

INTRODUCTION

Since technological changes are linked with social upheaval, it must be a sign of the times that the combination of a computer breakdown and upsurge of the movement delayed the publication of this issue by several months. Finally, however, in the midst of nightly curfews, a computer was located and the second volume of the Occasional Papers has been completed.

In the previous volume, the contributors were searching for a proper direction for anthropology in Nepal. There was a question whether it was legitimate and appropriate to pursue romance in a country with such endemic problems as are found in Nepal. Since then, drastic and astounding changes have occurred in states all over the world. While old regimes have fallen and new combinations of interests have arisen, both the practical ones among us and the more romantically inclined have been forced to critically reappraise our positions.

At the time of this writing, Nepal also is clenched in the midst of its own upheaval. Despite the euphoria that comes with struggle, rumors are rampant, violence is escalating, and no one has much of an idea where things will end up. Even though many of us would like the leisure to be romantic, history has upstaged us. Contradictions which once may have been brushed aside are now thrust in our faces. Many of our colleagues, students and family members have been jailed, others have died, and yet others are underground.

Although the university has been open much of the time, there have not been any classes since the commencement of the movement. The departmental faculty met to discuss a reorganization of the anthropology and sociology program, but the changes have been postponed until next year. Those of our students who were residing in the university hostels took refuge in Kirtipur the night of the 6th of Falgun. Tipped off about this, some 300 policemen entered Kirtipur in the dead of night and searched house to house, arresting some five hundred students. After being jailed and tortured for several days, most were released. On March 20th, the police arrested a large number of faculty and students who were attending an interdisciplinary speech program sponsored by the the University Teachers Association Coordination Committee entitled, "The Situation of the Country and the Role of Intellectuals." Although most of them were released within a week, the outrageous police action ordered by

governmental officials apparently politicized many intellectuals who previously had remained scholarly and professionally aloof.

In one way or another, most of us have been dragged into the movement. Our problem is no longer a disciplinary one of what a particularly Nepali social science should consist. Sociologists, anthropologists, and other intellectuals, in addition to working out the day-to-day details of struggle and survival, now have the task of contributing to the reshaping of the state to serve the people as a whole, rather than a small group of special interests. Given the intimate interlinkages of Nepal with the rest of the world, this is a "world historical" program.

Consequently, the editor and myself feel that romance must be put aside for awhile, and that penetrating and critical analyses, accessible both to scholars and to a much wider public, are urgently needed. Much of what has passed for romance in the anthropological literature has turned out to be an apology for the perpetuation of an extremely violent and totally immoral regime in the palaces and class domination and exploitation in the countryside, things that simply cannot be condoned any longer. It has been significant that large numbers of peasants and particularly women who have been so often described as embracing traditional values and institutions turned out to play courageous and active roles in the movement. Many institutions which have been described with detached objectivity here would be called slavery elsewhere in the world. Now it is time to let the myths die hard and give a new life to our people by their empowerment. In order to prevent a potentially progressive or even revolutionary movement from being turned aside by reaction from any quarter, we feel that it is imperative that the domestic and international forces and interests at work be disclosed for what they are, even and especially if the movement seems successful.

Nevertheless, the lack of romantic pieces in this volume is not the result of any sort of weeding and winnowing on our part. It just happened that nobody submitted such articles. That the articles which are published here have not directly addressed the movement is only because all the contributions were submitted prior to its commencement. However, all the articles expose to some degree symptoms of the serious problems which contributed to the movement. I hope therefore that we will not be judged too unfavorably from the standpoint of the new perspective that the movement has given to us.

It will be the job now of the next departmental chairman and editor to oversee the publication of these critical studies in the next volume.

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