

Role and Contribution of Pokhara's Civil Society in the People's Movement of 2005/2006

Arjun Bahadur Bhandari

Associate Professor Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, T. U.
Email : bhandariarjun2@gmail.com

Abstract

The people of Nepal have made numerous sacrifices and engaged in various democratic movements and armed conflicts in order to achieve democracy in the country. These efforts have been successful, and Nepal is now a federal democratic republic. In the past, Nepal was ruled by a centralized monarchy, but this changed in 1950 with the Movement for democracy. However, the elected Nepali Congress government was not able to effectively address the people's needs, and King Mahendra's ambition led to the implementation of the autocratic Panchayat system in 1990. This system was eventually replaced with a multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy in 1990, but the people were dissatisfied with the parties' governing style and the 2001 Royal massacre and King Gyanendra's ambition led to the country being ruled directly by the King. The Maoist insurgency fought for the political rights and socio-economic uplift of the people, but it was the 2005/2006 civilian movement, led by civil society, that had the greatest impact on the country. This research studies the role and contribution of Pokhara's civil society in the 19-day movement of 2006, which aimed to bring about political change and overthrow the autocracy, and its impact on Nepal.

Key words: Autocracy, civil society, ideological group, movement & republic.

Background

In the classical period, civil society was used as a synonym for good society. Socrates defined conflict within society as dialogue and good governance. Plato called ideal and just society. Aristotle called civil society a political community (Cohen, 1994). The concept of civil society was introduced by Cicero (Davis, 1996). In 18th century, civil society is defined as a political association that prevents citizens from harming each other, controls social conflict (Powell, 2000). About the concept of civil society, Hobbes and Johnlock say that "the state should have no power to endanger the fundamental rights of man." Basic rights of the human race, freedom of life and property should be protected. The state should work within the limits of civil and natural law. Civil society is not a separate part of the state; it co-exists between the state and civil society. Nature, natural law, social contract and government formation are developing in one system. Citizens can design their own systems (Davis, 1996). Kant says "Men are lovers of peace; wars are the creation of absolute governments." This system was effective in preventing the domination of single interests and the tyranny of the majority" (Burchill, 2001). Hegel separated the political state and civil society from the field of economic relations as a

"system of necessity". It advocates individual rights and private property, and as it is a field of capitalist interests, there is a possibility of oppression and inequality within it (Hegal, 1991). The concept of society is followed by Hegel's ideas. But Dahal rejects that Hegel's state remains positive. He calls civil society a structure to fulfill the interests of the capitalist class (Dahal, 2006). According to him, the emergence of the modern state created a sphere of civil society that limited the society to compete with each other, for private interests. The state cannot be neutral and solvers. The state is the protector of the interests of the capitalist class. It ends when the working class takes over and reaches socialism.

According to the World Bank, "Civil society refers to a variety of associations. Community groups, non-governmental organizations, labor unions, indigenous groups, charities, business associations and foundations." The initial form of civil society in 1989 after the transition to neoliberalism in the Eastern Soviet Bloc, as an attempt to legitimize it, using the concept of civil society, legitimizing the development of the third sector as an alternative to the welfare state in a new way, as an ideology, since then instead of political society, using civil society, political Practice started (Pawal, 2006). The concept of civil society, which has been changing in various forms since ancient times and spreading globally in modern times, and its influence, has also affected Nepal.

The concept of civil society is very new in Nepal; political freedom was stifled due to a lack of education, knowledge, science, and awareness and a centralized autocratic governance system. Until the Rana period, the political awareness among the people was like zero. In the latter part of the Rana period, some conscious and enlightened citizens tried to use the pen against the Ranas. In 1912, Baburam Acharya drew parallels between the Ranas of Nepal and the Shogun rulers of Japan in "Nepali Shiksha Darpan" (Brajacharya, 1972). Devi Prasad Sharma opposed the Ranas through the "Gorkha Sansar" (Gautam, 1989). In 1947, with the aim of ensuring that the citizens of the democratic countries enjoyed the same civil rights, the awakened and conscious youth formed a 21-member "Civil Rights Committee" under the chairmanship of Shukraraj Shastri in Kathmandu (Joshi, 1990) but it was suppressed by the Rana. Political organizations such as Prachanda Gorkha, Praja Parishad were also suppressed by the Ranas.

In 1950, the democratic movement led by the Nepali Congress ended the absolute monarchical system. Political stability could not be maintained even after the attainment of democracy. King Mahendra dismissed the democratic government of B.P. Koirala and the parliament elected by the parliamentary elections in 1959 and banned political parties on Jan 5, 1960, and imposed the Panchayat system (Karki, 2008). The third amendment of the constitution made after the movement in 1980 banned political parties but gave male suffrage (Karki,2008). During the course of time various social and political associations/institutions were opened and these were the initial forms of civil society. These unions/organizations have been doing anti-panchayat activities internally and supporting political parties and bringing the ideas of political parties to the people and advocating democracy. The people's movement of 1990 re-established democracy in

Nepal and a new constitution was promulgated. This constitution gave the right to establish a civil society in Nepal (Constitution of Nepal, 1990). It was the first time in history to establish a civil society legally. Even after 1990, political stability could not be maintained in the country. In order to resolve the political crisis after the Maoist insurgency (people's war) since 1996, civil society has been working to create pressure on the government and the rebel forces to maintain peace through negotiations. At a time when political violence and instability were increasing, the Royal massacre on June 1, 2001 turned the country's politics into turmoil. This is a turning point in history (Pokhrel, 2012). The new King Gyanendra, on 4 October, 2002, the elected government was dissolved and all the executive powers of the state were taken away (Gorkhapatra, Oct. 5, 2002). From 2002 to 2004, the king formed and dissolved the government according to his will. In 2005, the King through a Royal Proclamation issued an Emergency Order with immediate effect in accordance with Article 115, Clause 1 of the Constitution (Gorkhapatra, Feb. 2, 2005) he ruled directly. Due to the king's actions and the national and internal situation, the Maoist rebel forces also tried to come to the peaceful side and the political parties also came closer to the Maoists due to the behavior of the king. As a result, on 22 Nov. 2005 Twelve-point agreement was reached in Delhi (Navyug, Dec. 2006). In 2005/2006 people's movement started on the basis of these twelve points.

The contribution of civil society was important in this people's movement. When the leaders of the civil society started chanting slogans of the republic on the streets, people across the country came down on the streets. The impact of this movement was also felt in Pokhara, one of the country's major cities. In Pokhara, civil society with political parties fought continuously for 19 days for a democratic republic against autocracy. The civil society of Pokhara played an important role in achieving the republic.

For political freedom and democracy Nepali people have been struggling since 1950 in an armed and peaceful manner throughout time and period. The Nepali people have made sacrifices in the movements of 1961, 1971, 1973, 1980, and 1990 against the Panchayat system. Comparing another democratic movements the people's movement of 2005/2006 was totally different from the previous movements. The movement of 1950 was fought by activists under the leadership of political parties, especially the Nepali Congress. The 1990s movement was fought by the middle class under the leadership of political parties. In the 2005/2006 movement, political parties, activists, the middle class, and common people fought together under the leadership of civil society. There was widespread participation and pressure from the common people in this movement. It was against the established narratives that the people's movement could only be possible under the leadership of political parties and their leadership. The movement of 2005/2006 was made possible only by the participation of civil society.

Many published articles only mentioned the role of political parties in the democratic movement of Nepal but the role of civil society was not addressed by the previous study. The role and contribution played by the civil society of Pokhara to make this movement successful is equally important in this context. Although some articles, writings, books,

and newspapers have been published about the contribution of the civil society of Pokhara in the people's movement of 2005/006, but they are not complete and because no one has done in-depth study and research on this area. This article intends to find the answer of following questions:-

1. How civil society played a vital role to succeed the people's movement of 2005/2006 at Pokhara?
2. What was the contribution of Pokhara civil society in the people's movement of 2005/2006 ?

Method and Materials

This article is a qualitative study on the role and activities of the Civil Society of Pokhara on people's movement of 2005/2006. It is based on descriptive and analytical methods. This article focuses on primary sources. For the purpose of primary information in-depth interview (with an open-ended questionnaire) has been taken from the respondent of civil society such as activists, human right organization, lawyer, and leaders of political parties. In addition, secondary sources such as - research articles, published newspapers, unpublished documents, and the un-published thesis has been used as reference materials in this research. In particular, an attempt has been made to present the contribution of the civil society of Pokhara in the people's movement of 2005/2006 through analysis. This generalization of the finding of this study can be applied in the greater context. Frame work for analyzing political movement and rebellion change is studied on the basis of Hegel's Dialectical and Karl Marx's Conflict Theory. Hegel's theory deals about the "thesis- antithesis and synthesis which describes the conflict between old ideas and new ideas on society and it takes society one step forward. Marx's class struggle theory describes-"classes are based on property ownership. Political organization and power are tools of class struggle and structural change, results in class struggle. "This article is framed under the guiding principle of Marx and Hegel.

Analysis

Historical Development

In the political history of Nepal, there have been various types of people's struggles for democracy in different periods and political changes have been brought about by these people's struggles. According to Oxford dictionary, democracy is "a system of governance by the people, for the people, of the people". When citizens are deprived of the opportunity to run their own government, they have the right to protest and rebel. This is a fundamental principle of democracy ((G. Poudel, personal communication, march, 12, 2022). During the course of time, people have participated in the democratic movement to get rid from autocracy. Most of the people's movement were concentrated in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal but the major cities outside Kathmandu had also played a role to establish democracy. In this course western Nepal was the hot-spot in the democratic movement of 1950, 1990 and 2005/2006(T.baral, personal communication, april, 26, 2021). Before 1950 various kind of struggle took place in western hill region of Pokhara,

Palpa Baglung, Tanahun, Gorkha, Lamjung to awaken people against the Rana regime. In Lamjung, the Brahmins under the leadership of Pdt. Toya Nath Adhikari (Kuikel, 2022). started Plowing movement. Around 27 Brahmins joined this movement against Ranas. On those days it was considered that Brahmins weren't allowed to plow. It was not a mob but symbolic representation of the Ranas (Kuikel, 2022). This plowing campaign also appeared in Gorkha, Pokhara, Tanahun. This gave strength to the people to build a rebellious consciousness against the orthodox culture. Chiranjeevi Shrestha of Palpa organized the youths who stayed in Banaras to study and established "Palpa Sahak Mandal" and launched a social awareness campaign (Pangeni, 1950). In this way, when the citizens were becoming conscious, political parties were established and organizations expanded (G. Poudel, Personal communication, Jan, 22, 2022.). In the movement of 1950, like elsewhere, the citizens of Pokhara contributed significantly to the success of the movement.

When King Mahendra ended the democracy the citizens of western region fought for democracy against the Panchayat. The people's movement of 1990 started from Pokhara itself. Laxmi Karki scandal was became a big issue which awakened mostly students against Panchayat system. The movement against Panchayat system was started from 12 Feb in Pokhara (Karki, 2002). In the movement of 1990 role of civil society was highly appreciable. But because of the dominance of political parties it was underestimated aftermath.

Although the 1990s movement was successful, political stability could not be maintained. The Maoist insurgency had started in 1996 demanding full democracy i.e. republican state. The Royal massacre of 2001 created confusion in Nepal's politics. The political parties also got into trouble when Gyanendra became the new king. The political parties already who lost their public trust were in dilemma. They have no choice except movement but the people don't trust them (G. Poudel, personal communication, July 18, 2022). On the other hand, the rebel forces also wanted to come to the mainstream of the peace process by evaluating the geopolitics. As a result, the seven political parties and the Maoists signed a 12-point agreement and on the basis of this agreement, the people's movement took place in 2005/2006 (B. lamichanne, personal communication, May, 29, 2022). This people's movement ended the monarchy and established a democratic republic.

Contributions of Civil Society

If we look at the democratic movements of Nepal we will find that the workers fought under the leadership of the party in 1950 the workers and the middle class fought under the leadership of the party in 1990 but on 2005/2006 the people did not support much when the political parties called for the people's movement (T. Baral, personal communication, April 26, 2021). After 1990 people were disgusted with the leaders of the political parties. The people were not satisfied with their commitment to democracy and the behavior of the leaders and the political parties were not able to fulfill their duties and roles according to the wishes of the people. Political parties could not win the trust of the people so the common people were confused (G. Poudel, personal communication, July

18, 2022). In such a situation, when the civil society came to the scene in Kathmandu they called the public against autocracy, heading speeches, leaflets, pamphlets, articles, dramas, singing and writings, and demonstrations, processions in the squares, streets to join the movement. Its effect spread throughout the country. In the major cities of the country, Biratnagar, Chitwan, Pokhara, Nepalganj, and Dhangadhi, the movement spread everywhere (Kandel, 2019). The common people also supported the movement of civil society.

Role of Civil Society in Pokhara

In Pokhara, the civil society urged people of all professions and classes to join the movement and carried forward the people's struggle by holding slogans, speeches, processions, plays, songs, poems, articles, compositions, leaflets, and pamphlets on the streets. The whole of Pokhara was moving. The movement of Pokhara was also important in the sense that at that time the king who took the rights of the people was in Pokhara (Samadhan National Daily, April 6, 2006). Since the king was in Pokhara, the administration suppressed the movement to show that it had zero effect. The protesters were ready to make sacrifices to challenge the king. National and international interest came into effect in Pokhara (G.Poudel, personal communication, July 18, 2022). While the fire of the movement was burning all over the country, King Gyanendra was sitting in Pokhara and participating in various programs and applauding (Sazhan, April 6, 2006). To make the movement fail, the administration imposed an unannounced ban on Pokhara from April 6. The political party leaders and workers were on the criminal list of the administration, so they operated underground, while the leaders of the civil society were the ones who heated the streets and advanced the people's struggle (T. Baral, personal communication, April 26, 2021). Citizens played a greater role in this mass movement than political parties and activists. While the King was in Pokhara, the citizens processed a huge procession at Mahendrapool on April 8. Bhimsen Dahal, a civilian, was killed and 3 others were injured in the firing by the security personnel. The first martyr of this movement was Bhimsen Dahal is from Pokhara (B.Lamichanne, personal communication, May 29, 2022). This event not only stimulated Pokhara, but its influence spread across the country through neighboring districts (Adarsh Samaj, April 10, 2006). On April, 10, when the security forces opened fire on a peaceful procession 4 people were injured (Adarsh Samaj, April, 11, 2006). On April 10, 2006, foreign tourists took out a Candle light procession in front of the place where the king was staying (Pokhara Patra, April 11, 2006). Pokhara became a place where there were conflicts and conflicts in all areas, streets and squares. The police intervened in the procession of the professors who were expelled from the Prithvi Narayan campus and arrested 57 people (Adarsh Samaj, April 12, 2006). All levels, sections, classes and communities were involved in the movement. Professors, teachers, doctors, businessmen, employees, workers, farmers, women, human rights workers, journalists, retired soldiers, component of civil society, were involved in the movement. April, 11, 2006. The police suppressed the women's procession and opened fire and 2 women were injured (Jan Andolan-2, special issue, September 17, 2006). The forms of

the movement were different in Pokhara such as tying a black belt, walking upside down, shaking a plate, carrying a plow yoke, street drama, and street poetry.

On April 14, 2006, the king said that the way of dialogue has been opened to activate the multi-party democratic system (Kantipur, April 15, 2006). After the movement became serious, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "The King of Nepal must take bold steps to stop the bloodshed and eliminate the current situation (Kantipur, April 16, 2006). Similarly, Indian Congress Party leader Dr. Karan Singh commented that the situation in Nepal is out of control (Kantipur, April 19, 2006)."

Major Incidents at Pokhara

On April 18 more than 80 people were injured, and when all the injured were taken to Fewacity Hospital, the scene was horrible. In 19 April - the Civil Society Network for Peace published a statement and expressed its regret to the government for making the common people a battlefield for terrorizing the peaceful and unarmed protests of the citizens. (Jana Andolan-2, Special issue, September 17, 2006) Seeing the repression and struggle in Pokhara, a British woman, Caron Rawson, was arrested and kept in police custody. (Solution, National Daily 21 April, 2006) | The movement in Nepal became more violent. The state, the government was not in a position to endure, on the other hand, when the external pressure was falling on King Gyanendra.

Result of the Civil movement

On April 21, 2006, King Gyanendra made a royal declaration in the name of the nation and since the power and resources of the state are in the people, the people's depository (NASO) was returned to the people and they were asked to maintain peace. (Gorkhapatra, 21 April, 2006). It was clear that the king was not satisfied with this announcement but called the leaders for negotiation, but the citizens of Pokhara warned them not to enter into an agreement without the announcement of the election of the Constituent Assembly. The Nepali citizens, who have been cheated by the rulers many times, seemed more upset this time. The civil society created pressure in Pokhara with the slogan "Leader Durbar Pasoula, Fasoula again" (Pokhara Patra, 23 April, 2006). The political parties also announced that they will continue the movement until the goal is achieved.

The rebel Maoist called the announcement of April 21 as a 'conspiratorial announcement' and appealed to political parties and civil society to unite under one slogan to institutionalize a democratic republic through the Constituent Assembly (Rajdhani, 23 April, 2006). India, America, and Britain welcomed the king's royal announcement. Despite this, the people of Nepal went forward against the royal announcement (Kantipur, 23 April, 2006). On 24 April, 2006, which was the 19th day of the movement, i.e. the last day, King Gyanendra announced through the royal proclamation, that "We have re-established the House of Representatives to resolve the ongoing violent conflicts in the country and accept the road map of the alliance of the seven protesting 2006".

A reckless, arrogant, and stubborn king was forced to back down from his actions. King Gyanendra did not learn from history, how many innocent people had to be

sacrificed when his father Mahendra implemented the panchayat system, but the panchayat did not survive, he did not understand that the Nepali people are aware and aware, no one will tolerate injustice. Gyanendra's inability to analyze analysis of the 21st century abolished monarchy. As his brother Birendra was able to understand the situation which resulted a constitutional monarchy after 1990 but the arrogant King who fail to review the existing national and international situation contributed to establish republican in the country (B.Lamichhane, personal communication, May 29, 2022).

Conclusion

Since Nepal's unification, the elite class has suppressed the rights of citizens in favor of their own interests. The Nepali people have been fighting against feudalism since 1950, when they became aware of their rights. This struggle came to an end with the establishment of a republican government in 2005/2006. The Maoists, who had previously supported armed conflict, participated in a peaceful transition and joined the governing coalition. Previous democratic movements in Nepal were led by political organizations, such as the Nepali Congress, and carried out by a small group of activists. The 2005/2006 movement, on the other hand, was led by civil society and carried out by the general underprivileged classes, rather than the middle class and political parties. Political parties were seen as untrustworthy, living a lavish lifestyle while ignoring the needs of the general population. King Gyanendra, on the other hand, was unaware of the political consciousness of the people and ruled autocratically with military backing. The civil society movement in Pokhara, the largest city in Nepal, was particularly resistant to autocratic control and spread to the rural and common people. All sectors and classes of civil society came together for the first time in history to establish a democratic republic and overthrow the autocratic monarchy. The popular movement that began in 1950 was finally successful in achieving its goal in 2005/2006.

References

- Ardash Samaj National Daily, (April 10, 2006)
- Bajracharya, D. V. (1972). *Baburam Acharya and his works*. Kathmandu Nepal and Asia Research Center.
- Cohen, J. (1994). *Civil society and political theory*. MIT Press.
- Dahal, D. (2006). Civil society and peacebuilding. A report submitted to the UNDP Kathmandu.
- Davis, M. (1996). *The political of philosophy: A contemporary on Aristotle's politics*. Rowman and little field.
- Gautam, R. (1989). *Role of Pragya Parishad in Democratic Movement of Nepal*. Vudipuram, prakasan.
- Gautam, R. (1990). *Constitution of Nepal -1990*. Government Parliament Secretariat of His Majesty the King.
- Gorkhapatra, (February 20, 2004).
- Gorkhapatra, (April 25, 2006) Jan Andolan Special (September 17, 2006)
- Hegel, G. F. W (1991). *Element of the philosophy of right*. In A. W. Wood (Ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Nepal Human right Forum, on 2078/11/19.

Joshi, R. H. (1990). *Nepal's November Revolution*. A new era January 2007.

Kantipur, (April, 15, 2006)

Karki, G. B. (2002), *The Role of Intellectuals in Nepal's PeoplMovement2004*

Un-Published Ph.D. dissertation to the Din office Humanities and Social Science. T. U..

Karki, G. B. (2008). *Democratic movement in Nepal*. Nirmal Karki & Kiran Karki.

Kuikel, N. R. (2022) *Annapurnapost daily*, July 29, 2022, p.2).

National Daily, (April 6, 2006).

Pageni, V. (1950). *Democratic movement in western Nepal 2006*. Kapilvastu Shobhadevi Bholanath Trust.

Pawal. S. (2006). *Global non-governmental administrative system*. Warsaw.

Pokhara Patra National Daily, (April 11, 2006,)

Pokharel, R. K (2011). *Narayanhiti Palace and the demise of the patriot, notes*. Oriental Publications.

Powell. F. (2000). *The politics of civil society*. Policy Press.

Rajdhani, (April 2, 2006).

Samdhan, National Daily, (April 21, 2006).