

Political instability: A major challenge for nation building in the context of Nepal

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the difficulties associated with nation-building in Nepal, illuminating the country's diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic landscape. Conflicts can arise from differences in identity and perspective, and this diversity frequently acts as a fertile ground for them. These disputes can take many different forms, from tensions within the socioeconomic class to movements calling for independence or even division between various racial or cultural groups. These disputes have their roots in antiquity and are intricately linked to the development of human societies. In Nepal, these tensions are made worse by large differences in income, opportunities, and resource availability, which pose serious obstacles to the country's development and attempts to foster unity. The idea that effectively managing these conflicts and inequalities is essential to Nepal's nation-building efforts is central to the article's narrative. The goal is to integrate diverse communities into nation-building efforts and ensure their meaningful involvement in determining the course of the nation by addressing the root causes of these disparities and promoting inclusive governance and dialogue. While not exclusive to Nepal, this focus on diversity and conflict resolution is a reflection of the difficulties encountered by many countries attempting to manage diversity in the modern world.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, Conflict, Governance, Instability, Recognition

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INTRODUCTION

Building a nation is a slow process that aims to unite disparate groups and create a sense of national identity. Nepal, which is presently implementing federalism, has a lot of obstacles to overcome, especially when it comes to conflicts originating from linguistic, ethnic, regional, and cultural differences. According to Bhattarai (2019), these conflicts,

which are closely related to the country's social, economic, political, and cultural landscape, constitute a serious threat to its peace and integrity. Tensions within Nepali society are exacerbated by factors that act as catalysts for these conflicts, including caste, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, poverty, and hunger. Conflict, which is defined as conflicting beliefs and objectives between groups or parties in close proximity, frequently results in fighting, civil unrest, insurgencies, and, in the worst situations, acts of terrorism. Fundamentally, conflict is a natural byproduct of human interaction and always arises from different viewpoints and objectives. But the results can differ, changing society in ways that are both beneficial and detrimental (Pyakurel and Adhikari, 2013). It has been maintained that bringing the nation's people together and uniting them as one cohesive unit is how the people build their own homes.

Nepal is home to numerous ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and religions, creating a rich tapestry of diversity. As per the CBS Census Report; 2011, the nation speaks 123 languages, has 125 distinct caste and ethnic groups living in it, and practices 10 different religions. Nepal is a multiethnic society with no discernible majority due to this mosaic of identities; the majority religion is Hinduism, which is practiced by about 81% of the population. Nepal still faces difficulties in reorganizing and reintegrating its society in spite of its diversity. Sharma (2018) has drawn attention to the instability of the government and shown how elites have largely been behind earlier attempts at democratization, maintaining exclusionary practices that put the interests of the elite class ahead of those of the general public. According to Gurung (2017), the population's dissatisfaction and disagreement have been exacerbated by the lack of inclusivity. These problems could lead to widespread physical devastation and psychological stress if they are not resolved, which would be extremely difficult to deal with and would hinder efforts at nation-building and overall development. Therefore, it is imperative that these issues be resolved quickly in order to ensure the welfare of all Nepali citizens, promote sustainable development, and foster social cohesion.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Nation-building is the intentional process of using governmental power to forge a shared national identity within the confines of a state. Its main objective is to promote national unity, which will guarantee the state's long-term political stability and viability. According to Harris Mylonas, nation-building is the process by which unified majorities are created, and as such, popular rule is intimately linked to the legitimacy of authority in contemporary nation-states.

Nation-building, put simply, is the process of using state intervention to create a common national identity and to advance equality for all citizens. By fostering a sense

of integration and belonging among the various population segments living inside the state borders, this process aims to protect political cohesion. In the Nepalese context, national unity is seriously threatened by identity-related problems, so it is critical to promote a sense of integration among the diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. The purpose of this article is to discuss the difficulties Nepal faces in nation-building, which is an essential component of the country's identity. Its main goal is to highlight the disparities that exist and promote policies that will help the Nepalese people develop a strong sense of national identity. The following research questions have been addressed by this study in order to close the gap:

A) What are the major areas if the inequality and the root cause of the conflict for the building of the nation?

B) How to focus the apt management of the inequality and to involve the entire population of the nation in the process of the building of the nation?

OBJECTIVES

The primary goals of this research are;

A) To identify the major areas of inequality and the root cause of conflict which is the hurdle of nation building.

B) To focus on the proper management of inequality and bring the entire population in the main stream of nation building.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The primary goal of this research paper is to identify the main obstacles impeding Nepal's nation-building efforts. The country faces extreme levels of inequality in the political and social spheres. The nation's restructuring initiatives must directly address these disparities in order to promote a strong sense of national identity. This means making sure that every citizen in the country is given a true and equal sense of identity, despite their unique differences.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this article is informed by both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are first-hand accounts and observations from within the community, whereas secondary sources are compilations of information taken from a range of books, magazines, and reports. The research emphasizes in-depth investigation and comprehension of the subject matter, primarily using qualitative methods. Accuracy and authenticity are ensured by the use of trustworthy and dependable sources in data collection. This entails consulting accepted theories and concepts from academic literature as well as obtaining relevant information from reliable websites and outside links. The 2011 CBS census report is a noteworthy example of a significant data source that contributes to the research findings by offering insightful statistical information and historical context.

FINDINGS

Social division in Nepal is a result of pervasive inequality, which is why nation-building is so important, especially during the federalization process. Inequitable treatment and discriminatory practices are ingrained in Nepalese society, which feeds unrest and conflicts. Thapa (2016) has identified the post-conflict situation and posited that the emergence of the Maoist insurgency is a direct result of these social injustices. People who are persistently different from one another act as long-lasting catalysts for inequality, frequently escalating tensions and even violence. If these concerns are not resolved quickly, a number of other issues may arise that could seriously jeopardize the integrity and sovereignty of the country. Therefore, in order to protect Nepal's stability and unity, it is essential to address these underlying societal disparities.

The major areas of inequality:

The process of nation-building in Nepal has been fraught with difficulties, not the least of which is the assertion of a single national identity among the disparate groups that make up the populace. In addition to highlighting the role of the outsider, Paudel (2015) has explained how disputes over state reorganization, power dynamics, province boundary demarcation, and resource distribution have ignited conflict nationwide. This is mainly because people in Nepal come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including castes, ethnicities, languages, religions, socioeconomic classes, genders, and marginalized and underprivileged groups.

The underlying factors that contribute to discrimination and inequality are complex and have multiple facets. Adhikari (2014) has identified past shortcomings and future

prospects, elucidating that these include unequal access to opportunities, resources, and representation, in addition to systemic biases and prejudices embedded in societal structures. Because of this, resolving these differences necessitates a thorough comprehension of the intricate interactions between these elements as well as a determined effort to advance equality and inclusivity for every member of Nepalese society.

Caste based inequality

Hindu religious texts hold that caste divisions came about later in human evolution, and that humans originated from various body parts of Lord Brahma. Rulers were crucial in the process of formalizing these divisions over time. For example, King Jayasthiti Malla divided the Newar people into 64 castes according to their professions, while King Prithivi Narayan Shah thought of modern Nepal as a place where all the four varnas and 36 castes could live together.

The hierarchical relationships between various caste groups—which are divided into upper, middle, and lower categories—have been described in a number of literary works. Karki (2013) has illustrated the implications of the country's good governance and democratization system. He goes on to say that those classified as untouchables are placed in a lower caste, while Brahmins, Chhetris, and Thakuries—those who wear the sacred thread (Janai)—are traditionally regarded as members of the upper caste. Groups categorized as middle caste are those that do not fall into either of these categories.

This deeply ingrained system of caste discrimination frequently sparks disputes and maintains inequality, especially between members of the upper and lower castes. These conflicts represent serious barriers to Nepal's nation-building efforts, underscoring the pressing necessity of resolving these ingrained social divides (UNESCO Report 2006; 14). This report has shown the disparity based on Nepal's caste system, which needs to be addressed immediately to ensure that every citizen contributes equally to the country's development.

Ethnicity based inequality

There is a long history of social discrimination against ethnic communities in Nepal. In contrast to the caste system, Nepal's ethnic population is made up of many different groups, each with its own distinct cultures, customs, and languages. According to Bista (2012), who argues from a comparative perspective on good governance, ethnic communities face different challenges than caste groups in various ways. The nature of

social identity is one important distinction. Discrimination concerns for ethnic communities frequently center on issues of language, customs, and cultural heritage. These components are essential in forming the social identity that the state provides.

However, issues with power distribution and access to socioeconomic resources are a significant source of conflict for ethnic communities. These difficulties draw attention to differences in resource distribution, economic opportunity, and political representation, all of which disproportionately impact Nepal's ethnic minorities. Promoting social justice and encouraging inclusive development in the nation require addressing these complex challenges (UNESCO Report 2006; 30). The Gorkha dynasty, which included King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors, united the previously independent principalities of Nepal under a single political, economic, social, and cultural system. The goal of this consolidation was to place all authority and resources in one place.

An attempt was made to establish control over the resources that ethnic communities depended on for their subsistence as part of this consolidation strategy. The aim was to reduce the autonomy and independent resource management of these ethnic groups by centralizing authority and exerting influence over their economic activities (UNESCO Report 2006; 33). In Nepal, ethnic communities started to claim their identity and demand their rights to resources, which created a major obstacle to the process of nation-building. The nation's cohesive development and unity are threatened by this fight for recognition and resource rights.

Language based inequality

Nepal has a linguistically diverse landscape, with 123 different languages spoken there, according to the 2011 census report. For many communities, these languages are the mother tongue or native tongue, which makes it easier for family members and other people who belong to the same cultural group to communicate. In Devanagari script, Nepali is typically used when speaking with people outside of their community.

Dahal (2011) talked about the function of political parties and emphasized how the Nepalese constitution acknowledges the value of mother tongues by designating them as the official language of the country. It also declares Nepali to be the official language of the nation. It's interesting to note that, in spite of this constitutional guarantee, only 44.6% of people identify as Nepali speakers, with the remaining 55.4% speaking languages other than Nepali.

Regretfully, people who speak languages other than Nepali frequently discriminate against them and treat them like second-class citizens. The whole populace becomes dissatisfied as a result of this discriminatory behavior, which makes nation-building in Nepal more difficult.

Religion based inequality

Hinduism was the most common religion in Nepal for most of its history, with the introduction of other religions in the medieval and modern eras. The 2011 census report, which lists ten religions as practiced, shows that Nepal has become the home of a wide variety of religions over time. With 81.3% of the population, Hindus make up the majority, followed by Buddhists with 9%. The history of religious discrimination is longstanding, as seen by events like the Buddhist ban imposed by the Kirat rulers. The current constitution upholds the right of every person to declare, practice, and maintain their religion while guaranteeing freedom of religion. This freedom is not unrestricted, though, as there are legal consequences for acts that violate morality, public health, or law and order.

Religion-based discrimination is still present in Nepalese society despite constitutional protections, and members of the major religions frequently have power over marginalized groups. Those who practice Islam, which is different from Hinduism, in particular, experience insecurity and fight for their rights. The nation-building process in Nepal may become more complicated if other minority religions make demands along these lines.

Gender based inequality

In Nepal, institutionalized male dominance is prevalent in many spheres of life, and it is a deeply ingrained patriarchy. This system primarily assigns women to household roles while giving men access to legal, political, and social privileges such as property ownership, political power, and decision-making authority.

Women have traditionally been oppressed and subjugated by laws that have their roots in classical Hindu law. Because Hindu scriptures often viewed women as having negative traits, they were often assigned subordinate roles throughout their lives, with fathers, husbands, and sons ruling over them. Discriminatory practices against women in Nepalese society have historically been justified by religious principles.

Despite the current constitution's ban on gender discrimination, prejudice still exists—whether it be against women or people who identify as third gender. According to

Upreti (2010), women who are controlled by men under the pretense of pollution and purity can be empowered by the concept of national integrity and the democratic system of policy making, while third genders are marginalized for the sake of maintaining family reputation. Even in rituals pertaining to death, male children are prioritized. The discrimination and neglect experienced by third genders exacerbates their struggles for equal status in the home and in society. With the large proportion of women in Nepal, it is imperative that equal opportunities for women and third genders be pursued. Nation-building initiatives are further hampered by the failure to address these disparities.

Class- based inequality

Three distinct classes are distinguished by economic stratification in Nepalese society: the middle class, the lower class that is marginalized, and the wealthy upper class. The lower class struggles on a daily basis to survive, while the upper class revels in opulence. There is a wide and pervasive economic divide between the wealthy and the poor.

The UNESCO Report from 2006 states that the dynamics of Nepalese society are complex, with relationships ranging from local communities to the central power structure, and each level reflecting economic status. A targeted strategy involving varied samples participating in a range of economic activities is required to fully analyze social relations within economic processes and capture the entire social status spectrum.

Class distinctions are further accentuated by differences in access to education, employment prospects, and land ownership. Furthermore, the lower classes seldom manage to engage in meaningful decision-making processes. Significant disparities exist between affluent high-caste elite groups and marginalized groups like janajatis, indigenous peoples, and dalits when it comes to poverty indicators.

Historically, social unrest has been sparked by economic inequality; class struggles have arisen when the lower class has rebelled against oppressive landowners. Therefore, resolving economic inequality is critical to overcoming Nepal's nation-building challenges (UNESCO Report, 2006, p. 79). The UNESCO report has identified class-based inequality in Nepal and has to be addressed immediately.

Underprivileged/marginalized/socially backward groups and religions

In Nepal, most people live in rural areas spread across different geographical regions, where average household incomes are much lower than in urban areas and economic

access is restricted. The 2006 UNDP Report states that social discord is exacerbated by this economic inequality. Mostly living in rural areas, dalits, indigenous peoples, and socially disadvantaged castes experience high levels of marginalization and low literacy rates, especially among hill and Terai dalits.

The disparities that already exist between castes and ethnic communities are made worse by internal divisions within these social categories, where a large number of ignorant, resource-poor, and helpless people live. Geographically, the most economically backward region is the Himalayan region; in contrast, the development regions in the mid- and far-west lag behind in terms of both social and economic advancement. These underprivileged groups fight for fair access to resources and economic development, highlighting the necessity of just resource distribution and rights to enable their meaningful engagement in efforts to build their country.

Therefore, the problems that have been identified—such as the deep-rooted discrimination and socioeconomic inequality in Nepalese society—impede the development of a cohesive nation. Fostering a sense of unity among various groups and skillfully handling injustice, discrimination, and conflict are essential to resolving these problems. In order to enable the diverse population's willing participation in the process of nation-building, this study emphasizes the significance of incorporating their sentiments and suggests strategies for managing these obstacles (UNDP Report, 2006, pp. 56, 87). The issue of Nepal's marginalized groups has been highlighted in the report.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the great diversity of Nepal, which includes a wide range of castes, ethnicities, languages, religions, genders, and social classes in addition to disadvantaged, marginalized, and socially backward groups. In this multicultural environment, widespread prejudice and inequality endure, restricting social prospects for particular groups of people. Such discrepancies present serious obstacles to efforts aimed at nation-building.

The study is significant because it can help policymakers understand the need of addressing these problems and how to integrate diverse groups into nation-building initiatives in order to promote social and economic growth and welfare. Through the provision of representation in all sectors and the inclusion of historically marginalized

and unequal communities, policymakers can effectively manage social unrest and resolve conflicts.

To put it briefly, the results emphasize how important it is to promote equality and inclusivity for all Nepalese citizens in order to achieve long-term social progress and national cohesion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regardless of differences, the government must create policies that guarantee fair treatment for all citizens. These policies should serve the interests of the entire population and put the welfare of the country above partisanship.
- It is essential to form committees with experts from different fields to handle the main issues in nation-building. These committees ought to endeavor to resolve these problems in a practical manner.
- For the purpose of nation-building, political stability must be achieved. Thus, measures to end the current political unrest should be taken in order to promote a climate that is favorable to national unity.
- Leaders of the ruling party and the national interest must take precedence over party or personal agendas. Many of the current problems can be greatly alleviated by making this change in focus.
- To promote inclusive governance, it is imperative to give marginalized groups—like dalits—opportunities to engage in the legislative and decision-making processes.
- National cohesion requires the implementation of human capacity-building programs that promote unity among party cadres rather than discord.
- To further national development, the relationship between Village Development Committees (VDCs) and the federal parliament must be strengthened.
- In rural areas, setting up small-scale entrepreneurship training programs can help maximize revenue-generating endeavors and lessen regional and economic inequalities.
- It is possible to address issues at the grassroots level by giving communities the authority to supervise and encourage stakeholders' efforts in a variety of areas, such as social, cultural, and economic development. The state ought to acknowledge and reward community initiatives that are successful.

- To promote positive perceptions among citizens and establish trust in the government, it is imperative to strictly enforce legal provisions and uphold the rule of law.
- NGOs and INGOs can have a greater positive impact on the welfare of specific populations and areas if their efforts are efficiently directed under government supervision.
- Party politics should be defined by healthy competition meant to promote growth rather than by causing division and criticism that impedes the advancement of the country.

In Nepal, popular participation and political inclusion has been the subject of numerous studies, with a focus on the ethnicization of politics and identity movements in recent years. However, the efficient handling of these issues has been hampered by misunderstandings and disagreements among political parties. Parties frequently prioritize these issues for political gain and electoral success, which impedes nation-building efforts.

The goal of efforts to address these social issues must be to give marginalized groups more access. But current approaches run the risk of not doing much to improve the lives of the marginalized—rather than just widening the circle of elites within society. Moreover, successful nation-building initiatives are further hampered by the core elite population's predominance in positions of policymaking. Raising awareness among policymakers and advocating for the establishment of an inclusive society are imperative given these obstacles. Encouraging national unity and progress requires a high degree of inclusivity.

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