

THE 'PEOPLE'S WAR' IN NEPAL

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THE 'PEOPLE'S WAR' IN NEPAL

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Introduction

The Maoist movement in Nepal is by all counts the single most important event that began in the middle of the previous decade and continues to take a toll of human lives even today. Just the number of deaths¹ as a result of this movement is unprecedented in the history of Nepal—or any other Himalayan country for that matter. It has brought every aspect of life in Nepal to a grinding halt and has adversely affected the development process, which had made appreciable strides in the last two decades. The impact of the movement on children, women, and on family, clan, caste, or ethnic relations is yet to be assessed. The entire scholarly attention till recently was devoted to reporting the bloody incidents, trying to understand the genesis and strength of the movement, and looking for a scapegoat either in political parties, the Maoists, or the palace. Few seemed to realize that the Maoist movement in Nepal had long changed into a guerrilla war, which is being fought everywhere—on the pages of newspapers and newsmagazines, television, cyberspace, on the terraces, in forests, villages, and towns of this Himalayan kingdom. Therefore, the Maoist movement in Nepal requires a more serious understanding than has been attempted so far.

It is a little intriguing that the vibrant academic and journalistic worlds² of India have not paid as much attention to the Maoist movement in Nepal as one would expect. India shares its longest land border with Nepal, and various bilateral treaties and memoranda of understanding govern their relationship. Generally speaking, Indians have apparently perceived the Maoist violence in Nepal as being its internal problem. That there is a need to understand this movement and inform the citizens of India better is perhaps not generally realized. This is surprising since India has had the experience of bandhs, killings, destruction of public property, etc. at the hands of the ultra-Left groups in West Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh or the secessionist organizations in India's north-east inspired by the same ultra-Left ideologies that inform the Maoist movement in Nepal. There are also occasional reports of India supporting Nepal in terms of arms or providing training to the Nepalese Army in anti-insurgency operations. One would expect a more active role of India, not only because it has to bear some of the more serious consequences of the Maoist violence in Nepal, be it the temporarily displaced Nepalese or those permanently migrating from there, but also for its own security concerns that are linked with return of peace there. But the bitter lessons learnt from “peace-keeping” in Sri Lanka may be too fresh in the minds of Indian leaders to not repeat such a misadventure in Nepal. Given the lack of knowledge of most Indians about Nepal and the attitude towards India of both the Nepalese elite and the Maoists, it is not unlikely that any Indian initiative (specially a military one) towards solving the current crisis in Nepal would meet with opposition.³ But it is not necessary to limit our perspective to all-out military intervention, nor is it desirable to remain passive observers from across the border. If not anyone else, at least the academicians and journalists should perhaps take a greater interest than they have taken so far to understand the crisis in Nepal, which in many senses has its intellectual and ideological linkages with

India rather than with China. Although Maoism was not born in India, it travelled to Nepal from the south.⁴

This genealogy is, however, not to be taken with any sense of pride by Indians, as they have failed to douse the anti-Indian feelings of the Left political parties in Nepal in general and particularly that of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the political party that is responsible for the current political crisis in Nepal. While the Nepali National Congress Party dithered and differed on its stand on India, the communists gained a lot of credibility by taking a clear anti-India stand. India, in turn, mistook this to be a pro-Chinese position. Such a view of India was apparently informed by its own sensitivity of China rather than its view of Nepal's proximity to China. After all, the only two countries that independent India seems to take serious cognizance of in Asia are China and Pakistan: the other neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bangladesh are often, if inadvertently, overlooked. Even the communists in India made little effort, at individual or party level, to be involved constructively in the communist movement of Nepal. The Maoists of Nepal, however, continue to receive help from some of the ultra-Left groups in India like the Maoist Coordination Committee and People's War Group, but such groups have gone completely out of Indian influence/control and even turned violently against India from time to time, as is evident from the recent reports of the Maoists turning the heat on Indians.

It is essentially to overcome some of the shortcomings pointed out above that I proposed to take up the present study on the Maoists of Nepal. Otherwise, there is no dearth of literature on the Maoist movement either in printed or electronic form. There is also no effort lacking on the part of Nepali or European scholars to come to grips with the situation in Nepal, as is clear from the conferences and lectures arranged around this theme in various parts of the world. And some of those who have written recently on this movement⁵ have had long years of fieldwork experience in various parts of the country, including the more inaccessible terrain of west Nepal where the Maoists first consolidated their position.

At the theoretical level, it will be interesting to examine the uneasy relationship between Maoism on the one hand and nationalism and ethnicity on the other. The question I would like to raise here is: Are class and nation/ethnicity mutually exclusive or complementary concepts? The Maoists of Nepal have shown that they need not necessarily be exclusive, as one would theoretically expect them to be. Is the movement then a true class struggle for establishment of the rule of the proletariat, as claimed by the Maoists? At least on the face of it, it does not look so. It also appears that the biggest enemies of the Maoists were not the bourgeoisie but the Nepal police, whom they have by now 'conquered' and demoralized, and now the Royal Nepal Army. Both the police and the army are arms of the nation state rather than of the feudal class, although they are both constituted of high-caste Nepalis.

Another reason why the Maoist movement in Nepal is interesting enough to undertake the present study was its gender dimension. As a woman, although not

a feminist scholar, this author has always been interested in issues of women. The short projects completed earlier on women in armed conflict have sensitized this author to a good extent to be able to understand their strengths as well as vulnerabilities under abnormal situations. The Maoist movement in Nepal distinguishes itself in this regard, not only because girls constitute one-third of its combat force, but also the fact that achieving gender equality is one of the professed goals of this movement. We all know that this goal is not as easy to achieve as the Maoist leaders in Nepal would perhaps like us to believe, but this certainly shows progressive thinking on their part.

This author has generally tried to keep abreast with just not Nepal but South Asia as a whole through the quintessential *Himal Southasian* published from Kathmandu and through various academics and journalist friends in this region. Thus, this author's interest in the subcontinent extends beyond the tenure of the Kodikara fellowship, which enabled the present report. It has also been this author's firm belief that events in South Asia cannot be seen in isolation no matter where the epicentre lies, as they often have tentacles spread across international borders. Nor is literature always reliable enough to understand the events that unfold in this region. Direct contact with the people involved in an event is not only desirable, but essential.

Unfortunately, despite the best of intentions, the much-needed fieldwork in Nepal for preparation of this report could not take place. The Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, which awarded the prestigious Kodikara fellowship 2003, allowed this author time to wait and watch the situation in Nepal and consult friends there on the possibility of conducting fieldwork for at least a couple of months. All advice on doing the fieldwork received during the period was in the negative. Not one friend in Kathmandu or the author's academic adviser at India's North-Eastern Hill University advised going ahead with the fieldwork as planned. And one could not go on waiting and watching indefinitely for the situation to improve in Nepal so that fieldwork could be done in some of the most important Maoist strongholds there. One finally came to terms with the only recourse of preparing this report on the basis of secondary literature available in print and on the Internet. This author was, of course, immensely benefited from discussion on various aspects of the Maoist movement with Nepali friends, researchers and journalists, who were contacted every now and then. Interest in and exposure to the South Asian situation also helped in not losing the wider perspective and implications of the movement being written of. Although fieldwork could not be done in person by the author, the fieldwork information provided in the writings of scholars like Deepak Thapa, Manjushree Thapa, Judith Pettigrew, Anne de Sales and Sara Shneiderman was utilized. This author was also fortunate to have access to the extensive field notes and library of the academic supervisor. This author is, however, fully aware that this is poor compensation for what could have been done.

CHAPTER 1**A Brief History of Nepal**

In this section a brief history of Nepal linking the various major events that have a bearing on the ongoing Maoist movement is reconstructed. The aspects of Nepal's history that were not thought of as being connected to the present problem are not considered here. As someone teaching history for some years now, this job is at once easy and difficult. Easy because one is familiar with the rules of the game, and difficult because one will need to largely ignore the rules if one has to reconstruct a history of Nepal in a few pages, as has been done here.

Prior to the 1770s, numerous Tibeto-Burman language-speaking groups which practised shifting cultivation in the middle hills and pastoralism and trade in the higher mountains inhabited the elongated tract of land we now call Nepal. They had their own little village or tribal councils to settle internal disputes and at times a small militia to fight enemies. Some of these groups, like the Newars⁶ in Kathmandu Valley and the Limbus⁷ in east Nepal apparently had more developed polity formations that could be called chiefdoms, if not kingships in the true sense. Their cultures, languages, and religions were protected from the north by the glaciers and other formidable natural barriers, from the south by the long malarial *Terai*, and even on the east and west there were no easy access routes through the mountains for any large group to enter Nepal. Those who lived on the mountains along the routes to Tibet naturally had more influence of Tibetan culture, which is evident from their religious beliefs and practices. Still less is known about the people living in the malarial *Terai* except that Tharus lived on both sides of the Indo-Nepal border and had developed immunity from malaria.

The cultures of the original inhabitants of Nepal did not come under any serious threat for about five centuries since the thirteenth, which marked the beginning of the Indian emigration to Nepal through the Kumaon-Garhwal Himalayas.⁸ The Himalayas as an abode of gods and goddesses has always been part of Hindu mythology because of their mention in the epics and other religious scriptures. Thus, emigration to Nepal started very early, but the early migrants were confined to pockets of Nepal and had limited influence on the local population. The migrants to Nepal were mostly Hindu Brahmins from western and northern India, who, under the growing power of the Muslims, chose to migrate to Nepal. They later intermarried with local women, specially Magars and Gurungs. Some such emigrant groups from India had also established small kingdoms mostly in and around Kathmandu Valley. The Bahuns and Chhetris, who constitute the most dominant category in Nepal today in every respect, including demographic, are progenies of those Indian emigrants to Nepal.⁹

The cultural survival of the earlier inhabitants of Nepal came under threat after King Prithvinarayan Shah conquered most of the small kingdoms and principalities of present-day Nepal and succeeded in bringing the local communities under his subjugation with active help from the high-caste Hindus

already settled there.¹⁰ The first Shah king was apparently aware of the plurality of the Nepali nation state whose foundation he had laid, as he described Nepal as a garden of “4 *varnas* and 36 castes”.¹¹ He had also decreed to some local communities like the Limbus that their culture and traditions would be respected forever, and should any of his successors not respect his decree, the gods and goddesses would punish him/them.¹² On the basis of this evidence, the first king is seen as a person of wide vision and integrating qualities. But some scholars make a slightly different reading of the first king’s philosophy of Nepal. They read the above metaphorical expression with his famous resolve to make Nepal “*asli Hindustan*” or “true land of the Hindus”.¹³

First, it is clear from the life and works of the first Shah king of Nepal that he had an intimate knowledge of India, which was known as *Munglan*, or “the land of Muslims”. It is possible that he maintained close contact with India through the scores of Indian traders and mendicants who visited Nepal during the winter and disappeared when the rainy season started. Although King Jayasthiti Malla introduced the caste system in Nepal with the help of some Indian Brahmins as early as the fourteenth century, it was confined to certain pockets dominated by people of Indian origin. Most communities, till the unification of Nepal by King Prithvinarayan Shah, were, in today’s parlance, non-caste, non-Hindu, and egalitarian communities.¹⁴ With the unification of Nepal started the spread of the caste system and its related concepts of *varna*, hierarchy, purity and pollution.

According to various historical sources, the first king is believed to have been far more tolerant of the pluralist cultures of Nepal than his successors. It appears that his successors pursued the agenda of nation building more vigorously than he did, which essentially meant promotion of the Nepali language, Nepali dress and Hindu culture among the newly subjugated areas and peoples.¹⁵ In fact, from 1770s till the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814–16, Nepal showed expansionist tendencies and conquered Sikkim, which then included the present Darjeeling district of West Bengal, excluding its Kalimpong subdivision, which was under Bhutan. Nepal also extended its western frontier up to Kangra valley. The British had the firsthand experience of fighting with the poorly-armed but much braver Nepali forces, and although they won the war, the Nepalis won the hearts of the British as the latter soon set in motion a process of recruitment of Nepalis that perhaps has no parallel in history. This led to large-scale immigration of the Mongoloid Nepalis to India leaving the hills of Nepal, which were soon occupied by the high-caste Hindus gradually pushing themselves towards the east.

The high-caste Hindus’ eastward ho was not as simple as appears from the above account. From the middle of the nineteenth century there started a vigorous process of nation building, which practically meant promotion of the Nepali language, Nepali dress and Hindu religion among the speakers of 20-odd different Tibeto-Burman speakers practising various forms of animism or Buddhism. In this process, Nepal took the help of the *Tagadharis* (called so because they wear, or are supposed to wear, a sacred thread across their chest, which is done only by initiated men belonging to the Bahun, Thakuri and Chhetri castes, who are also called *dwija* or “twice-born” elsewhere) whose settlement in

the east was facilitated by the nation state by suitably changing the land laws and even putting an end to communal forms of ownership that existed there till the middle of the previous century, at least in Limbuan.¹⁶ Being essentially a hybrid group with polygyny as an accepted marital norm, the high-caste Hindu Nepalis multiplied fast and soon occupied the hills and mountains owned and occupied by the earlier inhabitants of Nepal who, since 1816, began to leave the hills of Nepal for various kinds of employment in India.

In 1846, Jang Bahadur Rana took over as the absolute ruler of Nepal and turned the Shah kings into titular heads. In 1854, he imposed the *Muluki Ain* or national civil code in Nepal, which completely redefined the land tenure system, rules of inheritance, and food, which included ban on eating of beef, etc. Above all, under this code, he categorized the people of Nepal into five hierarchical groups with the *Tagadhari* or “those who wear the sacred thread” on the top; the *Namasine Matwali* or “unenslavable drinking castes” like the Magar and Gurung; the *Masine Matwali* or “enslavable drinking castes” like the Limbu and Rai; the “touchable but impure castes” like the Tamang and Sherpa; and finally “untouchable and impure castes” like Kami, Sarki, and Damai. Since both the Hindu and Buddhist Newars of Nepal had a caste hierarchy of their own, the Newar castes were distributed in all the five categories.¹⁷

There might have been several reasons for the Magar and Gurung to receive the “unenslavable” status immediately below the *Tagadhari* castes themselves, but the few that emerge from this author’s reading of the literature on Nepal are these. The two Mongoloid communities being the first to come in contact with the Hindu emigrants from India were also the first to “Sanskritize” themselves by adopting several, if not all, characteristics of the *Tagadharis*. Second, by the mid-nineteenth century, several Magars and Gurungs had returned home after their stint in the British Army and were relatively rich, well-informed, and influential in Nepal. The *Tagadharis*, who dominated Nepal socially, politically, economically and demographically, could not ignore this new situation. Compared to the Magars and Gurungs of western Nepal, the recruitment of the Rais and Limbus living in the east took place later, and so did the contact between the *Tagadharis* and the two “enslavable” communities of the east Nepal. As a result, the latter two communities not only had relatively less engagement with the country’s nation-building process, but also were far less Sanskritized compared to the other two “unenslavable” communities from west Nepal.

There is some information to show how the various indigenous communities tried to protest against the nation-building process in Nepal. Besides the chronological information on protests by various *Janajati* communities against the state from 1770 to 1964 provided by Harka Gurung,¹⁸ we have now a moving account of Lakhana Thapa’s resistance to the state provided by Anne de Sales¹⁹ and of the Limbus in the east by Lionel Caplan.²⁰ Although not much detail is available on the Limbu resistance to the *Tagadhari* colonization of Limbuan, it appears that the Limbus had physically evicted the *Tagadharis* from their traditional habitat Limbuan in 1950–51, resulting in much loss of property belonging to the *Tagadharis*.²¹ As it happens in all such communal violence,

some Limbus who went against the ethos of their community and gave protection to the Bahuns and Chhetris fled east Nepal for their lives.

In 1951, the Rana rule ended in Nepal.²² In the country itself, whether ruled by Ranas or Shahs, there was practically no change in the policy of nation building. As a matter of fact, the national policy on language did not prove itself to be sensitive to the speakers of non-Nepali languages of the country. Although in 1963 the new civil code withdrew the state's patronage of the caste system, the caste strictures as well as structure remained the same as before. The partyless panchayat regime of Nepal, which lasted from 1960 to 1990, also tried to evolve a uniform national culture, language and religion,²³ much to the unhappiness of those who were at the receiving end. Although Nepal did not fully succeed in nation building even with active support of the high-caste Hindus, it certainly succeeded in seeing to it that the high-caste Hindus were fully entrenched.²⁴

Before concluding this section, we dwell briefly on whether or not Nepal is a feudal country. It is important to answer this question, as one of the most important objectives of the Maoist movement in Nepal is to put an end to feudalism in Nepal.²⁵ It is also necessary to examine critically the indiscriminate borrowing and supplanting of concepts by the Maoists from India. First, feudalism does not mean the same thing in every country or region. It is possible that the Maoist leaders have borrowed this concept lock, stock and barrel without examining its relevance and applicability in Nepal. Second, feudalism was at least officially abolished when B. P. Koirala formed the government in 1959,²⁶ that is alleged to have been done with an eye on resettlement of the Nepalese hill people in the *Terai*. However, it is quite likely that nothing changed about feudalism, as the government had hardly any time to implement its decision. But in order to be sure, one can turn to the work of Mahesh Chandra Regmi, who is an undisputed authority on the economic history of Nepal. His *Readings in Nepali Economic History*²⁷ has clear evidence to show that there were landlords in Nepal's *Terai* districts, where land was fertile and where surplus production was known. Some of the *Terai* districts even exported, among other things, rice to India. Further, Amy Waldman of the *New York Times* also reports about one Rachna Sharma who was from a landlord family with about 15 Tharu families living as bonded labourers on her land prior to being targeted by the Maoists, forcing her family members to live in a refugee camp in Nepalgunj.²⁸ But it is C. K. Lal, a journalist in Kathmandu, who provides the clinching evidence of the association between the fertile *Terai* and growth of landlordism. He shows that landlords were all high-caste hill people who dreaded living in the malarial *Terai* or disliked its heat and humidity. Hence, they lived off the sweat of the local Tharus whom they treated with disdain. The following words of his are particularly revealing.

This kind of disdain for farmers is most visible in the western *terai*, where Jang Bahadur and his Rana descendants doled out parcels of land to Chhetri court faithfuls, poor Rana cousins, destitute Thakuri in-laws and sundry other Brahmin priests. Not schooled in the zamindari traditions of noblesse oblige under which the tiller of the land is to be accorded as much respect as one's

own kith and kin, these neo-zamindars indulged in the worst forms of feudal exploitation, pauperizing the local Tharu farmers and turning them into *kamaiya* (bonded labour) slaves, a system formally outlawed only in 2000. The Bahuns of Dang, Kapilvastu, and Rupandehi and the Rana-Thakuris of Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur used the brute power of the state machinery to enslave the local peasantry and treat them as less than human beings.²⁹

Even without further evidence, it is quite safe to expect feudalism of sorts in the fertile *Terai* of Nepal, but to expect the same in the high mountains and the middle hills will perhaps be a mistake, though one might encounter a big landlord occasionally. The hilly terrain, low productivity of the soil, high cost of production, single cropping, lack of irrigation facilities, long gestation period of crops, and other such conditions virtually rule out the possibility of feudalism taking root in the hills and mountains. This is perhaps why most of the ethnographies on middle-hill and high-mountain communities that one has read make no mention of feudalism, which the Maoists frequently talk about. Had it been there, it would certainly be reflected in the detailed ethnographies on Nepal that are available. It will actually be risky even to generalize on feudalism in the *Terai*, as actual conditions are expected to vary significantly from district to district and even from one landlord to another.

This makes it difficult for one to explain why the Maoist movement started and consolidated in the middle hills and not in the *Terai*, as one would expect theoretically. It is possible that the Maoists incorporated the word "feudalism" mainly to gain support of the *Terai* people, of whom middle-hill Nepali leaders are indeed careful in view of the sheer demographic strength the *Terai* commands today. The picture may be clearer as we take more factors into our consideration as we proceed with the present report.

CHAPTER 2

The Second Coming of Democracy

The year 1990 is associated with the coming of democracy to Nepal. Hardly any author on Nepal seems to recognize the fact that it is not the first time that democracy gave a half-hearted knock at the door of this Himalayan kingdom.³⁰ This non-realization, one presumes, is certainly not due to any lack of information. One reason for not recognizing the first coming of democracy in 1959–60 could be the extremely short duration for which it lasted, while the other reason could be that even its second coming is half-hearted in the sense that the aspirations of several political parties and many of the hitherto marginalized communities, which are today called *Janajatis*, Dalits, and *Madhesis* have not found adequate space in the 1990 Constitution of the country. The country has been declared a Hindu country, which falls short of recognizing the cultural and religious plurality of the country. But whatever might be the shortcomings of the 1990 Constitution of Nepal, it is a significant leap forward without which the country would neither have seen the emergence of the *Janajati* nor the Maoist movement in the 1990s.

Calcutta and Benares [now Varanasi] were initially the two most important cities for educational and political training of the leaders of Nepal. This was so at least till the Independence of India and perhaps a decade or so more. Besides, the interaction between the people of Nepal and India for marriage, festivals, pilgrimage, etc. has been an old and continuous process. Hence, it was no surprise that some leaders of Nepal participated in the national movement of India and some Indian leaders helped the leaders of Nepal to overthrow the Rana regime in 1951. Although the boundaries between India and Nepal were fixed as early as 1816, the free transit system between the two countries makes the border virtually open, allowing the people of one country to commit crimes—political or otherwise—in one country and take refuge in the other or to conduct anti-government activities from across the border. The flow of Nepalese to India was, till the 1950s, rather limited in comparison to their flow after India's Independence.³¹ Although exact figures on the number of emigrants from Nepal is not known, the flow continues unabated between the two countries. With the flow of people flows their culture, and political ideas like democracy and communism. This is what happened between Nepal and India, too.

The freedom struggle of India had a profound and widespread impact on the people of Nepal. Nepal could not avoid the growth of similar aspirations in its own soil. As long as the British controlled India, the rulers in Nepal and India were in tandem, which made it difficult for such aspirations to grow there. But with India's Independence and ushering in of the development process everywhere in the country Nepal lost its political ally in the British to stop the growth of democratic aspirations in the country. Thus, it saw the birth of the Nepali National Congress Party in 1947 and the Communist Party of Nepal in 1949.³² And in the first ever election held in May 1959, the Nepali Congress won

74 out of 109 seats and formed the government under the prime ministership of the legendary B. P. Koirala, who was soon sacked by King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah. King Mahendra then established himself as the absolute monarch, and sent Koirala to a long haul in Sundari Jal jail and put an end to the parliamentary system of democracy.³³

This “bloodless coup” by King Mahendra had to do with certain decisions that the Koirala government took.³⁴ After overthrowing the Koirala government the king changed the Constitution from parliamentary democracy to panchayat democracy. The latter had a pyramidal structure with the national panchayat at the top, followed by zonal panchayats, district panchayats, and at the bottom were village and town panchayats. Most importantly, the new system was partyless. Although argued by the king as best suited for a country like Nepal,³⁵ the panchayat system actually provided opportunities to traditionally dominant groups like the Bahuns and Chhetris to reconsolidate themselves.

Nepal experimented with panchayat democracy till 1990. In fact, as early as January that year, the coordination committee formed on 28 December 1989 of members of various communist factions and the Nepali Congress announced the Movement for Restoration of Democracy in Nepal and called for a *Jan Andolan* (People's Movement).³⁶ It was for the first time that various communist factions, including the Maoists, came together on 10 January 1990 to form the United Left Front,³⁷ arguably after that of West Bengal's Left Front government. Whether or not this movement was inspired by the break-up of Soviet Union or fall of communist regimes like that of Ceausescu in 1989, as Millard claims,³⁸ the movement for abolition of the panchayat system and restoration of multiparty democracy gained unprecedented momentum and magnitude in no time. By April 1990, the movement had tens of thousands of men and women protesting on the streets of Kathmandu and Patan. Various intellectual and professional groups joined the movement soon, and even Chandra Sekhar, the would-be prime minister of India, exhorted the people of Nepal to take the movement to the streets.³⁹

The *Jan Andolan* was officially launched on 18 February 1990 on which day King Birendra reiterated his faith in the panchayat system.⁴⁰ From the next day the Opposition party calls for bandhs started, which were all successful despite the king's machinery keeping key journalists behind bars. The conflict between the king and the Opposition parties transformed into confrontation, which turned violent each time it occurred. Each repressive measure taken by the government brought a new group of Nepalis in support of the movement. This did not stop even after the king replaced Marich Man Singh with Lokendra Bahadur Chand as prime minister and announced, on 6 April 1990, the formation of a Constitutional Reform Commission to consider incorporation of the various demands made by the Opposition parties. On 8 April 1990, the king lifted the 29-year-old ban on political parties and established a commission for constitutional reforms. Curfew was lifted on the next day, 9 April, which is celebrated throughout Nepal as “Democracy Day”. The National Panchayat was dissolved on 16 April 1990 making way for the formation of an interim government represented, among

others, by the Nepali Congress, the United Left Front, the independents, etc., and headed by K. P. Bhattarai. The constitutional reform process the government initiated went through rough waters several times due primarily to the king's intransigence. While the United Left Front was willy-nilly party to its decisions, Mashal, a Maoist faction, stood as the most alert sentinel to the designs of the palace and even denounced the new Constitution the king promulgated on 9 November 1990.⁴¹ Since this new Constitution left much to be desired in terms of the fulfilment of the aspirations of several political parties as well as *Janaajatis* of Nepal, Mashal became immensely popular.

CHAPTER 3

The *Janajati* Movement

Following the promulgation of the new Constitution, Nepal entered a new phase of its history with almost every single community living in its territory mobilizing its members, reviving its age-old customs and traditions, and organizing itself for fulfilment of its demands.⁴² It appeared as though they were all held back by a powerful force and released suddenly into the world of freedom where one now could talk about one's language, custom, religion, tradition, etc. without any fear of being arrested and prosecuted. There were some ethnic organizations⁴³ called *Magurali* (an acronym for the Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu communities), and *Setamagurali* (an acronym for the Sherpa, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu communities) in Nepal prior to 1990, but it was only after the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1990 that there was a mushrooming of ethnic organizations all over Nepal. The few educated members of various ethnic groups began their search for roots, identifying what they considered as their own and "authentic" customs and rituals of birth, marriage, death, etc., and abandoning those they thought were imposed upon them during the past two centuries or so. Committees were formed at various levels, and some of them even established their networks outside Nepal, in areas like Assam, Sikkim, and Darjeeling for garnering financial and moral support to the cause of their "identity", which they were forced to submerge till the restoration of democracy in 1990.⁴⁴

The story of this mobilization—called the *Janajati* movement in most of the concerned literature—is important to recount here primarily because, as argued in this section, the Maoist movement has benefited from both the successes and failures of its precursor in the *Janajati* movement. Although one author⁴⁵ writes that 1990–95 was the planning period for the Maoist movement, there is little evidence to prove this, and almost no network existed even at district level in 1996 when the Maoists launched what they call the 'people's war'. The period 1990–95 was actually the *Janajati* period in Nepal, which the top Maoist leaders like Pushpa Kamal Dahal ("Prachanda") and Baburam Bhattarai perhaps watched with a sense of nervousness because there was caste and ethnicity everywhere, and no one talked about class. Each ethnic community was busy mobilizing its members and building networks across the ethnic boundaries for more strength. Although ethnic consciousness is quite old in Nepal, as it is nurtured by geographical conditions of the country and forced by the nature of its rule, the politicization of ethnic groups was something new. Hence, the people took some time to respond to the call of the leaders, but once the people started responding they quickly began to experience disillusionment with some of them, as the latter often lacked leadership qualities. Although there were enough reasons for a cleavage between the *Tagadharis* on the one hand and the *Janajatis*–Dalits on the other,⁴⁶ the latter were psychologically not yet prepared to take a position that would challenge the *Tagadharis*, who were knowledgeable, powerful, and

influential. The *Tagadharis* not only dominated the fields of administration, education, medicine, engineering, judiciary, etc.,⁴⁷ but had also established ritual brotherhood and other kinds of interdependent relationships with *Janajatis*. Because of a lower literacy rate and other forms of backwardness, the *Janajati* leaders could often not argue beyond a point with *Tagadhari* people, who dominated all discussions and decision making at village level and above.

Deepak Thapa, who has made one of the most perceptive readings of the transition from the *Janajati* to the Maoist movement, says:

The state's reaction to the incipient ethnic movement was uninspiring. Apart from *pro forma* gestures such as allowing the broadcast of news over the national radio in some regional languages and later the establishment of a National Committee for the Development of Nationalities, it did little to recognize concerns relating to language rights, under-representation in administration, introduction of affirmative action, the proclaimed 'Hindu' nature of the state (as opposed to a secular one), and so on. Resentment at the lackadaisical attitude of the mainstream politicians was building up throughout the 1990s. Having decided to abandon the electoral path, and having had to revert to developing a "ground-level" power base, the Maoists were quick to identify this ethnic discontent and tried to ride it to their purposes, taking advantage of the perceived correlation between ethnicity and poverty. They thus added ethnic demands as a flavour to their ideological programme of class struggle, declaring: "To maintain the hegemony of one religion (i.e. Hinduism), language (i.e. Nepali), and nationality (i.e. Khas), this state has for centuries exercised discrimination, exploitation and oppression against other religions, languages and nationalities and has conspired to fragment the forces of national unity that is vital for proper development and security of the country."⁴⁸

Generally speaking, most ethnic communities in Nepal were devoid of well-informed and articulate leadership. The few of those who had such qualities were already part of the panchayat regime and were, hence, excluded from the *Janajati* movement. As a result, a truly pan-Nepali leadership could grow only in the diasporic environments like Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Assam, not only due to the kind of social composition there, but also due to various local challenges to their survival. On the other hand, such a leadership could never grow within Nepal due to the kind of ethnic distribution in the country, and, more importantly, due to the ethnic policies followed by the state there. Thus, it was too early for various ethnic communities to rise up and face, as it were, the dominant "Other" in Nepal—the *Tagadharis*—who were, in every sense of the word, the surrogate state in Nepal. The first crop of leadership that could be seen among the *Janajatis* and Dalits in the early 1990s was from a semi-literate background. They apparently could not cope with the attention and stress their new role had brought them. Hence, they often proclaimed that the panchayat days were better, as they at least did not have to contribute money for their organizations every now and then!⁴⁹

In other words, confronting the *Tagadharis* in Nepal was not easy for the *Janajatis* and Dalits. There were too many local factors to consider and too many

obstacles from within as well as from outside. Unlike Dalits who traditionally lived on the fringes of the villages, the *Tagadharis* were all over, and it was very difficult to do anything in the villages without being noticed by them. The latter were sensitive of such developments. The *Janajatis*, on the other hand, were at the stage of cultural reconstruction and had often little idea of their ultimate political goals, which were equally important for a clear vision of the future. This created some kind of directionlessness among some such ethnic organizations, which was a situation *Tagadharis* were looking for to reconsolidate their control over the various ethnic communities. The Maoists provided them with such an opportunity in the mid-1990s.

Articulation of the differences with the high-caste Hindus by the *Janajatis* and Dalits is an interesting subject worth dwelling on for a while. Tanka Subba has devoted a whole chapter of his book on Kirata politics to this issue.⁵⁰ Further information is available from the valuable articles by Susan Hagen⁵¹ and Ganesh Gurung⁵² in a book published by the Sociological and Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON).

The above literature shows that the *Janajatis* have been trying to differentiate themselves from the high-caste Hindus on several counts.

First, they consider themselves Mongols, which is understood as a national (from Mongolia), or as a racial category (short for Mongoloids), and the caste Hindus are described as Aryans, which is a cultural rather than racial category, but understood in the latter sense. The most visible space where such "racial" boundaries are drawn is the human face. Because the eyes, nose, hair on the body, and body structure of the caste Hindus and the *Janajatis* are generally different, such racial characteristics become a handy tool for the politics of difference.

Second, the *Janajatis* represent themselves as non-Hindu, hence different from the high-caste Hindus. Although "non-Hindu" is not really a religious category as "Hindu" is, the former mostly represent people with animist and Buddhist beliefs and practices but who were "Hinduized" to different degrees during the past two centuries or so. As Subba has shown in his book,⁵³ some Limbus argue that *Tihar* is a Limbu and not a Hindu festival, although other Limbus have boycotted this festival on the ground that it is of Hindu import. Drawing finer lines on the basis of religion, specially in countries like India and Nepal, is indeed a Herculean task.

Third, the *Janajatis* have used folk history to both empower and separate themselves from the high-caste Hindus, who are of Indian origin. This is not only mentioned by several authors on Nepal,⁵⁴ but also supported by the kind of rituals they still practise. However, to treat the latter at par with Indians today is ahistorical, as the high-caste Hindu Nepalis have been living in Nepal at least since the thirteenth century onwards. The so-called Mongols had also come from different directions, albeit much earlier in the history of Nepal than the caste Hindus who went there. Thus, the folk history of the Mongols being the original inhabitants of Nepal and the high-caste Hindus as Indian emigrants to that country had a tremendous appeal and is not completely denied by all high-caste Hindus who have moved into some parts of Nepal during the past two centuries and some as recently as in the last 50 years.

Finally, the *Janajatis*, Dalits and *Madhesis* have projected themselves as an oppressed and marginalized lot and the high-caste Hindus as oppressors. This has as much truth as appeal globally, specially after the United Nations declared 1993 as the Year of the Indigenous Peoples. The paragraphs on landlordism in Nepal presented earlier also support this stand of the *Janajatis*. Although this construction does not take care of the poor and oppressed among the high-caste Hindus, who under no circumstances should be ruled out, it is obvious that power in Nepal belonged to a particular category of people called *Tagadharis*. This certainly changes the balance in favour of the stand taken by the *Janajati* movement.

If one now looks at the important demands the *Janajati* movement raised during 1990–95, it is interesting to note that several of the important demands raised by them have also been projected by the Maoists as their most important demands as well. Of the various demands made by the *Janajatis*, the most significant were the end of monarchy, establishment of a secular state, federalism, and facilities for teaching in Tibeto-Burman languages. As the next section will show, these demands are also the most important demands of the Maoist movement. It is also interesting to note that if the *Janajati* movement saw the palace as the symbol of high-caste Hindu power and hence sought its end, the Maoists saw it as the seat of Hindu landlordism to justify its abolition. The Maoists have carefully incorporated the demands based on caste and ethnicity without ever talking about them, and usurped the demands made by the *Janajati* movement based on primordial traits. But, most importantly, the leadership was once again in the hands of the high-caste Hindus. This point will be dealt with in more detail in the next section. The idea of bringing the Maoists here was to show the continuity in their demands from the earlier *Janajati* movement without the continuity in leadership.

CHAPTER 4**Nepal Turns Red**

*You see the colour red everywhere in Nepal:
in the roadside shrines and intricately carved temples
that edge the streets;
in the saris women wear and the vermilion powder that fills
the parting in their hair;
in the woven caps that men sport;
and in the sacred forehead mark almost everyone carries
after morning prayers.*

—Urvashi Butalia, *New Internationalist*, April 2002

The rather quick and unabated spread of Maoism in Nepal has taken almost everyone by surprise. There are not only interesting debates on why Nepal turned red from 1996, but also whether or not anyone had foretold that the country would actually turn red as it did from 1996. Several writers on the Maoist movement in Nepal, including none other than Anup Pahari,⁵⁵ have wondered why no one could predict the phenomenal success of the Maoists in Nepal. Although there was perhaps little that could have been done to avoid what happened in Nepal after 1996, the question may not be very important for two reasons. One, the development of social sciences, which are capable of making such predictions in some Western countries, is rather new in Nepal and not yet mature enough to make such predictions which requires great methodological rigour. Although there is a group of highly talented social scientists in Nepal with training in some of the best universities in the United States and Europe, they apparently did not take the Maoists very seriously until the latter turned violent in 1996. The track record of the Maoists was actually not good enough to merit serious academic attention, as they split and joined and split again at their sweet will. Two, Andrew Nickson of the University of Birmingham,⁵⁶ in his article “Democratisation and the Growth of Communism in Nepal: A Peruvian Scenario in the Making?” in the *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* in 1992 had certainly predicted that Nepal would turn red if it would not make itself more inclusive. He had also foreseen the Peruvian situation unfolding in Nepal, which shares several commonalities with Peru,⁵⁷ besides the inspiration that Nepal’s Maoist leaders draw from the Peruvian leadership and its Sendero Luminoso.

The relatively more important debate in terms of the attention it has received from scholars is over the “root cause” of Nepal turning red. Although perhaps any theory that seeks to explain this phenomenon with the help of a single factor is liable to be inadequate, the various theories put forward by scholars writing on this topic must be considered here. The first theory that we will take up here may be labelled, for sake of brevity and clarity, as the “theory of poverty”. There is

little dispute among scholars and journalists writing on the movement that the districts of mid-western Nepal from where the Maoists launched their movement are also the poorest and most deprived districts.⁵⁸ On this basis, several scholars have proposed that the theory of poverty is the root cause of the movement. The proponents of this theory must also be acutely conscious of the fact that a Maoist movement had to be first and foremost a *class movement*. It is quite another thing that this movement in Nepal is not so.

Proposing the theory of poverty for explaining the origin of the movement or its quick spread raises some concerns. First, the claim that the districts where the Maoists first spread are the poorest is not supported by corresponding evidence by those who claim this. No district-level poverty index data have been provided to show that districts like Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Salyan and the like are the poorest districts of Nepal. Nor is it easy for any social scientist or journalist even of Nepalese origin to have a comparative picture of the entire length and breadth of this country. Even if this were a possibility, the only outcome would be an impressionistic judgement and not hard-core data on poverty. Should such data be available, it would still not be easy to rule it out as a coincidence. Thus, it is not easy to establish any causal relationship between poverty and the origin or spread of Maoism in Nepal. There are several pockets of abject poverty in South Asia and elsewhere in the world that have not yet seen any Maoist spread, although it cannot be denied that such areas are vulnerable to Maoist ideas in particular and communism in general. There is information on the western Nepal districts that tells us of other advantages of launching the movement from there, such as its remoteness or inaccessibility, dense forests, and a thin but quite old base of communists among the Magars driving the Maoists to choose these districts for launching guerrilla warfare on the state. B. Raman⁵⁹ of the South Asia Analysis Group gives three reasons for the initial concentration in Rolpa and Rukum districts: remote mountainous area with poor communication facilities; weak influence of Hinduism; and, besides being home to some of the world's best fighters, the area is relatively free from caste and feudal influences. While the first reason is very significant, it is not clear how the weak influence of Hinduism and caste could have contributed to the origin or spread of the movement in the western districts of Nepal.

S. D. Muni, in a recently published book on the Maoist insurgency in Nepal,⁶⁰ argues that this came about due to failed governance and underdevelopment. He also thinks that the political and socio-economic agenda of the Maoists have considerable appeal for the poor and suppressed Nepalis there.

Another theory that seeks to explain the success of the Maoist movement holds the oppressive state as being responsible for forcing a large number of youths to embrace Maoism.⁶¹ It may be recalled that Baburam Bhattarai, the second-in-command of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), had submitted a list of 40 demands to the then Prime Minister of Nepal, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and urged upon the latter to fulfil them by 17 February 1996. A glance at the list not only shows a preponderance of non-class demands, but even a willing prime minister would not have been able to oblige the Maoists. Bhattarai certainly knew that not

one of his demands would be fulfilled, and surely not within the deadline given by him. Not surprisingly then, he declared the 'People's War' on 13 February 2004, four days ahead of his own deadline, by striking at several government institutions in several districts.⁶² The government came down heavily in these districts, and created an unprecedented climate of fear and mistrust, forcing thousands of youths to take refuge in the forest to escape arrest by the policemen. This was exactly what the Maoist leaders were waiting for—an opportunity, even at the cost of the innocent people of these districts, to recruit en masse cadres who had personal grudges against the policemen or the state for having forced them to sacrifice their education, career, family life, and be forced to live in the forest.

Judith Pettigrew and Sara Shneiderman⁶³ discuss the various motivational forces for both men and women joining the Maoist movement. If it was motivation that brought so many thousands of them into the Maoist camp, why did they not join the Maoists in such large numbers before 13 February 1996? Why was there no such motivation till then?

As if the Nepalese government had not learnt any lesson from the Gorkhaland movement in nearby Darjeeling⁶⁴ or the Bhutanese onslaught on hapless Nepalis,⁶⁵ it carried out Operations Romeo and Kilo Sierra 2, alienating more and more innocent people and forcing them in thousands to take refuge in the forests. Hence, they had no option but to join the Maoists and pledge to take revenge on the forces that compelled them to take up arms. The wish of the Maoist leaders to bring more and more personally motivated people into their fold was made a lot easier by the state itself.

There is a lot of information on the Maoist movement in Nepal but the available information is neither always reliable nor really adequate to conclude which theory is most acceptable. A quick replay, therefore, of the entire story is necessary to see if we can spot any tendency, no matter how weak, at any stage for Nepal to turn red. Anup Pahari, a noted intellectual from Kathmandu,⁶⁶ writes that one need not go before 1990 to understand the genesis of this movement. But for a historian to arrive at any conclusion, no matter how tentative, it is important to trace the movement from a little earlier date than 1990 briefly in the following paragraphs.

Deepak Thapa, one of the best-informed on the movement in question, traces the history of the Left movement in Nepal from the Biratnagar Jute Mills strike in 1947 that took place with active participation of Ratan Lal Brahman, better known as Maila Baje, and whose legendary leadership turned most of the tea gardens of Darjeeling hills red.⁶⁷ Later, on 15 September 1949, Pushpa Lal Shrestha formed the Nepal Communist Party in Calcutta.⁶⁸ It held its first conference in 1953 when Man Mohan Adhikari was elected as its secretary general. In the elections held in 1963, the Nepal Communist Party, although banned like any other political party, could put up an impressive show of strength when six of its candidates won the election from Kathmandu.⁶⁹ The party held its second convention in 1957 in which Keshar Jung Raimajhi replaced Adhikari as the party's secretary general. But the party fared rather badly in the first ever multiparty election held in 1959 due to its ambivalent stand on monarchy. After

that, factions within the party developed over their allegiance to the monarchy as well as to the Soviet or Chinese camps.

One of the most significant developments after the first coming of democracy in 1959–60 was the launching of a guerrilla movement in April 1972 by the Marxist-Leninist group led by young communists like Mohan Chandra Adhikari, Chandra Prakash Mainali and Radha Krishna Mainali and inspired by the Cultural Revolution of China and the Naxalite movement in adjoining West Bengal under the leadership of Charu Majumdar.⁷⁰ This is described as the “Jhapa uprising” after Jhapa, which is the south-easternmost district of Nepal adjoining the Naxalbari area of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Although their guerrilla activities were quelled quickly by the king’s government, there was little scope of the uprising sustaining itself for long specially in view of the heavy clamp-down on the Naxalites in West Bengal under the chief ministership of Siddhartha Sankar Ray. Besides, the Jhapa uprising was condemned even by Pushpa Lal Shrestha’s party, calling the uprising “semi-anarchy” for their use of “terrorist tactics”.⁷¹ The young and educated leaders subsequently formed the Nepal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), locally known as *Maale*, which was at one point of time in Nepal’s communist history one of the best organized political parties.

The first seed of the Maoist movement was actually sown in 1974 when Mohan Bikram Singh along with Nirmal Lama formed the Nepal Communist Party (Masal). But this party also split in 1983 with the formation of the Nepal Communist Party (Mashal) under the leadership of the hardliner Mohan Baidya, alias Comrade Kiran, who was later arrested, which paved the way for Pushpa Kamal Dahal to climb up the hierarchy of its leadership. In 1989, Dahal, better known today as Prachanda, became the joint secretary of the Nepal Communist Party (Mashal). The other well-known Maoist leader today, Baburam Bhattarai, chose to stay with Mohan Bikram Singh at that time.⁷²

In 1990, Masal and Mashal (both of which mean “torch”), united under the banner called Unity Centre and fought the 1991 parliamentary elections together emerging as the third-largest party of the country by winning nine seats. In the same year, they convened the United General Conference in which Masal, which believed in transformation through mass uprising, was voted out by Mashal, which chose “Prachandapath”, which prescribed transformation through guerrilla warfare. In 1992, the Mashal faction was formally named the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist). But it split again in 1994. Incidentally, the group led by Bhattarai was not recognized by the Election Commission of Nepal during the mid-term election that year. He had no option but to give a call for boycott of the elections, which he did, whereas the other faction was recognized by the Election Commission, and, therefore, fought the election. According to Deepak Thapa, the present leadership structure of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) took shape as late as March 1995.⁷³

As of now, the extent of Maoist spread in Nepal can be gauged from the following statistics: 68 out of the total 75 districts or 165 out of the total 205 parliamentary constituencies of Nepal are known to have various degrees of

Maoist influence.⁷⁴ Some go to the extent of claiming that except the isolated districts in high mountains in the north, every district of Nepal is under their influence. In as many as 32 districts, they move freely without being bothered about the Armed Forces. They have established their own revolutionary governments in mid-western districts like Rukum, Jajarkot, Salyan, and Rolpa. The Royal Nepal Army is protecting 25 district headquarters and another 25 district headquarters have reportedly sought its protection. The Maoists have already declared their victory over the police force.⁷⁵ According to an official source,⁷⁶ the areas where the red colour is deepest are Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Pyuthan, and Kalikot, all in mid-western Nepal. The areas with slightly lighter shades of red are Dolakha, Ramechhap, Kavrepalanchowk, Sindhupalchowk, Gorkha, Dang, Surkhet, Achham, etc. And the areas with the lightest shades of red are Khotang, Okhardhunga, Udaypur, Lalitpur, Nuwakot, Dhading, Tanahu, Lamjung, Parbat, Baglung, Gulmi, Arghakhachhap, Dailekh, Jumla, Dolpa, etc.

This is, very briefly, the history of the communist movement in Nepal till the declaration of the 'people's war' in 1996. This brief history shows, first of all, that the communist movement in Nepal is quite recent but has always been faction-ridden. Clashes of orientation, strategy, and personalities seem to have played significant roles in splitting the communists. Even now, the communists of Nepal are divided into about 20 different splinter groups. Second, on the basis of available information regarding their geographical base, it appears that the movement was centred around Kathmandu: the only other place mentioned until the declaration of the 'people's war' in 1996 was the eastern *Terai* district of Jhapa. Thus, it was never really a pan-Nepal phenomenon. Third, while we know very little about the social and economic backgrounds of the supporters, it is clear that the leadership, including that of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), has almost always been in the hands of high-caste Hindus, who control more than 90 per cent of the resources of the country.⁷⁷ This implies that even if the Maoists succeed in establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, as they wish, high-caste Hindu domination will remain in place. Finally, it appears that the hidden agenda of the Maoists, who have held the country to ransom, is not to improve the country's governance or develop it, but to have political and administrative control over it.

CHAPTER 5**The Red Force**

Nobody knows the exact strength of the Maoist force in Nepal. The lack of precise information is because it is a guerrilla force. It has rarely been possible in the past to know the exact strength of any guerrilla force anywhere in the world, which makes it possible for such forces to defeat much more powerful enemies. Even the guerrilla leaders have difficulty sometimes to keep track of the number of various categories of forces or ammunition. They are often on the move from one camp to another and some of their men and women occasionally desert the camps. There are also men and women joining the ranks and others losing their lives in encounters with the police or army. Thus, it is indeed difficult to have accurate figures of such forces at any point of time. Mostly, estimates are based on information provided by those who have surrendered, or the more unreliable intelligence—civilian or military—sources. Therefore, it is more important to assess the power a guerrilla force wields rather than discuss the number of their men and machines.

One of the biggest strengths of any guerrilla force is zero defensibility against them. They can live among the civilians and use them as human shields or fire from civilian-populated areas. They can ambush the best-equipped military and paramilitary forces at any place and time it is convenient to them and cause immense damage. They can decide to fire first and choose the kind of firepower they think can cause maximum damage to the police or army. All this makes them a lot more powerful with a lot less men and material. Hence, guerrilla warfare can be extremely effective for a group adopting such a strategy. The biggest power of the guerrilla force is, therefore, its unpredictability and its invisibility. The police or army can rarely predict anything about the guerrilla force.

Another source of guerrilla “power” is the people who have no option but to provide support to them whenever asked. The people provide them with money, food, clothes, medicines, and even help them in procuring arms, which is often misunderstood as “popular support”. One is yet to come across instances in which people have either offered themselves voluntarily, or refused to cooperate with a guerrilla or insurgent group and yet nothing happened to them subsequently. The “popular support”, therefore, is given due to the fear of being eliminated by the group immediately or at a later date. People know that the guerrilla force can reach them at any time of day or night. The police or army cannot provide protection to them even for a couple of households, leave alone providing security to hundreds of far-flung villages. Under the circumstances, the obvious allies of the guerrilla force would be the people.

Despite the difficulties in getting actual figures of a guerrilla force like the Maoists in Nepal, some idea of their physical force and command structure is available from various sources. According to one estimate,⁷⁸ the total number of

full-combat guerrillas is about 2,000, supported by about 10,000 militias with locally-made guns. According to another estimate,⁷⁹ they have a combat force of 5,500 persons, 8,000 militia, 4,500 cadres, and 33,000 hard-core followers or sympathizers. It is also estimated that about 100,000 youths in the age group of 15–18 fail the high school examination every year.⁸⁰ As they do not have access to jobs or the opportunity to study further they are suspected to have joined the ranks of Maoists. One other source relies on the estimates of military analysts in Kathmandu to claim that there are about three to four thousand regular troops, and 10 to 15 thousand local militias, besides thousands of activists and cadres in the countryside and towns.⁸¹

The chief of the Maoist command structure is Pushpa Kamal Dahal. Baburam Bhattarai heads the political front called United People's Front or *Sanyukta Jana Morcha*, whereas Ram Bahadur Thapa (or "Comrade Badal") heads the People's Liberation Army. The third leader is believed to be the least compromising of the three. About 60 per cent of the fighting force is deployed in the mid-western districts where they have a stronghold, the rest being distributed all over the country.⁸² Selected recruits are trained in guerrilla techniques of warfare not only by experts from the People's War Group in India but also the ex-military personnel who abound in Nepal. The trainers also include deserters from the Royal Nepal Army.⁸³ Ideological preparation of young students for joining the Maoists is reportedly done by the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union, which is claimed to have 400,000 members from school to the university level.⁸⁴

The Maoist command structure is as follows.⁸⁵ The party structure has a standing committee at the top followed by a politburo, central committee, regional bureaus (which are five, viz., eastern, central, Kathmandu Valley, western, and international department), subregional bureaus, district committees, area committees, and cell committees. The Central Military Commission was established in 1998, followed by regional military commissions, subregional military commissions, district military commissions, companies, platoons, and squads, etc. Finally, the United Front headed by Baburam Bhattarai has the united people's district committees, area committees, village committees, and ward committees. The standing committee of the party consisting of about 10 members is the most powerful body that takes most of the crucial decisions. There are about six guerrilla battalions, each under a chief commandant who is also a central committee member.

Regarding weaponry in Nepal, the first thing that comes to anybody's mind is the ubiquitous khukri, a short and slightly crooked weapon with the blade on the inside and the broader end outside. This weapon became such a legend during the British days that it became the symbol of the Gurkha Rifles and Assam Rifles even in independent India. Several British officers have lavished praise on what the Gurkhas could do with this small weapon. They could not only clear the thickets in the forest and construct temporary huts or bridges but also sever the heads of enemies even before they realized it.

Lest one gets an archaic picture of Nepal in the matter of weaponry, it is

necessary to state that Nepal has a fairly old history of manufacturing and procuring guns and other modern weapons of war from outside. In this regard, the chapter on “Munitions Production” in *Readings in Nepali Economic History* by M. C. Regmi is highly instructive.⁸⁶ This chapter shows that the production of arms and ammunition in Nepal had started during the period of King Prithvinarayan Shah, who had established a factory for this in Nuwakot (near Kathmandu) with the help of technicians from India. As early as 1796, some 200 guns of good quality and 2 cannons of British manufacture were purchased by the officials deputed from Kathmandu to the eastern *Terai* region. In 1799, the government sanctioned Rs. 2,500 for purchase of guns, and a few weeks later another Rs. 2,750 was sanctioned for purchase of guns with bayonets.

Systematic production of arms had started in Nepal in 1793 when a factory was opened near Kathmandu under the supervision of a French technician. In 1804, Nepal attacked Garhwal, which led to a spurt in production of arms and ammunition. During the Indo-Nepalese war of 1814–16, the factory was further expanded with 306 technicians working in the factory. In 1876, Sir Richard Temple, who visited Kathmandu that year noted: “In the valley near Kathmandu there are arsenals and magazines, with ordnance, including siege guns, stores, thousands of stands of arms, small arms and ammunition, and the like. It is remarkable that for all this they depend on indigenous manufacturers.”⁸⁷ In Pyuthan, one of the strongholds of the Maoists today, as many as 501 rifles of Enfield model were manufactured every year in 1811, which was raised to 2,101 rifles per year later.⁸⁸

Besides guns manufactured in Nepal, the adjoining districts of Bihar are widely known for manufacturing guns of all calibres, some of which would certainly have found their way to the Maoist-controlled districts of Nepal. This is perhaps why Prachanda once confidently said that arms were not a problem for them. Today, the arms in the hands of the Maoists include AK-47 rifles, self-loading rifles, .303 rifles, hand grenades, explosives, mortars, light machine guns, muzzle guns, .22 and 12 bore shot guns, pistols, etc.⁸⁹ About 85 per cent of them are believed to have been captured from the police stations and army personnel. Several hundreds of them have also been confiscated from ex-army personnel who invariably own one or two double-barrel guns. In fact, almost every Nepali house had a gun prior to the spread of Maoism. In the *Terai* districts, it was even more common to see people with guns for protecting themselves from bandits who often looted rich villagers. To have a gun prominently displayed in drawing rooms was also a status symbol. Manufacturing of ordinary guns is actually not a big deal: there are numerous persons in Nepal and adjoining Darjeeling hills who have the expertise. However, when the Maoists began to collect such guns from the people, others quickly deposited them in the police stations in order to avoid any problems in future either at the hands of the police or the Maoists.

Puskar Gautam, an ex-Maoist, provides further information on this subject.⁹⁰ Quoting Rabindra Shrestha, a Maoist leader, he writes that in the beginning of the ‘people’s war’ they had only two rifles, one of which was unusable. Impossible as it may sound, it is quite true that weaponization of the Maoists started only

after 1996. To begin with, they even used pressure-cooker bombs, petrol bombs made of beer bottles, .303 rifles, muzzle guns, etc. Today, such archaic weapons are used by militias, whereas the fighting squads are armed with AK-47s and SLRs (self-loading rifles), besides mortars and other heavier armoury.

What is disturbing about the recent acquisition of weaponry in the Maoist camps is their shift of priority from guns to explosives. The latter are extremely dangerous in the hands of guerrillas due to the possibility of huge collateral damage. If the trend continues, more innocent lives will be lost. With construction and mining sites dotted all over Nepal detonators are not at all difficult to procure, although Nepali factory workers in India were once prime suspects in this regard, and have even been apprehended with detonators on at least one occasion. Whatever be the source(s), such weaponry certainly enhances the power of the guerrilla forces and pushes them closer to the style of terrorists. While it may be easier for the state to pass more and more stringent laws or even declare emergency, the real losers are the people.

CHAPTER 6

Girls in Red

One aspect of the Maoist movement in Nepal that has received critical appreciation of several women scholars is the participation of girls in the movement. They are not just in supportive, but also in leadership roles and in combat forces. The Maoists proudly claim that they have a women's platoon and even a women's section at the brigade level. Equally publicized, especially among women cadres, is the declaration by Maoists that daughters will have equal right to parental property, including land.⁹¹ In this context, the Supreme Court of Nepal has recently legalized, under pressure from various women's organizations, inheritance of parental property by girls till marriage only, as it considered extension of such rights after marriage tantamount to dual rights and a threat to the patriarchal system of Nepali society.⁹² Relatively less publicized but important from the gender point of view is the claim that there is an overwhelming participation of *Janajati* women in comparison with high-caste Hindu or Dalit women, which is explained in terms of their relatively equal gender relations even traditionally.⁹³ All this needs closer analysis than it has received so far.

Scholars like Manjushree Thapa,⁹⁴ Sara Shneiderman,⁹⁵ and Judith Pettigrew⁹⁶ have closely examined the relationship between the Maoist movement and gender equity in Nepal. There appears to be an air of cynicism in their writings about the Maoist claims, and they do not miss the gaping holes in the Maoist arguments about gender. These scholars have intimate knowledge of Nepali society and they certainly have genuine reasons to argue that there is a gap between the Maoist rhetoric about gender equity and the reality on the ground. They also bring in the views of one Comrade Parvati,⁹⁷ who has made a very perceptive assessment of the role of women in the Maoist movement, to buttress their point.

The objective in this section is not so much to re-examine the views of the above scholars as to take their arguments further by looking into issues they have perhaps left out of their analysis. Before starting, let us briefly dwell on the word "girl" used in the title of this section. This is not done with any intention of sensationalization, as one might suspect. In terms of absolute age, a very significant proportion of the female participants in the Maoist movement reportedly belong to the age group of 14–18 years,⁹⁸ although the exact percentage of those who belong to this age group is not known to anyone. This is evident from the scores of photographs available on the Internet and information culled by Manjushree Thapa. The *Nepali Times* of 9–15 April 2004 also shows how girls of 10 or 11 years are taught to handle grenades.⁹⁹ Culturally, it is not important whether a girl is 12 or 21 years: she would still be called *kaytee* or "girl" and not *aurat* or *aimai*, which is a word reserved for a married woman. The Maoist force has a fairly large number of women who had joined the force as girls. During the last eight years of their lives as "revolutionaries", many of them have attained marriageable age and have got married with their fellow comrades,

and have even given birth. Some who lost their husbands in encounters with the police or army have remarried other men in the camps. Such practices are reported to be common, probably due to the fact that even if the girls wanted to marry outside the camp they would either be hounded by the police or not considered fit for marriage by prospective husbands.

For various reasons, the age at which girls have joined the Maoists is important. Exceptions apart, one knows what and how much to expect in terms of ideological awareness from a girl who was going to school till she suddenly disappeared from her village to join the Maoists in forests. Can a girl of such age understand even the basics of Maoist ideology and decide to join the Maoists voluntarily? Will she not be concerned about her studies, her parents, her brothers and sisters, and her own future? She would certainly understand some of the issues the Maoists stood for, such as inheritance of property for both sons and daughters, or abolition of monarchy, or prohibition, but would she understand the implications of scrapping the bilateral treaties, which the Maoists call "unequal treaties", with India? Would she understand the implications of the Maoist demand for closing the recruiting centres in Nepal? Would boys of her age understand all this, for that matter? In the best of situations, she will understand vaguely some of the Maoist slogans and will choose to ignore those she does not. After all, she has to learn other things such as to fire from a gun, service it, take position with it, jump with it, or throw the socket bomb at the "enemy" in less than four seconds, and also rear animals, grow vegetables, wash clothes and cook. In fact, once she gets into the whirlwind of camp life, which includes sentry duty to anything commanded by her superior, she rarely has time to think. At best, she may ruminate and cry in the cover of darkness at night, but she cannot leave the camp nor does she wish to do so for she knows that the world outside the camp is even worse. In the camp, she at least has an identity, a role, and chores to complete each day. The prison or police station, which is where she can alternatively be, will certainly be a worse place. She actually might not even get a chance to reach there: she might be raped or shot dead well before that. She may not be able to see her family members ever, which she can at least do now once in a while in the cover of darkness, and in some villages in western Nepal, even in broad daylight.

This is just a glimpse of a girl's predicament after she turns "red". Yet her agony, her sacrifice, her physical pain, hopes, aspirations, fears, etc. rarely get reflected in the history that we write of such movements. As if the palace paradigm would never leave us historians, we continue to write about the leaders who are more often than not men, not excluding the Maoist movement in Nepal. It needs another woman to take interest in her kind under armed conflict situations as if the men always have more important dimensions of such movements to cover. This is also true of what we see in Nepal today. Why does it need a Manjushree, Judith or Sara to write about the girls in this movement? My answer is plain: if scholars like them do not bring out the women's role in the Maoist movement in Nepal, the same will go down the country's history unnoticed, unaccounted for, and unsung.

In “The Question of Women’s Leadership in People’s War in Nepal” by Comrade Parvati,¹⁰⁰ we find the most exhaustive information on them. She begins her article with accounts of the bravery shown by Dalit women in snatching rifles from the policemen in Kalikot district in western Nepal, jailbreak in Gorkha district in March 2001 by six Maoist women, or the courage shown by the All Nepalese Women’s Association (Revolutionary) to organize a seminar in Kathmandu in March 1996, their anti-liquor drive, giving away of their jewellery to the party, the creation of a women’s department, all-women platoon, and the like. She shows how the conditions for women were changing in Nepal, and how the men were sharing their reproductive burden in Rolpa and Rukum districts. She writes about several women being in the central committee and increasingly more of them in lower committees. There are women commanders, women’s squads, women militias, etc. In the western region itself, she mentions about 1,500 women’s units, 600,000 women members, 10 women section commanders, 2 women platoon commanders, etc. But she also laments that patriarchal values are still in place in the camps, the men hesitating to give up their privileges, to recognize the abilities of women, to trust them, etc. She concludes by saying that the path of revolution is much more difficult for women than for men, as the former have to undergo both intra-party struggle and inner struggle.

To Manjushree Thapa,¹⁰¹ the figures on Maoist women are overestimated, as their number, age, etc. cannot be verified. Instead of women being liberated in the Maoist camps, she thinks that their burden has actually increased, as even menstruating women have to cook, whereas in the villages they would at least get half a week’s respite from cooking due to traditional beliefs about pollution during menstruation. But with these beliefs having no takers in the camps the women have no rest even under such a psychosomatic condition as menstruation is.

Judith Pettigrew and Sara Shneiderman, in an article in *Himal Southasian*,¹⁰² take a more moderate view of the Maoist women. They argue that the empowerment of women must take into consideration the Maoist ideals on the one hand and the ground situation for them in Nepal on the other. They also argue that the Maoist movement is neither free from caste nor from gender biases. They cite the instance of how the talent of Kausila Tamu (Gurung), one of the few women to rise to the level of vice-chairperson of a district government and commander of a guerrilla squad was ignored by the Maoist leadership both while she was alive and after she was killed in May 2002. On the other hand, Rit Bahadur Khadka, who held a similar organizational position in Dolakha district but was a high-caste Hindu, received a lot of attention and eulogy from the party leaders when he died. They also report that the Maoist negotiating team to Kathmandu following the ceasefire in January 2003 had no woman member.

The two anthropologists explain the motivation of the *Janajati* women to join the Maoist movement, which they locate in a “generation gap” rather than in a “gender gap”. While this emphasis takes care of why both men and women are “motivated” to join the Maoist camp, it raises some concerns. The first concern is that there is indeed “motivation” to join the Maoist camp. It may be difficult to

accept that it is true of all Maoist girls. Some of them might certainly have had the motivation to join the movement, but a substantial number was certainly forced to join the Maoists.¹⁰³ The same is perhaps true of the men who joined the Maoists. And no one can be sure of the figures for girls and boys who joined the Maoists out of motivation and for those who were forced to join.

The second concern is the suggestion that there may be a lesser gender gap among the *Janajatis* in comparison to the high-caste Hindus. This can be an interesting starting point for further research, but possibly somewhat premature for drawing any important conclusions about the high rate of participation of women in the Maoist movement. There can be significant local variations in gender gap not only across the *Janajati* communities but even from household to household. One might expect the households that are headed by women to have a lesser gender gap, although it is risky to assume so. Even if the men are not around to impose patriarchal values, years of conditioning under a patriarchal system would have made the women conform to such values even where men are not around to implement them. Values and norms are invisible yet instrumental in influencing the way we behave.

The third concern is the suggestion that there may be a greater generation gap among the *Janajatis* in comparison with the high-caste Hindus. Generation gaps might be expected to be wider in cities or in foreign countries, and indeed there are reports of serious generation gap problems in Nepali families that have spent long years in Hong Kong, Brunei, Singapore, London and Malaysia, where the children are often unable to adjust with their parents and grandparents. The simple, illiterate or semi-literate *Lahures* would often not be able to notice the new values and tastes their children would have adopted within a few years of their service abroad. The children would also be exposed to food habits and means of recreation that their parents would never have heard or seen. As a result, many children get frustrated and turn to drugs or spoil their careers, which could perhaps be minimized with professional guidance and counselling. However, as regards the families that have not left for service in foreign countries there seems to be no overwhelming reason why there should be a greater generation gap just because they are *Janajatis*.

Returning to the Maoist girls, it is indeed not possible to know their exact number vis-à-vis the Maoist men but various estimates show that girls roughly constitute one-third of the red force. They are in all the three wings—the party, the People's Liberation Army, and the United People's Front—of the Maoists and also at all levels except the very top standing committee, the most important decision-making body of 10 members, all of whom are men. Further, the Maoists claim to be practising gender equality in the camps, although it must be at the level of rhetoric rather than actual practice. This is a point we will dwell on briefly here.

First, we argue here that the Maoist movement has extended male symbols and values to the world of women in camps as well as those who have stayed back in the villages.¹⁰⁴ The photographs of Maoist girls on the Internet show that they wear male dress, male caps and male shoes. They not only seem to have given up

their feminine dress, but also their feminine ornaments. But they are not free from their traditional roles as women, which have been repeatedly condemned as “exploitative” by their leaders, who do not seem aware of the new symbols of gender exploitation taking them over. As the girls grow older or get married, they are often re-entrusted with their traditional roles of cleaning and cooking in the camps besides rearing the children. They are reportedly even forced by their leaders to get married with men of different caste or ethnic backgrounds, as unmarried girls are considered a “problem” in the camps. One can easily guess why the leadership thinks so. Without the institutions of social control in place, young girls and boys can indeed create social complications without strict discipline imposed by the leaders on their relationships. One cannot, of course, rule out the fact that the leadership does not want them to rise above a certain level, because marriage automatically reduces such chances of career enhancement for women in the camps.

The women back in the villages are not better off in this regard. First, there are no men around who would court them, who would lop the branches of trees for them, plough the fields, mend the terraces, collect firewood, and occasionally bring glass or plastic bangles for them when they returned from a visit to some distant place. Today, the women in the villages not only experience a sense of bewilderment without the men, but also shoulder added responsibilities. They not only have to do all that they did traditionally, but also all the work that men did earlier. They are even said to have breached the taboo on ploughing.¹⁰⁵ They repair the cowsheds, pigsties, terrace walls, besides cooking and washing. Those who brewed malt or distilled alcohol to earn some money have no such source of income any more. Many of them have not had decent food or dress for several years now because their personal income from such activities has stopped completely. Nor could they migrate to India as easily as many men could in order to avoid being conscripted by the Maoists or arrested by the police.

What emanates from the above is that instead of being empowered, they are further exploited today. Although some Maoist men and women leaders speak of empowerment of women in Maoist camps, the women down the command structure are repeatedly told “not to be discouraged” about anything, as Manjushree Thapa reports.¹⁰⁶ This indicates that the women there are discouraged, probably to find themselves in worse conditions than they were before. Playing second fiddle to the men in the camps is perhaps not too difficult for them, as they are used to playing such a role in the villages they went from. But hoping their emancipation under what they call a “people’s republic” is perhaps hoping against hope.

CHAPTER 7**Between the Ravine and the Deep Sea**

The spread of Maoist influence in Nepal since 13 February 1996 has been phenomenal, and several scholars have tried to identify the factors responsible for it. Among such factors contributing to people's disenchantment with the weakling government that could not put up any resistance to India's alleged high-handedness, the infighting among and within political parties, the leaders, and bureaucrats are some notable ones. In this search for the causes they have not paid adequate attention to what is happening to the common people, be they Maoist sympathizers or devout believers in the king as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu or supporters of the National Nepali Congress Party. The common people, turned voiceless by the Maoist violence as well as state apathy, should have mattered the most but are forgotten amidst discourses on Maoism, democracy, inclusion, and the like. The journalists chase the Maoists to their camps in forests rather than the villages that have been abandoned by men and women.

The plight and predicaments of the common people, of course, vary from district to district and from village to village. It at times varies from house to house as well. But there are certain problems the common people face everywhere that must be brought out here. We begin this section on their problems first by enumerating some of the relevant events.¹⁰⁷

- 13 February 1996: The Maoists attacked police posts in Rukum, Rolpa, Gorkha and Sindhuli districts of mid-western Nepal.
- 1998–99: Police committed excesses under Operation Romeo and Operation Kilo Sierra 2. They searched and arrested suspected Maoists, many of whom died.
- 25 September 2000: About 1,000 Maoists attacked Dunai, the headquarters of Dolpo district, in which 14 policemen were killed.
- 25 February 2001: Maoists resolved to adopt "Prachandapath", which refers to a dual strategy of armed conflict combined with urban mass uprising with the help of women, students, and labour organizations.
- 2–7 April 2001: Maoists killed 70 policemen in separate attacks in Rukumkot and Naumule.
- 15 June 2001: Maoist women declared Chitwan a dry zone, while the student organizations stepped up their attacks on private schools.
- 6–13 July 2001: Maoists attacked police posts in Lamjung, Nuwakot, Ramechhap, Gulmi, Dailekh, and Holeri, and abducted 69 policemen from the last post. They also formed the Confederation of Communist and Maoist Parties of South Asia (CCOMPOSA).
- 23 July 2001: Maoists attacked a police post in Bajura, killing 17.
- 23 November 2001: Maoists attacked Surkhet, Dang, Syangja, etc. They attacked the Royal Nepal Army for the first time, killing 14 of them in Gorahi

base, and 23 policemen elsewhere. They also looted NRs. 225 million from various banks over the week.

- 25 November 2001: They attacked the army again in Salleri. They killed 27 policemen, a chief district officer and 4 soldiers. Over 60 Maoists were killed by then.
- 26 November 2001: King Gyanendra declared national emergency and deployed the army to fight the Maoists.
- 14–21 February 2002: A major clash took place between the Maoists and government forces in and around Achham resulting in the death of 132 security personnel and 46 Maoists.
- 22 February 2002: Maoists killed 34 in Salyan and set off bombs in Kathmandu, while the government forces killed 40 Maoists in Achham.
- 25–27 February 2002: The Royal Nepal Army killed 67 Maoists in Kalikot on 25 February, 14 in the same place on 26 February, and 17 in Achham on 27 February.
- 11 April 2002: About 160 policemen and military personnel and 100 Maoists were killed in Dang. The estimates went up within a couple of days.
- September 2002: A major clash between Maoists and security forces took place resulting in the death of about 60 security forces and 50 Maoists.
- November–December 2002: According to the report released by Amnesty International, about 7,000 persons, most of whom were civilians, were killed in the clashes till then between the Maoists and the security forces.
- 29 January 2003: Ceasefire announced.
- 27 August 2003: Ceasefire collapsed. About 1,000 persons killed in the clashes between the Maoists and the security forces since then.

There has been no let-up in the violence between the Maoists on the one hand and the police and the Royal Nepal Army since 13 February 1996. On an average, 17 persons died each day till 2003. This has come down to 6 persons a day now. Even during the ceasefires in 2001 and 2003, there were sporadic incidents of violence. Whereas the Maoists carried out hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, the army continued with their search, arrest, and punish. This led to enormous hardship to the people and resulted in deaths and cases of missing persons.. This must have been even more cruel in Nepal than in some other countries because human rights issues are new to the government forces there.

It is important to bear this background in mind while discussing the plight of the people caught between the Maoists and the Royal Nepal Army. If ordinary people do not cooperate with the Maoists they are taken as their enemy, and when they cooperate, the government forces take them to be Maoists or their sympathizers, which is not a lesser crime in the eyes of the security forces. When the Maoists demand food, it has to be prepared and served with all politeness, for they cannot tolerate impoliteness of the people even if they may well disregard civilities themselves. One can ignore their wishes only at the cost of one's life or security. Such is the extent of fear in the minds of ordinary people about the Maoists. The people are no less afraid of the government forces, which can extract any information from a person with the butt of a gun. In 2002, Sushma

Joshi, a graduate from Brown University, wrote:

The worst backlash has been to the civil rights of ordinary citizens. More than 4000 people have died in the war since 1996. Hundreds of journalists, lawyers, students, teachers and even doctors have disappeared under suspicion of being sympathizers of the Maoist movement since the government's imposition of a nationwide Emergency of November 26, 1991.¹⁰⁸

On 14 June 2001, one Ajay Suri reported in the *Indian Express* that residents in Talkot village on the outskirts of Kathmandu spoke about the Maoists in hushed tones and believed that they could strike at any time. On the other hand, Amy Waldman of the *New York Times* provides the picture of army brutality on the Tharus, whose support for the Maoists has been significant reportedly due to their exploitation by Bahun and Chhetri feudal lords. She writes, "Support for the Maoists by some Tharus has placed the entire community under suspicion. The army has come down hard on the Tharus, harassing, beating, detaining and sometimes killing them, often with little or no evidence." Quoting various sources, she points out that 37 Tharus have disappeared in army custody, and of the total of 709 Nepalis who have disappeared, 200 have been taken by the Maoists and the remaining by the government forces. And she tells the story of one Phool Kesari, whose husband was taken away by the army, and who now had to bring up three children without any land, education, income and husband. She would have no option but to return to her landlord.¹⁰⁹

The fear of the Maoists on the one hand and the security forces on the other has displaced a large number of Nepalis from the hills of Nepal. Although poor Nepalis leaving the hills of Nepal for seasonal or permanent employment in India is nothing new, they are now leaving their land out of fear and are settling outside Nepal. For instance, Kishore Nepal reports in the *Nepali Times* from Baitadi,¹¹⁰ which is the westernmost border of Nepal and, therefore, perhaps the farthest from Kathmandu, but not certainly free from the dread of violence. Just 19 km away from Jhulaghat in India's Uttaranchal state is the Nepalese municipality called Gothalapani. This municipality has seen a surge of Nepalis after the Maoist violence in the recent past. One of the first to be forced to leave for Gothalapani was the family of Dhauli Devi, consisting of her schoolteacher husband (who had to leave his job after the Maoists started forcing the teachers to attend their meetings), two sons and two daughters. After they left, the Maoists looted their house. Dal Bahadur Bohora from another village also had to settle in Gothalapani after the Maoists abducted his daughter. Thus unfolds the story of each internally displaced person, each sadder than the other. Very soon, the saddest of stories turns into a mere demographic fact sheet on which one discovers the number of persons with inconsolable woes in thousands. According to one estimate,¹¹¹ the internally displaced persons in Nepal number about 1.5 million.

But the army brutality is not less heart-rending, as David Blair writes a moving account of in the *Telegraph* of 13 April 2004.¹¹²

One of the most vulnerable groups in armed conflict situations is women. With the men away to evade police arrest or Maoist abduction, the women not only have to shoulder extra responsibilities at home and in the field, but also bear

molestation and rape. Although this is a common phenomenon in all civil war areas, only women can understand what each new case of rape or molestation means to a woman. Since rapes take place without any protection, the victim not only undergoes trauma, but can also suffer from sexually transmitted diseases or even AIDS. Each Maoist kind of movement results in hundreds of preventable childbirths, widows, rapes, molestations, forced marriages, and the like, not to speak of the loss of their career, opportunities of love and marriage missed, etc., for both men and women. Any armed conflict situation not only makes the women more vulnerable, but also strips them of whatever honour and dignity the patriarchal society would have spared them. They turn themselves into mere objects, either to be protected or to be sacrificed at the altar of such violent movements. To talk about empowerment under a militarized climate, therefore, has no meaning.

The children are equally—if not more—vulnerable in armed conflict situations anywhere in the world. Despite the Maoist leaders in Nepal denying child recruitment there is enough evidence to show that children are being recruited for furthering their cause. The impact of the armed conflict on children can be gauged from the following simple statistics¹¹³ relating to the period from February 1996 to June 2003: 161 dead, 100 injured, 105 arrested, 518 abducted, besides 4 cases of sexual abuse of girl children. Death or injury to children is due to landmines, bomb explosions, crossfires, and other offensives carried out by the Maoists or security forces. On the other hand, due to frequent strikes in educational institutions called by the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union—Revolutionary (ANNISU-R), the student wing of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the children's natural right to education has been badly affected. Furthermore, thousands of children have been deprived of their right to education due to the closure of private schools under pressure from the ANNISU-R.

With the declaration of emergency on 26 November 2001, several fundamental rights of the citizens, including their right to freedom of expression, press and publication rights, and right to information were suspended. The government also promulgated the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance on that day, that empowers the security forces to detain suspects for six months without trial and imprison convicted terrorists for 20 years.¹¹⁴ On the same day, the police raided the offices of three pro-Maoist publications, *Janadesh*, *Janadisha* and *Dishabodh*, and arrested nine staff members and confiscated equipment and written materials. On the next day, the army issued a notice asking journalists to seek their permission to publish any matter related to them. On 28 November 2001, the government seized all copies of the *Kathmandu Post* which carried a photograph of Maoists. This was followed by arrests of several top-ranking journalists for publishing articles or photographs related to the Maoists.¹¹⁵ As if these were not enough, the Maoists killed Gyanendra Khadka, a journalist, on 7 September 2003, quite soon after the ceasefire that ended on 27 August the same year.¹¹⁶

There were several other attacks by the Maoists during the year. An

organization called Reporters without Borders (Reporters sans Frontières) has been protesting against attacks on journalists. This organization has reported many such cases.¹¹⁷

The insecure situation created by the Maoists as well as the security forces has affected tourism, which is one of the most important sources of income not only for the country but also for the common people. Its forests and mountains provide unlimited opportunities for adventure and eco-tourism, as its glaciers provide the ultimate attraction for persons from all over the world. But the news of shoot-outs, bomb explosions, blockades, abductions, extortions, landmines, etc., by the Maoists have had negative impact on the tourist industry in places like Pokhara, which is believed to be one of the most beautiful places in the entire Himalayas. Although the Maoists have reportedly assured that they would not harm tourists, suspected Maoists have caused anxiety to tourists from European countries by vandalizing the vehicles they were travelling in or by forcing them to walk after pushing their vehicle down a gorge for not complying with a call for a bandh by the Maoists.¹¹⁸ No wonder then that both the inflow and average stay of the tourists has fallen drastically causing this very important industry of Nepal to plummet by 40 per cent in 2002.¹¹⁹

With tourism, trade too is affected. Naresh Newar reports in the *Nepali Times* about the woes of traders in Birganj, which contributes 44 per cent of Nepal's revenue and 60 per cent of Indo-Nepal trade. This town boasts of about 400 industries employing about 50 thousand Nepalis. According to Newar, the traders there are increasingly feeling insecure with Maoists sending letters to all industrial and business houses, hotels, departmental stores, and shops for regular contributions. If they refuse to cooperate they are killed, just as the mayor of this town was for not paying 5 lakh [1 million equals 10 lakhs] Nepali rupees demanded by the Maoists.¹²⁰

The affected people are not just Nepali citizens but also the Nepalis from Darjeeling who go to Nepal to work in various private schools that are doing burgeoning business in Nepal.¹²¹ Many of them with better educational backgrounds provided by schools in Darjeeling district had also succeeded in opening English boarding schools in Nepal and were doing well. But after 1996, the private schools in Nepal, which were opened by Nepalis from Darjeeling, have become a major target of the students' front of the Maoists. With both students and teachers being kidnapped and coerced to participate in the various fronts of the Maoist movement, education in Nepal is one of the most badly affected after the onset of the Maoist mayhem in 1996.

Like education, the nation's already poor economy is almost on the verge of collapse. According to the Asian Development Bank report issued in April 2002,¹²² the growth rate declined to 3.5 per cent in 2002 compared to 5 per cent in 2001. Agricultural growth had fallen from 4 to 3 per cent, and in the service sector from 7 to 3.5 per cent. It needs no statistics to say that the people of Indian origin control the economy of Nepal almost completely. This is perhaps why the Maoists have launched a concerted hate campaign against them and are even suspected to have been responsible for vandalizing the shops owned by Indians

during the Hrithik Roshan episode a couple of years back.¹²³ If the current situation continues, it can have significant impact on the diasporic Nepalis in India who do not seem to matter to the Maoist leadership, although they often take refuge in India, even among them, in order to evade arrest in Nepal. The Maoists do not seem to realize that by creating such a climate they are also forcing the Nepalis retiring from foreign services in countries like England, Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia to invest their life's savings in India, the US, Canada or Australia instead of their own investment-hungry motherland, Nepal.

CHAPTER 8**The Maoists and the King**

The relationship between the Maoists and the kingship in Nepal first came to the limelight during the royal massacre of 1 June 2001. The then Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel, who was known to have a conciliatory stand on the Maoists, quickly announced to the nation denying the hand of the Maoists in it.¹²⁴ On the relationship between the Maoists and the monarchy, Brahma Chellaney, a professor of security studies at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi, wrote:

The unprecedented palace bloodbath on June 1 that left most royal members dead has come as a shot in the arm for the underground Maoists and the assorted communist groups that form Nepal's main democratic opposition under the banner of the pro-China United Marxist-Leninist alliance. With the institution of monarchy damaged and the weak elected government under siege, the red star hangs over Nepal.¹²⁵

Several other commentators have indicated that the Maoist leaders, particularly Baburam Bhattarai, enjoyed the special confidence of King Birendra who was assassinated on 1 June along with his wife and other family members, leading to an array of conspiracy theories about who might have engineered that massacre. Even Prachanda apparently had a positive view of King Birendra who, according to the Maoist supremo, had "liberal thoughts".¹²⁶ And there is indeed no dearth of fingers pointing at the present king as being responsible for the royal massacre that did not touch the son of King Gyanendra—Paras—despite his being present at the site. Although the latter is a fact, it ignores the truth that nothing happened to several other members of the royal family present in the palace at that eventful moment but have not been indicted.¹²⁷ The common people in the villages often suspect the present king of Nepal as the one who would be most directly benefited by such an incident, hence he is alleged to have a motive to engineer the royal massacre. Brahma Chellaney writes:

Not only is there evidence of their (Maoists') hand in instigating street violence in Kathmandu following the massacre, the Maoists were also quick to publicly allege a "grave political plot" in the royal murders. In fact, the second-ranking Maoist leader (Bhattarai), in a signed article published in the largest Nepali-language newspaper, went so far as to claim a joint U.S.-India-Gyanendra conspiracy behind the slayings. The publication of the fugitive's article prompted authorities to arrest the newspaper's editor and top two executives.¹²⁸

The linkage between the Maoists and the palace is indeed quite complex. Although some scholars in Kathmandu claim that King Birendra remained a true constitutional monarch for about 11 years since 1990, everyone knows the level of interest the palace had in the politics of the country. Impossible though it appears, the hand of the palace behind the Maoist movement is "speculated by scores of intellectuals, journalists and politicians".¹²⁹ In this context, Ramesh

Sharma writes:

In what is taken as a highly revealing interview with vernacular weekly *Deshantar*, Professor Dhruba Kumar has, however obliquely, tried to attribute Maoists' desire for safe landing to the machinations of [the] palace. He has opined that the palace does not want the Maoists to be stronger [*sic*] enough as to jettison themselves out of their control. Because, the way Maoists are gaining strength has apparently made the palace apprehensive. Incidentally, Nepal Communist Party (Masal) leader Mohan Bikram Singh is also fully convinced that the Maoist insurgency is the creation of [the] palace. According to them, [the] palace does not want the Nepalese to be empowered. Therefore, [the] violent Maoist insurgency is a macabre ploy virtually aimed at circumscribing the rights of people guaranteed by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990, a product of historic mass movement.¹³⁰

A small but intellectually influential group of scholars in Kathmandu,¹³¹ although critical at times of the present king, is not against kingship per se. In fact, this group wants a proactive role for the king to steer the country out of the present mess. They seem to believe that Nepal is not yet ready to do away with kingship, if at all that is the ultimate wish of the people. There is substance in this stand. If the present king does not facilitate a smooth changeover from the present system to any other political system that the people of Nepal want, there are strong possibilities of the country getting into a messier future. Too drastic a transformation, such as in China after the Cultural Revolution, can have equally drastic consequences as China had in the biggest ever number of deaths taking place due to starvation. Hence, some kind of continuity is desirable, more so in a country like Nepal, which is racially, culturally and otherwise heterogeneous and where the people are yet to reconcile to a future without a king or a future under Maoist rule. The king might also choose to let the present situation continue if he finds this useful for continuing the institution of monarchy, and complementary to the palace interests. It is also too early for the people of Nepal to forget the 12 years of political instability that the so-called democracy had brought. In fact, there was such public dissatisfaction about the behaviour of various political parties that people had begun to wonder if the partyless panchayat era was not better.

Today, all eyes are on King Gyanendra, about whom not much is known to the people outside Nepal except the fact that he was a successful businessman before taking over the throne of Nepal. The poverty-stricken, semi-literate or illiterate people who constitute the majority of the population of Nepal rarely have an opportunity to see the king on a television screen, let alone in person, and least of all to confirm dozens of allegations about him. Ordinary people give a lot of credibility to the printed words in magazines and newspapers, although they take the news given by Radio Nepal or Channel Nepal quite seriously. Many English-speaking Nepalis, however, consider the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as a reliable source of news. But the percentage of Nepalis who can understand English is indeed negligible. Under the circumstances, all kinds of wild gossip flourishes, and, through repetition, assumes the status of truth, making it difficult

for people to distinguish gossip from the "truth". They have several questions to ask the king, but rarely have the opportunity to do so.

The most significant turn in the monarchy-Maoist relationship took place when King Gyanendra dismissed the Sher Bahadur Deuba government in February 2005 and declared a state of emergency in Nepal. This was followed by arrests of several leaders and journalists and severing the telecommunication link between Nepal and the rest of the world. Whatever little information that trickled out of the country was possible with the help of foreign embassies that had satellite links for communicating with the rest of the world. Despite the pressure created by the international community, especially India, the US and UK, freedom of expression is restricted even today.

Almost every intellectual of Nepal condemned this act of the king. A few even considered the new situation to be risky for the 200-odd-year-old institution of monarchy, as the cushion that political parties provided between the king and the Maoists was no more there. Although this concern was apparently misplaced, it reconfirms the importance of the monarchy as an institution in Nepal. Many Nepalese today are critical of the king, but they are not equally prepared to renounce kingship.

One definite result of the king taking the charge of the country in his own hands is that it has settled one of the most widely speculated relationships between the Maoists and the monarchy. Whatever might have been the relationship between them in the past, it is no longer what many Nepalis suspected. The positions of the Maoists as well as the king are clear, as much as their strengths and weaknesses are known to each other. Any further precipitation of the clash between these two forces will only make the solution that much more difficult.

CHAPTER 9

The Uncertain Future

On 6 June 2002, Madhu Acharya, a correspondent, quoted an ex-Maoist (Rajan Raj Sampang), thus.

The Maoists will definitely intensify their attacks and might become a major force. The battle for power and the greed within and among the different parliamentary parties has provided enough grounds for the Maoists to gain public sympathy. It is not because of their ideologies that people are sympathizing with the Maoist movement, it is because of the frustrating behaviour of the parliamentary parties.¹³²

By April 2004, the prediction certainly came true, but it also spelt uncertainty about the future. Also consider what a leading thinker and journalist from Nepal observes.

King Gyanendra has frequently and publicly reiterated his commitment to multiparty democracy and a constitutional monarchy, and there is every reason to believe that he is personally sincere in these statements. But that does not mean that the palace, which constitutes the monarch as well as the interests and forces for conservatism, is not averse to expanding the space it has been relegated to since the people's movement of 1990.¹³³

The future of Nepal depends on how the monarch, the Maoists and the political parties negotiate their respective spaces. It will also depend partly on who among the three power-centres takes the initiative to bring the other two to the negotiating table. Despite the fact that the political parties have not fared very well in the past, they cannot be ignored in any democratic settlement. Although the two most important axes of Nepal are the monarch and the Maoists, they have to engage with the political parties sooner or later, and the sooner the better. These are paths the Maoists must tread one day even if they continue to be guided by their mentors in Peru, India, or elsewhere. Not choosing to do so is likely to be counterproductive for the future of Nepal.

While it is rather early to be optimistic of a solution, there are certain indications that it is not too far away. There is, first of all, a shift in discourse on the current crisis in Nepal from *possible causes* to *possible solutions*. Some Nepali scholars are actively engaged in finding a solution that may or may not be finally acceptable to various political stakeholders in Nepal. Although they are still divided on several issues, including, most importantly, the status of the monarchy, the churning process is on and that is something very positive. There is no more lamentation about what happened during the past eight years or so, and no more blaming this or that agency, even though peace is yet to return.

As a matter of fact, there is really no dearth of bright ideas about how to restore peace and normalcy in Nepal. What seems to be lacking is the initiative towards fulfilment of the same. The biggest hurdle, besides several other important ones pointed out by Anup Pahari,¹³⁴ is the lack of communication between the

monarch, the Maoists, and the political parties. The communication channels must be kept open keeping the national interest in mind and not the furtherance of their respective agenda. The ultimate solution comes through negotiation, understanding of the other stakeholders, and an attitude of accommodation rather than exclusion on ideological or other grounds.

Of the three stakeholders in Nepal, the monarch has the most important responsibility to involve the other two stakeholders in finding a mutually acceptable solution. There is no reason to see why Prachanda and Baburam may not agree to end their guerrilla warfare if the monarch calls them personally for negotiation and negotiates with them directly and in a transparent manner, rather than through a representative, and shows his readiness to agree to one of the most important and legitimate demands of the Maoists—constitution of a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution. In fact, this appears to be the only solution to the political crisis in Nepal today. And with the current level of their influence, they would certainly be interested to participate in the political process as the single largest political party that it can certainly hope to be. Hardly any observer of Nepal's current political crisis disagrees that the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), in the event of its choosing to join parliamentary politics, can indeed emerge as the largest national political party, which it could never dream of becoming without taking the short-cut route of violence, as Sridhar Khatri rightly points out.¹³⁵

However, any political settlement among the three stakeholders will not be lasting if some of the most important aspirations of the *Janajatis*, Dalits, and the *Madhesis* for an inclusive democracy are not taken care of. It is necessary to make defection a lot more difficult than it is under the present Constitution. There is also a need to draw a code of ethics for political parties and self-seeking leaders. Nepal, with its limited resources, cannot afford to give them freedom without responsibility, and rights without duties. With the experience of 10 governments in 12 years of democracy, which is one of the major reasons for the present political crisis in the country, there should be no difficulty in building a consensus on this.

The constitutional and political reform must be holistic. For the past two centuries or so Nepal had to worry little about poverty and unemployment, as India provided solutions to the two interrelated problems of Nepal. If a Nepali had no work, he simply migrated to India. He needed no training or any education: his readiness to do anything with his bare hands was his biggest asset. He worked on the road, in the forest, on railway tracks, in mines, in the army, police, private residences as household servant or chowkidar, as milkman, farmer, as anything one can imagine. It was only during the past two decades or so that Nepal is taking its development activities with right earnestness and the educated Nepalis in Kathmandu are in a position to ask why they should go to India and work under inhuman and humiliating conditions, and why they should not serve their own country even at lower wages or salaries. The most natural option for them is still to go wherever jobs are available; they would certainly not stay back unemployed for the sake of their sense of nationalism or because they are ill-

treated in some parts of north-east India, as reported in a section of the press in Nepal.¹³⁶ A more important point is this: employment opportunities for the Nepalis of Nepal are increasingly limited in India, as several avenues earlier monopolized by them have been contested not only by Indian Nepalis, but also by migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh, and internally from Bihar. Even the avenues in the Armed Services are becoming restricted for them today, as more and more other Indian communities are joining the Armed Forces. The policy of the Government of India to wean away young unemployed youth from insurgency-infested areas has severely curtailed the need for the government to recruit Nepalis from Nepal for such services. Similarly, Indians from various states, including those in the North-East, are now increasingly taking up jobs of security guards in various industrial centres, which Nepalis from Nepal monopolized earlier.

But when the Nepalis from Nepal look around in their own country, particularly in development sites, the semi-skilled and skilled labourers from India have taken over all such jobs. And when they turn to their towns and cities, they see Indian traders dominating the urban economy. This perhaps explains the Maoist angst against Indians in general and Indian traders in particular. Nepal must, therefore, now gear itself to take care of the bulk of its population by providing them with some sources of livelihood within its own territory. This is not going to be easy, nor will it be solved by driving out the Indians from Nepal, as the Maoists are up to. Such a short-sighted action of the extremists in Nepal can only have a backlash on the Indian Nepali diaspora, and ultimately on Nepal itself. It is time now that Nepali Maoists begin to think of the Nepali diaspora as a resource. Should a proletariat-ruled Nepal like to export *gundruk* (fermented and dried spinach) and *kinema* (fermented soyabean), who else would buy them, after all?

Notes and References

1. The exact number of deaths due to the Maoist movement in Nepal is not known. Rough estimates put the figure at 8,000, which includes civilians, children, Maoists, policemen, and army personnel.
2. Deepak Thapa, however, thinks that the Indian media devoted a lot of column space and airtime to this movement: "India and the Maoists", *Nepali Times*, 14–20 December 2001: nepalresearch.org/archive/politics/maoists/archive_2001_2.htm
3. Anupam Mehta, "Strong-Arm Tactics, Myopic Vision": www.ASIANaffairs.htm
4. Thapa, op. cit., n. 2 above.
5. Authors like Manjushree Thapa, Deepak Thapa, Anup Pahari, Sara Shneiderman, Judith Pettigrew, Anne de Sales, and many others.
6. Gopal Singh Nepali, *The Newars: An Ethno-Sociological Study of a Himalayan Community*, Bombay [now Mumbai]: United Asia Publications, 1965; Colin Rosser, "Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System" in *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon*, ed. C. von Furer-Haimendorf, London: Asia Publishing House, 1966, pp. 68–139.
7. Lionel Caplan, *Land and Social Change in East Nepal: A Study of Tribal-Hindu Relations*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.
8. Dor Bahadur Bista, *People of Nepal*, Part I, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1980.
9. Ibid.
10. Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests: The Process and Consequences of the Unification of Nepal, with Particular Reference to Eastern Nepal*, Calcutta [now Kolkata]: Oxford University Press, 1991.
11. This is a metaphoric expression first used by King Prithvinarayan Shah and repeated numerous times by successive rulers that at once captures the diversity as well as the underlying unity in diversity.
12. T. B. Subba, *Politics of Culture*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1999, p. 39.
13. Rajendra Pradhan, "Ethnicity, Caste and a Pluralist Society" in *State of Nepal*, ed. Kanak Mani Dixit and Shastri Ramachandaran, Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2002, p. 7.
14. For instance, Francis Hamilton writes, "Before the arrival of the Hindu colonies, they had no idea of cast [*sic*]; but most of the tribes confined their marriages to their own nation, while others admitted of intermarriages with strangers." See his *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, repr., New Delhi: Manjushri Publishers, 1971, p. 24.
15. Pradhan, op. cit., n. 13 above, p. 7.
16. Caplan, op. cit., n. 7 above, pp. 3–5, 23ff.
17. Pradhan, op. cit., n. 13 above, pp. 8–9. Also see Harka Gurung, "Trident and Thunderbolt: Culture Dynamics in Nepalese Politics", Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture at the international conference on "The Agenda of Transformation: Inclusion in Nepalese Democracy", Kathmandu, Social Science Baha, 24–26 Apr 2003.
18. Gurung, *ibid.*, p. 10.
19. Anne de Sales, "The Kham Magar Country: Between Ethnic Claims and Maoism" in *Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences*, ed. David Gellner, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2003, pp. 326–57. For its review, see T. B. Subba, "Weapons of the Weak", *Biblio*, vol. 8, nos. 9–10, 2003, pp. 28–30.
20. Caplan, 1970, op. cit., n. 7 above, pp. 175–82.
21. Ibid.
22. Pashupati S. J. B. Rana, Prabhakar S. J. B. Rana, and Gautam S. J. B. Rana, *The Ranas of Nepal*, New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2003.
23. Pradhan, op. cit., n. 13 above, p. 11.

24. The most objective evidence of this is provided by Piers Blaikie, John Cameron and David Seddon in *Nepal in Crisis: Growth and Stagnation at the Periphery*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980.
25. As Anup Pahari constructs in his discussion paper “The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Dimensions and Outlooks for Peace”, Jan 2003: “From all that is available in writing from the Maoist leadership, the insurgency is explained as a logical, necessary and inevitable historical development in which the class interests of the Nepali ‘oppressed masses’ (peasants, workers, etc.) are pitted against the constellation of feudal classes headed by the ‘feudal Nepali monarchy’.” See www.einaudi.cornell.edu/SouthAsia/conference/pdf/nepal5.pdf
26. M. D. Dharamdasani, “Electoral Participation and Nation-Building in Nepal” in *Nation-Building in South Asia*, vol. II, ed. Ramakant and B. C. Upreti, New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1991, p. 376.
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29. C. K. Lal, “Cultural Flows across a Blurred Boundary” in *State of Nepal*, ed. Kanak Mani Dixit and Shastri Ramachandaran, Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2002, pp. 100–18.
30. Sanjay Upadhyaya, “A Dozen Years of Democracy: The Games that Parties Play”, Dixit and Ramachandaran, *ibid.*, pp. 39–61.
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33. Dharamdasani, *op. cit.*, n. 26 above, p. 377.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Nickson, *op. cit.*, n. 32 above, p. 365.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 365–68.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
38. Colin Millard, “Democracy and Dissent in Nepal: An Overview with some Perceptions from the Valley of Dhorpatan” in Gellner, *op. cit.*, n. 19 above, pp. 281–304.
39. Nickson, *op. cit.*, n. 32 above, p. 365.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 370–71.
42. Subba, *op. cit.*, n. 12 above, pp. 104–23.
43. Ganesh M. Gurung, “Ethnic Identity and Politics of Ethnographic Museum in Nepal” in *Anthropology and Sociology of Nepal: Cultures, Societies, Ecology and Development*, ed. Ram B. Chhetri and Om P. Gurung, Kathmandu: Sociological and Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON), 1999, pp. 81–90.
44. Subba, *op. cit.*, n. 12 above, pp. 104–23.
45. Bernard Imhasly, “Maoist Guerrillas Battle in the Himalayas”, *Neue Zurcher Zeitung*, 15 Jul 1998: www.nzz.ch/english/background/background1998/background9807/bg980717nepal.html
46. Subba, *op. cit.*, n. 12 above, chs. 6, 7.
47. Blaikie et al., *op. cit.*, n. 24 above, pp. 91–98.
48. Deepak Thapa, “The Maobadi of Nepal” in Dixit and Ramachandaran, *op. cit.*, n. 29 above, pp. 77–99.

49. It appears that the second spell of democracy in Nepal raised many expectations among the common people of Nepal, who were soon not only disillusioned with what the political parties in the country were doing, but also with their own ethnic organizations.
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52. Ganesh Gurung, op. cit., n. 43 above, pp. 81–90.
53. Subba, op. cit., n. 12 above, pp. 108–9.
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64. T. B. Subba, *Ethnicity, State and Development: A Case Study of Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1992.
65. Michael Hutt, *Unbecoming Citizens: Culture, Nationhood, and the Flight of Refugees from Bhutan*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
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67. Thapa, op. cit., n. 2 above.
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71. Ibid.
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73. Ibid.
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82. "Nepal Terrorist Groups", op. cit., n. 76 above.
83. Chowdhury, op. cit., n. 78 above.

84. "Nepal Terrorist Groups", op. cit., n. 76 above.
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86. Regmi, op. cit., n. 27 above, pp. 37–45.
87. Ibid., p. 40.
88. Ibid.
89. Puskar Gautam, "Khukri to M-16: Rapid Escalation of Small Arms Availability in Nepal" paper presented at the conference on "Asia in the New Millennium: Development, Democracy and Security" organized by the Asian Political and International Studies Association (APISA), Singapore, 27–30 Nov 2003.
90. Ibid., pp. 4–7.
91. See the list of Maoists' demands in *INHURED International*, 4 May 2004, or: www.inhured.org/40_points_demands.htm
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93. Pettigrew and Shneiderman, op. cit., n. 63 above, pp. 19–29.
94. Thapa, op. cit., n. 92 above, pp. 49–55.
95. Pettigrew and Shneiderman, op. cit., n. 63 above, pp. 19–29.
96. Ibid.
97. Com. Parvati, "The Question of Women's Leadership in People's War in Nepal": <http://lists.econ.utah.edu/mailman/listinfo/marxist-leninist-list>
98. Thapa, op. cit., n. 92 above, p. 52.
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100. Com. Parvati, op. cit., n. 97 above.
101. Thapa, op. cit., n. 92 above, p. 51.
102. Pettigrew and Shneiderman, op. cit., n. 63 above, pp. 19–29.
103. In fact, the people are reportedly so scared that they would not dare to refuse anything that the Maoists would ask for.
104. The point about invasion of women's space by men-centric symbols seems not to have been noticed yet, although it is often too glaring to be missed.
105. Several journalists have reported on this as if it was really a taboo. It is true that women did not traditionally plough the field, a job that was reserved for men, but it did not amount to a taboo, the breach of which would, according to their beliefs, entail some supernatural punishment. To the best of ones knowledge, this is not a taboo in this sense.
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122. W. A. Sunil, "US Provides Military Assistance to Nepal to Crush Maoist Guerrillas", *WSWS News & Analysis*, 2 May 2002: www.northbayprogressive.org/vol1_issue6.html
123. The episode took place following an alleged anti-Nepal statement by the Hindi film hero, Hrithik Roshan. Although Manisha Koirala (the heroine from Kathmandu) quickly defended him, enough damage had already been done.
124. There was widespread speculation at that time that the Maoists might have been responsible for the royal massacre. But what the urgency of the deputy prime minister was to clear the Maoists of all speculation is not clear.
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