

Armed Conflict and Migration: A threat for development and peace

A case of Nepal

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Introduction:

This paper presents an argument on; what is the ground for the present armed conflict in Nepal and why has it been a problem though the history of the conflict is not that longer compared to other armed conflicts around the world? As a result of the conflict, internal as well as international migration is taking place. The forced movement of people has caused obstacles for a development process in the country. At the moment, most of the development projects are at halt which is definitely an obstacle for healthy social transformation and thereby peace building. This is one of the hottest experiences of Nepalese society at the moment. The paper looks at the Maoist movement and emergence of conflict as a consequence of the then “system failure”. Finally, the paper concludes that the conflict is causing forced migration and has been a barrier for development and peace in Nepal.

Conflict and Migration: A conceptual understanding:

‘Conflict’ is an ambiguous word that carries different meanings to different people in different contexts. The genesis of conflict is contextual based. As it is described in the Cambridge dictionary¹, ‘conflict’ is “an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles”, “fighting between two or more groups of people or countries”. Warner (2001) argues that conflict can refer to a debate or contest, a disagreement, argument, dispute, quarrel, a struggle, battle or confrontation, or a state of unrest, turmoil or chaos violence. Like wise, Walker and Daniels (1997) argue that conflict is an active stage of disagreement between people with opposing opinions, principles and practices manifested in different forms (grievance, conflict and dispute). However, conflict is a disagreement over “others”. Conflict forms/creates a clear demarcation between “I” and “You”, “We” and “Them”. Hence, conflict is generally interpreted as the opposite of peace though it is inevitable for a (sustainable) transformation.

Conflicts normally occur when one feels segregated from the totality, feels “minority” that forces to realize where “s/he” is. The dominated, suppressed, or neglected form of

¹ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=16125&dict=CALD>

identity fosters the feeling of “I” and “you” and “we” and “them”. This is the beginning of a conflict where one group or a person disagrees with the other. Such disagreements, if not managed in the “whole” lead to further development of conflict and in some cases take the form of “armed conflict” if the conflicts find fertile breeding ground, supported either by poverty, social, religious, ethnic or political ideological exclusion. Since the genesis of a conflict is contextual based, it contributes in the totality accordingly. We can also distinguish conflict in two major kinds; say a “good force” leading to welfare of people and “bad force” leading to destruction and disharmony as a goal. Therefore, the nature, intention and context of conflict are important aspects to look at.

Interestingly, any thing whether good or bad, as we perceive is the product of the totality itself and it does appear in the totality as a part of it during the process of evolution and transformation. Conflict, therefore is a part of the whole that appears therein during the process of evolution and transformation. Conflicts represent the contemporary state, process and nature of transformation in the totality. Hence, the new ideas and thoughts emerging in different forms and levels at a particular place and time as “conflict” are something very important that give hints of how evolution and transformation is taking place at a particular time and space giving a possibility to further conceptualization in the whole.

The emergence of Khmer Rouge and Al Quada are also the product of the whole which can be characterized as a “bad force” which have claimed the lives of thousands of people and the goal was probably not the welfare of the people in general. On the other hand, in case of Nepal although the consequences of the conflict when we look at the human right abuse, is severe and the conflict has already claimed more than 11000 lives, which is another part of the conflict, may not be equally compared with the “bad forces” since the objective of the revolution, as they say, is welfare of people and elimination of “social inequality”². The genesis and the context of Nepalese conflict are different.

² <http://www.india-seminar.com/2005/548/548%20baburam%20bhattarai.htm> (Baburam Bhattarai is the Member of Standing Committee of the Politburo and Convener, United Revolutionary People's Council, Kathmandu)

Emergence of “good force” and “bad force” during the course of evolution and social transformation.

The process of evolution which occurs in many dimensions during social transformation is really complex. In such a complexity both negative and positive forces emerge and do act accordingly.

- Good forces are supported by majority of people though less at the time of emergence and they are less supported by military and some times no military support at all.
- Bad forces are heavily supported by military rather than people.

During the course of evolution “good force” and “bad force” emerge, at times get blended in the mainstream or vanish, and sometimes even lead mainstream. The 1990 revolution in Nepal to overthrow Panchayat was led by “good force” and had no military support at all which formed new mainstream and led it. It was a good example of inclusion of the “conflicting ideology” in the whole. Sometimes the “bad forces” lead the mainstream, of course with a help of heavy military support which at some point of evolution collapses because military support is less strong than the support of people in terms of sustenance of “ideology or power”. The collapse of Nazi and downfall of communism from the Eastern Europe can be cited as an example. However, it is not good to treat the new ideas and thoughts as “nothing”. Even the conflicts leading to destruction rather than construction can give some inputs to enlarge understanding and to search new paths to further conceptualize in the “whole”.

Hence, opposing ideas though contradictory with the establishment should be treated as parts of the whole and should be given a careful attention about the intention of its emergence in the whole. The contextual base and the intention of the conflict is to be analyzed in such a way that the conflicts get blended in the mainstream, especially the “good force” otherwise, in most cases it develops into arm conflict in the later stage, if not all. Feeling of exclusion forces and directs people for confrontation that threatens and makes people feel unsafe. Lack of political, social and even economic safety and security is one of the causes of people’s movement. The social and economic cost of staying and migrating is always calculated before a migration takes

place (Neumayer, 2004). Because of armed conflicts, forced migration becomes a compulsion for people though the social and economic cost is higher for migration. Migration be it “in-country” or “international”, is mostly due to armed conflicts and lack of peace, which shatters the economic, social and political stability in a country. Therefore, such conflicts are the major causes of migration. Generally, we see two kinds of migrations.

Voluntary Migration:

Unlike forced migration, voluntary migration is willingly done, in which one plans to settle in a new place. Because of the development in communication and transportation it has enabled people to explore new places of their suitability. The people of economically better off strata and academicians also do migrate voluntarily because of their works and possibility to further explore their talents. Family reunion is also another cause of migration. This sort of migration comparatively does not negatively affect the system because it takes slowly and is planned to some extent before migration takes place.

Forced Migration:

Forced migration is one of the worst scourges that torment humankind (Malender and Öberg, 2004). Armed conflict is the most obvious cause of forced migration and is consistently found to have significant effects on the magnitude of forced migration (ibid: p4-5). Aga Khan (1991) and Moore and Shellman (2002) argue that state repression is one of the causes that leads to forced migration as it is one of the results of armed conflict. The main determinants of forced migration, as mentioned in many researches are in-country war, genocide, dissident violence and state repression, with economic non violent and demographic factors (Malender and Öberg, 2004). The intra state conflict is also found to be a strong factor to forced migration. Human right abuse can cause severe forced migration. However, Migration in general is also a part of social transformation and therefore can not be completely prevented. If migration takes place at a large scale, especially the forced migration, it leads to hamper development process and social fabric affecting the strength of a society. Disturbances in development process and incoherence in societies cause problem in peace keeping. Hence, conflict, migration, development and peace go together and do form a

network. By any reason, if one of them is disturbed the whole network gets threatened and peace shattered.

Socio-economic, Cultural and Political failure: The reasons of conflict.

Nepal, a small country between two giant forces; the India and China, has its own geo-political foundation since long .Geographically; Nepal seems to be small but is rich in cultural diversity. The country represents as one of the poorest in the world with a per-capita income of around US \$ 200 (Acharya, 1998). The World Bank (2002) reports US\$ 240. The national budget largely depends on international loans and grants which has been one of the major drawbacks of Nepali economy. Chadda (2000:124) mentions that though Nepal received heavy foreign aid poverty increased.³ Most reports say that 60% of the total development budget is dependent on foreign aids and donations. On the other hand, high magnitude of loans and lack of proper planning has fostered economic gap among the people. In the later half of 1990s political failure opened a possibility for corruption and abuse of authority⁴ in the country. Consequently, the country has been forced to step backward economically and politically even after the restoration of democracy in 1990. Upreti (2002:82) gives an argument that the persistence of poverty is the outcome of inappropriate use of foreign aid and misallocation and abuse of national resources by the government.

Deraniyagala (2005) argues that the “income poverty” has accelerated during the period of economic liberalization. The chronic problem of corruption, mismanagement of the national as well as foreign aids has caused economic situation worse. The regional imbalance in planning is another aspect to look at. Murshed et al (2003) clearly articulate that there is a spatial and horizontal imbalance in Nepal. Development budgets were largely focused in cities and towns. The agricultural sector which is the main base of rural economy and source of income for more than 80% of the population was/has been less prioritized. One of the major parts of agricultural

³Nepal received aid totaled U.S \$ 22 per capita compared to U.S. \$ 2.60 India and U.S.\$ 13.30 for Pakistan

⁴ The king’s government arrested the former Prime Minister (Sher Bahadur Deuba) at mid night, 27th April. Before his arrest the plain clothed security men cut off his telephone at his residence and handed over the letter of arrest). Mr. Deuba was in jail for 9 months in charge of corruption. The anti-corruption Royal Commission was formed after king’s direct rule which started from Feb, 2005. The commission had summoned other ministers and high level personnel as well for interrogation, yet there were questions raised regarding its authenticity. (Source: www.kantipuronline.com and www.nepalnews.com). There was an argument whether it was a corruption or abuse of authority.

growth, irrigation facility is very low in Nepal. Only 35% of the total cultivated area has provision of irrigation at least one season (Deraniyagala & Sharma, 2003). Elimination of subsidies in fertilizer also helped to deteriorate agricultural sector, especially the small farmer. This, be it either because of unawareness or negligence, ultimately created a huge imbalance between the rural/village and urban economy.

Table 1. Poverty over time in Nepal

Survey year	% of people below poverty line
1977	33
1984	41
1996	44

Source: Sources UNDP (2001)

To improve economy of the country, as it is said, there had been many changes made in the name of industrialization, liberalization and facilities with subsidies. There are many sources of argument viz. Khadaka (1994) and Pandey (1999) argue that despite the country's planned development efforts since first democracy in 1950, the basic indicators of life and the economy have in most cases even deteriorated or remained almost the same.

Table 2. Income distribution since 1986 to 1999

Year	Gini coefficient
1986	0.350
1996	0.352
1997	0.355
1998	0.354
1999	0.357

Source: UNDP (2001)

The reason is that the poor did not benefit even from structural adjustment programs. The socio-economic condition of many people remained almost the same though the per-capita income went up. In fact, poverty has further accelerated even after the restoration of democracy in 1990 which has been heavily supported by the unstable political situation. Consequently, the poor became poorer comparative to that of the past. The gap between the poor and rich went up which has helped to found a critical thinking among the people about their socio- economic status. The accessibility of the

resources like health, education and income sources are not within easy access to majority. People of economically and socially better off strata educate their children in private schools and even can afford for education abroad; where as, the poor can not even send their children to the local public schools. Nearly 30% of children still lack access to primary education (Khatiwada, 2003). The case is almost same with health sector.

If we look at more than two century long history it is very clear that the feudal political-economy, as well elite biased socio-cultural structure has been dominant factor in Nepal. The first democracy established in 1950 was unfortunately snatched away by the King Mahendra, the father of the present King Gyanendra in 1960 giving an explanation that multiparty system in Nepal could not work to maintain harmony. He might have been afraid of the growing consciousness among people regarding freedom, democracy and development which definitely could be an unbearable threat to the palace if not dealt in time. Therefore, he might have taken an undemocratic and of course autocratic step in order to suppress the newly emerging “people’s consciousness” and provide a new identity under his direct rule so that the newly blooming consciousness fades away. The poor minds were again forced to accept the king a “supreme” subject. Obviously, this was the foundation for inception of party less Panchayat system under his direct leadership.

The Rastraiya Panchayat (national council), Jilla Panchayat at the district level and Village Panchayat at the lower level were the clear divisions of political institutional decentralization but were directly monitored by the upper levels and of course, the center. It was a very good institutional chain to monitor from central to the village level to give a good way to spread the party-less Panchayat system in order to foster “Absolute Monarchism”. The Panchayat system lasted until the beginning of 1990.

The thirty year long (1960-1990) Panchayat monopoly was shattered in 1990 through the *Jana-andolan* (people’s revolution) and multiparty democracy was established. A new constitution was formulated. The new constitution formulated in 1990 explains that Nepal is a country of multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy. The constitution gives supreme power to the king even to dissolve the parliament in case of so called “problematic situation” (what is exactly happening now).The king is the

supreme commander of the Royal Nepalese Army, as the constitution declares. There are some other questionable articles⁵ like: “No question shall be raised in any court about any act performed by His Majesty”, “The income and personal property of His Majesty shall be exempt from all kinds of tax, fee or other similar charge”.

Despite the transition to democracy in 1990, traditional elites and upper castes continued to dominate the state apparatus and left wing parties were marginalized within the political process (Deraniyagala, 2005:56). The result was political instability and conflict. The political parties could not make clear and far-sighted vision for the development of the country. Their intra-party conflict and personal interests paved the way for the palace to emerge at the political forum. Sedan and Hussein (2002:9) mention

that;... a short period of considerable optimism, it became increasingly evident that the new political order was characterized by instability, corruption and patronage (a crisis of governance) and that a rapid succession of governments was unable to achieve any real headway in addressing Nepal’s continuing economic underdevelopment and deep-seated social inequalities. In this already unstable context – and ostensibly in response to it – an armed insurgency began in February 1996, led by Nepali Maoists.

In fact, the period post 1990s has divided people in different ways and has fostered for the search of sense of ethnic identity and civic consciousness. During this period, to some extent, dominance of Brahman and Chetri has been questioned (Bista, 1991). No doubt, it is a contribution of globalization. Especially, the NGOs, rural political activities and freedom in media have contributed remarkably though consensus in the national level seemed to be lacking among the political parties. Post 1990s multiparty and democratic political system in Nepal has given possibility of commercialization of the education system which is one of the reasons of further isolating poor people to some degree. The two systems of education (private for the rich and public/government for the poor)⁶ have created a sentiment of discrimination among the people. This has created an immense social stratification and severe strife in the

⁵ Source: <http://asnic.utexas.edu/asnic/countries/nepal/nepalconstitution.html>

⁶ The people in Nepal mostly do have a view that rich people send their children in private schools and poor ones in public schools. The result shows that the production of private schools is better and competitive than that of the public schools (in majority). This has created a boarder between private schools and public school.

society. The gender inequality, cultural as well as legal pluralism (Upreti, 2002) also have contributed much for the ongoing conflict. This is the reason that within the period of ten years the country has witnessed despair in democracy due to the extremely poor performance of the government and lack of institutionalized bureaucracy. The bureaucracy in Nepal was highly influenced as the change of government. Hence, the political parties are blamed of not creating an environment where people could feel a real democracy and enjoy safety. Less participation of the public and even the civil society in the present movement launched by the parliamentary parties against royal take over is the result of what the political parties have offered to the people in the past. It does not mean that the movement will not be supported but may take some time.

Inception of Maoism:

The Maoist movement began by the Feb.16, 1996. Maoist read the minds of the poor, disadvantaged and frustrated people, especially in the remote western Nepal. The region had/has been neglected by the state in terms of development and basic infrastructure, argued as spatial and horizontal imbalance (Murshed et al,2003), therefore became a fertile ground for the inception of Maoism.

Table 3. Regional disparity in the incidence of poverty

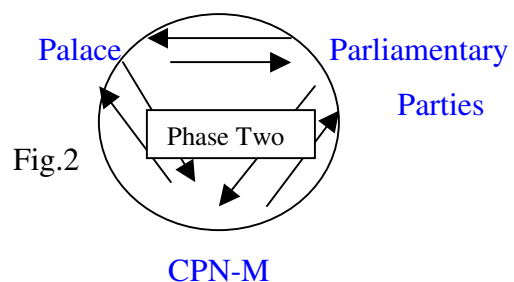
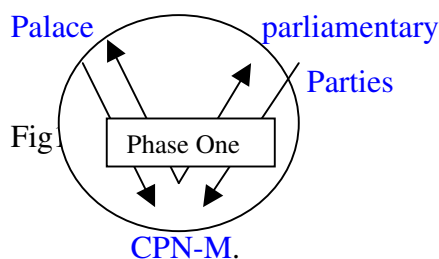
Region	% of people below poverty line
Nepal	44
Urban	23
Rural	44
Plains	42
Hills	41
Mountains	56
Rural eastern hills/mountains	28
Rural central hills/mountains	67
Rural western hills/mountains	40
Rural mid and far western hill/mountains	72

Source: Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 1996

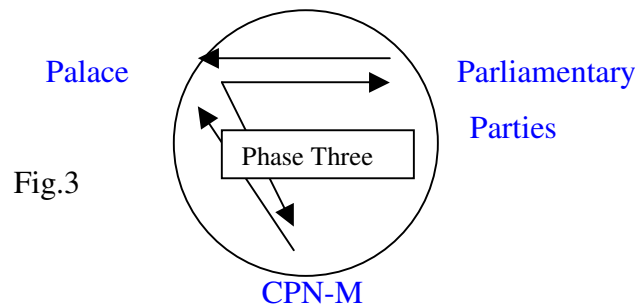
The highest poverty rate is measured in the rural mid and far western hills and mountain where the Maoist found a suitable breeding environment. Maoist conceptualized that the existing feudal structure from the village to the capital, is the main obstacle to Nepal's "underdevelopment". Therefore, on this understanding they

forwarded forty points agenda (for details see Hutt, 2004: 285-87), demanded a grand discussion in the parliament and if possible a change in the constitution. It does not mean that the entire problem would have been solved or eliminated even if the agenda was discussed in the parliament. It also does not guarantee that it would have prevented the rebellions to raise guns even if it was openly discussed in the parliament. The question is that, had it been discussed as a part of the evolutionary process of the “whole” I think it would have at least provided a space to take a different direction, because the demands, as one can see, were addressing the very basic needs of citizens and institutional changes in order to set up a relative egalitarian society. But it was blindly refused which forced them to work underground and raise arms in order to make a change in the whole. As a result, they announced people’s war as the only way to overcome the existing chronic social, political and economic problem.

Manandhar (2004) mentions “the Maoist claim ‘People’s War’ was inevitable because all the attempts to carry out reforms within the old ‘semi-feudal’ system had failed. The BBC news analysis says “their anger at the plight of the rural poor - prompted them to take up arms”⁷. Gradually; the CPNM is expanding its influence and has been able to take a large area completely under its control. They have also developed strong guerrilla fighters, militia and brigade level army equipped with modern weapons and able to control a large portion of the country, around 70-90 percentage (Upreti , 2004:2). Raising taxes, forming their own government and expansion of the military as well as non military activities are taking place. The movement has already claimed more than 11000 lives and thousand have been forced to migrate. The figure illustrates the conflict development.



⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3573402.stm



The conflict in Nepal since the inception of the Maoist movement on Feb-16, 1996 has passed through three stages. In the beginning the underground rebellions were the target of both the palace and parliamentary parties where as in the second stage there was a time when they all were target of each other (a big confusion!). At present, especially, after the Royal take-over, the entire environment and politics has dramatically changed. The Maoist and parliamentary parties protesting the Royal takeover is largely in favour of a change. Interestingly, this is one of the achievements of the conflict, because the very change was refused before. Hence, at present, the situation is such that the CPNM and the parliamentary parties are anti palace though they don't accept each other's methodological approach to end the ongoing conflict.

The System Failure: A cause of conflict and migration

In fact, the historical process shows that there were many hidden and neglected aspects that fostered the presently ongoing conflict in Nepal. Seddon and Hussein (2002:8) clearly and strongly argue that;

A historical perspective reveals that a failure of development and of governance created the pre-conditions – poverty, inequality, social discrimination and lack of social justice and democracy – for widespread discontent, and ultimately for the Maoist insurgency. Not only has the government been ineffective in providing for the needs of the poor, it is generally seen and experienced as corrupt, repressive and as working against, not for, the interests of ordinary people. International and national development agencies have also failed to strengthen the capacity and commitment of state structures or to change practices at local level to any marked degree.

As has been argued by Deraniyagala(2005), the economic aspect has played an important role for the growth and sustenance of the conflict in Nepal. There are social and political reasons as well. The growing frustration of the people in the remote areas, joblessness, insecurity, and social discrimination, feudal structure that dominated the socially and economically poor has fueled the conflict. The 235 year long social and economic structure, the governing system of promoting and providing

protection to the elite, power centered system, discriminatory social practices are some of the main causes behind the existing armed conflict (Upreti, 2004). The Maoist looked at all these “social evils” and targeted the constitution and the palace as the sole problem of the country. They were able to attract and lure the frustrated mind which is one of the reasons of the growth of the ongoing conflict.

Intensity of the conflict and migration: weakening of development and peace.

The conflict in the Himalayan kingdom seems to be growing gradually. The failures of political parties and growing conflict created a conducive ground for the royal take over, announcement of state of emergency and thereby home-arrest of most of the political leaders in the beginning of the Royal-takeover. Restriction for the leaders to travel (though temporarily), media censorship and human right abuse are the direct consequences of conflict and hijacking of democracy in the country. King’s willingness, of course, with the support of Army to be an active monarch and the Maoist’s goal to establish peoples republic though they at preset might agree for constitutional assembly (which is not acceptable to the palace, as it is seen from the very beginning), international forces not in a collective and a single views shows a symptom of intensification of the conflict.

The former parliamentary parties though protesting together do give different views at times, which is an indication of lack of strong unity among them. The resuming of the Indian military support⁸ though said non- lethal, which was suspended after the king’s take over in Feb. might intensify the ongoing conflict. The Maoist claim that it’s people’s war is in the third phase- the “strategic offensive” phase, which is supposed to mark a change in it’s military strategy from “decentralized” to “centralized action” to keep the unified command of security forces on a defensive and encircle the city from villages (FES,2004). As reaction, the Kings government has adopted a policy not to allow the mobiles phones and many other forms of telephones, especially in the regions where Maoist have strong hold. According to the present government, it is done in order to prevent the rebellion to be able to run communication and easy

⁸http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=data/subcontinent/2005/May/subcontinent_May370.xml§ion=subcontinent and <http://nepalnews.net/>

movement. Though it is said that it has weakened Maoist network, which partly may be true in terms of communication but in reality they seem to be continuing their struggle and growing. Recent clash in Kalikot in western Nepal is one of the examples where NRA has faced heavy casualties after Royal takeover⁹. Like wise, the open views from king, viz.

*“In the history of last 200 years the Kings of Nepal have always been inspired and directed by the wishes and desires of the people and we are committed abide by multi-party system and human rights and international laws,” and “there was no alternative left but to take a decisive step by us.”*¹⁰

Such a view indicates the rare possibility negotiation with political parties because though the king expresses the willingness to democracy it has been executed in practice, as the parties argue. Hence such a situation hints that there is a less possibility of negotiation for peace, therefore fosters conflict further. “One family one militia” strategy adopted by the Maoist is another threat for the civil society. Which has forced many families and youth to flee .Human right abuse in different periods like abduction and brutal killing are very common from both of the warring parties. There have been already 400 children killed and more than 20000 internally displaced¹¹ so far. Physical and mental tortures from both of the warring groups and at times inhumane act like ‘rape’ and sexual violence¹² have been threatening phenomena of the ongoing conflict. Because of all these reasons the internal displacement in Nepal is growing¹³. It is reported that there are there thousands of IDPs and hundreds have migrated internationally either in the form of refugee or immigrant¹⁴ . Many people have just fled of fear of arrest under TADA because,

“Many people were arrested under the 2002 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Act (TADA), which gave the security forces the power to arrest without warrant and detain suspects in police custody for

⁹ Nepalnews.com., Kantipuronline.com

¹⁰ Speech by the King Gyanendra in the Afro-Asian summit April, 22, 2005 at Indonesia’s capital, Jakarta. Source:<http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=37947>

¹¹ BBC Nepali News ,12th August 12, 2005.

¹² <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa310542005>

¹³[http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewSingleEnv/0DFA5D0E9A30CECF1256E38003C7EEE/\\$file/CSWC_Feb04_IDP_paper.pdf](http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/idpSurvey.nsf/wViewSingleEnv/0DFA5D0E9A30CECF1256E38003C7EEE/$file/CSWC_Feb04_IDP_paper.pdf)

¹⁴ The clear upto date data is not available.

up to 90 days. Scores of people are reported to have been held for weeks or even months in illegal detention in army custody without access to their families, lawyers or a doctor. In 2002, Nepal recorded the highest number of "disappearances" of any country in the world. The CPN (Maoist) are also reported to have abducted scores of people"¹⁵.

This is a clear indication of magnitude and scale of migration as a result of conflict. Since, there is no signal of peace process, it can be expected that the 'conflict victims might increase in the forth coming days and can be argued that rate of migration will go up. One can easily notice that continuously intensified conflict has laid a massive impact on the entire development infrastructure. Recently many development projects have been turned down and funds cancelled. The external agencies also, even those formally devoted to development with poverty alleviation as a primary focus and goal began to focus their attention more on the conflict and possible measures for conflict resolution (Sedan and Karim, 2002). Development agencies, whether foreign or national, have been increasingly obliged to develop their own responses to conflict (Seddon and Hussein, 2002).

The recently taken decision from the Danish Government, CIDA and Norwegian Governments withdrawal from Melamchi project can be cited as an example as backdrops of conflict. Like wise, there have been similar responses from other countries which is the direct impact of conflict and human right abuse from both the warring groups. The deterioration of economy, huge development budget diverted to defense, passive economic market and political instability are the obvious signs of economic, social and political famine in the form of "armed conflict" has immense impact on the development projects and programs thereby accelerating "forced" migration within the country and even internationally. The rate of migration has tremendously increased which has forwarded a question, is development and peace possible in this situation? which is to be answered by the state and the rebels. Because of the intense conflict, increasing migration and slow development, "peace" in the country is almost out of reach at the moment.

Conclusion:

¹⁵ <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA310922003>

The livelihood of the people is gradually deteriorating in Nepal (Seddon & Hussain, 2002, Deraniyagala, 2005). The Nepalese armed conflict is the out come of uneven process of development that gave a foundation for social and economic exclusion of large portion of population particularly in the remote and rural areas wherefrom the conflict originated. Consequently, people are forced to migrate in search of safety and security. It can be argued that “democracy” got misused or democracy has had large negative impact in later half of 1990s. By saying this, I definitely do not mean that multi party system is a failure in itself. The lack of collective political understanding among the the political parties is one of the main causes of the conflict which could not distinguish good force and bad force.

Democracy is not merely a freedom of speech and movement. It means more than that. Sen (2000) opines that democracy means freedom not only of politics but also of economy which enables people to have access to the resources they are in need of. This was what clearly lacking in the context of Nepal. Throughout the entire period of 15 years we can see that the political leaders did not realize that “democracy is a combination of rights and freedom on the one hand and duty and responsibility on the other”. I am in line with (Upreti, 2002), in the present context of Nepal that conflict is an inevitable process in society that can be used as a constructive and non-coercive means for social transformation and agrarian change.

Finally, I would say, the present problem is a part of Nepali society experienced during the process of evolution and social transformation. The genesis of the conflict has a clear political, social, cultural and economic base. The conflict has forced people for migration and flees and has an immense impact in development and peace building, yet is a part of social transformation and may be able to be a “good force” in the context of Nepal. On this ground, it is important that the conflict should be treated a part of the totality providing a suitable possibility of inclusion for interaction. Suppression of such movement and continuation of the undemocratic, autocratic and military system (thinking) means allowing another form of movement as a part of transformation that might be more intense and complicated.

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