

CHAPTER THREE

Maoists in Nepal: Historical Background

Introduction

A study of political history of Nepal reveals a history of autocratic rule. Nepal as a state was organised by Prithiv Narayan Shah of Shah Dynasty in 1764. The rulers of the Shah dynasty remained in power till 1848. They were dethroned by the Ranas (Ranas were the ministers in the Shah dynasty) in the same year through a massacre. The Ranas continued to remain in power for more than a century. They were dethroned by a democratic movement in 1950. Once isolated itself from rest of the world, the state of Nepal was open to the new political ideas like democracy. Domination of the monarch in the state politics, vested interests of the political parties, since 1950 till date, has made the very democratic form of government a failure in Nepal. A long history of deprivation, discrimination, torture and poverty has paved way for many struggle and armed rebellion against the existing power structure. The most important and powerful armed struggle against the existing power structure of Nepal is the Maoist Insurgency.

The Maoist insurgency in Nepal was not the first organized protest against the autocratic rule of Nepal. Before the emergence of Maoists, Nepal had already witnessed many uprisings and revolts against the autocratic Rana oligarchy. During the Rana regime the public protest could not come to the fore for a long time. One of the earliest uprisings against the Rana regime (against Jung Bahadur Rana) was led by the Gurungs of Lamjung and Gorkha. The leader of the uprising was imprisoned and the uprising was suppressed brutally. The leader, named Sukadev Gurung, was accused of trying to be the

king of the Buddhists. He died in the prison in 1875¹. In 1876, Lakhan Thapa Magar led a revolt against the Rana from the central hill region of Gorkha. The revolt mobilized hundreds of people and spoke against the regime how it had failed to provide justice to the poor. The leaders of this revolt were executed and hanged to death in their native Gorkha land and the supporters were either put behind the bar or exiled². Subba Krishna Lal (Krishna Lal Adhikari), an employee in Munsilhana (office of the foreign affairs) wrote a book titled Makaiko kheti (Corn Farming) in 1907³. This book was a satire on life under the Ranas and urged socio-economic reforms and the introduction of new mechanisms in the cultivation of maize.

During early parts of twentieth century the south of Nepal was greatly influenced by the Indian Independence movement. During that period the Gurkha soldiers who fought for the British in the First World War got exposed to the new thoughts of democracy and were greatly influenced by those ideas. Various groups used the Indian soil and operated from there against the Ranas in 1921. The Gorkha League was organized under the leadership of Thakur Chandan Singh in Dehradun. Literature like Gorkha Sansar and Tarun Gorkha were published against the Ranas. Initially, Nepali Students' Association was established in Banaras and in 1945, Himachal Students Association was organized from Calcutta. In 1931, a group of Nepalese youth established a group called Prachanda Gorkha. This group planned to bomb all the senior Rana rulers to uproot them and to establish the system of elected parliament and a constitutional

¹ For details see Karki Arjun and Seddon David (ed), *The Peoples; War in Nepal: Left Perspective*, (Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2003), P.4.

² Ibid.

³ For details see Bhim Rawal, *The Communist Movement in Nepal: Origin and Development*, (Achham – Kathamandu Contact Forum, CPN (UML), Kathamandu, 2007), p.16.

monarchy⁴. They were arrested before they could undertake their plan. Shortly after this on June 2, 1936, Nepal praja parishad and Mahabir School were established. Under the umbrella of Prajaparishad, a 'Revolutionary Committee' and the Nepali Nagarik Adhikar Samiti (Nepalese Civil Rights Committee) were also established in the same year⁵. This party aimed at democracy and constitutional monarchy. In 1940 the party distributed leaflets against the Ranas, and in the same year, those who were involved in the party were arrested and given stringent punishment.

The fight against the Ranas did not come to an end hereafter. In 1941, Akhil Nepal Barga-Mahasabha (All Nepal class Assembly) was established underground. A committee was formed for armed revolution and for the first time this Assembly gave slogan 'Long live Republic of Nepal'. It is interesting to know that this group had contact with the Bolsheviks⁶. About the success of this group the literature tells the same story of other groups earlier to this.

The above discussed struggle against the Rana autocracy could not achieve their goal to remove the Ranas because of various reasons. First and the foremost was the ruthless suppression of these revolts by the Ranas. Secondly, most of the groups were limited to a particular area and the ideas against the Ranas could not reach many as a uniting factor. Thirdly, the isolationist approach of the Ranas had kept the Nepalese away from the political development of elsewhere in the world. There were instances when the Ranas

⁴ See Ibid. Pp. 17-18.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ As mentioned by Prem R. Uppreti, "Nepal: A Small Nation in the Vortex of International Conflict", (Kathamandu, Pugo M), 1984, P.47, as cited in Bhim Rawal, No. 3, P.19.

appointed a person named Birendra Nath Ghosh to monitor the activities of the Nepalese students studying in Calcutta. He was also directed to seize all radios during the period of world war signifying the then social conflict and consciousness⁷. The failure stories of different anti- Rana group did not lead to a dead end to the same.

Communist party of Nepal: origin and evolution

The communist movement in Nepal emerged when there was a strike by the workers at Biratnagar Jute mill in 1947. The man who led the workers was Man Mohan Adhikari. Man Mohan Adhikari at that time was a member of communist party of India. Pushpa Lal Shrestha, a member of the Nepali congress at that time, left the party and determined to start a communist movement in Nepal. For the first time he translated the Communist Manifesto into Nepali language in April 1949. This translated version of the Communist Manifesto was made public in 15th of September 1949. To others this was the time when the communist party of Nepal was established. So there is a bit of confusion regarding the date of the establishment of the CPN. The other founding member of the CPN were, Nara Bahadur Karmachary, Niranjana Govinda Vaidhya, Narayan Bilash Joshi and Man Mohan Adhikari.

The party's slogan at its initial conventions was, 'civil liberties for all the classes',⁸. From the very beginning idea of armed struggle was very clear. The communist groups were active as part of the Mukti Sena (Liberation Army). Through its

⁷. See Pramod Shamsheer Rana, "Rana Nepal: An Insider View", Kathamandu: Nirs, R.Rana, 1978. Pp. 97-100 and 243-94 (as cited in Bhim Rawal, No. 3, P.17).

⁸ For details see Anand Swaroop Verma, *Maoist Movement in Nepal*, (Samkalin Teesari Dunia Publication, New Delhi, 2001), P.21.

leaflets distributed to the people in 1949 it was declared that, “Nepal should establish a ‘new democracy’ as in China- if necessary through armed struggle- so as to create a People’s Republic”⁹.

Though the CPN was not very clear about its role during the 1950 revolution against the Rana oligarchy, it was very critical about the Nepali Congress- the major political party that time. It viewed Nepali Congress representing the elite class, since it has association with the Ranas. The CPN was also critical about the success of the 1950-51 revolution. In its first convention in 1951, the CPN viewed that, the 1950-51 revolution having no political significance, since it was not a total revolution. In its first convention, the CPN committed itself to strive for an all party conference, an interim government and elected constituent Assembly. It failed to influence for the above causes because of the lack of organizational base.

First Congress of CPN:

The first congress of the CPN was organized in 1954 to stabilize the party. The congress elected Man Mohan Adhikari as the party’s General Secretary. Two members of the party named Tulsi Lal Amatya and D.P. Adhikari were suspended from the party, accused of creating grouping in side the party and allowing feudal forces into the party respectively¹⁰. However, they were allowed to the party a year after.

⁹ . See Arjun Karki and David Seddon, No.1, P.6.

¹⁰ . See Bhim Rawal, No.3, P.43.

In order to consolidate the gains of 1951 people's movement, the congress adopted a strategy of continuous mass mobilization. The congress raised the slogan for constituent Assembly as its main political agenda and demanded for the democratic rights for the citizens. The Delhi settlement of 1951 was strongly opposed. It highlighted the sovereignty of the parliament and a head of the state without any special privileges. There by it indicated support for a constitutional monarchy¹¹. It also adopted the resolution for upholding continuous struggle against the feudalist rule and stressed upon distribution of additional land and means of production to the landless peasants.

Second Congress:

The communist party of Nepal organized its second congress in 1957. This was the congress which experienced, for the first time, differences of opinions and disagreement on leadership and various other issues. Keshar Jung Rajamajhi was elected as the General Secretary of the party. The second congress, rejected the first congress's demand for a constituent Assembly, and sought for what Rajamajhi called 'fair democracy'. Disagreements aroused over the issues like 'Constituent Assembly' and parliamentary democracy proposed by Puspa Lal Shrestha, Republic by Sambhu Nath Shrestha and a constitutional monarchy" advocated by Rajamajhi¹². Once the disagreement began it was a never ending process, throughout the communist movement of Nepal, polarized into two blocs during the second congress. One group favouring co-operation with other democratic process and the other was an adventurist and fighting policy¹³. However, the

¹¹. Ibid. P.44.

¹². Ibid. P.51.

¹³ Anirudha Gupta, *Politics in Nepal, 1950-60, Kalinga*, New Delhi, 1993, P.204 as cited in, Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati, *Kingdom under Siege*, Zed Books, London, 2004, P.22.

somber performance of CPN in 1959 General election enhanced a section of party members believing in radical approach.

The Panchayat Era and Split in CPN

The year of 1960, there occurred a total political gap. This gap affected the CPN more than any other political party. The parliament was dissolved by king Mahendra and all political parties were banned. Two years later in 1962, the king promulgated a New Constitution with provisions for a party less electoral system. A New sort of democracy was established, what king Mahendra called it as a ‘Party less Panchayat Democracy’.

The communist got split on the question of support to king’s take over. It was during this time CPN’s General Secretary issued a statement from Moscow declaring the King’s action as a ‘progressive step’. But in Kathmandu, on behalf of the Polit Bureau, Puspa Lal issued a circular demanding the end of the military terror and calling a conference of all parties. During this time the communists divided into two lines, pro-Soviet faction led by Rajamajhi and pro-China faction consisted of Pushpa Lal, Man Mohan Adhikari and Tulsi Lal Amatya. Prof S.D Muni rightly observes that:

The faction of the communist party that sided with the palace got support and encouragement, since the king wanted to use the communists for countering the Nepali congress, and all other

democracy forces opposing his direct rule, which was subsequently protected under his direct rule¹⁴.

The Darbhanga Plenum:

Amidst this political chaos the Darbhanga plenum (central committee) meeting was held in 1961. From this convention there emerged three different political lines. They were: (a) constitutional monarchy and guided democracy supported by Rajamajhi, (b) a joint mass movement along with Nepali congress against the dissolution of the parliament and monarchy advocated by Pushpa Lal Shrestha and (c) an election to constituent assembly suggested by Mohan Bikram Singh¹⁵. From Darbhanga plenum three major resolutions came out: First, to convene the party congress within nine months to sort out party's internal contradictions for political purposes. Second, to divide the country into five zones, each under the charge of a polit bureau member and. Third, to remove Rajmajhi from the post of General Secretary to be replaced by a three member secretariat.

The Third Congress:

Third congress of CPN was held in April 1962. Tulsi Lal Amatya was appointed as the new General Secretary. This congress also elected a National Council, which posed a resolution that the panchayat system was sustaining a 'military dictatorship' and that the exploitative feudal system was destined to collapse¹⁶. But it was objected by Puspa Lal

¹⁴. See S.D.Muni, *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: The Challenges and Responses*, (Rupa-co-Publication, New Delhi, 2003), P.02.

¹⁵. Mohan Bikram Singh was elected to the central committee of the communist party of Nepal during second congress in 1957. He had ideas of radical left movement in Nepal.

¹⁶. See Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati, *Kingdom under Siege* (Zed Books, London, 2004), P.29.

Shrestha, who adopted a more extreme position. However, the congress, this time extended its support for a powerful and sovereign parliament (implying either a republic or a constitutional monarchy). From this point onwards, CPN began to experience significant divisions. One of the reasons was different orientations towards popular struggle and revolution within Nepal. The second reason was the Sino-Soviet split and its international repercussions¹⁷.

Thus, after the third congress resulted in a split in the communist party, the member at different levels declared them independent. Due to the failure of the 1962 congress Puspa Lal and his supporters organized a separate convention in 1968. In this convention Puspa Lal formed a separate party and he was elected as its General Secretary. Looking back to the history of the communist movement in Nepal one can always find that the Royal takeover in 1960 divided the communists into two major blocs, those who criticized the king's position and those who supported it¹⁸.

In the panchayat regime, CPN's leadership and most of the party cadres were either in jail or in India. Though all of them were- by and large- affiliated to the CPN, but their activities had hardly co-ordinated, since there was no central command structure. A number of cadres like Man Mohan Adhikari and Shambhu Ram Shrestha wanted to co-ordinate the divisions and to have a central committee. They were released in 1968 from the jail as they agreed to assist and support the king without reservation. In 1971 both Nirmal Lama and Mohan Bikram Singh were also released and a 'central nucleus' was

¹⁷ See Arjun Karki and David Seddon, No.1, P.10.

¹⁸ For details see Narayan Khadka, "Factionalism among Communists in Nepal", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.68, No.1, April, 1995, P.58.

formed to unify party apparatus. The aim was to bring the various strands of the communist move met under one party umbrella¹⁹. The central nucleus also tried to include the Puspa Lal party into it. But Puspa Lal wanted others to join his party and remained strong on working with the Nepali congress against the Panchayat Regime.

The Jhapa Uprising:

Jhapa uprising in 1971, made the first attempt of armed struggle against the state. Following the footsteps of Indian Naxalites and teachings of Mao, organized an armed uprising, killing the local feudals in the Jhapa district of Nepal. The uprising started from Jymirgadi village in Jhapa on 16th May 1971. Soon it attracted many young political activists across the country. The Jhapa uprising was able to wipe out some eight of the local feudal during armed action. It was brutally crushed by a police action. Looking back to the Jhapa uprising one can always put a question what led to the armed uprising in Jhapa. First, Jhapa is situated just across the border river of Mechi from Naxalbari, in West Bengal. The formation of CPI (Marxist-Leninist) in 1969, which was influenced by Mao's ideas of armed struggle and reports from Beijing about encouraging would-be revolutions through various press, influenced the youth and the leaders of the CPN to carry an armed struggle out. The CPI (ML) not only inspired the CPN cadres but it also assisted with two activists to the Nepali side.²⁰ Though the Jhapa uprising failed in fostering a communist movement, but its leaders succeeded in building the largest communist organization in the country, CPN, (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

¹⁹ . Anirudha Gupta, 1993, (as cited in Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati , No.16, P.25).

²⁰ . See Deepak Thapa, No.16, P.26.

The failure of Jhapa uprising led the steps towards establishing the CPN (ML). An underground convention was held and the All Nepal Communist Co-ordination committee Marxist Leninist (ML) was formed in 1975. Over next few years other localized movements also joined the committee and finally communist party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist) established on 26th December 1978. The ML rejected the simple application of imported dogma and recognized the need to analyse and understand the objective conditions of Nepal. It also emphasized that, a distinctive revolutionary Nepali road to socialism would be based on an understanding of economic and social conditions in Nepal²¹. CPN (ML) was involved with a process of incorporating the smaller groups within it and by the time of 1990 people's movement, it had become the largest communist organization in the country having network in 50 districts²².

Interestingly, one finds that the communist movement in Nepal had as many as twenty different factions of the communist party. Ironically, some of them in fact have very few members, but their ideological and strategic moorings do not show wide divergence. The communists, irrespective of their ideological and strategic moorings do not show wide divergence. The communists maintained National level prominence because of continued support from the peasants' and workers' organizations. The country's poverty and deprivation offered a fertile ground for the communist ideal. The split in CPN went on widening because of personality clash between, leaders, parochialism and regionalism²³.

²¹. See Arjun Karki and David Seddon, No.1, P.11.

²². See Deepak Thapa, No.16, P.27.

²³. As mentioned in Lokraj Baral, *Oppositional Politics in Nepal*, (Abhinava Publication, Delhi, 1971), P. 83.

Fourth Congress:

The fourth congress of CPN was held in September 1974 under the leadership of Mohan Bikram Singh and Nirmal Lama. The congress agreed on a strategy to launch a people's movement to be converted into an armed revolution depending on an opportunity. This group again broke into two factions. Death of Chairman Mao and the overthrow of the 'Gang of Four' in China had its severe repercussion on the ideological lines of the fourth congress. While Nirmal Lama favoured the new Chinese leadership, Mohan Bikram Singh was stick to the orthodox Maoism and 'Cultural Revolution'. However, the formal relationship of Mohan Lal and Mohan Bikram Singh came to end in 1983-84 when Nirmal Lama continued with the name of Fourth Congress. Accompanied by some his friends (Mohan Vaidya) Mohan Bikram Singh formed a new party called Communist Party of Nepal (Masal). In 1984, Masal became one of the founding members of Revolutionary Internationalist movement (RIM), the world wide grouping of Maoist parties.

Referendum and the Communists in Nepal:

Reacting to a nationwide movement from 6th April to 23rd May 1979 against the panchayat Regime, king Birendra declared a 'National Referendum' on 24th May 1979. Various factions of communists in Nepal reacted differently to the referendum. The CPN (M-L) declared a boycott saying "the declaration was a deception aimed at suppressing the genuine public opinion and people's revolution and thus lengthening the rule of decadent reactionary regime deceiving the people and the revolutionaries after its failure

in the policy of violence to suppressing the people's revolution"²⁴. However, in the later stage in 1980 the ML decided to support the Referendum with five pre-conditions to be fulfilled by the king. Since the pre-conditions were not fulfilled, the ML stuck to its position with no restriction on voting against the panchayat system. Unlike the CPN (M-L), though the Fourth Congress, initially, announced an active boycott, but in February 1980 it changed its stand to participate in the referendum without any pre-condition²⁵. Not only the above mentioned groups, but some other communist groups also had difference of opinion over referendum. This showed the instability and ambiguity among the communists in Nepal.

People's Movement in 1990 and the Communists

Shortly after the referendum, the Nepali congress launched a civil disobedience (Satyagraha) to protest against the panchayat regime. At the same time various communist parties also initiated a 'fill the jails' campaign. Series of bombing in June 1986, in Pokhara and Kathamandu by Nepali Jana badi Morcha (People's Front) added intensity to both the campaigns. During the same time various communist parties were engaged in mobilizing against the panchayat system.

In 1989 CPN (Ma-Le) decided to call upon all 11 factions of Communist Party of Nepal and the Nepali Congress to unite and bring an end to the panchayat system. In early 1990 seven communist parties made an alliance and came to be known as United Left Front. The United Left Front joined with Nepali Congress and organized a

²⁴ . See The CPM (M-L), *Barga Sangharsa*, Vol.6, No.11, (1981), P.31, as cited in Bhim Rawal No.3, P.147.

²⁵ . See The CPN, "our main differences and causes of split in the party", Central office, 1984, P.62, as cited in Bhim Rawal No.3, P.148.

movement for the restoration of Multi-Party-Democracy and to bring about the end to the partyless panchayat Democracy. The movement, National People's Movement (Jana Andolan), succeeded when in April 1990 the panchayat system effectively came to an end. Though the present day Maoists did not join the United Left Front, elect they were the ones who initiated and supported the movement underground.

The two groups Mashal²⁶ and the Revolutionary party were committed worker's party wanted to stick to the 'People's War'. These three parties were united under the banner of Samyukta Rastriya Jana Andolan (United National People's Movement – UNPM) and joined in the street protest in April 1990. However, the UNPM did not formally participate in National People's Movement.

During the National People's Movement, the Maoists were clearly and assertively demanding for the abolition of monarchy and the declaration of Nepal as a Republic. However, they were not satisfied with the compromise on a multi-party democratic system under constitutional Monarchy that ended the people's movement against the party less panchayat system in May 1990²⁷. They maintained their stand on the demand for a constituent Assembly to draft a constitution. But they were forced to accept the 1990 compromise as a 'first step' for the abolition of monarchy and establishment of

²⁶ . During the 1990 People's Movement for the restoration of democracy, the Communist movement in Nepal strengthened and reunited. An extremist faction of the CPN emerged during this period. This was known as 'mashal' who meant 'torch'. This faction of the CPN was led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Mohan Vaidya. The Mashal group soon fell apart and a different group emerged out of it. It was known as CPN (Masal) led by Baburam Bhattarai and Mohan Vikram Singh.

²⁷ . See S.D.Muni, No.14, P.4.

democracy in Nepal. Even the Left Front, that was with the Nepali congress, found itself in a distinct minority in the interim government, formed after the movement.

In pursuance with these above mentioned demands the United National People's Movement rejected the new constitution, promulgated at the beginning of November. Initially the UNPM was not inclined to take part in the General Election, declared to be held on May 1991. In November 1990 the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity centre- Ekta Kendra) was established with Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) as General Secretary. The CPN (United Centre) rejected the newly promulgated constitution declaring it as inadequate for a genuine democracy²⁸. In January 1991, the Unity Center changed its agenda and formed United People's Front of Nepal (UPFN) with an objective to fight in the election if necessary. Different factions of the Maoists came together under the banner of Unity Center. They were CPN (Mashal) under Prachanda, the CPN (Fourth Congress) under Nirmal Lal, the proletariat workers' organization under Ruplal Bishwakarma and the Splinter group of the CPN (Mashal) led by Baburam Bhattarai.

In the meantime, two major communist parties- the CPN (Marxist), the remnants of Pushpa Lal's original party (United Marxist-Leninist) in 1991. The CPN (UML) took part in the first General Election and established itself as one of the major political parties securing 69 seats as compared to 110 seats succeeded by Nepali Congress. But the CPN (Unity Center) as United People's Front of Nepal (UPFN) with Baburam Bhattarai as coordinator was only 9 seats. Of those nine seats, the UPFN won four in the western

²⁸ . See Arjun Karki and David Seddon, No.14, P.15

region, two in Kathmandu, two in the Terai and one in the central region²⁹. As a political force, CPN (Unity Center) was weakened by splits, even within the first few months of its existence.

Formation of CPN (Maoist):

During the 1991 election, the CPN, Unity Center organized its first congress in December. In this congress it is decided to adopt 'Marxism-Leninism-Maoism' as the 'ideological direction' of the party and the path of 'protracted people's war' through the initiation of open struggle in the rural areas the classic Chinese model. The congress opposed the idea of 'mass uprising' line proposed by Nirmala Lama, as the appropriate revolutionary strategy for Nepal. The new parliamentary politics was dismissed by the Unity Center declaring it as incapable of progressive change.

The faction in the unity center became stronger during the mid-term election in 1994. One group was headed by Nirmala Lama and Niranjan Govind Vidya and another by Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) and Baburam Bhattarai. It was the latter group that represented the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal. Interestingly, the group led by Nirmal Lama got recognition as a political party by the Election Commission. So it clearly shows that the UPFN under Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai had been marginalised. So there was no way out but to boycott the mid-term election and used the opportunity to criticize the parliamentary democratic system and prepared cadres to bring 'radical change' through the armed struggle.

²⁹ . For details see Election commission, (Election for the House of Representatives 1991), Kathamandu, 1991.

The situation was all set for the people's war. In March 1995, at the Third Plenum of central committee, it foreswore elections and changed its name to the communist party of Nepal (Maoist). It decided the strategy and tactics of Nepal of the People's war in the country keeping in mind the specificities of Nepal. In their plan for historical initiation of the people's war adopted by the CPN (Maoist) central committee in September 1995, the Maoists stated that:

on the occasion of the formulation of the plan for the initiation of the process that will unfold as a protected people's war, based on the strategy for encircling the city from the country side according to the specificities of our country, the party once again reiterates its eternal commitment to the theory of people's war developed by Mao as the universal and invincible theory of war³⁰.

The people's war in Nepal aimed at creating a New Democratic state by overthrowing the monarchy; and marching towards communism passing the socialism through a continuous series of cultural revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and thus making it as integral part of the world proletarian revolution.

So what the CPN (Maoist) aimed in the political scenario of Nepal is to overthrow the monarchy. All the communist parties were well aware of the fact that, the possibility of establishing a pure democratic system is very hard without overthrowing the monarchy. Monarchy, during this time, had been associated in the social tradition of

³⁰ As cited by Arjun Karki and David Seddon, (Arjun Karki's "The Politics of Poverty and Movement from bellow in Nepal", Ph.D. thesis, University of East Angila, School of Development Studies, U.K., 2001, P.174), No.1, P.18.

Nepalese society. It used to derive power and authority not only from the feudal elements who support it but also from all economic classes. Keeping in mind the above mentioned position of the Nepalese society, the CPN (Maoist) started the path of complete revolution by first starting with an opposition to the feudal structure of the society.

The People's war

Once the CPN (Maoist) was formed it was never silent. In the areas of their influence and dominance like, Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot and Salyan, they started attacking land lords and government functionaries. The voters and political activists, who had taken part in the election process, were also targeted by the Maoist. During the period 1994-1995, the Maoists, led by Baburam Bhattarai started a campaign called 'sija campaign' in the areas of Rukum and Rolpa. The intention of the campaign was to propagate Maoist ideology through focused training-action programs. And again it intended to rouse the masses and heighten political consciousness. The Maoist also had continuous fighting between the UPFN (Nirmala Lama Group), Nepali congress workers and UML workers.

The unleashing violence by the Maoists was retaliated to by severe police action under a military operation code named 'Romeo', launched in November 1995. The ruthlessness of this operation Romeo became a notorious subject of discussion at the time and some have seen it as a crucial precipitating factor behind the Maoists' eventual commitment to the launching of a people's war³¹. Reacting to the ruthlessness of the operation Baburam Bhattarai, in a news-paper interview stated that:

³¹ . See Arjun Karki and David Seddon, No.1, P.20

Under this armed police operation around 1,500 policemen including a special trained commando force sent from Kathmandu have been deployed to let loose reign of terror against the poor peasants of that rugged mountain district (Rolpa) in western Nepal. So far about 1,000 people have been arrested, of whom about 300 are kept in police custody or sent to jail under fictitious charges while the rest have been released on bail after severe torture³².

The Human Rights year book for 1995 reported that,

The government initiated... suppressive operations to a degree of state terror. Especially the workers of UPFN were brutally suppressed, under the direct readership of ruling party workers of the locality, police searched, tortured and arrested without arrest warrants, in 11 villages of the districts. Nearly 6,000 locals had left villages due to the police operation one hundred and thirty two people were arrested without serving any warrants. The arrested included elderly people above 75 years old. All the detained were subjected to torture³³.

This was the situation when on 4th February 1996, Baburam Bhattarai, chairman of CPN (Maoist) presented the Nepali-congress-led coalition government of Sher Bahadur Deuba with a list of 40 demands related to 'nationalism, democracy and

³² . See Bertil Linter, "Nepal struggles to cope with diehard Maoist violence", *Jane's intelligence Review*, Vol.11, No.6, June, 1999, P.43.

³³ . For details see Deepak Thapa, in Kanak Mani Dixit and Rama Chandra Shastri, (ed), *State of Nepal*, Himal Publication, Lalit pur, 2002), "Maobadi of Nepal", P. 85.

livelihood'. These demands were not much different from the points outlined in the 1991 election manifesto. Baburam Bhattarai's letter contained an ultimatum that the government would initiate positive steps towards fulfilling those demands by 17th February 1996 or else they would be forced to resort to an armed struggle against the existing state. But, while the prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was on a visit to India, the CPN (Maoist) struck on 13th February 1996, before the expiry of deadline.

February 13 marks a historic and decisive victory for the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist-Maoist line over the various brands of revisionisms and neo-revisionisms plaguing the Nepalese communist movement for long and in that sense the supreme sacrifice made by the heroic martyrs in this phase of the revolution deserves permanent place in the annals of proletarian revolution³⁴

The initiation of people's war was due to the necessity of prevalent conditions in Nepalese society. Its agenda rested upon yearlong preparations of the Maoist revolutionaries. The new historic initiation of the people's war gave a fatal blow to the revisionist and reformist past of the communist parties, which was marked by the achievement on both forms an organization and also the struggle. By introducing a new era of democratic revolution in Nepal, it forced on all spheres of the society, economic, political, social and cultural. The CPN (Maoist) gave the organizational call of 'the right to rebel'. Therefore, the CPN (Maoist) party led the masses all over Nepal, to rebel

³⁴ . For details see 'The first day of people's war in Nepal', *Revolutionary worker*, 870, August 25, 1996, Pp.2-3.

against the reactionary state, the ruling feudal and bureaucratic class to smash the existing order and build a people's new democratic state.

Factors leading to the Maoist insurgency

In 1993, Stephen Nlikesell could make a sense of the forthcoming Maoist insurgency in Nepal. He noted:

The London staff of the International Emergency Committee to defend the life of Abimael Guzman, the imprisoned leader of the Shining Path guerrillas of Peru, has been astounded by the volume of mail received from Nepal in support of him. From nowhere in the world has such large number of letters been sent by so many members of a national legislature, to say nothing of common citizens³⁵. Perhaps, this support from a world away springs from ignorance of less than complementary picture portrayed by the international press and western analysis of the Sendero Luminoso (the party's name in Spanish). Or does not derive from a naïve romance of the Nepal's intellectuals with the revolutionary traditions? Or could the affinity for comrade Gonzalo's ideology have deeper underpinning, based on similarity of certain underlying characteristics of Himalaya society with those of the Andean hinterland of Peru? If this were the case, could we then expect tendencies similarly violent to emerge in Nepal?

Taking the above mentioned prediction and the political instability in Nepal, one can find that the Maoist problem in Nepal is not a sudden phenomenon. At the same time to say the Maoist insurgency in Nepal is a law and order problem will land

³⁵. See Njikesell, Stephen, "The paradoxical support of Nepal's left for comrade Gonzalo, Himal, Mar/April, 1993, cited in Deepak Thapa, No.16, P.54.

upon more fallacious situation. The kind of support the Maoists got during the Sija Campaign in 1995 and during the initiation of the people's war in 1996 shows the insurgency is deeply rooted in various problems of Nepal. Not only the political but the socio-economic and the external factors of the state of Nepal, contribute a lot to the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

Social Factors

The social structure of Nepal is highly hierarchical in nature. While the Bahuns (Brahmins), Chetris and Newars dominate the social hierarchy, the ethnic communities like Limbus, Tharus, Magars and Gurungs are treated as the second-class citizens. One of the most important aspect of the domination of the of the power elites like the Chetris and the Brahmins is to achieve certain measure of cultural uniformity in Nepal by unifying different tribes under the label of Hinduism. This too is a result of the process of sanskritization³⁶. The hierarchy mentioned above has been a practice since the initial rule of the Shaha Dynasty and successfully taken over by the Ranas. Since the time of the Ranas, the Bahuns, Chetris and the Newars have been socially, politically and economically dominant.

In the course of history of Nepal, Hindu religion has tried to dominate the other religion and beliefs. Society has been organized on the basis of a hierarchical caste system whose distinctive feature was exclusiveness based on ritual status with reference

³⁶. For details see B.L.Joshi and Leo Rose, *Democratic Innovation in Nepal*, (California University Press, Berkeley, 1996), Pp. 11-12.

to marriage and diet³⁷. The Mulki Ain (Law of Land) 1854 had five hierarchies to accommodate the tribal natives between pure and impure castes.

| Hierarchy | Category | Social Group |
|--|------------------------------|---|
| A | Wearer of holy cord | Parbate bahun/chetri, Newar Brahmin, Indian Brahmin, Newar Hindu |
| B | Non-enslave Alcohol drinkers | Magar, Gurung (associated with Gorkhali Army) sunuwar (Hinduised), Newar (Budhist) |
| C | En-slavable Alcohol drinkers | Bhote (Buddhist), Chepang/Kumal/Haya (ethnic minorities), Tharu (Tarai Ethnic), Gatri (Progeny of freed slaves) |
| D | Impure but touchable | Lower class Newar, Muslim, Christian |
| E | Impure and untouchable | Parhate artisan castes, Newar scavenger castes |
| Source: Harka Gurung, "Social Exclusion and Maoist Insurgency", no. 37, P.2. | | |

From the table it is clear that the Mulki Ain of 1854 clearly granted supremacy to the politically, socially and economically dominant hilly higher castes. The Mulki Ain of 1854 had an ending impact on the constitution of Nepal even after the collapse of the Rana regime and when Nepal entered into a 'so called' democracy.

³⁷. For details see Harka Gurung, "Social Exclusion and Maoist Insurgency", paper presented at National Dialogue Conference on ICO Convention, Kathamandu, 19-20 Jan. 2005, P.2.

In 1962, Nepal was defined in the constitution of king Mahendra as ‘an independent, indivisible and sovereign Monarch’s Hindu state’. Commenting on in favour of Hinduism in Nepal Richard Burghart writes, “Like good Hindus, the Nepalese know the higher truth that all is one. Furthermore, they put this truth into practice. It is because the Nepalese are really Hindus and that there is no ugly communalism in Nepal”³⁸. The statement like this one is quite ironical. First of all it is very difficult to define what he means by ‘good Hindu’ and his conception of all the Nepalese are Hindus is a mistake. Fifty percent of Nepali population are ‘janajatis’ (tribals) and twenty percent are Buddhists. Though the Hindu ruling classes would claim that the janajatis (tribals) are sudras, tribals (many of whom are animists and nature worshipers) reject the Hindu label³⁹.

The movement of 1990 for the restoration of democracy raised some hope among the Nepalese for a society free of discriminations. The constitution of 1990 jeopardised the hopes and aspirations of the people when once again it declared Nepal as a Hindu state. Though the constitution of 1990, in some cases, talks about social equality, it has more contradictions. Article 11.3 of the 1990 constitution states ‘The Right to Equality’. In this article it is stated that “the state shall not discriminate the citizens on the basis of religion, colour, sex, caste, ethnicity or conviction or any of these”. It shows a secular character of the constitution. But the Right to Equality is contradicted by the Right to Religion. In the Article 19.1 of the constitution it is stated that “Each individual will have

³⁸. See Richard Burghat, “The Political Culture of Panchayat Democracy” in Michael Hutt’s *Nepal in Nineties*, (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994), Pp.1-13.

³⁹. See K.P.M.Basheer, ‘The US presence in Nepal: A threat to India’, *The Hindu*, Hyderabad, Nov.30, 2003.

the right to follow and practice one's ancient (*sanatan*) religion by maintaining the dignity of prevailing tradition". So the article clearly indicates inequality towards sections of the society. Not only socially but culturally also the 1990 constitutions included some discriminations. With special reference to the usage of language. It was in this constitution, 'Nepali' as the 'national' language got recognition. Where as other languages were treated as the 'language of nationalities'. Use of languages like Maithali, Newari and other local languages were not allowed in the local administration. So the above examples clearly show the state of Nepal always practiced a policy of exclusion of the tribal and ethnicity minorities giving importance to the Hindu higher caste hierarchies and 'Nepali' as the language of the country.

Along with the social and cultural discrimination, discrimination on the basis of region is also a social history of Nepal. Historically, both the Shah Kings and the Ranas used to give land grants to the above mentioned three groups. The military and civil officials always preferred to establish themselves in the Kathamandu valley. So these officials, in the course of time, supported a mode of government who allowed them to remain in Kathamandu. As a result, Kathamandu became the geographical center where surpluses appropriated from other regions were realised⁴⁰. At the same time except the three dominant castes other ethnic groups or dalits never had any say in the state apparatus. This has always led to a polarization and which has contributed to the civil servants to operate from Kathamandu. Any development programme in Nepal has always been Kathamandu oriented, and the welfare among the worst affected and in the remote areas is completely sidelined.

⁴⁰ . See Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapat, No. 16, P.74.

Under this back drop the communists in general and the Maoists in particular, have constantly advocated the minority rights. Demands for the minority right goes back to the Fourth Congress, which emphasized the need for ‘effective action’ to develop the language, culture and society of oppressed and backward groups⁴¹. It was no co-incidence that the minorities of Nepal swayed away by the Maoists ideas.

From the very beginning the Maoist party (then Unity Center) began mobilizing oppressed ethnicities and dalits and adopted the twin agenda of secular state and linguistic and ethnic equality. The UPFN manifesto for the 1991 election was full of such sentiments. During the initiation of the people’s war in the drafts the Maoists declared that:

to maintain the hegemony of one religion (i.e. Hinduism), language (i.e. Nepali) and Nationality (Khas), this state has for centuries exercised discrimination, exploitation and oppression against other religion, language and nationalities and has conspired to fragment the forces of national unity that is vital for proper development and security of the country⁴²

As already has been discussed it was co-incidence that the oppressed ethnic communists, nationalities and dalits swayed by the Maoists ideas. Rather, because of the centuries old exploitation, discrimination and oppression forced the minorities to believe

⁴¹ . See CPN (Mashal) 2059 BS, P.69 as cited in Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati, No. 16, P.78.

⁴² . See *The Worker*. No. 16, 1996.

in the Maoists as a hope which could bring an end to the disparities. These were the reasons why the Maoists had a strong hold in the western areas of Nepal.

The western region of Nepal is the poorest and the most underdeveloped, and is also inhabited by tribal and backward social groups who have felt exploited and discriminated against at the hands of the upper castes⁴³. Giving a clear background about the political and economic situation in western Nepal, a Maoist comrade says,

The western region, economically and socially, has a feudalist character. Growth of capitalism is very little and slow. There are many social contradictions and the main problem is feudalism. Economically and socially, feudalism has dominated in this area in forms of exploitation. The main contradiction is between the people and the usurers. The usurers are also social, political and religious leaders in the society⁴⁴.

Economic Factors:

The economic factors are no less responsible for the growth of Maoist in Nepal. The state of Nepal is the poorest in the whole world and stands 142nd on the UNDP's Human Development index. Comparing the economic status of Nepal, with its Asian counter parts. Only Laos, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are worse off. The economic factors that led to the growth of the Maoists in Nepal can be divided into three major sections like,

⁴³. See S.D.Muni , No.14, P.10.

⁴⁴ . See Lio, Onesto, "Reports from the people's war in Nepal" in Deepak Thapa's *Understanding Maoist Movement in Nepal*, (Chautari Books Series, Kathamandu, 2003), P.151.

first, economic disparities among the regions. This includes the difference between the cities and the rural areas, urban and localities, economic difference between the centre and periphery. Secondly, acute underdevelopment. This includes failure of various development projects since 1950s, acute poverty low per capita income and low growth rate. Thirdly, concentration of land holding in few hands and lacuna in the distribution of national resources.

Taking the second criteria of Nepal's economy first, it can be found that, the political instability through out the history of Nepal has caused sorry and unbearable economic conditions in Nepal. The social hierarchy, mentioned earlier, has caused polarization of position and a way, the wealth of the country in few hands. In that case corruption of public wealth becoming institutionalized was a permanent feature of the panchayat regime that lasted from 1960s to 1990. Feudalism, a major mode of production, became unbearable for almost all lower strata people in Nepal since it paved way for the elites and businessmen to accumulate wealth to most of their capacities. Though some of the development projects were taken by the government, but it failed to satisfy the popular expectation. The unbearable and sorry economic condition of Nepal witnessed sporadic unrest and protest among the people in inner Tarai and elsewhere in the country. But the political impotence of the less privileged groups could hardly do anything about it⁴⁵. The economic inefficiency of the panchayat regime invited criticism

⁴⁵ . See Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati, No. 16, P.56.

against it. Saying the economic crisis could be resolved only if the political system was reformed and multi party politics reinstated⁴⁶.

The regime change could not survive itself from repeating the same story but in course of time the new political system experienced even worse kind of economic crisis. The new government's promise to bring down the prices by 35 percent worked reverse. Rather during the tenure of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai it was up to 30 percent. Though fiscal year 1993-1994 saw a good economic growth, yet another political instability in 1995 changed the whole situation. It so happened that the economic condition of the people during 1990s became worse than the panchayat era. Because during 1990s when there was a democratic government the politicians and the elites misutilised the freedom and openness of the polity into an open house of nepotism, bribery and corruption. This was not the only cause of the economic crisis in Nepal. Many foreign donors who came to Nepal for any sort of development project were often trapped by the elites. The development project initially aimed at development of the rural people and eradication of poverty, either to be a failure or became successful document wise. Usually the donors never consulted the rural people about the programme that might serve their purpose, and secondly most of the time the foreign donors applied their methods and ideas to run a project which proved to be misfit for Nepalese condition. These were the reasons why, in spite of many development been implemented, there were hardly any changes in the economic standard of the people.

⁴⁶. As mentioned by David Seddon, "Democracy and Development in Nepal" in Michael Hutt (ed), *Nepal in the Nineties*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001), Pp.135-36.

Secondly, the social hierarchy replicates the economic uneven distribution in Nepal. Since the military and the civil servants are based at the Kathmandu valley any development programme are always been Kathmandu oriented. Hence, it created an economic dualism between the rural and the urban areas. This economic dualism does not necessarily limit itself to the village, town, or geographical regions rather it goes to the development pockets. This economic dualism of Nepal can be interpreted putting up the argument of center and periphery idea of the Neo-Marxism.

The Neo-Marxist analysis says inequality is the main feature of the centre-periphery concept where the centre appropriates the surplus from the periphery for its own benefit and maintains domination over the periphery. Looking into the history of economic crisis of Nepal, one can find that Kathmandu, centre for economic and political power, appropriated and distributed the surplus generated by the peripheral areas. Regions like Tarai and Hills outside the valley are considered as the periphery. Neither the representation of the periphery is considered nor gets the surplus distributed in these areas.

The center and periphery argument, in the case of Nepal, is put by the Maoists in a different platform. The Maoists not only take the internal aspect of the argument but also take India as the centre and Nepal as its periphery. According to the Maoists since India is a geographical compulsion for Nepal, India always tries to dominate the economy of Nepal in a large extent. The unrestricted market in Nepal to sell the Indian products, appropriation of Nepalese primary products and labour and domination of *Marwaris* in

Nepalese market are some of the features of India's domination over the economy of Nepal⁴⁷.

Thirdly, Nepal's economy is largely based on agriculture. The limited arable land holding is concentrated in few hands. The feudalistic nature of Nepalese agriculture has not only caused accumulation of agriculture in few hands but also created a gap between landlords and the farmers in the rural areas. So the acute poverty, regional disparities, rampant corruption, favoritism and nepotism, failure of development projects in meeting the needs of rural people, concentration of land in few hands are the reasons why the Maoist could easily go to the mass and share the difficulties. The Maoists were the first who brought a proposed solution to this and that could touch the sentiment of the oppressed and economically deprived ones. It was for the first time the people found some force fighting for their cause. So the economic crisis in Nepal helped to a great extent for the growth of the Maoists.

Political Factors:

Political factor is the most important factor that led to the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Along with the socio- economic disparities, constant political instability, and inefficiency of the political system and the high handedness of the Monarch have always been causes for various protests and unrest among the Nepalese citizens against the political system. The political factors that contribute the Maoist insurgency in Nepal can be divided into followings.

⁴⁷ See Baburam Bhattarai, "Politico-economic Rationale of People's war", in *Problems and Prospects of Revolution in Nepal*, (Janadisha Publication, 2004), Pp.58-88.

Constant political instability has been one of the major cause, which has led the Maoist to think of an alternative system against caused when the very system loses its legitimacy over the people. Legitimacy of a state over its citizens is nothing but to have the authority to enjoy the obligation of its citizens. According to S.M. Lipset legitimacy of a system involves, the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society. Furthermore, he says, the extent to which contemporary democratic political systems are legitimate depends in large measure upon the ways in which the key issues which have historically divided the society have been resolved⁴⁸. To put the political systems of Nepal into this definitional framework one would find that, not a single was appropriate for the Nepalese society. Instead of resolving the issues those divided the society, they were, time and again highlighted and used. So, the political legitimacy, always in crisis, in Nepal was questioned by the Maoists and thought of an alternative legitimate political system through armed struggle.

Lack of political representation from the lower strata was another cause of the Maoist insurgency. Not only socially and economically, but politically also, the rights and voices of the lower strata people of Nepal had been suppressed through out the political history of Nepal. The age old practice of sidelining the ethnic communities, Dalits and other under privileged ones were also sidelined and neglected even after the democratic constitution of 1990 was drafted. It was quite evident from the fact that, the Election Commission did not recognise political parties of nationalities. So the lukewarm response of the state to the claims of nationalities and ethnicities has further crystalised

⁴⁸ . For details see S.M.Lipset, *Political Man*, (Anchor Books, New York, 1963), P.64.

ethnic issues and provided opportunities for ethnic mobilization⁴⁹. The constitution of 1990, proved to be incompetent, in resolving the ethnic and nationality issues, was demanded to be redrafted or reformulated. But the state machinery failed to accommodate them. Though various political parties raised voice in favour of the ethnic communities and the nationalities, the ethnic communities found it comfortable under the banner of the Maoists. Because unlike other political parties, the Maoists's stand for the ethnicities and nationalities appeared to be more forceful, clear and resolute.

Inefficiency and lack of far-sightness of major political parties in general and Nepali Congress in particular led to the growth of Maoist insurgency in Nepal. In the post 1990 revolution for restoration of democracy, the political parties remained hesitant to take up the issues against the monarch or in favour of the unprivileged ones. They were in fear that any stand in favour of the ethnic communities or neglected nationalities may tilt the power balance in favour of the radical forces or non-parliamentary forces. And this gave a space to the Maoists to utilize. On the other hand, Nepali Congress, in power, took repressive measures any action against the government or the system. Citing the repressive measure of the Nepali Congress against the communists and other hesitations.

The Human Rights Year Book 1992 says:

political workers, employees and teachers have been the victims of arrests and torture because of political revenge...speeches, processions and mass meeting had been prohibited in that area (Rolpa). There are many incidents that political parties with support from the ruling power

⁴⁹. For details see Chaitanya Subba, "The ethnic dimension of the Maoist conflict", in Lok Raj Baral (ed), *Facets of Maoist Insurgency*, (Adroit Publishers, New Delhi, 2006), P.42.

had taken political revenge in this district. Local elections were held in a one-sided manner in this district... and candidates of other political parties (non-Nepali Congress) were not allowed to file their nomination⁵⁰.

Nepali Congress as a political party in power proved to be pro-Monarchy throughout the political history of Nepal. Some section of the Nepali Congress belonged to the elite class of Nepal having some relationship with the ex-Ranas of Nepal. In the course of time NC failed seriously to address some of the important issues like ethnicity, identity, development and the distribution system. And this widened the scope for the Maoists to address various issues as mentioned above. Not only the NC, but the Communist parties like the UML also equally responsible for the growth of the Maoists in Nepal. The CPN (UML) joined the mainstream politics in order to make a check and balance for both the monarch and the NC. But it turned to be reverse once it entered into the politics. The UML only tried to adjust itself into the existing political scenario for its own benefit. Lack of consensus between the political parties also helped the Monarch to exercise some extra constitutional and extra- legal power over the political parties. Frequent change of government, constant political instability and the over exercise of power by the Monarch are some of the major political factors that gave rise to the Maoists of Nepal.

⁵⁰ . For details see NSEC, Human Rights Year Book, 1992, Pp.224-225.