

THE ISSUES OF NATION-BUILDING IN NEPAL

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Abstract

This article presents the issues of nation-building in Nepal. It reflects the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual society and the conflicts based on their diversity, which are the major issues of nation-building. The data, statistical facts and historical evidences are collected from viable and authentic resources of the study. The qualitative method of study is the primary focus of the research. In order to reach conclusions, nation-building also applies customs, religions, and culture. Descriptive and analytical methods have been employed in this process. Nepal has been struggling with inequality which is the great barrier in nation-building. This article tries to address the major areas of inequalities in Nepal and the reasons behind it. It also focus on the proper management of these conflicts or inequalities, so that the diverse groups of people should be brought in the main stream of nation building which is the major need of various nations at present.

Keywords: Federalism, identity, nation –building, recognition, transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Nation building is the long run process to unite the diversified groups of people to promote their feeling as one. Nepal is in the process of practicing federalism; restructuring the state, the conflict based on region, recognition, ethnicity, language, etc is the burning issue in contemporary Nepal. Social norms are crucial to the process of creating states. Some significant information about the establishment of the state of Nepal and the composition of its society can be recalled if the time of its formation is regarded as the period of its unification. The position of Nepali society and the structure of the state are not of the same kind with regard to the nation-state's formation. The state structure has not developed in the recognition of the nation-state, starting with the pre-unification states of Limbuwan, Khumbuwan, Kirat, Khas, Baisi, Chaubisi, Shen, etc. and continuing through the state's restructuring phase. Because the foundation of the large and small states prior to unification was power. Power had allowed the Gurkha state to establish a unitary Nepal. The nation-state's process of state building is not widely acknowledged. Similarly, that recognition was not accepted even after the state was restructured.

The rejection of the fundamental tenets of the federal-state formation on the basis of plurality and equality of the population as well as language and religion, represents a form of nation-state recognition creates a major threat to the peace and the integrity of the country (Ghimire et al. 2021).

In multi-structured society, the diverse groups create the conflict, socio-economic tensions, autonomy movements or struggle for separations. Conflicts arise due to the differences of people, their thoughts, ideologies, needs, desires, opinions, etc. It has originated from the prehistoric age and gradually developed with the evolution of mankind. It is a long prolonging factor of violence in the society and the country which brings negative effects. These conflicting issues are closely related to the social, economic, political and cultural condition of

the country. Caste, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, hunger, poverty, etc are the precursors of the conflict. Conflict is one of the main causes of violence, fight, battle, civil war, insurgence and even terrorism. When there is disagreement over the opposing viewpoints and mutually incompatible objectives or ideals that are pursued by several closely related groups or parties, conflict results. People naturally disagree on certain issues because they have different ideas, beliefs, and philosophies. Every conflict in human history brings about change in society, whether that change is for the better or worse (Pyakurel and Adhikari. 2013).

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious country. There are 142 caste/ethnic groups listed in the census of 2021 in which 125 of these were the same as in the census of 2011, and 17 new caste/ethnic groups were discovered and added in the census of 2021 (NPHC National Report 2021, p. 31) as the 2011 census recorded 125 caste and ethnic groups, 123 languages and 10 religious groups. (CBS Census Report; 2011). In terms of ethnic groups, there is no clear majority but numerous minorities are present and with a majority of Hindus, about 81% of the population. Nepal is struggling with the issue of restructuring and reintegrating. The previous attempts of democratization resulted in an elite-led process continuing exclusion and serving the purpose of affirming the position of the elite rather than increasing popular participation which was another reason of disagreement. If it is not addressed in time, the physical destruction and mental tension will be common for the entire population which is a hurdle to nation building and blocks development.

The focus of this research article is on exploring the main challenges that impact the process of nation-building in Nepal, a country grappling with significant social and political inequalities. It is essential for the nation's reconstruction to effectively tackle these inequalities in order to provide every citizen, regardless of their differences, with a genuine and equal sense of identity.

OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of this study are:

- To identify the primary issues and the underlying causes of conflict and obstacles to nation-building.
- To analyse the ways of ensuring inclusion of the entire population in the process of nation-building.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Nation-building is constructing or structuring a nation identity using the power of the state. Nation-building aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. According to Harris Mylonas nation-building involves aligning the boundaries of the modern state with those of the national community. The ultimate goal is to accomplish national integration and legitimate authority in modern national states is connected to popular rule, to majorities. Nation-building is the process through which these majorities are constructed. Nation-building is constructing or structuring a national identity and equality for all using power of the state people which aims to unify the feelings of the people within the state so that the state remains politically integrated with diverse group of people.

The integration of all diverse groups of people in Nepal is crucial for addressing identity issues and preserving national unity. This article focuses on the core value of nation-building

in Nepal and aims to draw the attention of the authorities to address inequalities and foster a sense of nation-building among the Nepalese people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nation-building, which aims to unite the feelings of the people within the state so that the state remains politically integrated with diverse groups of people, is the process of creating or structuring a national identity and equality for all using the power of the state people. The process of nation-building entails lining up the borders of the national community and the contemporary state. The ultimate objective is to achieve national integration, and in contemporary national states, legitimate authority is linked to popular rule and majorities (Mylonas. 2020). Language, culture, and tradition serve as the primary pillars of nation-building, according to Mahajan (1988), similar nations that annexed a particular natural region, sovereign states have progressively come into being.

Conflict arises when there is disagreement over the conflicting perspectives and mutually exclusive goals or ideals that are pursued by multiple closely related parties or groups. People's differing ideas, beliefs, and philosophies cause them to naturally disagree on some issues. These issues are intimately linked to the nation's social, political, economic, and cultural circumstances. Precursors to conflict include caste, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, poverty, and hunger. Throughout human history, every conflict has altered society, whether for the better or worse (Pyakurel and Adhikari. 2013).

The constitution was written in 2072 was an effort to rebuild Nepal around nation-building. While the foundation for nation-building and the formation of solidarity are the same, the republic's new structure has not been in accordance with them since Nepal's unification period. Social values and politics have been very important in this. Growing Hindu influence was observed in Nepal, a country built on the basis of power, while foreign and political influence had contributed to the state's restructuring. Nonetheless, the fundamental ideas behind state-building have been muddled. However, the long-standing Hindu influence has made the nation cohesive as a whole. These elements have made Nepal's state restructuring more intricate (Ghimire et al. 2021).

A state-nation is characterized by an “inclusive democracy” and a kind of ethnic federalism, which Hachhethu names “identity-based federalism” (p. 36). The rebuilding of the Nepalese state has been “subverted and manipulated” by the overwhelming bunch (the Khas Arya) to ensure and solidify the status quo, in specific, by their inconvenience of a kind of regional federalism (p. 6). The politics behind the parties' shifting positions on contentious issues related to the constitution at the time of its making; understand better the conflicting aspirations from and competing perceptions of restructuring the Nepali state among the people from different ethnic backgrounds; and capture the role played by intermediate agencies at a critical time of its constitution-making between 2006 to 2015 (Hachhethu. 2023).

Using state power to create or organize a national identity is known as nation-building. The goal of nation-building is to bring people together within the state to ensure its long-term political viability and stability. Since its founding, the Nepali Army has done a remarkable job of forming and strengthening the nation. Its mission has always been to serve the people and the country. The Nepali Army is tasked with defending the country's freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, independence, and dignity, as stated in article 267 of the constitution (Paudel. 2022).

The history of nation building is not controlled by the right logical methods for maintaining its distinct national identity, the small Himalayan nation continues to face difficulties in the future.

It is necessary to examine a few pivotal moments or areas in Nepali history where the status of nation-building was in dispute and eventually took shape throughout the country's history. These enclaves credited the Nepali Army with helping to build the country. National and international state actors or internal and external non state actors shaped nation building in Nepal (Bhat. 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on primary and secondary sources of information. The primary source is based on the personal experience of the society and the secondary sources are drawn from various reports, books and magazines. The research is mostly focused on qualitative method of study. Nation-building also involves the application of traditions, religions, and culture, and descriptive and analytical methods have been used to draw conclusions. The facts and data gathered for this study came from secondary sources exclusively, which is the library. Proper internet websites and related external links are used to explore authentic theories and concepts.

FINDINGS

Nepal is a multiethnic nation as well. One of the world's most ethnically diverse nations is Nepal. The issue of ethnicity arises in any nation where there is ethnic diversity if there are castes, classes, or communities that are ruled by other classes or communities. Since democracy was restored in Nepal, this issue has gained political traction. In Nepal, the topic of ethnicity has become more significant when it comes to state restructuring and the drafting of constitutions. In Nepal, ethnicity has become a problem because the government is run on a single cultural tradition inside a heterogeneous cultural framework. In Nepal, the caste system is based on Hindu philosophy. Hinduism and caste are hierarchical systems in Nepal. Caste and ethnicity are terms that have caused confusion in Nepal as well. A social structure called caste is established by birth. A community that shares a language, culture, identity, economic status, and social life is said to be ethnic.

In Nepal, the feeling of people is fragmented due to the unequal practices prevailing in the Nepalese society because if which nation building is a very important issue in the federalization process of Nepal. These discriminative patterns and unequal behaviors have brought conflicts in the society. Maoist insurgency rose due to such practices of the society. The differences of people are the prolonging factors of inequality which may raise the conflict or violence. If it is not addressed in time, it may create numerous problems which will threaten the sovereignty and the integrity of the nation. The main focus of nation-building in Nepal is on introducing and explaining identity-based federalism, which is a novel kind of federalism and a unique concept. Over time, ethnic mobilization has been crucial to the advancement of a comprehensive majority rule government.

Nation-building in ethnically diverse countries like Nepal should align with the state-nation concept rather than the nation-state concept. When converting from traditional to modern societies, some countries underwent nation-building processes. Others underwent nationalistic movements to free themselves from colonial rule, managing the issue of immigrants' assimilation into their host societies and moving from conflict to peace. Some countries rose up against the autocratic system in favor of a democratic one in order to protect themselves from scenarios in which several states failed. Nonetheless, Nepal continues to hold its distinctive position in terms of nation-building. One of the important elements of any culture that helps to create a sense of national identity and belonging is language (Bhat. 2021).

The major issues of National Building in Nepal

The process of nation building raised numerous problems which brought the questions of single identity by various groups. The restructuring of the state, power sharing, demarcation of provincial boundaries and sharing of resources has arisen conflict in the country as the population shares different castes, ethnicities, languages, religions, class, gender, unprivileged groups and backward groups. There are various bases of inequalities or discriminations which are discussed below:-

1. Caste based issues

According to the Hindu religion scriptures, the human beings are originated from the body parts of Lord Brahma but castes are divided later on. The Varnas and the Castes were created by rulers in the course of time. King Jayasthiti Malla divided Newars into 64 castes according to their occupations and King Prithivi Narayan Shah called the modern Nepal as the common garden of people from 4 varnas and 36 castes. "Various literatures have classified the relationship between caste groups of upper, middle and lower level categories. Gurung (2006) claims that Nepal's caste system is split into two categories Dalit and upper caste. According to this Brahmin, Chhetris, and Thakuries, who wear Janai are considered to belong to the upper caste. The caste groups labeled as untouchable are placed in the lower caste categories. The remaining groups which neither falls in the upper nor the lower caste categories are listed in middle caste categories." (UNESCO Report 2006; 13). These inequalities trend of caste discrimination creates conflict mostly between upper and lower caste which is one of the major hindrances in nation building. (UNESCO Report 2006; 14).

2. Ethnicity based issues

Social discriminations faced by ethnic communities in Nepal are a historically built phenomenon. The ethnic population of Nepal does not constitute a homogenous category. It is divided into a number of separate groups having their own specific cultures, customs and languages. "The problems related to discrimination of ethnic communities differ from those of caste groups in many ways. One relates to question of social identity provided by the state of culture, custom, language and the other area is concerned with the problems regarding sharing of power and socio-economic resources." (UNESCO Report 2006; 30). The principalities with their own political, economic, social and cultural system were annexed into one by Gorkha rulers, King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his descendents. Then "the strategy was developed to control resources on which the ethnic communities depended for their ethnic groups to dispose of their resources." (UNESCO Report 2006; 33). The ethnic communities started struggling for their identity and rights on resources which is another obstacle in nation building.

3. Language based issues

According to the NPHC National Report 2021, p. 31, there were 142 castes and ethnic groups recorded in the census of 2021; 125 of these were the same as in the census of 2011, and the remaining 17 were newly discovered and added though the census report of 2011 represents 123 language spoken in Nepal. The different communities have different languages for communication which is called mother tongue or native language. The mother tongue is a common mode of communication among the members of families or same community while Nepali language is spoken with the people who do not belong to their community. The present constitution states that "all the mother tongues spoken in Nepal shall be the language of the nation" and "the Nepali language written in Devanagari script shall be the official language of Nepal." (The Constitution of Nepal 2072; Part -1, Article 6 and 7.1). It should be noted that Nepali is mother tongue of only 44.6% of the population and remaining 55.4% of the population speak a language other than Nepali. The people who speak non-Nepali languages

are treated as second class citizens. This discriminatory behaviour of Nepali speaking people to the other language group of population creates dissatisfaction to the entire population which is another problem of nation building.

4. Religion based issues

Nepal was a Hindu country and other religions entered into Nepal during medieval and modern period according to Nepalese history. The history of religious inequality is in practice in Nepal from the ancient time when the Kirat rulers prohibited people from following Buddhism. In the course of time, numerous religions increased in Nepal. According to the census report of 2011, there are 10 religions practiced in Nepal among which Hindus comprise 81.34% and Buddhist comprise 9% of the total population. 81.19% of people identified as Hindu in 2021, down from 81.34% ten years earlier; the percentage of Buddhists has also decreased slightly, from 9.04% to 8.21%; populations of Muslims, Kirat, and Christians have all slightly increased since the last census.

The present constitution states “each person shall be free to profess, practice and preserve his/her religion according to his/her faith and while exercising the right, no person shall act or make others to act in a manner which is contrary to public health, decency and morality or act to disturb law and order or convert religion from one to another or disturb the religion shall be punishable by law.” (The Constitution of Nepal; Part 3; Article 26.1 and 26.3). Although the people are discriminated as per the religions in the society, the followers of major religion dominates the minorities. The minorities especially Islam, which is contrary with Hindus, feels insecure and demands special rights. The other minorities too may raise their voices which is another obstacle in nation building.

5. Gender based issues

Nepal is a country with a patriarchal society. Patriarchy as an institutionalized system of male domination is expressed in a variety of ways. It is legally supported and tied to the property ownership, access to political power, attainment of social status and decision making to the men, and women, for the most part are confined to the domestic spheres. “According to the classical Hindu law, women are mostly in oppressed position. They have stressed that woman need to be controlled as they bear many evil characteristics. In childhood, a female must be a subject to her father, in youth to her husband and when her lord is dead, to her sons.” (MANU, V, 145 cited in Kumari, 1990). Discrimination against women by way of religious principles was historically supported through provisions in the law of country. The present constitution prohibited any kind of gender discrimination but still the discrimination is practiced either towards women and third gender along with LGBTQ.

The women are controlled by males in the society by practicing the notion of purity and pollution and the third genders are controlled for the prestige of the family. Even in the death related rituals, the male child is considered the most. The third genders are the most neglected and hated people in the society and worst condition for LGBTQ. Women are struggling for their equal status in the family and society. If equal opportunities are not created for them, there will be another hindrance in the path of nation building because female population is higher in Nepal than male. The provision of 33% quota system somehow satisfy the female population.

6. Class- based issues

Nepalese society is economically divided into three classes; higher class, middle class and low class. The high class enjoys luxurious life while the low class struggles for survival. There is a vast gap between the high class and low class population. “There is a multi-layered issue involving various relationships between different sections of the society ranging from local unit to the central power structure which also indicates the economic status. Even the analysis of

social relations involved only in the economic processes demands a focused type of sample population engaged in different types of economic activities in order to access the different types of status.” (UNESCO Report 2006; 79). The disparities of land ownership, occupational status and the enrollment pattern in schools are greater according to the class difference. The participation pattern and decision making has not reached to the lower class population. Poverty indicators of janajatis, indigenous and dalits in Nepal are very high as compared to that of high caste-elite groups. This economic inequality is always the subject of struggle. We have the examples of class struggles when the lower class raised weapons against the land lords. Thus, it is also one of the hurdles in nation building.

7. The issue of underprivileged/marginalized/socially backward groups and religions
The majority of population of Nepal falls in these groups. The population of these groups mostly lives in the rural areas of each geographical region. The economic access to average household is very low. Average per capita income is much lower in rural areas than urban areas. These facts of economic inequality too raise the conflict in the society. “The dalits, indigenous and socially backward castes primarily live in the rural areas. Literacy rate of this groups are very low. The dalits of the hills and terai are the most disadvantaged among all the sections of the population.” (UNDP Report 2006; p. 56 and 87). Because of these different types of categories there are internal divisions of population within each of these social categories. The proportion of uneducated, resource deprived and powerless people spans all of the castes and ethnic communities. In the comparison of geographical feature, Himalaya is the most economically backward region, while the mid and the far western development regions are economically and socially backward regions. These groups of people are also struggling for their share in resources and economic prosperity. They too have to get equal share in resources and rights for peaceful participation in nation building.

The ways of inclusive management of these issues

The above mentioned issues are the major challenges in nation building. The major areas of conflict are socio-economic inequality and discriminations that are deep rooted in the society. These inequalities have fragmented the feelings and the thoughts of individual groups and separated them from each other. It is necessary to make the entire population feel that the unity is strength. The effective ways of nation building takes place when the feeling of all the diverse groups is integrated. There have been two different kinds of movements in Nepal between the eras of unification and republic. While one movement centered on democracy, the other was more concerned with certain castes' rights. Following the return of democracy, this problem gained some attention. There is some accommodation behind the integration of caste and culture, as the Maoist movement compared the religion and culture of the castes with the process of state-building. Several provisions were added to the constitution following the emergence of democracy. The primary document of state restructuring was the dissolution of the Maoist movement and the interim constitution drafted to bring it into mainstream politics.

This study focuses on the proper management of these inequalities, discriminations and conflicts to bring these groups to participate willingly in the process of nation building. The political stability is another very important issue of nation building, thus, the trend of unstable political environment must be removed for the flavor of unitary framework. Nation-Building in Nepal primarily deals with the presentation and elucidation of identity-based federalism, a unique concept and a novel form of federalism. Ethnic mobilization has played an imperative part within the improvement of a comprehensive majority rule government over the long term. In ethnically different nations such as Nepal, nation-building ought to be in agreement with the state-nation concept, instead of a nation-state concept. The rulers and other party leaders should think and act higher for the national benefits and not for their party or individuals which will

solve most of the problems itself. The government has to focus on providing opportunities to dalits or marginalized groups for direct share in decision making activities while making laws for the state. An integrative approach to provide human capacity building training must be launched by the parties rather than showing hatred feeling by the party cadres among each other.

Linkage between local governments to federal parliament should be strengthened for national development. Small-scale entrepreneurship trainings should be organized in rural areas to systematize and optimize income generating activities through sustainable management of available resources so as to minimize the economic and regional inequalities. Communities should be given power to control or support the stakeholder's activities related to social, cultural, economic and development areas to solve these problems at grass root levels and such communities should be awarded by state that are successful at implementing them. The strict and effective implementation of legal provision and rule of law is the strategy required for solving problems by the government which may bring positive feeling about the government. NGOs and INGOs must be channelized under the government effectively for utilizing their activities for the welfare of targeted groups or regions. Party politics should be done for the development with positive competitions and not for criticizing and creating obstacle for national development.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that Nepal is a country of diverse castes, ethnicities, languages, religions, gender, class, underprivileged, marginalized and socially backward groups. There is greater discrimination and inequalities in the society. The social opportunities are only available for certain groups of people. It is distributed differently in different sections of population which are the main problems in nation building. Any programme intended to deal with these social problems need to increase the access of the marginalized sections of population but the strategy developed will only help to enlarge the circle of elites in the society without bringing any significant change in the life of the suppressed population. Even in the sectors of policy making, the majority of core-elite population holds major posts which are not in favor of proper and effective nation building.

Several studies are done on popular participation and political inclusion in Nepal in relation to ethnicization of politics and identity movements in recent decades but due to the disagreements and misunderstandings among the parties, no issues have been tactfully handled. These are the major hindrances in nation building because the parties raised these issues merely for their popularity and gaining votes in the elections. The political stability is another very important issue of nation building, thus, the trend of unstable political environment must be removed for the flavor of unitary framework. The rulers and other party leaders should think and act higher for the national benefits and not for their party or individuals which will solve most of the problems itself.

The significance of this study lies in the facts which will help the policy makers to find out the majors to achieve the social and economic growth and welfare through including these diverse groups in the mainstream of nation building. If these unequal and excluded communities are integrated into the mainstream of social development, it would ultimately avoid possible threats of social unrest and resolve conflicts by representing them in all sectors. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a need of enlightening the policy makers to create a discrimination free society which is the backbone of the nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should design policies to treat all the population equally despite of their differences. It should not focus on party politics but should have to work for the entire nation.
- The state should form committees to find the solutions of these major problems in nation building and involve the expert of these sectors in the committee to deal with the issues.
- The government has to focus on providing opportunities to underprivileged/ marginalized groups for direct share in decision making activities while making laws for the state.
- An integrative approach to provide human capacity building training must be launched by the parties rather than showing hatred feeling by the party cadres among each other.

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