

Social Solidarity as a means to strengthen Democracy

Organized by: Martyrs' Memorial Foundation

Supported by: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung(FES)

03 - 04 May, 2013

Kathmandu,Nepal

Prepared for: FES, Nepal

Prepared by: Bikash Dahal

Martyrs' Memorial Foundation organized a seminar on **Social Solidarity as a means to strengthen Democracy** on 03-04 May 2013 in Kathmandu, Nepal with cooperation of FES. The seminar was divided into three parts i.e. opening session, paper presentation session and closing session.

Opening session:

Khila Nath Dahal, the General Secretary of MMF said that this kind of programs have been organized by the MMF in memory of Martyrs' every year. He also stated that till date some martyrs have not been declared as martyrs by the government. Martyrs' sacrificed their life for the improvement of economic, social life of the Nepalese people. They also devoted their life to establish democratic system in Nepal. **Sambhu Hajara Paswan**, former Constituent Assembly member said that at present context this topic is relevant. According to him we have many aspects like education, caste, class and if we manage to stop this we can improve the situation of our country. He was also concerned about disagreement between the political parties but to strengthen democracy we need political stability. He also said that Nepalese are still in doubt regarding the upcoming election. **Dr. Dev Raj Dahal**, the Country director of FES said that without democracy there will be nothing. According to him equilibrium must be present in the society. Democracy's main objective is the people themselves. Where there is rule there are rights, he stated. He also said that rights and duties go hand in hand. If not then there is going to be chaos in the society. According to him equality, public will and development activities are necessary to maintain democracy. Nepal is a country of beliefs and there's a gap between people ideas and beliefs however women's society is growing stronger in our country. Absolute power asks for acceptability but market is always anarchy. He emphasized that our nation is weak and we the citizens of this country must talk about making our nation stronger. Public should develop a vision because strong people with vision and faithful towards the country will lead to stronger nation. **Dr. Jagadish Chandra Pokhrel's** speech focused to two main points: martyrs and Nepal's development model. We have a long list of martyrs but the list hasn't been published and many although declared as martyrs are not in limelight. Something ought to be done in the name of martyrs whose name is still hidden. Later on he said that pluralism, democracy, social harmony are the main elements to develop a nation. He further said that no one believes in dead or static peace. We look for dynamic peace (harmony). Therefore we need dynamism in our country. Which means respect for each other, understanding and search for co-existence and compromise in duties and responsibilities. Democracy is through modelling. There are ups and downs. Chief Guest of inaugural session Hon. **Bimalendra Nidhi** basically focused on three topics: martyrs, to strengthen fundamental democracy and social solidarity. He also said that when people go to collect data regarding martyrs to collect more information people become skeptical and do not open up. He also said that other programs should be conducted and there should be another effective method to collect the names of martyrs. Mr. Nidhi also said that an agenda was needed for solidarity. Despite of ideological differences there should be a mission according to him. Since social diversity exists in our country we need unity. Differences or diversity which exists in our country should be

solidarity. For this notion's composition should be recognized first. The phases of development are: Individual, Community, Society and Nation. **Tirtha Gautam** was the master of ceremony for the program jointly organized by MMF and FES. With this the opening session came to an end. Hon. **Dhundi Raj Shastri**, the president of MMF said that only social democracy will protect peoples' social, political, economic and cultural rights. He also mentioned that federalism will provide different rights at local level to develop country as a whole. He also concluded the opening session of this program.

Day 1, Session 1/2:

Mr. Keshab Prasad Bhattarai presented a paper on '**Promoting the notion of social and solidarity economy to strengthen the relationship between state and society**'. This session was chaired by **Mr. Lal Babu Yadav** and the commentator was **Ms. Amuda Shrestha**.

Synopsis:

Mr. Bhattarai talks about the shift from agricultural economy to industrial economy 18th century onwards. He also talks about the rise of countries due to shift to industrial mode of economy where land has more options than just agricultural production. But with this according to Mr. Bhattarai's paper rises the necessity of food and water. For example a human body needs 3 to 4 litres of water daily for drinking purpose. We already have a population of 6 billion and counting, but our resources are limited. The most populated countries in this world China and India have the least water resources. We know that by 2050 the world will need 70% more food. Regarding the same Mr. Lestor Brown has written a book entitled Full Planet Empty Plates. According to Brown due to increase in population and use of more water resources the world is turning into a desert. The five major risk areas due to this affect are:

- Critical system failure
- Chronic fiscal imbalances
- Unsustainable population growth
- Rising greenhouse gas emissions and
- Global governance failure

All the facts above leads us to understand the importance of social solidarity and its importance. According to this paper the biggest importance of liberal market is production of high quality products, use of strategies to pull customers, and schemes to make market interesting and heavy competition. This paper talks in favor of a social solidarity economy because a country needs to focus on how many citizen have benefited rather than how much a country has developed. For example: India is developing at a rapid rate however more than 40% Indians are still under the poverty line. The concept of social solidarity started from 1972 AD. According to this paper social economy means capitalizing on capitalism and focusing on green economy. Social democracy means

- Participation
- Democracy
- Relation between economy and societal activities
- Common workplace
- Voluntary participation

The world is facing many problems ranging from economy to societal. Many countries are going through a drastic change in economic and technological aspects. This paper also focuses on the use of economy to stabilize the political situation. As said in the paper a country with Per capita income of less than \$ 1000 are prone to democratic problems. A country where the per capita income of an individual is between \$ 3000 and \$ 6055,

democracy is stable and progressive and countries where per capita income is more than \$ 6055 there has never been problem regarding democracy. This means political stability and economic development going together means social economy. Eradication of poverty always comes before democracy and social security.

Comments:

This paper talks about positive outcomes and incidents in brief. The focus is also on being cautious about tilting to one side or another. Since the paper also consists of reasons behind the failure in the making of constitution it is well presented. According to Ms. Shrestha social solidarity must be a major issue and also long lasting however it should be flexible so as to make changes when necessary.

From the floor:

Mr. Ramesh Wagle suggested that there might be the next world war due to scarcity of water. Mr. Kedar Dahal was concerned about the data in the paper not being of more than 20 years. He also questioned if this was because of political instability. Another question he raised was what exactly the cause of being economically weak is. Mr. Narayan Dhungel came up with a what do we need rather than what is and what happened. He also said that we don't know about the problem. At the end of this session Prof. Lalbabu Yadav, the chairperson for this session said that there is no political development without economic development. According to him the aspiration of Nepalese is limited. One major question in our country according to him is who is to be responsible regarding the current situation of Nepal. Is it state or society? A phrase he used to emphasize his points was 'No matter if the cat is black or white it needs to be able to catch mouse'. He also said that leadership is born in crisis however entrepreneurship is born in mistakes.

At the end of the Q & A session Mr. Keshab Prasad Bhattarai said that we are not concerned about our economy. We are mainly focused on political topics. He also insisted that it's high time we demand economic policies. Since political talks are everywhere our common question from now on should be economic. In our country although we talk about people and their needs, wants and demand we are nowhere to be seen. Now we must be focused on long term development.

Day 2, Session 1:

Mr. Naresh Rimal presented a paper on '**Regime shift and alteration in Social Cohesiveness**'. This commentator for this session was **Ms. Madhavi Bhatta**. This session was chaired by **Hari Shankar Pariyar**.

Synopsis:

Mr Rimal talked about regime shift and alteration in social cohesiveness. The regime shift is discussed mostly in an ecological balance. However, the shift in ecological system does have implications on the social or human system. According to Mr. Rimal if a shift in regime occurs from within then the tendency for the system to reach a new level of understanding in social order implies desired state or to a less desired state. The regime shift is discussed mostly in an ecological balance. However, the shift in ecological system does have implications on the social or human system. The human activities are adjusted to the shift in the natural system, for example change in weather, climate or even the productivity of land or livelihoods. If shift in the system is coerced from outside then shift should be abrupt. However, intervention in a smaller level for a longer period of time with its cumulative effect can also be abrupt. The changes that are abrupt is not consonant with the culture.

The order of society has withstood many challenges as threats and influences. The history speaks louder than voice. However, while contemplating on contemporary changes, it is important to look back into history while elevated to march forward into the future. Also the implication of transformation, regime shift and order relating to nation state does provide implications for rural societies as well as urban societies. It is this nexus which is important for nations to build upon the strength of ruralness because it adheres to the cultures of people, their practice and their closeness with nature bounded in the sense community. The spirit is not about our structures of institutions or the governments but of the people, place and history.

Comments:

Dr. Mdhavi Bhatta started with a comment on time management. She also asked a very critical question regarding whether time management is possible in our culture. She was also skeptic regarding the paper since it had no footnotes or references. She said that system must be made resilience. She also briefed about the kinds of regime shift namely: abrupt, smooth and discontinuous.

From the floor:

Ms. Meena Neupane talked about the regime shift taking place many times in our country. She also said that freedom of thought comes first. This is because change in people's thought can only be the best change.

Day 2, Session 2:

Mr. Kalyan Gurung presented a paper on '**Social Democracy as a means to strengthen democratization process**'. This session was chaired by **Mr. Radha Kanta Deo**. The commentator for this session was **Mr. Sita Ram Niraula**.

Dr. Dev Raj Dahal at the beginning of this session talked about the relationship between state and society. No doubt the relation is disturbed right now. We need to think about how to manage this problem. Awareness level has increased in the Nepalese people and our society is also getting stronger but there are political dispute between themselves. Democracy gives us everything: it gives public rights, private rights, and human rights. Our nation is getting weaker because we are concerned about group identity. Change as such is always related to opportunity. It means making vision for ourselves and also for our families. Change can be of different types. Regime shift doesn't necessarily mean citizens getting everything. Change in ruling system is political. Change means access to technology, modernized farming, access to road and transportation. The movement during 2007 BS, 2036 BS and 2046 BS were for a political change however after the 12 point agreement between the government and the Maoist we were able to feel social change. Even after the announcement of Nepal as a republic state our culture didn't change. We talk about a secular state but still we are unable to feel the same. A change is necessary in which positive awareness is the main factor.

Synopsis:

Mr. Gurung presented a paper entitled Social Democracy as a means to strengthen Democratization process. He started with a brief background to the increasing inflation, poverty, unemployment, and food scarcity, lack of quality drinking water, environment pollution, security risk and rapid increase in population. According to Mr. Gurung all capitalist might not be democratic but many capitalist are democratic. The basic importance of democracy is the right and ownership of wealth by capitalists. According to this paper democratic socialism can be defined by three points:

- Economic perspective on democratic socialism

Remittance coming into our country again is used to buy goods from other countries. Our nation is not self-dependent in any production sector. Due to lack of well-made policies we are in energy crisis, majority of working people are unemployed and the market is not competitive.

- Social perspective on democratic socialism
 - o This can be categorized according to ethnicity, religion, gender, caste and age
 - o We need to use a participatory approach
 - o We need to trust ourselves for opportunity distribution
- Political perspective on democratic socialism

This is the most important perspective amongst all. It is because this accepts an individual's democracy and independence. This also guarantees human rights. Social democracy also accepts multi-party democracy. Political freedom and political right are the most important aspects citizens use.

According to this paper democracy means involvement of stakeholders and not stockholders.

Comments:

Mr. Sitaram Niraula said that public awareness is necessary to let the citizens know about their rights and duties. It is because many people do not exactly know what their rights and duties are. It is because it depends on individual personal interests.

From the floor:

Mr. Ramesh Kafle was concerned about the paper not having any reference of citation. He also said society will be less of empowerment and more of democratization. Mr Sita Ram Khatri suggested that no awareness from democratic front be added to the paper as well. Ms. Nirmala Chhetri said that 33% for female is only in written but women still lack opportunity.

Closing Ceremony

With this the program came to end with a formal closing ceremony. **Khila Nath Dahal**, general secretary of MMF thanked all the paper presenters, commentators, chairpersons of various sessions, participants and local organizers. He also took this opportunity to thank FES Nepal who has supported MMF in organizing such kinds of programs since a long time.