

Peaceful Resolution of Ethnopolitical Movement in Nepal Madhesh

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1. Madheshi Nationalism

In Nepal, people have normally been identified as Nepali or Pahadi, the hill origin people, and Madheshi, the non-Nepali speaking people originating from the plains living mostly in Tarai region. Pahadi and Madheshi are socio-culturally, ethnically and linguistically two distinct ethnic communities and each of these two broad ethnic groups is composed of indigenous Janjati, Hindu caste hierarchy including Dalits, the socially deprived community, and Muslims. In the English language, we use three distinct words, namely Nepal, as a country, Nepali – people speaking Nepali language as their mother tongue or their first language, and Nepalese, the citizen of Nepal. Whereas in Nepali language we use only two words e.g. Nepal and Nepali, the later indicates both people speaking Nepali and citizen of Nepal. In the preamble of the present Interim Constitution, “Nepali people” has been mentioned but not the “people from Nepal”. It confuses Madheshi people. An Indian Nepali is granted the status of Nepali in Nepal but not a Madheshi who is being asked if he is a Nepali. Naturally, this frustrates a Madheshi and they feel their identity being threatened in their own country. After the Andolan I we could have coined the word ‘Nepalbasi’ for any person who is a citizen of Nepal; it could have helped bringing Madheshi and Nepali people together. In this paper, Khas indicates people speaking Nepali language as their mother tongue, Nepali specifies people speaking Nepali language as their mother tongue or their first language, and Nepalbasi as the people from Nepal. Madheshi people feel proud of calling themselves as Nepalbasi or Nepalese but not Nepali. The Tarai region is otherwise known as Madhesh. Maybe move that section here.

According to the 2001 census, the total population of Nepali and Madheshi community in Nepal was estimated to be about 68% and 32% respectively. This skewed ratio has been questioned by many Madheshi scholars and politicians as widely manipulated and they have very often raised voices for a fresh census before the Constituent Assembly election. In 2001, 48.4% of the country’s total population of 23.2 million lived in 20 Tarai districts. Just over 95% of the Madheshi population live in Tarai districts whereas Nepali people live in all the 75 districts of the country; currently, about 36% of the population living in Tarai districts are Nepali which is mostly due to planned migration of hill origin people in 1960s and 1970s and also due to restructuring of Tarai districts in 1963 which included large areas of mid mountains and Siwaliks, about 34%, however, these areas are sparsely populated. About 96% of the Muslim people live in Tarai.

Since the unification of Nepal in 1768 and more so after the Sugauli Treaty of 1815 and 1860 with British India, the Madheshi community has been considered as a minority group being secluded from all forms of planned socio-political and economic initiatives as well as governance, state opportunities and education. Till the 1940s, Madheshi people were required an entry paper to visit Kathmandu, the capital of their own country, Nepal. They have been discriminated against for decades and they have almost lost “the sense of belongingness to Nepal”. Madheshi people collectively suffered and had to bear systematic discriminatory treatment because of their socio-cultural and ethnic background by the rulers who have been mostly from the Nepali community. Very recently in early 2007, a large number of the Madheshi obtained citizenship rights. In reality, Nepal has become to a greater extent an “Unequal Society” in which the Khas community having Nepali language as their mother tongue have prospered while many other communities including Madheshi have not. Social, economic and political exclusion of Madheshi, Janjati, Dalits and women has been fostering unequal society for an intolerable period of time.

Madheshi nationalism surfaced following the 1990 democratic movement, which restored a democratic system in the country after nearly 30 years. The democratic constitution could not do justice to Madheshi people and the political systems between 1990 and early 2006 did not, in practice, adopt the concept of power sharing and proportional representation in governance, opportunity in state organs, decision-making, policy planning process, nor in all other forms of planned socio-economic development. Madheshi people have seldom been allowed to be in the right place at the right time for their voices to be heard or considered. Ironically, the key players in the governing parties during this period e.g. Nepali Congress and UML were elected from Tarai districts by Madheshi people. The representation of Madheshi people in the national legislature in 1999 was merely 17%, and again, most of these Madheshi parliamentarians till the February 2007 showed ‘sleeping syndrome’ seldom raising the issues, concerns and the aspiration of Madheshi people who elected them as their representatives; in practice they were considered second class politicians in their respective parties. They probably feared threats of expulsion from the party for demonstrating

rebellious tendencies such as raising serious Madheshi issues. Some of them even preferred to benefit personally by obeying their Nepali leaders instead.

The Madheshi people have awakened and they want to exercise their natural rights like other Nepali people, like other citizens of Nepal. They do not want to remain a forcibly secluded community any more. Since 1993, a few Madheshi scholars started writing and publishing articles on Madheshi community and national integration. Since 2006, many Nepalese scholars living in Nepal or abroad have analysed the causes of socio-political and economic exclusion, their impacts, current status and issues, and measures to mitigate adverse impacts. Some of the researchers elaborated the glorious culture and history as well as the strengths of Madhesh and the Madheshi people; several kingdoms in Madhesh were established and perished with time, abandoned and turned to forests. However, the ancient history of Madhesh and the culture of Madheshi people were practically discarded while writing the history of Nepal by Nepali people.

The Anglo-Nepalese war (1814-1815) and the resulting Treaty of Sugauli (1815) and the subsequent Treaty (1860) with British India substantially reduced the size of Madhesh in Nepal; Madhesh nation was divided between Nepal and India. Madhesh remained an internal colony of Khas rulers from 1768 to 1951, but the oppression and suppression continued till 2006 by Nepali people ruling the country through various political parties. The contribution made by Madheshi people during the 1990 democratic movement called Andolan I was conveniently ignored by the Nepali politicians and many of them do not even know that the first women martyrs in the history of Nepal are from the most under-developed village of Dhanusha district; the three Madheshi women belonging to Yadav community were the martyrs of 1990 revolution.

Madheshi organisations and scholars are organising several workshops and seminars exchanging views and ideas both in rural and urban areas. In recent months, very few organisations with Nepali people in their governing body have initiated dialogue between various stakeholders. The positive attitude and actions of some international organisations including UN Human Rights have helped Madheshi people to come closer to discussing way outs for peaceful resolution and holistic development in Madhesh. The mass media including the internet have helped a lot in terms of communication. A sense of identity deeply rooted in a common culture, a common history and the glorious past, as well as the memory and feeling of conquest and oppression by Nepali rulers have united the Madheshi people. Now the Madheshi people throughout the country both in rural and urban areas and living abroad are united and they very much feel the Madheshi nationalism. They are proud to be Madheshi and Nepalese.

2. Ethnopolitical Conflict

A decade long socio-political revolution led by the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) – Maoists, the agreements between the major political parties and Maoists in late 2005 in India, involvement and strong advocacy of a large number of civil society and development activists, and the mass movement of early 2006 significantly changed the political dynamics in Nepal. The king lost all the authoritarian governing power through the alliance of seven political parties (SPA) on 18 May 2006 and the SPA headed by Nepali Congress (NC) leader Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala led the multiparty secular democratic government. The people felt a great relief sensing stability and peace although the socio-political condition in the country was very much deteriorated. Prime Minister Koirala, along with a high profile Nepalese delegation visited India in early June 2006 for a possible 'economic and political package'; the visit was considered moderately successful in terms of economic package. CPN-Maoists, who had formed local governments in rural areas and had strong hold both in Tarai and hills, were still considered a threat to the State. On 21 November, a 'Peace Accord' between the CPN-Maoist leader Prachand and the Prime Minister GP Koirala, a leader of the SPA was signed. All the Nepalese were happy about this historic event and they regained hope to leave peacefully with pride. The Maoist leaders spared no time to organise meetings with the elite groups, organisations including bi-laterals and multilaterals, and scholars in Kathmandu Valley; they listened to the participating people and tried to make them aware and convince them the 'Maoist development and governance approaches'. Many people felt them more progressive than the traditional political parties ruling the country. Very soon CPN-Maoist became urban based in Kathmandu like the other political parties, and in late March 2007 they joined the government thus forming Seven Party Alliance and CPN-Maoist (SPAM) government.

The behaviour of the State governing body led by the alliance of seven political parties towards the Madheshi people remained more or less unchanged; even the Interim Constitution of the late 2006 did not do socio-political justice to the Madheshi people, who felt their identity threatened. The Janjatis – indigenous people felt the same. The governing political parties, democrats or communists, did not think of restructuring their parties; a true representation of Madheshi, Janjati and Dalits in the decision-making body of parties was ignored. The mentality of the political leaders who are mostly from Khas community remained unchanged, disregarding the socio-political transformation that the

people and the country want. Madheshi and the other disadvantaged ethnic communities felt oppressed and let down again.

The Khas people are dominant groups in all the major political parties in the parliament such as Nepali Congress (NC), Nepali Congress (Democratic), United Marxist Leninist (UML), Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), Nepal Prajatantra Party, Nepal Janshakti Party and many others, and they often label Madheshi, Janjati and Dalits as 'minorities' and the dominant group consider them 'less worthy ethnic groups' in political status.

The Madheshi ethnic group or people, subjected to discriminatory treatment by the rulers who are mostly Khas people because of their cultural and ethnic traits, are now mobilised for political action to promote and defend their common group identities and interest. The disadvantaged or secluded Madheshi communal group is thus called Madheshi ethnopolitical group. This fuels the ethnopolitical protests, movement and rebellion. Usually, the ethnopolitical conflicts cause humanitarian disasters as seen in Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Myanmar and in other parts of Africa and Latin America. If prolonged, it leads to terrorism and rebellion and provokes fruitless military intervention. There are successful ethnopolitical movements such as the US civil rights movement in 1960s and Baltic nationalism in late 1980s and 1990s. A total of 32% and 22% of the country's population consist of Madheshi ethnopolitical group and Nepali Janjati ethnopolitical group respectively. About 95% of the Madheshi ethnopolitical group live in one continuous geographical area called Tarai or Madhesh whereas people from the Nepali Janjati ethnopolitical group live scattered in high mountains, hills and Tarai regions.

Deliberate public policies, adverse socio-political practices and discriminatory treatment by the governing body of the state – the ruling political parties dominated by Khas people, who secluded the Madheshi people even after the Andolan II, fuelled the ethnopolitical movement. The CPN-Maoists had promised federal state in Madhesh, rights of self determination and many other assurances during their decade old revolution against the monarchy and the state, but in due course of time after the Andolan II in May 2006 Madheshi people found these promises to be empty. The breakaway Madheshi factions of Maoists established socio-political organisations such as the Janatantrik Tarai Mukthi Morcha (JTMM) led separately by Jay Krishna Goit and Jwala Singh.

Madheshi people had no alternative but to initiate mass movement initially through protests and mass demonstration to defend their threatened identity and to gain opportunity in governance and political power to rule their homeland, a separate Madhesh federal state extending from Mechi in the east to Mahakali in the west, and proportional representation in constituent assembly and in government organs. The Nepalgunj incidence in early December and the firing by Maoists at the unarmed demonstrators in Lahan, Siraha district on 19 December 2006 killing one person, a thoughtless action by the Maoists, resulted in mass spontaneous demonstration all over Tarai districts from Mechi in the east to Mahakali in the west. The Prime Minister on 23 January 2007 while meeting the Nepali Congress Parliamentary leaders blamed the Maoists for "escalating" violence in Tarai.

This ethnopolitical movement was based on Madheshi nationalism, which the governing political parties could not properly understand and due to their utter negligence, brutal force was used killing over 38 Madheshi people and injuring over 800 people. The CPN-Maoists even advocated use of force to wipe out the Madheshi movement. This movement, known to the Madheshi people as Andolan III, was basically rural based unlike the earlier movements, Andolan I and II, which were mostly Kathmandu centric.

The Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, an activist organisation successfully led the movement although the Jantantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha led separately by Jay Krishna Goit and Jwala Singh were involved in this movement in a few places. In some areas, local members of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party – the Madhesh based political party took part in the agitation. The movement was internationalised and there was intense pressure from UN human rights organisations, agencies and some political parties to stop police brutality; very few Civil Societies and Nepali Human Rights organisations took interest after the bloodshed in Madhesh and they were silent spectators during the brutal police action by the state. Their indifferent attitude towards Madheshi people at large became questionable, which could be a subject for research in future.

On 7 February 2007, the seven political party alliance and Maoist, the SPAM, signed an agreement guaranteeing the Tarai region representation in the Constituent Assembly in proportion to its population. The Prime Minister in his nearly midnight address to the nation broadcast live by state owned media, guaranteed the increased number of constituencies in the Tarai region in proportion to its population, increased number of seats to be elected through proportional representation systems, inclusion of Madheshi in the State organs on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion, federal system of governance and delineation of electoral constituencies, all through immediate amendment in the Interim Constitution. He recognised the legitimate demand of Madheshi people during the movement. It has been a collective commitment of SPAM government.

This movement very much weakened the stand and influence of Maoists in Tarai region and clearly indicated emergence of democratic forces reducing the chances of spreading hard-core communism in Tarai region. The socio-cultural and linguistic southern boundary of Madheshi ethnopolitical community is Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the politically less stable and economically less developed provinces of India . A democratic Madhesh (Tarai region) extending from Mechi in the east to Mahakali in the west would be in the interest of India as well as the Western countries which have socio-economic and political interest in India itself.

The Madheshi people believing in democratic governance system welcomed this state gesture and wished a long lasting peaceful situation in Tarai. They had already gained citizenship rights. The Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) was elevated as a powerful political force in the country; their leaders were praised in Madhesh and the media in Kathmandu highlighted them very frequently. In Madhesh, Forum became a big name. Sensing a big share in the forthcoming Constituent Assembly election, they registered the socio-political activist group as a political party.

Most Madheshi people thought that the SPAM commitment and political and governance reforms would lead to dialogue for peaceful resolution of Madheshi ethnopolitical movement. The base had been prepared for the future political framework for governing Madhesh region. Due to certain reasons, both the Forum and the State very much delayed the dialogue process for peaceful resolution of Madheshi unrest. Moreover, the delay in amending the Interim Constitution incorporating the SPAM commitments confused many Madheshi people. The Madheshi parliamentarians from UML , NC (Democratic), Nepal Sadbhavana Party and Nepali Congress made an alliance to press the government for legitimising the PM's declaration on Madheshi issues. It was a difficult job to create and stabilise the alliance, which acted against the command of their political parties especially NC, UML and NC (Democratic), which are ruled by Khas people. Consequently, about 40% of the parliamentarians (MPs) from the above parties adhered to their Khas rulers in the party and some of them were reluctant to show sympathy to the alliance and their efforts. In spite of intense party pressure, the Madheshi MPs continued their efforts and eventually the alliance efforts were fruitful. The alliance and its activities were considered pro-Madheshi by many Madheshi and Janjati people; nevertheless it made the participating MPs closer to the Madheshi community.

During the past three months the popularity of Madheshi Janadhikar Forum has declined. It could not force the government to implement the SPAM agreement such as inclusion of Madheshi in the State organs on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion. Some of its local level cadres as well as its mid level leaders initiated actions which were not accepted by many Madheshi people. As a political party, it needs to develop codes and norms acceptable to people and gain the support of a large number of Madheshi people who strongly allied with them during the movement. At the same time, the SPAM government could not convince a large number of Madheshi people that their actions were pro-Madheshi. Their governance mentality and order remained unchanged. Proportional representation entitles space and position of minorities at all levels and every segment of government. There has been no change in the governance system in Tarai districts; most of the administrative offices and key development offices which make socio-economic and governance decisions in Tarai have people from hill origin.

Tarai Janatantrik Mukti Morcha (Jwala Singh) on the Nepalese New Year widely circulated its press release asking the government to change its discriminatory policies towards Madheshi people but these remained unnoticed by the rulers. They were active during the Madheshi movement and their actions have intensified in the past four months. In the last two months the government made a positive effort of organising dialogues with Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, but no other such efforts have been made with other agitating groups in Madhesh. Now many groups have emerged and some of them show militant characteristics similar to Maoists from about 3-4 years ago. Most of these groups are breakaway factions of CPN-Maoists. Currently, Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Goit), Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Jwala Singh), Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Bishfot Singh), Madheshi Mukti Morcha, Madheshi Tiger, Tarai Cobra Group, Madhesh Mukti Force, Tarai Tiger, AASK Group, Tharu Mukti Morcha, Chure Bhawnr Pradesh Ekta Samaj, Janajati Mahasangh are active in Tarai districts, and many other unknown groups are still emerging one after another. The law and order situation in Tarai region has very much deteriorated and the transport system has been very much affected due to strikes most of the weeks. This has adversely affected economic activities in Tarai region.

Some of the agitating groups, the breakaway factions of CPN-Maoist, are using violent measures including kidnapping, torture and killings, similar to Maoist insurgency in the last decade which systematically employed such violent measures. They are kidnapping both Madheshi and Nepali people who are very close to the government mechanism. Most of these groups have made it clear that they are fighting for the Madheshi cause with the government ruled mostly by Nepali, and not with the average Nepali people living in Tarai unless they themselves blindly support the government system. During the movement in early 2007, property and lives of Nepali people in Madhesh were in danger which reminiscent of Maoist revolution till two years ago.

3. Resolution of Conflict

Currently, the main issue in this country is the holding of Constituent Assembly (CA) election peacefully and fairly in November 2007, which will make important decisions on the state governance system and draft and approve the Constitution for Nepal acceptable to all Nepalese. It has been already postponed twice and the blame collectively goes to the SPAM government although the smaller parties in SPAM blame Nepali Congress and CPN-Maoist for their failure to make arrangements for the scheduled CA election. A successful CA election will adequately address the inclusion issue of Nepalese while its failure will adversely affect the nation-building democratically leading to dictatorship or anarchism. CA election should be considered as a great opportunity for the people and the political parties in building the nation.

The SPAM government is unfortunately losing the confidence of the general mass simply because it cannot provide basic service and goods to the people, whom they inspired during the Andolan II, and many average people doubt that the CA election will be held in November 2007. There are basically two schools of thought: a) The major political parties such as NC, UML, CPN-Maoists and NC (D) fear losing many seats in CA election which they have been currently enjoying in the restored parliament and that many of the current MPs will lose their position in the forth coming election, and the thought of losing political status will distract them holding CA election in time and in a fair manner, and b) The general agitation and unrest problem in Tarai region if not solved properly in time will make the election impossible. The CPN-Maoist parliamentarians have not been elected but nominated. The NC and NC (D) fear that unless they are united as one democratic political party, they have very little chance to maintain their existing numbers. There will be many regional parties contesting in the CA election supported by ethnic communities. This election will be very much influenced by ethnopolitical aspiration.

The reality is that the concept of New Nepal and its holistic socio-economic development depends wholly on Madhesh and Madheshi people because of its geographical setting . Many sensible intellectuals in Kathmandu have appraised this factor and some of them have started discussions and interaction with Madheshi people and politicians from both the SPAM and non-SPAM groups involved in agitation on resolving the Madhesh unrest. There are some positive signs. However, due to self-interest of the political parties, the average communal attitudes of Khas politicians towards minority groups, and unclear ideology among many political leaders, the SPAM government is unable to resolve the Tarai unrest.

All the Nepalese living either in Madhesh or hills and mountains wish for a “developed, stable and united Nepal” to be governed by Nepalese for the Nepalese but not by Nepali or for Nepali. All Nepalese, either a Nepali or Madheshi or Janjati should be given equal opportunity in nation building. This is what Madheshi people justly want and this is what a Nepalbasi wants. The world is becoming narrower with the application of science and technology. The average Nepalese questions that if China and India can develop so fast, then why is it that Nepal cannot whilst situated between these two Asian giants. Many think that the current politicians in the government do not have that vision.

Let us analyse the three questions which will positively lead to holding the CA election in November 2007.

Firstly, what do the Madheshi people want?

A current survey and workshop conducted in May 2007 involving non-political socio-economic local leaders in seven Tarai districts have identified major social, economic, cultural and political issues which they wish to be solved by the present and the future Nepalese rulers . They have pinpointed the major issues such as establishment of federal system of governance in republican setting and regional autonomy with rights of self-determination in Madhesh region, one federal Madhesh state from Mechi in the east to Mahakali in the west, proportional representation at each of the organs of the state, proportional representation of all excluded groups of Madhesh in constituent assembly, and reservation for women in CA poll. They want an end to exclusion, end of gender and caste based discrimination and co-existence with Nepali people in the country. This is what the average Madheshi people wants. Like any other Nepalese, Madheshi people want to exercise their natural birthrights.

Most Madheshi people ask the question, “Will this new constitution developed by Constituent Assembly members be pro Madheshi?” Their eagerness is very natural. The electoral seats for CA election are 497; direct election 240, proportional election 240 and nominated 17. If the election is held fairly, under the mixed system 164 Madheshi people would be represented including 38 women. They will still be in the minority but they could democratically convince or press other CA members to address the issues of inclusion of Madheshi, Janjati and Dalit citizens. They will need to form an alliance between the other excluded communities. Only time will answer their billion dollar question.

Secondly, what can the State do?

The State must understand the emerging Madheshi nationality, and immediately start power and opportunity sharing mechanisms, comply with agreements signed and implement the commitments made. The State has to change its mentality and the political leaders governing the State have to make the Madheshi community feel confident that their actions have good motives. The leaders have to exhibit their greatness and not merely pay lip service to the commitments. If the major political leaders are sincere in their motives and actions, they can win the heart of the Madheshi people or other excluded groups and start meaningful dialogue with the agitating ethnopolitical groups. If the NC, UML and NC (Democratic) and other political parties could have dialogue and agreement with the Maoist in Delhi, then why can they not have dialogue and agreement with agitating ethnopolitical groups in Madhesh? Their intention amuses many sensible Nepalese. They have to convince the people and the ethnopolitical groups that the New Constitution of Nepal developed after the CA election by Nepalese and for Nepalese will be pro-Madheshi, one Madhesh federal state with regional autonomy and self determination, equal opportunities to all Nepalese including Madheshi people and rights of minorities.

Of course, some agitating ethnopolitical groups have demanded a separate Madhesh country; this is just for bargaining purposes. They are showing their frustration to the SPAM government. If we remember the events 3 to 4 years ago, the CPN (Maoist) was demanding an immediate abolishment of monarchy and a direct rule adopting the principles of hardcore communism. But now they have joined the government under the framework of multiparty democratic system and they have also accepted the fate of monarchy to be decided by the first meeting of the Constituency Assembly members. Great efforts were made from both the Maoists and the democrats to come to this stage. Similarly, efforts are to be made by the state to bring the various agitating ethnopolitical groups under the framework of democracy. Now the SPAM has the experience and moreover, the agitating groups in Tarai are the breakaway fractions of Maoists; the latter should have good knowledge of their strategy, action and motives.

Even India in the south would not like an independent Madhesh State; they have probably sensed that the independent Madhesh State would eventually demand for the Madhesh land which became a part of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh after the Sugauli Treaty in 1815, which is about 55% of the size of the present Madhesh. Again, they would not like to reduce the depth of the border with China.

If the current ethnopolitical conflict continues unresolved and if the State unwisely uses military intervention, then there will undoubtedly be serious trouble in Madhesh as the separatism idea could widely spread. Some political parties such as Maoist have openly suggested force to control the ethnopolitical movement in Madhesh. It shows their poverty status in analysing the facts and the overall consequences. If this happens, it will be very unfortunate for Nepal and the idea of separatism cannot be ruled out; even the moderate Madheshi people would support this idea if force is to be used. The SPAM government does not appear to be united in their action. Few days ago, the Home Minister warned the agitating ethnopolitical groups to face stern security actions, indirectly military action, if they do not stop violence and strikes within a fortnight. This warning was similar to the authoritarian action taken by the king prior to Andolan II, which changed the political face of the country. The present government should be wise enough not to take unwise action which could change the geographical face of the country. The SPAM government should not fail to realise the consequences. Unlike the Janjati people of hill origin, 95% of the Madheshi people live in a distinct Madhesh ecological region and a failed military intervention could lead to separatism, which will be a disaster in Nepal and no sensible person wants that to happen. Some of the sensible parliamentarians are now discussing seriously ways to initiate proper dialogue with the agitating ethnopolitical groups in Madhesh. This is a positive step and they should get help from civil societies and intellectuals who have sympathy towards Madheshi people.

The slogan of 'one language' Nepali, Nepali nationality and unity, culture of writing and glorifying history of hill people as Nepal history, and in practice recognising and promoting nationally and internationally fair skinned Nepali speaking Aryans and Janjati as Nepali nationals were the legacy of Panchayat System, which unfortunately the ruling societies have continued to this day. The Nepali politicians and the state have to change their mindset, give up their narrow mindset and promote all ethnic people as Nepalese and promote and practice multi language and multi socio-cultural Nepal. This is of course not an easy job.

In the past and even currently, the state and the major political parties have adopted the unethical political strategy of dividing ethnic groups e.g. Madheshi and Janjati for their personal or party benefits. Now they have to remember that these groups are the ethnopolitical groups and they have united for some basic reasons. If the state and the major political parties and their key leaders are sensible, they should immediately give up the old British Indian "divide and rule" policy and convince these ethnopolitical groups with good approaches and deeds for peaceful resolution of the present conflicts. They have no alternative but to pave the way for dialogue process as suggested by Nepalese intellectuals, some civil societies, international organisations, and some sensible politicians from NC (Democratic) and

UML. The state and its key leaders have to keep in mind that the Constituent Assembly election must be held on 22 November 2007 otherwise we will lose our credibility both nationally and internationally.

Thirdly, what politicians can do?

The politicians of both hill and Madhesh origin elected from the Tarai districts have to go to their constituencies and sincerely apologise for their past mistakes of excluding the Madheshi people during their last tenure and convince them that they would not repeat such mistakes again. If they are sensible, they should declare that they are not standing for the CA election but they want their support. They have to realise that many of them have already been discarded by the Madheshi people and they would probably lose CA election, if they fairly compete. After all, this CA election is just for drafting the New Constitution. However, some of the Madheshi politicians of governing or non-governing political parties who are still considered pro-Madheshi in their intention and action should immediately form an alliance which will act as a forum that would facilitate creating an environment for the average Madheshi people to understand the possible consequences of the CA election. They should together visit the constituencies, create awareness about the CA election, convince them that all ethnic minorities in Madhesh will be represented in the Constituent Assembly, and assure them that the New Constitution will address the issues of inclusion for Madheshi and all Nepalbasi. They have to make it clear that they will fight for the Madheshi rights whether elected or not.

All the SPAM leaders have to develop a strategy, visit the Madhesh area together and discuss with the local people on clear political agenda. They will face problems but they have to accept the situation. After all they will be visiting the excluded communities. They will have to adopt a similar approach in areas where Janjati ethnopolitical groups are active.

I along with many Nepalese wish these three questions to be well understood by the State and the politicians for peaceful resolution of ethnopolitical movement in Madhesh and in other geographical areas. We request all the media houses and media persons to be pro-Nepalese and give up their past legacy of highlighting and elaborating only the undesirable events taking place in Madhesh. Many media houses were against the government during the decade long socio-political movement launched by CPN-Maoists and some of them even supported the movement. Kidnapping, killings, and destruction were very high and we lost about 14,000 Nepalese. One sensible Nepali intellectual from the UML asked me why many of the media houses and media persons are against the legitimate demands and actions of Madheshi community. The media has to be neutral in their duty which could enhance the dialogue process between the government, politicians, civil societies, intellectuals and the ethnopolitical groups, and could help to hold Constituent Assembly election in November 2007. **We can make it happen if we sincerely want to and collectively take positive steps towards achieving that common goal.**

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