



Say Peace First

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Kingdom to Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means

The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly (CA) overwhelmingly voted in favor of republicanism by 560 to 4 members. The meeting finally ended at 23.25 hrs on May 28, 2008 ousting the 449 year old Shah Dynasty (initiated by Drabya Shah¹ in 1559). Before voting, Girija Prasad Koirala, Acting Head of State and Prime Minister of the Government of Nepal (GON) tabled a six-point proposal. The proposal says, "Nepal shall turn into an independent, indivisible, secular, inclusive, and federal democratic republic with sovereignty and state authority vested in the people." The meeting abolished all rights and privileges of the king and his (royal) family members and put them in the same category as common Nepali citizens. The meeting accepted the proposal to direct the GON to drive out ex-king Gyanendra and his personal secretariat from Narayanhiti Royal Palace within 15-days and take care of the safety of national properties remaining inside. The same meeting decided to develop the royal palace into a historical museum. The meeting declared, "Nepal shall mark Jestha 15, 2065 (May 28, 2008) Republic Day every year as per the Nepali calendar. It extended tribute to the martyrs whose sacrifice contributed to bring about republic in Nepal. The proposal scrapped all deviance in constitutional provisions, laws, administrative rules and regulations effective from the same day. The CA also passed a separate bill to make new arrangements for a president as Head of State by amending the Interim Constitution (IC). The President works as the patron of the IC and controls the Nepal Army, but shall mobilize the army and impose emergency upon recommendation of the cabinet. The position of president shall remain until the CA promulgates the New Constitution.

Monarchies around the World

There are 27 monarchies, mostly constitutional with a few in the absolute form, still existing in the world somewhere. There are 10 in Europe, six in Asia, six in the Middle East, two in Oceania and three in Africa. The monarchial states belonging to Europe are Belgium, Denmark, the Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Principality of Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Great Britain. The Asian monarchial states are Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand. The monarchial states in the Middle East include Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Samoa and Tonga lie in Oceania. Similarly, Lesotho, Morocco and Swaziland are in Africa. Some notable examples in the world of how monarchial states have turned into republics are given below:

Russia: The people of Russia had respected Tsar Nicolas II (July 17, 1868-July 17, 1918) as national father. His official title was Emperor and Autocrat of all Russia, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland. When he had hundreds of laborers (men women and children who had gone there to submit request letter to him) indiscriminately shot dead on Sunday, January 22, 1905 the incident became a turning point in the Russian republican struggle. The 300 year old, Romanov Dynasty finally ended when he was forced to abdicate the throne and imprisoned on March 15, 1917. The Bolsheviks of the Russian Revolution executed him and his family members on July 16-17, 1918 inside the jail.

France: Louis XVI (August 23, 1754-January 21, 1793) ruled 18 years as King of France (1774-1792). While the entire country was suffering from famine and hunger, he had been spending luxuriously in the palace and turning a deaf ear on his subjects. First, leaders of the French Revolution transformed the King's executive authority to elected representatives in July 1789. On October 5, angry masses of women unofficially arrested him, though he wasn't officially arrested until August 13, 1792 when he was accused of 'high treason and crime' against the State. On September 21, the National Convention declared France a Republic. On January 15, 1793, out of the 721 Convention deputies, 40 percent voted against the death penalty, but suggested imprisonment or exile, whereas 10 percent voted for the death penalty. However, a slight majority of 50 percent (361deputies) voted for immediate execution and he was executed by Guillotine on January 21, 1793.

¹ Drabya Shah, the prince of adjoining of Lamjung, had squeezed Gorkha winning local tribe chiefs in 1559 and had been succeeded by his offspring until 1741 (183 years). Prithvi Narayan Shah ascended at the throne of Gorkha at the age of 20 in 1742. He, 25 years later, conquered Kritipur first, and then Patan and Bhadgaon in Kathmandu Valley in 1768. Some historians think that the Shah Dynasty initiated its rule when Prithvi conquered Kathmandu, or unified Nepal 239 years, eight months and three days ago.

Italy: As King Vittorio Emanuel III became the puppet of the fascist, Mussolini (who was killed in World War II after Italy was defeated), he was forced to abdicate in 1946 after the arson in Rome. His son, Umberto II, became Head of State. However, the confrontation continued. Umberto II agreed to a referendum on the fate of monarchy in his brief rule of 40 days. The monarchy was formally abolished as the majority of 54 percent voted in favor of a republican setup and 46 percent voted against the motion. Accepting the results with magnanimity, he absconded to Portugal with his crown.

Mongolia: Mongolia became a puppet of Russian between 1911 to 1919 after it declared independence from the Qing dynasty. Following the declaration, Bogd Khan (1869-1924) was enthroned as the eighth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (reincarnation of Buddha). After the Russian withdrawal of force, the Chinese initiated their rule a second time from 1919. The Chinese troops put Bogd Khan in house arrest, but he was reinstated by Roman von's White Army troops chasing away the Chinese troops from Urga. In 1921, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party revolted against the state, but established a Mongolian People's Republic on November 25, 1924 only after Bogd's death.

Egypt: When the army revolted against the King Faruq I and he was forced to abdicate, he fled to exile in Italy and his 7-month old son Ahmad Fuad II (January 16, 1952-June 18, 1953) ascended to the throne. As the revolution continued, the 5000 year old monarchy formally ended before Fuad II was formally crowned. He joined with his family in Italy. King Faruq I died in 1965, but his body was cremated in Egypt after 10 years at the request of his wife.

China: Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), a revolutionary republican leader, led the Chinese Xinhai revolution on October 10, 1911 and established the Republic of China February 12, 1912. Sun became the first president on January 10, 1912 forcing the abdication of the last Emperor of the Manchu/Qing Dynasty. Sun was forced to resign by the commander-in-chief Yuan Shikai who announced himself president for life in November. After Shikai's death in June 1916, Sun became the president again, until he died in March 1925 and Chiang Kai-shek emerged as the new leader. The political turmoil eventually ended with the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, ejecting Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan.

Iran: Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was declared King of Kings 'shahansha' and ruled from September 16, 1941 until February 11, 1979. Due to his policy of westernization and recognition of Israel, religious clashes started. He imprisoned 2,200 political prisoners in 1978, but the political unrest had transformed into a revolution whereby he was forced to abdicate and flee to Egypt. Thus, the revolution abolished the 2500 year old Shah Dynasty and formed an Islamic republic.

Laos: Pathet Lao, Communist leader of the Vietnamese-backed Lao Patriotic Front, overthrew King Savang Vatthana and established the People's Democratic Republic of Lao in December, 1975. Thus, the 600 hundred year old monarchy was formally abolished. The Prince, Souphannavong, became the president and Savang Vatthana was appointed as his adviser.

India: The Mughal Dynasty ruled over most of the Indian subcontinent from the 1600's onwards with the leadership holding the title of Badshah (emperor). British East India Company captured the revolutionary last Mughal Bahadur Shah II and he was exiled to Myanmar in 1858. Queen Victoria, leading the British East India Company as 'Empress of India', ruled the Indian subcontinent from May 1, 1876. When Victoria died, her son Edward VII ascended the throne under the title of "Emperor of India." that title continued until India and Pakistan separated on August 15, 1947. India had been ruled by more than 650 petty kings or rulers over the country. They were facilitated by the state until the Indian Prime Minister, Indira, canceled this.

Even after establishment of republic, a few countries have reinstated monarchy. The following prominent examples could be useful for understanding events.

Britain: The civil war established Britain as a republican nation under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell (April 25, 1599 – September 3, 1658) and initiated the presidential rule (1649 to 1658) of the middle classes executing Charles I in 1649. After Cromwell's death in 1658, the monarchy was restored, placing Charles II on the throne in 1660. But, the revolutionary forces forced the king to transfer his power and authority to the parliament.

France: France briefly established a constitutional monarchy from 1789-1792 and again in 1819-1848 (Louis Philippe), but the concept of absolute monarchy (divine rights of the king) had already been decapitated.

Spain: The king Alfonso XIII of Spain was forced to leave the throne by republican forces in 1931 after removing his support from the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera. The general election, held in 1936, overwhelmingly elected Manuel Azana as president of the Popular Front. However, the fascist army officer, Francisco Franco, led a revolt against the presidential rule and captured Madrid on March 28, 1939 with the help of Italy and Nazi Germany. He then proclaimed himself Head of State. In the referendum of 1947, the Spanish people restored monarchy again, but Prince Juan Carlos, designated prince in 1969, was not declared king until November 22, 1975, after the death of Franco.

Hungary: In 1918, Hungary also abolished the King and restored him in 1920, but it could not persist. The position of Head of State remained vacant till republic was declared.

Long Waiting on a Good Wednesday

PM Girija Prasad Koirala announced the first meeting of the CA would be at BICC (Birendra International Conference Center) on Wednesday May 13, 2008 at 11:00 am. All invitees including the US Ambassador, Indian Ambassador, Chinese Ambassador, UNMIN Chief and so forth reached the location at 10:30. Almost all the CA members were in attendance one hour before the scheduled time. The journalists, diplomats and other elite citizens crowded the floor.

The meeting could not start on time, so all were informed at 11.30 hrs that the meeting had been postponed to 15.00 hrs. The diplomats lobby was empty within couples of minutes. Everyone was back again on time, but again the meeting was delayed by three-hours to 18.00 hrs. The Maoist party Supremo, Prachanda, with his close associates reached the meeting hall at 18.12

hrs. Some Nepalis remained seated in front of the live televisions coverage at home; others left to roads and lanes to celebrate. The live television broadcast commented that the meeting would start immediately after PM Koirala arrived. The mission heads also filled up the guest lobby. As all CA members occupied the meeting hall, the defeated leaders of the parties, the UML particularly, were busy delivering interviews to journalists outside the BICC. A lot of enthusiasm was on display with all the young and dynamic CA members present, the Maoists in particular. However, as the PM continued to delay, gradually the crowd spread hither and thither. Prachanda also left the hall after an hour with his close associates. Even with tight security, two socket bombs were set off in front of main gate of BICC. The explosion shocked the masses who were curiously gathering and demonstrating to pressure the parties to initiate the meeting quickly. The explosion was heard even in the meeting hall. As the staff of the Assembly started to distribute the program schedule to the CA members at 21.00 hrs, the celebrations at private houses and public offices as well as streets intensified. The meeting started at 21.17 hrs (after a 10 hour delay) as soon as PM Koirala sat down at his chair. All CA members including the Maoist party were visibly smiling. PM Koirala, the UML General Secretary and few senior leaders of the NC in particular were not visibly in good spirits. Among them, Koirala seemed the saddest one, although he said, "A day comes once in a century. Today is a day that Nepalis' long-cherished dream has come true." He delivered a 5 minute (21.25 to 21.30 hrs) speech. The voting started at 21.50 and ended at 23.10 hrs. The first CA meeting concluded, declaring the country the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. The historic meeting was chaired by the eldest member (74 years old) Kul Bahadur Gurung.

Civil society organizations and their members and cadres of sister organizations of political parties, who have awaited this day for more than six decades, have requested people to wholeheartedly celebrate the Republican Nepal for three days. It is estimated that about a million people with red flags were on the roads and small lanes in Kathmandu for celebration. Moreover, people all over the country celebrated the victory by organizing various street programs such as drama, comedy, lectures, revolutionary songs and dancing. It is estimated that more than three fourths of the red flag carriers were the Maoists activists who are the most happy about the decision, while less than one-fourth of campaigners were from the UML and other forces. Most puzzling was that no sister organizations from the Nepali Congress (NC) or flag carriers from their side made their presence known in such a historical and glorious victory. Why did this happen? First, the NC is obviously still not feeling comfortable with the CA results, as the people allocated just 15.5 percent representation for them in the first-past-the-post elections. Second, the NC is a leader-based party rather than cadre and mass based. This means they relate to people somewhat like a master, the foremost reason being that economically empowered elites have long associated with them. Third, the NC, which is recognized as a party of conformists, has had a very close working relation with the King, his family, courtiers and supporters for a long time. The announcement of republic shall drive a wedge between them. Many central leaders of the NC must feel as if they lost their patron; their back bone. Seeing such historic interest for the glorious day, all republican forces including the three major parties – the Maoists, NC and UML – decided to grant a three day National Holiday.

Why was the Monarchy ousted in Nepal?

International, regional and national (political, economic and socio-cultural) dimensions are the prime causes of abolishing monarchy in Nepal. The few prominent examples are as follow:

In the 20th century alone, 38 monarchies were abolished. They are: Portugal (1910), Korea (1910), China (1912), Russia (1917), Germany (1918), Prussia (1918), Austria (1918), Finland (1918), Lithuania (1918), Poland (1918), Turkey (1922), Iceland (1944), Hungary (1944), Yugoslavia (1945) and Vietnam (1945). Along with the intensification of democratic trends and human rights after World War II, 61 percent of the monarchies came to end. They were: Italy (1946), Bulgaria (1946), Albania (1946), Romania (1947), India (1950), Pakistan (1956), Tunisia (1957), Iraq (1958), South Africa (1961), Yemen (1962), Burundi (1966), Maldives (1968), Libya (1969), Afghanistan (1973), Greece (1974), Ethiopia (1974), Malta (1974), Laos (1975), Iran (1979), Fiji (1987) and Mauritius (1992). Nepal's kings and their offspring never recognized the global trend of abolishing monarchy or thought to transform themselves by respecting the desires, interests and expectations of the people accordingly.

The constitution making process through CA (participation of people's representatives) was the first demand put forward by the NC in Nepal in the 1950s immediately after India proclaimed a new constitution. Similarly, the mainstream communists demanded a republic in Nepal for more than six-decades, being influenced by Russia's victory and China's triumph in particular. Indeed, Nepal is a country that is sandwiched in between the Indian and Chinese republics.

Nepali people had been living as the "subjects" of the king since 449 years instead of sovereign citizens of Nepal while believing the monarch is a reincarnation of lord Bishnu (God of protection as per the Hindu religious epics). As the monarchy appeared as the master/Bishnu and used the Nepali word *timi* (diminutive form of *you*) to all Nepalis despite the democratic responsibility of "service provider to the people," politically conscious people had been looking for an opportunity to abolish it and its courtiers at the right time.

The monarchy promoted feudalism, corruption, nepotism and favoritism rather than giving priority to socio-economic improvement.

The Maoist party initiated the People's War on February 13, 1996 to sweep away the constitutional monarchy, feudalism and imperialism on one side. On the other side, King Gyanendra started his unilateral journey according to his road map on October 4, 2002 Friday at 22.45 hrs by removing Sher Bahadur Deuba government for his 'incompetence' in not being able to hold the fourth general elections. He reinstated Deuba as PM, granting full executive authority on June 3, 2004, but ousted him again for incompetence in restoring peace and security and in holding parliamentary elections on Friday

February 1, 2005 at 22.00 hrs again. Gyanendra followed the example of recruiting octogenarian leaders set by his father, Mahendra, 43 years ago in constituting a Council of Minister under his chairmanship whom reestablished absolute monarchical rule. The King's undemocratic move finally provided fertile ground for a 12-point understanding between two extreme forces: the constitutional Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the unconstitutional Maoist Party on November 22, 2005. The same force finally ousted Gyanendra and established republic in Nepal 30 months after the agreement.

In the evening on June 1, 2001 a very tragic incident occurred at a routine weekly dinner party of the royal clan in the palace where ex-King Birendra, his Queen, three of his children, his brother, three sisters, a brother-in-law and a son-in-law were shot dead. It was reported that Prince Dipendra shot them before committing suicide himself. However, very few Nepalis accept that. People in general both domestically and abroad have the following principal observations, analyses and suspicions:

The Royal massacre was a grand design under the leadership of ex-king Gyanendra and acted out by his son, Paras, who hired international gangsters. It has been reported that a half-dozen gangsters masked themselves to match Dipendra.

Dipendra was in a normal demeanor when he returned from a sports program to the dinner party. The conspiracy theory is that Paras gave him black narcotics, as he carried him to his bed. If Paras supported him it means Dipendra was not in a position to walk alone. How could such a semi-conscious man pick up an automatic rifle and shoot all royal family members excluding only those of Gyanendra. According to criminology, the immediate beneficiary may have direct or indirect involvement in such an incident. In addition, it seems unlikely that Dipendra committed suicide himself as bullets had passed through his spine.

While Nirajan, youngest brother of Dipendra, was climbing a tree, he was shot dead, but Paras was left alive, as he supposedly begged a pardon from Dipendra. This strains the imagination. The dead body of Dipendra was burnt at mid-night during an imposed curfew, creating another controversy. There is a tradition of having international Heads of the State or other representatives present for the last rituals and rites, but none of those procedures were followed in this case. Gyanendra neither showed any interest in inviting international experts to investigate the massacre nor dared to allow visit of Nepali dignitaries to the premises at which the incident occurred.

Immediately after the incident Gyanendra announced himself a regent of the already murdered Prince Dipendra to open a path to the Monarchy. When PM Koirala, who was also working as the Defense and Royal Palace minister, went to the Army Hospital, the Nepal Army compelled him to wait for an hour. Nepal Television aired that the army pushed him to attend to something else when he tried to observe the bodies of the recently deceased King, Queen and other family members closely.

Many ADC (Aide-de-camp) "personal security forces" of the late king, queen and his family members left the country immediately after the carnage. Interestingly, most of them had already procured a visa to Europe before the slaughter.

The wife of Dhirendra, youngest brother of Birendra, who had witnessed the massacre, was killed in a helicopter incident in Rara Tal, prompting suspicions of being silenced.

Paras was extremely skittish during cremation of late king, queen and family members. Paras stayed close to his father, Gyanendra, the whole time fearing for personal security as was repeatedly brought to attention by the live television broadcast.

Due to the above allegations and perceptions, faith in the monarchy has gradually been fading. Certainly, even people who had high faith in the monarchy from the belief it is the reincarnation of lord Bishnu have lost it. It has been a widely held discussion that if the monarchy had any kind of religious power, lord Bishnu could have protected the late king and his family members. If there was not any involvement of Gyanendra at the massacre, he has a bright future as a sovereign citizen, and if he was involved, he could face many difficulties in the days to come.

Even after the recent announcement of republic in Nepal, Gyanendra should be thankful that now he is recorded in history as last King of Nepal. Although, if the UML General Secretary, Madhav Nepal, and PM Koirala had respected the people's wishes and demands, leading the mass demonstrations on the street against Gyanendra and his son Paras instead of saluting the now ex-king Gyanendra putting the gold coin on his feet at his coronation, Nepal would already have been declared a republic in 2001. If that had happened, the country would have neither suffered from 87 percent of the extra-judicial killings in the total of 13,000 killings nor the billions worth of infrastructure damage from the Maoist party led People's War. In addition, Gyanendra should be grateful as he was able to be King of Nepal without inherent rights and traditional as well as constitutional provisions. The nationalist Gyanendra proclaimed himself a king of Nepal with the strong backing of the then Royal Nepal Army, which further strengthens the Nepal monarch's association with the barrel of gun as the most powerful state-machinery against the people's interests, demands and voices. This explains why the Nepal Police have been discriminating for a long time in terms of qualification in the process of recruitment, promotion, age of retirement and responsibilities. Gyanendra should be overjoyed that he received an opportunity to stay in the Nagarjun palace for the time being as a dignified sovereign citizen in Nepal, unlike the fate of many past monarchs in the world. Nepalis are heartily pleased with the announcement of republic (as it was the people's victory), as the people have become sovereign citizens instead of subjects of the monarch. Thus, State power has been transferred to the people peacefully. Now the world shall give its attention, as Nepal has displayed its unique "tact and fact" model of conflict transformation by peaceful means.

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