

Civil War If Constitution Promulgated Siddhi B Ranjitkar

Dharma Nirpech Maha-samiti literally meaning Grand Coalition of Secularists was born thanks to Chairman of RPP-Nepal Kamal Thapa. Nepalese of different faiths rose up to face the challenges posed by the Hindu fundamentalists advocating for making Nepal a Hindu state. The government deployed the army along the east-west highway to ensure the movements of supplies trucks and passenger buses. Bijaya Gacchedar joined the Madheshi movement. Gacchedar even warned the establishment of a civil war if the new constitution were to promulgate on the 75% votes. Even Kamal Thapa quit the constitution-crafting process. However, Chairman of CA Subhas Nemwang said that the new constitution would be promulgated within two weeks. Chairman of UCPN-Maoist Prachanda had been trying to persuade the Madheshi leaders to join the constitution-crafting process quitting the protest movement hoping Gacchedar would jump in the bandwagon later. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala continued to harp on about holding talks with the Madheshi leaders doing nothing to this end.

On September 10, 2015, the secularists held a grand rally at Nayabaneswore in Kathmandu demanding to continue Nepal a secular state. The Hindu fundamentalists had been demanding to revert Nepal back to a Hindu state. Chairman of RPP-Nepal Kamal Thapa had been a champion of making Nepal a Hindu state again. His party had received about five percent of votes for the Hindu cause at the CA polls. Standing on this tiny percentage of these Nepalese votes, Mr. Thapa had been causing a tremendous civil commotion. He had support from the Indian Hindu fundamentalists and even more from the leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). So, he did not have any problem of money for holding numerous rallies for demanding to revert Nepal back to a Hindu state.

Chairman Thapa's efforts on building Nepal a Hindu state gave birth to the Dharma Nirpech Maha-samiti which practically means 'Grand Coalition of Secularists' to advocate retaining Nepal a secular state. Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Kirantis rallied the support for keeping Nepal a secular state. They held a huge rally at Nayabaneswore in Kathmandu on September 10, 2015. Leaders of all faiths spoke in turns for a secular state. Most of them warned the establishment of the consequences of denying them their religious rights. They also said that they would never accept the domination of one religion again.

Previously, some Muslims had supported the Hindu fundamentalists to make Nepal a Hindu state fearing the Christians would overrun them. They knew that most of the poor Muslims were lured into the Christianity, as the low caste Hindus became Christians to avoid the social stigma of being low caste people. Some Hindus even complained that the money played a great role in spreading Christianity in Nepal. Converting to Christianity, anybody could enjoy many financial, economic and social benefits the Hindu fundamentalists accused the converts of. However, Muslims also joined the grand coalition of the secularists this time to fight for a secular state. They also must have come to the sense that the Hindus would not tolerate their faith, too.

Probably, Muslims had a second thought. They must have thought that given Nepal became a Hindu state again, the Hindus might have the monopoly on a single faith. The Hindu fundamentalists might stop running even Muslim religious schools called madrassas. So, Muslims must have thought that they would be well off to be on the secular side rather than on the Hindu side. Hindus had been quite vocal against the Islamic schools run elsewhere in Nepal. When Islamist terrorists killed twelve Nepalese job seekers in Iraq, the police sitting next door closed their eyes to the destruction of mosque at Dilli bazaar in Kathmandu by the Hindu fundamentalists. Sher Bahadur Deuba was the prime minister at that time. The then Hindu king presided over the state.

Buddhists had endured the supremacy of the Hindu rulers for 240 years. They had suffered enough in the past. Simply being Buddhist monks, they had been exiled from the country. Now, they were not for living under the repression of the Hindus anymore. They wanted their culture and faiths have the same status as any faith in the country. They did not want anything more but the equal rights that had been denied for about two and a half centuries by the Hindu lords. So, they did not want any religion mentioned in a new constitution not even the freedom of religion.

The Hindu rulers discouraged if not stopped the people from celebrating any other festivals other than the Hindu festivals in the past. For example, people celebrating the Losar had to do so without causing any prominence that would draw the attention of the police. Some of them were forced to celebrate the Hindu festivals. Only after Nepal became the republic, celebration of other festivals other than the Hindu festivals could be the public events.

None other than the Hindu deities had the space in the Hindu state. For example, Living Goddess Kumari was the Buddhist deity but the Hindu rulers made Her the Hindu deity making Her the incarnation of Hindu deity called Talleju. The entire Buddhist priests from the Buddhist-deity temples were replaced with the Hindu priests. Forcing all the people of different faiths to follow the Hindu faith, the Hindu rulers claimed Nepal a country of the religious harmony.

Christians had been chased away from Nepal in the past. The first thing Prithvi Narayan Shah did after setting his rule on the Kathmandu basin was to give Christians the option of either leaving Nepal or facing persecution even immediate deaths in the worst cases. He went after the Christians. He drove them out of Nepal, and made Nepal a pure Hindu state. Then came the Ranas that had taken over the control of the state from the Shahs for 104 years. The Ranas relegated the Shah ruler to a puppet during this period. Even though the Ranas had heavily favored the British Raj in India, they kept the Christians out of the country.

During the brief democratic rule in Nepal from 1951 to 1961, Christianity flourished but again Christians had to remain unidentified for another 30 years during the Panchayat system introduced by Mahendra in 1962. Only after the democratic movement in 1990, Christians could come out openly and celebrate their festivities. Now, the Hindu fundamentalists wanted to put the clock back to the period of the reign of the Shahs and Ranas.

Thanks to the persistent efforts of Kamal Thapa of the RPP-Nepal on reverting Nepal to a Hindu state and the aggressive attempt of the Indian Hindu fundamentalists on making Nepal again a Hindu state disregarding the millions of Nepalese of other faiths, the Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Kirantis, and people of all faiths other than the Hindu had the opportunity of rising up against the Hindu domination. They had been able to shed the burden of the Hindu domination they had endured for the centuries. Ensuring the rights to practice any faith would surely ensure their other fundamental rights following the UN Charter Nepal had already signed off. Certainly, the international community would be not only for the religious freedom but also for the freedom of conversion to any faith.

The grand coalition of secularists must have the support of the international community. Probably, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Kirantis living elsewhere in the world must be empathetic to the Nepalese Buddhists, Muslims, Kirantis, and Christians in Nepal. They might not directly support as the Indian Hindu fundamentalists had been doing but they would prop them up morally. The UN Charter Nepal had signed off gave every citizen to practice any religion of his or her choice, and convert from any faith to another.

Currently, the very shrewd Nepalese politicians had been thinking to replace the secularism with the religious freedom in a new constitution. The current constitution crafters also had been for identifying the religion with the traditional Hindu faith. Nepalese of different faiths other than the Hindu had categorically rejected this idea of religious freedom. They were not for less than the secularism.

Now, turning to other issues other than the issues of faith, Chairman of MPRF-D Bijaya Gacchedar launched his Madhesh movement. Three independent groups such as the UDMF: probably the largest one, then a group of small parties including the CPN-Maoist of Matrika Yadav, and then the Gacchedar group were on the streets in the terai. He warned the government of the constitution promulgated without giving the fundamental rights to the Tharus and ethnic people would be destructive; the country would face the civil war and subsequent destruction. He also said that he had brought together the three political leaders of the three different parties facing three different directions to craft a new constitution but today they had ignored him and his people. He would fight for ensuring the fundamental rights of Tharus in the new constitution no matter how long it would take, Gacchedar said in his public speech in Biratnagar on September 10, 2015.

Tharus as other people had been the victims of the Shah-Rana rulers for the centuries. Tharus had been bonded throughout their lives until recently. Even today some of them were bonded, the media frequently stated. Tharus as other ethnic and Madheshi people had risen up against the oppression perpetuated by the rulers. They wanted their share in the state administration, police and the army, too. However, some political leaders particularly of the NC and the CPN-UML standing for the undivided far western region obviously had made a wicked conspiracy to perpetuate the slavery in the region.

Instead of making financial reparation to the bonded laborers, the government had sent the police, armed police force and even deployed the army to suppress the voices of the Tharus, and the Madheshi people in the terai. The government had been waging an undeclared war in the terai killing the unarmed demonstrators every day, and getting killed the policemen from the infiltrators in the peaceful demonstrators that had been demanding to ensure their fundamental human rights in the new constitution, and to enforce the previous agreements the government had reached with them.

Even Kamal Thapa of RPP-Nepal quit the constitution-writing process at the CA (he later on joined in the constitution-crafting process at the CA). He said that the leaders of the three major political parties had disregarded the voices of his party at the CA; so, it was useless to participate in the constitution-crafting process. Chairman of UCPN-Maoist Prachanda had been trying to persuade Mr. Kamal Thapa and other Madheshi leaders to return back to CA for participating in the constitution-crafting process. However, Prachanda had not succeeded in his mission, yet.

Chitra Bahadur KC: the famous and staunch anti-federalist had become a bit wiser and rational man prescribing to replace the cow with the rhino for the national animal in a new constitution. A cow was a divine for the Hindus only, for others it was just a regular animal but a Nepalese rhino was unique and it had been featured in the Nepalese banknote, too. To replace the cow with the rhino would be the most rational thing to do, as a cow would represent only the Hindus whereas the rhino would represent all Nepalese in a new constitution. Removing the cow as the national animal from the constitution would mean ending another Hindu domination in the country.

The government had declared the east-west highway as the riot-prone area to deploy the military to patrol. The Madhesh movement had prevented the highway from functioning

regularly. So, supplies trucks, passenger buses, cars and so on had difficulty in moving from one place to another. The government had used the army to patrol the area, and helped the vehicles to move smoothly. However, some political analysts asked whether it was not toward the militarization, and ultimately to use the military in the full-fledged scale for suppressing the people's voices.

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala was inviting the Madheshis to the talks doing nothing. He had been playing a deceptive role in the Nepalese politics. He had been one of the vocal foes of the people fighting against completing the crafting of a new constitution disregarding the aspirations of the ethnic and Madheshi people for having their rights in the new constitution. He had ignored the history of the then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba disregarding the concerns of the Maoists in 1996 pushed the country to a civil war for ten years (1996-2006). Now, Mr. Koirala was almost doing the same thing not considering the crafting of an inclusive constitution. The major forces of dissent would defeat the forces of Koirala and his clique. People had been already disenchanted with his governance and his style of working. They understood that the victory of the NC and the CPN-UML in the CA polls had been deceptive and unfortunate to the people.

Mr. Koirala enjoyed the political wrangling, as it would keep him in his current position. So, he fanned the flame of the Madheshi movement sending the army to tackle the unarmed and peaceful demonstrators. He had been quietly supporting the group of politicians of his party and other parties such as CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist for crafting a new constitution that would perpetuate the governing elites of today. Such a constitution would be strongly detested and surely rejected by the ethnic and Madheshi people.

Subhas Nemwang being nothing more than a puppet of his CPN-UML party bosses declared that it was sure to promulgate a new constitution in two weeks. He had clearly the signals from his party bosses that he had to work so hard to make possible the dreams of his party bosses particularly of the chairman of his party that had had the bad dream of being a next prime minister come true. Bijaya Gacchedar had said in his public speech in Biratnagar that some of the political leaders having vested interest and dreaming to be a next prime minister had been pushing hard to promulgate a new constitution.

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