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Bahuns have become even stronger than before after abolition of monarchy



Krishna B. Bhattachan, Phd

Dr. Krishna Bhattachan is not a new name for the regular readers of the Telegraph Weekly. He has contributed several articles on contemporary issues to this weekly that have been well appreciated by the readers both within and without. Notably, he has presented working papers for the Telegraph Weekly sponsored seminars in the past.

He is straight forward in pushing his views that at times invite serious criticisms from among his own colleagues and detractors as well.

In the recent years, Dr. Bhattachan associated himself with the areas of his specialization such as Modernization and Development; Sociological Theory; Ethnicity; Indigenous Peoples; Gender, Dalit Issues, Madhesi Issues, Inclusion; Conflict Analysis; Conflict Resolution; Advocacy; and Impact Monitoring & Evaluation and highly contributed to attract the attention of the government towards the genuine issues of the indigenous people.

A Berkeley, USA, doctoral degree holder in Sociology, Dr. Bhattachan is a very close friend of this paper.

He is amicable. He is a modest scholar who could not be dismissed easily for his logical comments.

Last week, we approached this long time friend to share his exclusive views on contemporary issues. He agreed and here are the results: Chief Editor.

TGQ1: Federalism based on ethnicity/linguistic and regionalism, or the administrative federalism and or federalism with autonomy/self determination, have become a matter of intensively debated topic among the federalists basically.

From the Janajati perspective, Dr. Bhattachan, considering that regions as such are socio-culturally more heterogeneous by nature, how can we justify which among all the outlined alternatives can help us build an inclusive Nepal with no future confrontation, more so, no possibility for the much feared secession?

Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan: Mr. Upadhyaya, the main demand of our indigenous peoples' movement has been ethnic, linguistic and regional autonomy and sub-autonomy with right to self-determination should be the basis of federal democratic republic. Our assessment is that the proposed eleven ethnic and regional states with three linguistic sub-states proposed by the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) is very close to what we have been thinking of. We believe that Nepal Communist Party (UML) is not in favour of ethnic and linguistic autonomy. The Nepali Congress is totally against right to self-determination and ethnic and linguistic autonomy. Both NCP (UML) and the Nepali Congress conceded for "One Madhes, One Pradesh" in an agreement between Nepal Government and the Madhesi Jana Adhikar Forum. Madhesi political parties are in favour of regional autonomy and many Madhesis are in favour of linguistic autonomy but they all are not in favour of ethnic autonomy. As no political parties and caste/ethnic groups have absolute majority in the constituent assembly, it is for sure that this issue is going to be the most sensitive, most debatable, most controversial, most time consuming, most complicated. Confrontations of one or the kinds are inevitable but the question is which one do we choose to live with and which one to eliminate for good, and choose the one between confrontation of low and high intensity. Concerning your question about heterogeneous socio-cultural composition, we need to recall history, gaze at present and look at the future. Bahun-Chetri's encroachment in indigenous peoples' land started from the far-west and mid-west and continued to the east and finally in the Terai. The policies, plans and programs of the State were indeed in favour of the encroachers and against indigenous peoples. By now Bahun-Chhetris has spread out their populations in all 75 districts of Nepal. On the contrary, many indigenous peoples are still concentrated in their traditional homeland, some indigenous peoples have spread out in other districts but none in all 75 districts. If autonomous states are based on geographical region or watershed region or vertically from north to the south or any other alternative ways it is sure that Bahun-Chhetri domination shall continue unabated in each autonomous region or state. The population size of each caste and ethnic groups depends on how the government slice the community. For example, Chapeangs have about 53,000 population concentrated in Chepang homeland. But they have been divided in four districts, namely, Dhading, Gorkha, Chitwan and Makwanpur. In each district they are further divided in different electoral constituencies. If They had their own constituency based on their traditional homeland, if every 100,000 population has an elected member for the Parliament, they would get one seat but in present division, they are not more than two-three thousand in each electoral constituency, there is no way that they could get a seat.

Different groups of people are seeking autonomy in different ways. Indigenous peoples are seeking it on ethnic grounds and Madhesis are seeking it on regional grounds. Some Madhesis are seeking it on linguistic grounds. I believe these all groups should exercise their right to self-determination to decide on what basis they want to realize autonomous states and whether the nature of autonomy should be single ethnic identity, comprehensive ethnic identity or some may even opt either self-rule within autonomous states or be directly under the federal government. It, however, needs to be guaranteed that each caste/ethnic, language and regional groups have their autonomous states of their choice, which, I believe, would be some where in between 10 to 30. Such a process would prevent different groups from engaging in confrontations.

To make the autonomous states inclusive, proportional representation, special measures or affirmative actions and guarantee of minority rights must be ensured through constitutional and legal provisions. However, voting rights and rights to be elected should not be given to people of other autonomous states who are interested either to continue or come to live in states other than their own.

Secession in a unitary state is difficult as long as the rulers are dictators or justice givers. But if injustice prevails for long, secession is inevitable. Listing nine lessons learnt from experience of federalism and autonomy in different countries, Prof. Yas Ghai writes, "autonomy does not promote secession, instead, true autonomy prevents secession." UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007. Almost all the member countries, including Nepal, voted in favour of the Declaration. The declaration gives rights to self-determination to indigenous peoples and ethnic autonomy or self-rule but prohibits exercise of such rights for partial or full secession. We, like the international community, believe that ethnic autonomy would make the country strong than ever before. We need to remember that there are more unitary states in the world and incidence of breakaway is more in unitary states than in federal states.

TGQ2: Dr. Bhattachan you are the sharp critic of the Bahunbad, how has the Brahmin legacy contributed to the making of the exclusive State that Nepal is currently? Some Bahunbadis claim that it is your personal attack on the Brahmin sect flaring ethnic conflict than any thing else? How you justify your claims?

Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan: Bahuns have become even stronger than before after abolition of monarchy. Even after colourful rainbow representation of different caste, ethnic, linguistic, regional, sex and class groups in the newly elected constituent assembly, the top brass, all Bahuns, of three political parties, namely NCP (Maoist), Nepali Congress and NCP (UML) controlled by the Bahuns, have turned the constituent assembly nothing more than their huge rubber stamp. The question now is why it is so? Why 25 political parties represented in the constituent assembly are categorized in hierarchical groups just like in four-fold Hindu varna model. The status of the three political parties is of the Brahman, of

the remaining four of the seven political parties is of the Kshyatriya, of remaining six of the thirteen political parties is of Vaisya, and remaining twelve political parties is of Shudra. Twenty six nominated members' status is of the Mlechha ("White foreigners who eat beef, i. e. meat of cow).

In Nepal unfortunately Bahuns and Bahunbadis are almost identical. It is like the Nepal or the Nepalese peoples and poverty are almost identical or in the past the British and colonialism were almost identical. When someone says or writes that the Nepalese people are poor, it does not mean that each and every Nepalese people is poor. Similarly when some one said or wrote that the British colonized India, it does not mean that each and every British citizen was a colonizer. In a similar vein, when one talks about Bahunbad one cannot avoid talking about the Bahuns. After reading Arun Baral's recently published book entitled **Bahunbad**, I felt that Bahun themselves see even more wrong doings and injustices done by the Bahuns than what we indigenous peoples or Dalits or women see. One could imagine how Bahunbadis would have reacted if that book should have been authored by any indigenous peoples like me? We know that if we and the Bahuns say the same things, we would be criticized for being communal, flaring ethnic conflict and being secessionist, but on the contrary, Bahuns would be appreciate for having a big heart, being generous, compassionate, liberal and truth seeker. When I talk about the Bahuns, it is related more to their wrong doings and injustices against indigenous peoples, Dalits and women, to creating an equitable and a just society. It is not about flaring ethnic conflict; on the contrary, it is intended to avoid such conflict. As often people get confused with private and public life, similarly they get confused with Bahun as a person and Bahunbad as an ideology, policy and practices. In democracy personal life of public figures are public as long as it affects the public. Similarly, talking about Bahun is inevitable as long as Bahunbad is related to the Bahuns. No one would be talking about Bahuns if they do not practice Bahunbad any more. As you have rightly pointed out that the allegation of "personal attack" comes from Bahunbadis, not from the Bahuns who are for equity and equality among different caste, ethnic, linguistic, religious, sex and regional groups.

Mr. Upadhyaya, you know very well that my views about Bahunbadis and Bahun has nothing to do with them as persons. It is indeed about the public issues. Otherwise how come that I have many friends and well wishers like you and many other Bahuns and vice versa. I agree to disagree with ideas but not with persons. It is for sure that if my Bahun friends like you also thought of that I engage in personal attack against the Bahuns, I do not think that you and I would continue to maintain cordial and friendly relations and that you would give me opportunity frequently either to present a paper in seminars organized by or publish interviews and articles in your esteemed paper The Telegraph Weekly if I should be attack Bahuns personally.

TGQ3: With the formation of the Constituent Assembly there is the considerable

presence of the janajatis in the legislative body. Now that the demand for the CA has been met with, how is the Janajati leadership preparing to get their issues addressed in the CA finally? What challenges the Janajati issues might face in the CA for the next two years or so?

Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan: Mr. Upadhaya, you should recall that indigenous peoples' movement had demanded for fully proportional representation on the basis of caste/ethnicity, sex and region based on population size and ensuring at least one representation of each caste and ethnic groups. The rule of the game of electoral politics was made unfair but conscious voters detected and weeded them out making constituent assembly more representative. It is indeed a result of the indigenous peoples' movement and contribution of a decade long insurgency that indigenous women and men have significant representation which is in par with official population size. They all come from 25 different political parties but not from their respective caste/ethnic communities. Hence they carry bodies of indigenous peoples but they are bound to speak the language of their respective parties than their indigenous peoples' communities. If the members should vote on articles related to right to self determination and ethnic autonomy, will Nepali Congress and NCP (UML) allow members who belong to different indigenous peoples community allow to vote in favour if the party issue a whip to vote against the proposition?

The bad intention of political parties against indigenous peoples has become clear after failure to respect 20 points agreement done on August 7, 2007 between the Nepal Government and Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities and Indigenous Nationality Joint Struggle Committee. Instead of nominating indigenous peoples who have been left out by the direct and proportional elections, the seven political parties are not willing to give all the seats as agreed.

We know that right to self determination and ethnic, linguistic and regional autonomy is going to be the most controversial issue to be decided in its favour or against. The current power structure of the constituent assembly in which none of the political parties and social groups have absolute majority, the new constitution would fail to incorporate it. Indigenous peoples movement is fully preparing to exert strong pressure from the street while constituent assembly members from indigenous peoples community continue their struggle within the constituent assembly. In spite of mounting pressure from indigenous peoples movement, if the constituent assembly should fail to ensure ethnic autonomy, it is for sure that indigenous peoples would be forced to generate peoples movement or insurgency led by indigenous peoples. If it should happen, indigenous peoples have nothing to loose, but to win.

In the past the main challenges faced by indigenous peoples were monarchy and the Hindu Kingdom. Now monarchy has been abolished for good and Nepal has been declared as a secular state. Now, the main challenges to indigenous peoples comes from Bahunbadis,

patriarchy, continuation of unitary state in the name of federal democratic republic, and undemocratic and exclusive political parties. How to ensure ethnic autonomy with right to self-determination, effectively implement ILO C. 169 and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, How to avoid future armed conflicts or insurgencies? How to create a just and equitable society? How to march forward in the highway of positive peace, progress and prosperity? These are some of the challenging questions facing indigenous peoples in particular and the Nepalese people in general.

TGQ4: Dr. Bhattachan what say you of the continuing political deadlock? The Nepali Congress is blamed for creating the deadlock by the Communists? Some even say that extraneous forces both near and far are contributing to the deadlock. Do you agree or disagree?

Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan: Yes, I do agree with you Mr. Upadhyaya for the continuing political deadlock. Given Nepal's geopolitical strategic situation, endowed with abundant water resources, and continuing transition period, Nepal has obviously become a playground of extraneous forces. We know from the very recent history that if all the peoples of Nepal unite, they can do nothing. Yes, indeed the Nepali Congress should have gracefully accepted the people's verdict and paved the way for smooth transfer of power. I, however, believe that these all are in appearances like in the monitor of a computer. We need to go beyond such appearances by digging out the reality and looking at the hard disk. The hard disk is indeed the Bahunbad, i.e. greed of concentration of power and authority among one caste (Bahun), one sex (male) and one region (the Hill). If power and authority is shared equally by Bahuns, Chetris, indigenous peoples, Dalits, Madhesis and women, I do not think that such dirty political deadlock would surface up. The deadlock is a product of turning the constituent assembly nothing but appendices that hurts when infected, kills when it burst and has no use when it functions normally. ***The CA members should reclaim their due rights of the constituent assembly to stop such deadlock in the days to come.***

TGQ5: It is widely believed that the possible left alliance will mar the entire democratic process. Do you see such a possibility as is alleged a communist dictator in offing? What would be your opinion in this regard?

Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan: I do not believe that the possible left alliance would mar the entire democratic process or that there is a possibility of a communist dictator in offing. Abolition of monarchy after its dictatorial rule is evidence that the common Nepalese people do not tolerate any form of dictatorship, whether it comes from left or right. Alliance between NCP Maoist and NCP UML may appear to be alliance of the left but in reality NCP (UML) has left to be left as it bears a brand name of communists but in reality it has no significant feature of communists. UML leaders are "*kum nistha*" meaning less committed, rather than "*kamyunist*" meaning "communist"; and they are referred by the peoples as "*kam red*" meaning less red than "*kamred*" meaning "comrade." Civil society, specially

indigenous peoples, Madhesis, Dalits and women, and other groups are indeed against any form of dictatorship should they be the rightist or the leftist or the centrist. The days of dictators are over in Nepal if any political party should learn lessons from the exit of Gyanendra as the last King of Nepal.

Further information on Dr. Bhattachan:

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A., 1993.

M.A., Sociology, Banaras Hindu University, Banaras, India, 1980, [First Division].

B.A., Political Science, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, 1977, [Merit].

Intensive English and Academic Orientation for Foreign Graduate Students, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, U.S.A., July-August, 1987.

Attended a course on Conflict Resolution, Postwar Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU), University of York, York, the UK, January 16-April 7, 2006.

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Modernization and Development; Sociological Theory; Ethnicity; Indigenous Peoples; Gender, Dalit Issues, Madhesi Issues, Inclusion; Conflict Analysis; Conflict Resolution; Advocacy; and Impact Monitoring & Evaluation.

RATOS: R=Research; A=Advocacy; T=Teaching/Training; O=Organization Building; and S=Social Mobilization.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

Senior Chevening Fellow at the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU), University of York, York, awarded by Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom, January 16 to April 7, 2006.

Honoured with a Plaque of Recognition by the Dalit NGO Federation (DNF) in Kathmandu on International Day Against Racism, March 21, 2005.

Honored with a Letter of Honour by the Sociology/Anthropology Student Association (SASAN) and Free Student's Union, Trichandra Campus, July 19, 2003.

Honoured with a Plaque of Recognition by the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN) in Kathmandu on World Indigenous Day, August 9, 2002.

Mahendra-Vidya Bhusan Class-A Medal awarded by His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, February 24, 1994.

Fulbright-Hays Scholarship, University of California at Berkeley, U.S.A., 1987-1992.

Tribhuvan University Faculty Development Fellowship, Banaras Hindu University, Banaras, India.

Award for scoring the highest marks in M.A. (Pre.) Sociology, Banaras Hindu University, Banaras, India, 1980.

Intelligent Student Award, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, 1976-1977.

ASSOCIATION WITH PROFESSIONAL, VOLUNTARY AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Team Member, NEFIN's Dialogue Team to talk with Nepal Government's Dialogue Team now led by Ramchandra Paudel (Previously by Mahanta Thakur), Since March 2007.

Member, Steering Committee, South Asian Sociology Society (SASS), Since December 23, 2005.

Advisor, National Coalition against Racial Discrimination (NCARD), Kathmandu, Since 2006. (Past Coordinator, 2000-2001).

Advisor, Online Journal of Inclusive Democracy, Since 2004.

Advisor, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Kathmandu. 2000-2006.

Recent Publications

"Nepalese Buddhists' View of Hinduism," Pp. 227-239. In: Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen and Hendrik M. Vroom (Eds.) **Religions View Religions. Explorations in Pursuit of Understanding.** 2006. Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi.

Book Reviews: Towards a democratic Nepal. Inclusive Institutions for a Multicultural Society by Mahendra Lawoti.

Pp. 605-607, **Democratization. Special Issue: Promoting Democracy Abroad**, Volume 12, Number 4, Routledge. Taylor & Francis Group, August 2005.

Coauthor (with Sarah Websetr). **Indigenous Peoples, Poverty Reduction and Conflict in Nepal**. 2005. Geneva: International Labour Organization (ILO).

2008-06-25 06:23:28

Comments (6)

The writer is merely reflecting the ground reality on a piece of paper; I do not see anything that construe his racism. He is not against Bahun; but he is talking about ism or Bahunism in plain. Simply because of this ism, the whole Bahun seems to have involved that is not case. Most importantly the writer is not targetting any individual of any particular cast; what he is talking is the idealogical differences that is affecting the other either directly or indirectly.

Commented by hb - June 26, 2008 @ 4:36 AM

I think Mr. Bhattachan is correct and the first step to eliminate bahunbaad is to join Mongol National Organization by all the smart Mulbasis so that they can leadm their own people rather than being just a puppets of Bahunbaads.f they sauy it is communal what would they say about their discrimination and caste system which is a shame in international community.

Commented by Dawa Sherpa - June 25, 2008 @ 10:01 PM

Its natural, how one blind can avoid another one, so you both are blind Dipesh. Do you know does it means Bahunbad?? Dr. Bhattachan himself is a inheriently bahunbadi, if you have any doubt please let me tell his history.

Commented by Kamal B.K. - June 25, 2008 @ 6:31 PM

Its mere example of pulling the legs..i congratulate Dr. for having real character of nepalese

Commented by Rahul - June 25, 2008 @ 11:53 AM

Ethnocentrism is one of many perspectives to view the present state-aparatus of Nepal. However, embracing exclusively this view can also be limiting, restraining and hypocritic in many ways.

Bhattachan refers to Baral's recent book "Bahunbad" which is very much based on parochiality rather than holistic evidences. I am not sure whether Bhattachan's uncritical critics of Bahuns can really do good for the country. I guess a kind of hate has been mixed in the name of of his so-called academic perspective

Commented by Garjaman - June 25, 2008 @ 2:19 AM

Mr Bhattachan unquestional speaker for indigenous nationalities. Its true monarchy finish and now we've to finish Bahunbad. Of course specially NC and UML are anty indigenous so they got sack on election of constitution assebley. Even though moist have bahunbad, they encouge us for the movement and educate us for our right either way. Still if they fallow the bahun bad next will be maoist to exile from history like monarchy. For the issue of indigenous peoples I'm blind fallower of Dr Bhattachan.

Commented by limbu dipesh - June 24, 2008 @ 11:24 PM

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Five questions



Bahuns have become even stronger than before after abolition of monarchy

Krishna B. Bhattachan, Phd ,

In Nepal unfortunately Bahuns and Bahunbadis are almost identical. It is like the Nepal or the Nepalese peoples and poverty are almost identical or in the past the British and colonialism were almost identical. [More..](#)

Online Poll

Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala as the first president of the republic.

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No

Don't Know

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Buddhi Narayan Shrestha ,

I must say that India must be merged into Nepal...the merged single country, extended from Himalaya to Cape Comorin must be named as 'Nepal' but not 'India' on the globe.

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