of the clash site but they could not find any death body of the militant. If the security forces really stormed over the insurgents, they could have found some dead bodies of Maoist militant in the clash site. NTV tried to make the issue bigger by adding a large number of others wounded in the operation onto the list of those who had actually died.

News is constructed from an infinite range of would-be version in terms of potential stories, resources, modes of delivery and language. News stories and bulletins develop a particular narrative and meaning from multiple possibilities. This theory would be applicable to the following story entitled “Twelve Maoists killed as local retaliate in Kapilvastu”. The story further read:

In a fit of anger, the outrageous locals of Kapilvastu district killed twelve Maoists in a clash at Jhinga of Ganeshpur VDC. According to DPR of army, local of Ganeshpur VDC of the district went to the Maoist and pleaded them free two villagers Dukha Seteli of Ganeshpur VDC ward no5 and Indra Bahadur Bhujel of khurhariya VDC ward no 1 who had been abducted and severely tortured by the Maoist. But the Maoist threatened the locals in return.

About fifteen hundred to two thousand locals retorted against the atrocity and fought with the terrorist. (Feb 18, 2005).

NTV promoted such story as people’s spontaneous rise anger against the Maoists in anger. It is no doubt that Maoist had tortured several innocent villagers but the killings of so-called Maoist by the locals were actually by the infiltrated army men and state sponsored vigilantes.

The follow up of the same story came on February 11 and 20, 2005, as eight more Maoists had been killed in the 'local' retaliation. NTV showed a video about 1:30 minute of sloganeering locals against Maoist. They torched the so called Maoists' houses and dead bodies of women and children who had died in the retaliation. NTV lauded the vigilante's' attack and it did not condemn the death of those children because they were 'terrorists' children. Those who had died were actually not the Maoist but innocent villagers and were not involved in any 'terrorist' activity as claimed by NTV news according to the investigation of UN office of High Commissner for Human Right in Nepal.

On government-run television, the control of content and policy in general is handled directly by the government. This system is clearly advantageous for totalitarian governments wishing to control information. NTV's newsroom policy was also regulated and shaped by the ideology of royal government chaired by king Gyanendra. The government appoints the chief executive of state-run television. He is either a member of ruling party or a sympathizer of the ruling elite. In NTV's case, king Gyanendra's policy about Maoist became its newsroom policy about them. NTV news showed a video of king Gyanendra talking to the editors of different broadsheet dailies: "There are only two isms in the country now – terrorism and 'Peacism'. We have identified terrorism, and we are going to pursue to resolve it. Terrorism is not accepted any more in Nepal" (Feb 24). King's words determined NTV's newsroom policy. Then Maoist ideology represented the 'terrorists' bent and king's ideology represented 'Pacifist' bent in NTV news. King Gynendra had said, 'terrorism is not accepted anymore' in Nepal, but news story about 'terrorist' got coverage primarily in NTV news. But, Maoist news came in NTV along with 'terrorist' tag.

Therefore, the ‘terrorist’ tag became the dominant ideology for NTV news encoding. Encoding refers to the ideological, professional and technical processes that inform how the world is represented or signified in media text. To analyze Maoist representation in NTV news the ideological, professional and technical processes should also be taken into consideration. Professional newsmen or journalists are involved in construction and dissemination of news. They are well aware to the editorial or newsroom policy so that, news constructs a particular version of events among the many where this version is shaped by a wider context. This is plainly illustrated where the state explicitly controls news output and becomes able to disseminate what is, in effect, propaganda.

NTV news made two types of propaganda about Maoist. First, they are losing battle with the government’s security forces, and the other was that the organization internally divided ideologically. NTV broadcast numerous news story about the security operation carried out by the security forces against Maoist insurgents and death of insurgents. Heavy casualties of the insurgents’ side automatically came into main story on NTV news. For example, NTV broadcast news story entitled, “forces recover forty-six bodies of Maoist terrorist killed in Bardia”:

The security forces have recovered forty-six bodies of the Maoist terrorist killed in Monday’s clash between the two sides in Mahamadpur VDC ward no four in Bardia district in mid-west Nepal. The terrorist are reported to have suffered heavy loses in the fighting as many more of these killed were taken by their comrades. Journalist and human right activists who reached the site of the incident said that a large number of Maoist had died while four

security personnel- two Royal Nepal army (RNA) soldiers and two policeman have bereaved their lives in the operation (March 2, 2005)

This news story was telecast along with two minutes long video clips of incident site and inspecting journalists and human right activists. Those newsmen and right activists were taken into the site in an army helicopter on fourth march, 2005. Most portion of the video was spent to show the dead bodies of Maoist militants destroyed by bomb and bullets. They scattered around the clash site covered by flies. But, the bodies of dead security personnel were shown covered by white clothes with high respect.

NTV fought ideological war against Maoist along with the government's security forces. The government force counts its success with the number of death militants. More number of dead militants is considered as high success of the security forces. NTV turned these events in to high publicity stunts through its news coverage. For NTV, the greater number of dead militants, the bigger the coverage was. The greatest ever success for security forces and the largest coverage for NTV during the first year of king Gyanendra's royal regime was the Khara attack by the RNA, an attack that cost 113 lives of Maoist on April five to six of 2005. NTV covered this event as main news and showed five minutes long video in its news on April 7, 2005:

The terrorist, who have been demoralized by extensive security operation, local resident's strong retaliation and internal rift within the group, second worst defeat at Khara of Rukum district in mid-west Nepal. The security forces recovered fifty [which toll one hundred thirteen on April 9] bodies of the armed terrorist who were killed in a clash there on Thursday this week, the PRD of RNA said. The battle site and the local eyewitness said the hundreds of other terrorist could

have died in the fighting. According to directorate, the forces strongly countered the terrorist who had come in thousands to attack Khara-based security base at 6:30 pm on Thursday and foiled their attempt.

The fighting lasted till Friday morning. (NTV news)

Probably this event was Maoist's largest loss in its fight against the RNA after the royal coup. NTV news video showed the deformed bodies of dead Maoist scattered around the incident site. Both video of April 7 and 9 showed the security forces pulling dead bodies of Maoist out from the grave where they were buried by their comrades. The video was so soul searing but NTV praised only RNA for their 'successes'.

NTV recalled a past incident with this news story. This was also about the RNA attack on same area two years earlier: "It is worth recalling that about two year earlier, the security forces killed two hundred sixty seven terrorist who had attacked the same base camp and seized dozens of their automatic rifles, thousand of bullets, a large number of bombs of various types as well as a huge amounts of explosives" (NTV news). But, this was not as large an attack as claimed by NTV news. RNA could not get control over the Lisne Lake of Khara this time. BBC reporter Daniel Lak was there on the site while RNA cordoned the Lisne lake of Khara. NTV news claimed two hundred sixty seven Maoists had died in this incident but Lak said on live report to the Radio that he saw only twenty-two dead bodies of militants. This also turned into a propaganda spread by NTV.

The frequent attack by the security forces against Maoist and its coverage in NTV news become routine job for NTV newsmen. They have nothing new to come up with. They came with the same story but different in terms of incident site and the number of deaths. On other part of the story, almost the same old story repeated again.

NTV covered a news story about the security forces killing more than one hundred fifty Maoist insurgents on June 6, 2005;

The four hour long fighting between the security forces and the terrorist in the forest area of Masuria VDC in Kailali district in Monday left at least one hundred fifty terrorist dead injury hundreds.

The fighting started at 4:30 pm and continued till 8:00 in the evening claimed the lives thirteen army soldiers of the RNA and one security personnel of armed police force, security source said. The Maoist had spread an ambush in an area of three square kilometers to destroy entire squad of security forces but the forces failed the Maoist attempt to trap them in the ambush exhibiting their fighting skills and forcing the terrorist to flee, the far-western divisional headquarters of the RNA Deepayal said. The security forces have found six dead bodies of the terrorist from the encounter site. The terrorist took away the dead bodies of their fellow combatants in three buses, three tractors and motorcycles towards a southern forest. (NTV news)

This story is also a repetitive stance made by NTV newsmen. The clash site is new and number of dead militants high but the process of news making is same from the earlier side. Maoist came to attack the security base camp, the security forces resisted strongly and the militants had flown because of the heavy resistance. The security forces covered few dead bodies and suspected hundreds of other might have been killed. The dead militias become sign of victory for security forces and NTV newsmen but in contrary the death of the security forces covered as they got 'martyrdom'.

Narrative of NTV news coverage was totally changed when the rebel's side carried out the attack. Therefore, Maoist attack on security base camp was also covered as terrorist, barbaric and cowardice activities. On the other hand, if any soldiers of security forces were killed, this was described as cases of the 'martyrdom' while fighting for the nation. NTV covered news of Maoist attack on Pili base camp of Kalikot district on August 6, 2005 in this way: "forty security personnel attained martyrdom in the overnight clashes with the terrorist. The terrorist too suffered huge reverse with more than three hundred of them presumed killed, according to the local eyewitness" (Aug 7, 2005). Government policy towards Maoist was reflected in this news coverage. If the death was on Maoist side, it became great victory for the security forces.

Maoist further challenged the statements made by NTV and the then government that they were losing the battle. They further proved their capacity by attacking at Thankot police post, the entry point of Katmandu valley, the capital city of Nepal. NTV covered this event on January 14, 2006 news. The attack was carried out a few hours before the news was aired. The news reads "Eleven police killed in terror attacks":

Eleven police personnel including an inspector lost their lives in a series of attack launched by the Maoist terrorist in various police post in the Katmandu valley this evening. According to police sources, at least ten police personnel including an inspector Mahesh Rawal were killed in an attack on Thankot police check post. Likewise, an assistant sub-inspector died another attack on Dadhikot police post in Bhaktapur. The terrorist who had come in army uniform made a

surprise attack, taking advantage of roll call at Thankot police post.

(NTV news)

Maoist had carried out this attack after the vice chairman of the government Dr. Tulsi Giri had remarked that the attacking capacity of Maoist has been significantly reduced through continuous security operation by the security forces.

Besides their attack on police post and army barracks both in small and large scale, Maoist carried out various civilian attacks that strengthened NTV claim. These incidents obviously got full fledged coverage in NTV news. Maoist had brutally killed ten villagers in Nawal Parasi district and got NTV coverage as; “Ten killed for refusing to join terrorist group”:

The terrorist have brutally murdered ten innocent villagers of Bargadwa in Somani VDC-7 in Nawal Parasi district. The terrorist, who were defeated after attacking the local retaliation committee at about 11:00 pm took the sleeping people out and shot them dead. The PRD of RNA said that the victims were killed after they refused to join the terrorist group. (April, 2005)

This was the brutal killings but what was significant is that the news was based on the RNA PRD’s press release. Though this was a heinous act of Maoist but the news was based on ruling ideology. Neither RNA gave detail report of this incident nor NTV tried to covered this incident independently.

NTV’s biggest ever coverage about Maoist was the latter’s notorious civilian attacks that claimed thirty eight lives and seventy two others were injured at Bander mudhe in Madi village of Chitwan district on June 5, 2005 as a passenger bus caught on ambush set by them. The news reads:

At least thirty eight people were killed and over seventy two injured when a passenger bus ran over an ambush set up by the terrorist at Bandermudhe River in Madi village of Chitwan district today. The bus with the registration number Na 2 Kha 3245 was caught in the ambush at the river that lies between ward no 1 and 4 of Kalyanpur VDC at 8:00 am this morning. Thirty six passenger including six children died on the spot while two succumbed their injuries while undergoing treatment at Bharatpur Hospital. (NTV news)

This news was broadcast on NTV along with the video coverage of the incident. The coverage showed the dead bodies who lost their lives in this attack, the destroyed passenger bus, injured people were undergoing treatment at Bharatpur hospital and crying peoples who lost their loved ones in this attack.

The video coverage of this attack was so powerful because the soul-searing images of the attack told the story of tears, rage and devastation. Like the lens of camera that close to its subjects, the images blur everything behind them commanding attention, urging our mind to complete the picture. The visual representation of violence stunned the sense of the viewers giving the presenter a chance to communicate whatever he wanted to. By this coverage, NTV succeeded to convey its terrorist tag ideology about the Maoists.

But, the security forces always get coverage as liberator and savior of people in NTV news in contrary to the Maoist. RNA was mobilized to crush Maoist as the government had already declared state of emergency. King Gyanendra also the supreme commander of RNA said, “The RNA was mobilized to provide security to the countrymen suffering from the brunt of terrorism and protect their fundamental rights guaranteed by constitution” (April 4, 2005). But, this mandate of supreme

commander made RNA accountable to no one. They were themselves involved in extortion, killing and acts of missing people. RNA barracks were used for torture-camp and secret detention center. But, these activities were not getting coverage in NTV news. If they got any, they were only the distortion of reality.

Another instance of such a distortion of news broadcast in NTV aired on September 16, 2005 after UN Special Rapporteur of Commission on Human Rights on Torture Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Manfred Nowak flays both the security forces and the Maoist, however, NTV distorted the news and maintained that Nowak only criticized “terrorist’s inhuman act” (NTV, news). Nowak had visited many army barracks and detention center and talked to many detainees. He said in his report that there was corporal punishment in those detention centers. But some of these detention centers had worst record in inhuman punishment and missing of detainees. NTV news focuses on Nowak’s request to the government to rectify the convention against torture and enact or Repeal Legislation. Nowak report said both the security forces and the Maoist were involved in inhuman act of torture and punishment such as, “beating with sticks on the legs, piercing of legs with metal rods, beating with rifle butts on ankles and even mutilation, such as amputation of toes” (NTV news). NTV news simply described these were only Maoist deeds.

Confrontation between top brass leadership within the Maoist also received prime coverage in NTV news. Dr. Baburam Bhattarai ideologically confronted with Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias ‘Prachanda’, and Dr. Bhattarai and his wife Hisila Yami were expelled from the party. This incident was reported in a distorted manner on NTV. NTV said that Dr. Bhattarai was primarily supporter of

peace and Prachanda had discarded Bhattarai's stance, an obvious falsification of the event. NTV news read this story as, "Dr. Baburam Bhattarai expelled from his party":

The so-called politburo member of the Maoist terrorist' Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and his wife Hisila Yami have been expelled from the party. It has been learnt that they were expelled by the central committee of the Maoist. Meanwhile, houses and public place in Lanti Bazaar and Shankhamul of chhaya chhettera of Salyan district reportedly bear wall painting with slogan like, 'down with Prachanda path', 'declare ceasefire immediately', 'hold peace talk immediately' says the PRD of RNA (March 14, 2005)

Citing the wall painting RNA tried to prove that Dr. Baburam Bhattarai was for peace talk and declaring cease-fire. However, Prachanda was against the peace process.

NTV used this confrontation as a divide and rule policy of the government. News of conflict within Maoist leadership was frequently broadcast in NTV based on RNA's press release. "Reports of depending internal squabble within the Maoist terrorist outfit are coming to the fore with more and more terrorist stepping against their so called supremo Prachanda. They have engaged in the campaign of sloganeering against different part of Illam and Taplejung, in far-east Nepal" (March 18, 2005). This news was not independently verified and Maoist spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara discarded this allegation. Despite this, however, NTV follow up news confirmed that Dr. Bhattarai being expelled from his party. This is what the news report said:

The Maoist confirmed that Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has been relieved from the responsibilities of the terrorist group following his clash with Prachanda. The FM radio operated by the rebels from a secret location

in Pyuthan district quoting a statement one of their leaders identified as Biplav, announced a 7:30 pm Saturday that the terrorist group took action against Dr Baburam Bhattarai and his wife Hisila Yami. (March 19, 2005)

NTV further verified the internal conflict of Maoist based on an audio tape, which, the RNA maintained, consorted of the voice of Maoist supremo Prachanda's. In this audio clip, Prachanda could be heard talking to top brass of Maoist leadership and trying to justify the feud inside their organization. The government publicized this conflict among Maoist leadership as a consequence of improving security situation.

“Skirmishes break out between Baburam, Prachanda Factions. Security situation in western Tarai improves” (March 22, 2005). This story itself was a ridiculous one, especially when one question, how can the security situation of country improve when there is continuous gunfight. But with the media representation of these incidents the government claimed that Maoists are internally divided and they are not able to resist the security forces.

These distortions of news story were part of NTV's discourse formation. This discourse formation has enabled institution to wield power and dominate by defining and excluding 'the other'. Discourse is related to the power structures operating in society. Discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social and political power operates through discourses. The royal regime of king Gyanendra used social institutions like press, radio, television, religious forums for creating discourses and discourse practices. Discourse is related to power and power at that time was centered around king Gyanendra. The security forces (RNA, APF, NP and National Investigation Center) were solely accountable to him, all government Medias (NTV, Radio Nepal, the Rising Nepal and GorkhaPatra) were controlled by his men, and

press censorship on independent Medias was imposed. That helped king Gyanendra to create discourses that Maoists have ‘missed the way’, they are ‘engaged in destructive activities’ and, that they are ‘doing crime against people and democracy’.

Such discourse formation enabled NTV to wield power and dominate by defining Maoist as ‘terrorist’ and excluding them as ‘the other’. That became the blue print for NTV to represent Maoist in its news.

Therefore, main purpose of NTV’s discourse formation was to represent Maoist as terrorist and exclude Maoist as ‘the other’ because king Gyanendra said, “Terrorism is not accepted anymore in Nepal” (Feb 14, 2005). Though terrorism is not accepted in country, news of ‘terrorist’ is accepted and disseminated to public as ‘the other’. Maoists are not of these types who support peace and prosperity in country. They are involved in destructive activities, abduction, torture, kidnapping and murder of innocent people. And, news related to these activities of Maoists’ on NTV is important factor of discourse formation.

NTV’s repetitive broadcast about Maoists’ encounter with security forces and causalities in the rebel’s side is a form of discourse practices. Besides this NTV primarily broadcasted news in that security forces recovered arms and explosive from Maoist and stories about success of the security forces were aired frequently. Similar story about the security forces’ broadcast on NTV was they, “destroyed a factory producing various weapons and bombs set up clandestinely by the Maoist terrorist at Sisni Jungle area of Barcheni VDC, Doti district” (March 15, 2005). This news could not be confirmed independently and NTV version of interpretation got authenticity as it holds power to disseminate it.

Among the successful stories about RNA broadcast on NTV news was that it recovered ‘some’ weapons after the clash from Maoist side. This type of news

broadcasted with prime importance; “the security forces recovered thirty one guns that included a Galil and an AK-47 as well as SLRs, GF Rifles and 303s” (April 7, 2005) was to prove the victory of the security forces. The security forces recovered these weapons from Khara of Rukum district. Similarly, security forces had recovered “two SMG rifles, two MG 60s, and Insas rifles, nine SLR rifles, a communication set and a hand made pistol” (March 1, 2005) from the same area. NTV broadcast stories used such incidents to give that the security forces had become stronger than the Maoist at the same time, as per the ruling strategy, it did not broadcast news about those weapons that Maoist took away from Pili attack on August 6, 2005.

Discourse involves in power and is related to the power structure operating in society. In this way, the discourse formation about Maoist was also a power struggle between the Maoists and the king. State power was on the king’s hand and he held the power of social institutions. Maoists and king confronted each other directly because the former were committed to overthrow the institution of monarchy from Nepal. King through the ‘Royal Coup’ also sidelined other legitimate democratic political parties. Because of king Gyanendra’s coup new political alliance between seven democratic parties’ and Maoist became possible. The former were sidelined from political arena and the latter were declared as terrorist by the king’s government. This new political alliance also affected the power structure of society. Earlier government’s target was to cope with Maoist but now, because of this new alliance, the government had to tackle other political parties too. Such new social power balance creates new discourse in media. NTV started to treat Seven Parties Alliance (SPA) too as terrorists like the Maoists.

At initial phase of the alliance, NTV broadcasted speeches government ministers and royalist politicians cautioning the masses that the new political

alignment would be dangerous for the parties themselves and for the nation. NTV frequently broadcasted clips of Sachit Samsher Rana, Bharat Keshar Singh and government ministers saying, “Parties terrorist alliance will be suicidal” (Aug 9, 2005). This alliance created new discourse of power stakeholders. Talking to the NTV’s Mukesh Shrestha King Gyanendra responded about the alliance between SPA and Maoist in the following manner: “I have heard political parties are planning to forge a co-work with the terrorist; as they should be answerable to the people and not to myself” (Aug 29, 2005). King’s remarks on this alliance led to support of certain schools of the ruling elite but it could not affect the grooming understanding between SPA and Maoist.

The result of this understanding prompted the Maoist to declare unilateral ceasefire for three month on September 5, 2005. Maoist had issued a press release signed by chairman Prachanda declaring ceasefire and halt all offensive from their side, responding to this new development NTV news stated that “Truce declaration on India’s request it is difficult to believe the Maoist ‘terrorists’ announcement of stopping offensive from its side for three month reflects their intention for peace, considering their past breakage of the true and running away form the peace talks” (Aug 5, 2005). It is obvious this news story’s focus was not on Maoist declaration of truce, but in showing how they are not sincere concerning the peace process. NTV simply blamed Maoist for earlier breakage of the truce, and maintained that they were not responsible for peace talk. However, it did not say anything about the Doramba Carnage which was real cause leading to the break up.

The government did not identify Maoist’s unilateral ceasefire and rejected National Human Right Commission’s request to declare truce from government’s side to make it bilateral. NTV had already raised question about the honesty of Maoists in

truce and it broadcasted only those news that supported the government's stance, i.e. Maoists are not sincere on truce and the alliance between SPA and Maoists is nothing but a "bargaining for power" (Rana, Sept 5 2005). Government brought issue of nationality and blamed political parties "making noise for republic for foreigners instigation" (Giri, Sept. 19, 2005) as political parties had changed their statute, and would go for the republic state.

NTV created a discourse about the SPA and Maoist alliance that this would be an "unholy tie" (Rana, Nov 23, 2005). NTV news broadcasts often showed news, which criticized the new alignment between SPA and Maoist. Most of the broadcasts of that time were governments' ministers and leaders of royalist parties. Main theme of NTV news stories was that the political parties should reconcile with the king, but not with Maoist 'terrorist'. They criticized the SPA -Maoist alliance saying "some of the parties to strike an alliance with the terrorist at a time when elimination of terrorism has become first priority of the country are perilous to the nation itself" (Dhakal, Nov 5, 2005). In other words the royalists only pointed at the parties' fault but not at the king's who was mainly responsible for the latest political development.

NTV news spent most of its time to broadcast those news stories that criticized the alliance between democratic political parties and Maoist. The alliance was discarded as, 'unholy', "counterproductive if not corrected in time" and that it should be "taken as accomplices of terrorism for forming alliance with the terrorist and should be dealt with as per the country's law" (Rana, Nov 23, 2005). NTV news broadcasted the response of Satchit Samsher Rana, a royalist, besides broadcasting the main story that was twelve point Pact between the SPA and Maoist to establish peace in the nation. NTV had launched criticism campaign against the twelve point pact since then, "Terrorists do not come under the definition of citizen of a nation and they

have no legitimacy in taking decisions related to the country. Hence, talking and making alliance with them is unlawful.” (Nov 25, 2005). NTV news urged the alliance and the twelve points understanding between the Seven Parties and the Maoist and simply rejected the idea that it would end the violence and killing that had made country’s condition vulnerable.

Discourse is involved in power. Discourse and power are inseparable entity because discourse is ordering force that governs every institution. Certain set of standards and their dichotomies are produced and imposed on society as definitive of human existence, and operate in such ways which have real effects on society’s institution. NTV followed the government’s set standard on Maoist issue and the SPA, after it aligns with Maoists also came placed into the same category as the latter. Government threatened SPA that they will be treated as terrorist rather than calling them for reconciliation. Vice chairman Dr. Tulsi Giri, second in command of king Gyanendra’s government “ruled out reconciliation with any political force that would create a hoax” (Dec 21, 2005). Dr. Giri’s remark shows that how much the government was under pressure. But, he hid the pressure and ruled out any possibilities of negotiation between the SPA and the government. He was not ready to accept the new alliance of SPA and CPN-Maoist that would bring any positive result. Giri stated, “How can we reach out for dialogue with those who forge alliance with the terrorist that have been unleashing violence and talk about uprooting an establishment” (Dec 21, 2005). The major issue for government was not peace for nation and people but to sustain an establishment that had lost people’s consent. To show the government’s strength and the improving situation of the country Dr. Giri even remarked further that “striking capacity of the terrorist has been controlled that substantiates the government’s success in controlling terrorism” (Dec 21, 2005).

However, in contrary, the security situation of the country was degrading. He claimed, “Backbone of the terrorist has been broken” (Dec 21, 2005), while he really was of a quite difficult order.

Issues of nationality were the most powerful discourse that created and disseminated through NTV news after the SPA and the Maoist reached an understanding and declared a truce from Indian capital Delhi. The situation within the country was not favorable for the SPA to hold dialogue with the Maoist. Therefore, they reached Delhi and accepted the support of the Indian government, an action that was strategically necessary and important at that time.

Indian involvement in negotiation between the SPA and CPN-M became an issue about nationality for royal the government. NTV news created discourse of nationality and perpetuated the idea that the country’s problem should be solved within the country’s territory. NTV news broadcast the remark of minister for Education and Sports Radha Krishna Mainali is worth considering in this regard; “it is shameful to join hands with the terrorist and plead before India” (Nov 17, 2005). Government even rejected the truce declared by the Maoist and considered the alliance between the SPA and the Maoist as foreign intervention because “it happened from outside not from within the country-it will be great unfortunate if the efforts are made to establish peace through unpractical alliance” (Dhakal, Nov 23, 2005). In other word, the government laid emphasis on the process rather than in the result that might emerge from such process.

Involvement of power is important in discourse formation. The institution of monarchy was at the center of power in Nepali politics in royal regime of king Gyanendra and before his Royal Coup. King Gyanendra used discourse on nationality to oppose the SPA and Maoist alliance. On his first anniversary speech of Royal Coup

on February 1, 2006 said this,, “Politics indifferent to national pride- will neither benefit the nation not the people” (NTV news). King Gyanendra had power and controlled all institutions that constituted power. Since NTV is a state fund television controlled by the government, therefore, meaning of discourse created by NTV depended on government’s ideology.

IV CONCLUSION

This study took NTV news coverage of CPN-Maoist and analyzed the ideological role of the government in Maoist representation on NTV news during the period of 1st Feb 2005 to 1st Feb 2006. King Gyanendra, the then head of the state, declared himself also the head of the government through his Royal Proclamation on NTV live broadcast on 1st Feb 2005. This was an army backed 'coup', and, following it, all state power centered on him, which earlier was jointly shared by the elected government and the monarch. Communication Medias often become first target in every coup. King Gyanendra too captured all communication Medias, through his proclamation broadcasted on Nepal television, funded and run by the government. Television news is encoded by dominant ideology or the ideology of the ruling class. King Gyanendra declared Maoist as 'Terrorist' and NTV news reflected the ideology of the then government and represented them 'terrorist' as well. Representation is reflection or distortion of something real but it should not go unquestioned. Therefore, the present study questions the Maoist representation on NTV news in the aforementioned period.

NTV represented Maoists in its news as 'terrorists' acting through sponsored mobs. They were engaged in 'criminal activities against democracy' 'taking up arms' against the nation and people. NTV represented Maoists as engaged in extortion, abduction, killing innocent people, bombing civilian targets and as the violent one. Television news coverage constructs a reality that is disseminated by dominant ideology. Ideology of king Gyanendra was the dominant ideology to the NTV newsman. Maoists were state-declared 'terrorist' and they were treated in accordance with their policy.

King Gyanendra created discourse about Maoists that they were ‘terrorist’ had ‘missed the way’ and that was operated through NTV. Television is Communication State Apparatus that circulates dominant ideology on Ideological State Apparatus. This discourse formation of king enabled NTV to wield power and domination by defining the Maoist as ‘terrorist’ and, by excluding them as the people who ‘missed the way’ in other words certain standards and their dichotomies were imposed on society as definitive of the existence of the Maoists.

The dichotomy of terrorist tag affected NTV news coverage. Maoists were excluded from political arena as ‘terrorist’ but their news got coverage on NTV news. Maoists were covered as ‘brutal’ and ‘criminal’. Most of Maoist coverage on NTV news was about cross fighting with the security forces. The security forces were represented as brave and hero whereas Maoists were represented as ‘coward’, brutal and terrorist. The death of Maoist militants counted the success of the security forces. Large number of Maoist militants’ death was considered the success of the security forces. Therefore, massive security operations got prime coverage on NTV news. News coverage of Khara operation in Rukum district, Mahamadpur of Masuria of Kailali district got prime coverage on NTV news. News reports, video coverage of incident site, death bodies scattered around the site and arms if recovered any by the security forces got major time on NTV news bulletins.

However, if any security forces lost their lives in those fighting that became martyrdom. Moreover, news coverage to those incidents did not show detail report as those of the loss on other side. News coverage of Maoists attack on Pili base camp of RNA came only as ‘forty security personnel got martyrdom in fighting with terrorist’.

News, like any other text is constructed from an infinite range of would be version and has infinite range of meaning. But, NTV news was constructed only from

the perspective that favored the government ideology. It discarded other multiple versions while presenting its own. The coverage of Madi carnage got prime coverage in terms of its nature and modes of delivery. But, in case of Kalyanpur of Kapilvastu district, NTV news turned into total distortion and just propaganda. Twenty innocent villagers were killed in the name of Maoists in the so-called retaliation with the villagers. That was murder by army-infiltrated vigilantes. If the Madi carnage was the example of Maoists extremism, the Kapilvastu incident was the example of state sponsored terrorism. Both should have gotten equal coverage, but did not.

NTV news often distorted the story and gives them its own interpretation favorable to the government. NTV is depending on government in funding, therefore, government version of story is broadcasted in its news. NTV severely criticized the alliance between SPA and Maoists on November 2005. This was unusual because SPA does not believe in violent politics and Maoist took up arms to fulfill its political means. But, it was necessary alliance to stop violence and killing that had already cost more than thirteen thousand Nepalis' lives. Maoist declared unilateral ceasefire for three month, which was ruled out by the then government. Besides making favorable condition for negotiation with the political forces, the royal government further made situation of confrontation. The SPA and Maoist had signed twelve point pacts in Delhi; NTV news broadcasted a comment of royalist Sachit Samsheer Rana, 'SPA should be treated like the terrorist and they should be banned' besides the real story.

After the SPA Maoist alliance, NTV's job was to make propaganda about the twelve-point understanding. For people this was a hope for peace and political stability but for the government that was 'unnatural' and 'unacceptable' move. NTV news broadcasted king and his ministers as criticizing the understanding and saying

that 'it is unacceptable if efforts are made to establish peace through unnatural practices'. SPA and Maoist both are political parties, they both have different political ideology and beliefs and they could come on same places on common political agendas. King Gyanendra closed all possibilities for peace, invited confrontation, and tried to naturalize his move, the alliance between SPA and Maoist was natural and acceptable for people. NTV news coverage was driven by the ideology of authoritarian government that wished to control information in order to indoctrinate people its ideology.

To sum up, NTV news coverage was not independent and neutral in perspectives. It privileged government interpretation from among other infinite range of interpretation and meaning. It only reflected the ideology of the then government and become a part of Ideological State Apparatus that disseminates the dominant ideology, which in this case was the ideology of the king Gyanendra and, of those who supported the institution of monarchy.

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