



Discussion Paper


Leadership Crisis in Nepali Politics: Specific Focus on National Parties in the Context of Declaration of the Republic



Khimlal Devkota

Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: khimlaldevkota@gmail.com

 0000-0001-6969-2744

Abstract

The article reflects upon different political movements that took place in Nepal before Nepal was declared a republic and argues that all the earlier political movements failed to declaration of republic, because of the crisis of leadership and leaders' dilemma to make decisions in the right time. The article is prepared based on the survey of literature on Nepali political transition ranging from the Rana regime, a close study of Nepali politics till the declaration of republic in 2008 mapping of literature related with leadership skills and qualities. After a comprehensive study, I have come to a conclusion that Nepali political movements have repeatedly failed due to the failure and crisis of leadership because of indecisiveness. Right decision in right time is make sense of leadership quality.

Keywords: *Leadership; crisis of leadership; people's movement; declaration of the Republic*

Introduction

Nepal has been declared a republic since 29th May, 2008. Almost 250 years of monarchy ended with a small casualty. However, it took a long period of time, and a number of chances were missed by the leaders because of their indecisiveness. Having practicing multiparty democracy with poverty, underdevelopment and monarchy living at a time was never matching. It seems unnatural only because of leadership crisis. Indeed, Nepal is in a phase of transition in which most of the recent time encountered political changes. But before justifying the claim of leadership crisis, it is necessary have conceptual understanding of leadership, the leadership types that lead to crisis and the types that can liberate from crisis.

Leadership is an art of leading an organization. Simply put, leadership is the “art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal” (Ward, 2019, para. 1). In a business setting, this can mean directing workers and colleagues with a strategy to meet the company's needs (Ward, 2019). The art is demonstrated at all times with different ways. There was the practicing of multiparty democracy for a long period of time but the attempts to remove monarchy to bring republican state failed at multiple times which is mostly because of leadership crisis. Connecting to this notion, leadership has been defined in different times and ways in different theories and practices which are rightly pointed out by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (2001). In theory, good leadership – although not an exact science –

can be achieved. In practice, however, this often does not happen. Individuals who are genuinely inspirational and can build trust, integrity and fairness with their people tend to be the exception.

There are several characteristics for leadership such as Charisma (Provides vision and a sense of mission, instils pride, gains respect and trust), inspiration (communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus efforts, expresses important purposes in simple ways), intellectual stimulation (promotes intelligence, rationality and careful problem solving) and individualized consideration (gives personal attention, treats each employee individually, coaches, and advises) (Bass, 1990, as cited in Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, 2001, p. 4). When observing the leadership skills, some important elements are: 1. Seeing things for what they are, 2. Strategy and detail, 3. Multiple option, 4. Decisiveness, 5. Collaboration, 6. Listening unpopular advices, 7. Calm courageous and positive, 8. Taking risk and facing of risk, 9. 80% rule, and 10. Preparing to admit mistake (Rowe, 2008). Such leadership skills and qualities were in crisis. Therefore, the system of multiparty democracy with monarchy prolonged for a long period of time because of leadership crisis. Admittedly, many have not been adequately trained, coached or mentored and even those managers who have taken many courses still fail to improve (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, 2001, p. 6). Dave Ulrich described the requirement of effective leadership need to shape the future, get things done, manage others, invest in others,

and demonstrate personal proficiency (Ulrich, 2011). An effective leader influences followers in a desired manner to achieve desired goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). The leader, in this process of leading, enables the follower(s) to be innovative as well as self-directed within the scope of individual-follower assignments and allows the follower(s) to learn from his/her/their own, as well as others' successes, mistakes, and failures along the process of completing the organization's objectives (Winston & Patterson, 2006, Bolman & Deal, 2008). Recent works on leadership skills and qualities include Correctional Leadership Competencies for the 21st Century (Campbell, 2006), Leadership for 21st Century Learning skills and qualities (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2013), Leadership of Post-Conflict Operations (The Stanley Foundation, 2003), How Effective Leadership can Facilitate Change in Organizations through Improvement and Innovation (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015), Lahel explore in his PhD thesis on Political Leadership: Character & Performance A Comparative Analysis of British Political Leadership, 1997-2010 (Lahel, 2011), Transformational Leadership, Organizational Commitment, and Mediating Effect of Trust (Lim & Lee, 2016), Specific on transformation in topic of Ownership, Leadership and Transformation (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003), (Morse, 1996), Transformational Leadership in Coaching titled PhD thesis (Pharion, 2014). Likewise, other studies (Sydänmaanlakka, 2003), (Turnbull, 2017), (Winston & Patterson,

2006), (United Nations Development Programme, 2010), (ORACLE, 2012), (Robinson-Dobson, 2015) focused on leadership in terms of leadership skills and qualities (Silva, 2016). The authors described the various kinds of skills and qualities. Based on the literature, I have come to conclusion that the skills and qualities of leadership are to be decisiveness, transparent, honest with the people and society and leading them to achieve the goal as mandated of the people. Based on these parameters, I intend to pick up the points of crisis of leadership in particular mission declaration of republican especially in decision making process.

To substantiate the above mentioned claims, I mainly studied literature related with leadership skills and qualities and compared with the respective party leaders and findings is leadership crisis. To find out the real situation of leadership of Nepal and problem facing by the people and society mainly based on different leadership theories and at the same time linked with critical theory with the help of literature review. In this study I conducted interviews with concerned stakeholders and available leaders. Trying to be more specific, I did content analysis on declaration of republican against monarchy from the first meeting of the constituent assembly.

Nature of Leadership Crisis: A Case of the Declaration of the Republic

One survey conducted by Edmunds, Mulford, Kendall, and Kendall (2008) on leadership tensions and dilemmas reached a

conclusion that the results from the Tasmanian Successful School Principals Project (SSPP) survey concur with the four major leadership tensions and dilemmas identified in the background literature namely: internal/external control, ethic of care/responsibility, and professional/personal as well as leadership/management imperatives (Edmunds et al., 2008). In the same line Nepali political leadership has facing tension and dilemma. Since 250 years de-jure Nepal has ruled by monarchy. However, de-facto, in between 1847 to 1951 February 19 the Rana regime ruled the country about 103 years. Sometimes monarchy became active and sometimes passive. However, de-jure monarchy had ruled the country all the time.

A strong argument in Nepal is that Nepali People are republican and democrats all the time. A country where people are Republican and democrats, ruled by monarchy is never matching. We celebrate democracy day on 19th February 1951. During the declaration of democracy, the then King Tribhuvan had committed the ruling of the country in days to come will be republic through the constitution made by people's representative (Pahilo Post, 2015). But after the royal addressing, the parties did not pay attention to declare republican as addressed and leaders focused on power struggling. Arms struggle against the establishment initiated by Nepali congress was close to complete the declaration of republican system Debate derailed either election of constituent assembly or parliament. Finally issue of constituent assembly was diluted and election of

parliament took place after eight years. The Nepal parliament convened in Kathmandu on September 22, 1950 (Dynamic Analysis of Dispute Management [DADM] Project, 2015). After long ups and downs after the restoration of democracy, the first Parliamentary elections were held from February 18 to April 3, 1959, and the NC won 74 out of 109 seats in the House of Representatives. King Mahendra deposed Prime Minister B. P. Koirala, dissolved the parliament, and declared a state-of-emergency on December 15, 1960. B. P. Koirala and other NC leaders were imprisoned. King Mahendra banned political parties on January 5, 1961 and Some 250 individuals were killed during the crisis (DADM Project, 2015). With this incident, the chances of republican missed and instead of restoring republican state, autocratic party-less Panchayat system was introduced in Nepali politics. This is only because of leadership crisis.

Problem of Concrete Analysis of Concrete Situation

The Importance of Concrete Analysis of Concrete Conditions is quite relevant in our context, mainly the referendum called by the King; however, most of the politicians got confused back then. It is because of leadership crisis. The Marxist emphasized the concrete analysis by saying that it is crucial to focus on the importance of correctly analysing the objective conditions. The Marxists have always viewed it as the foundation for their work. For example, Mao stated that "Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin have taught us that it is necessary to study conditions conscientiously and to proceed

from objective reality and not from subjective wishes; but many of our comrade's acts in direct violation of this truth" (Tse-tung, 1941, para. 3). As mentioned in Marxist perspective, the chances of the referendum could be useful to remove monarchy. It means the leadership was not able to make concrete analysis of the concrete condition. The situations were fairly in the side of republican. Most of the people were dead against the monarchy and their autocratic rule for last couple of decades. Parties were banned. Political activities were discouraged. Only the panchayat ruler enjoying the democracy and panchayat consumed the state power unilaterally. However, leaders were unaware or reluctant to commit to action causing leadership crisis.

People's movement for multiparty democracy

The golden chances of referendum have been missed by the Nepali politics and then there was no chance to wait for one decade. During the time of 1990 when movement took place, it was almost out of control. Leaders initiated the movement just for the party freedom but people were one step ahead of that. Masses of the people were ready to participate in a movement until the declaration of republic would be made. People continued to fight leadership and the state worried about the mass mass movement and ways to control them. The movement began on 18 February, 1990 and ended on 16 April, 1990 when King Birendra announced the dissolution of Rashtriya Panchayat and other Panchayat structures. An interim government was

formed and it was given the responsibility of framing a democratic constitution and holding general elections. The new constitution was promulgated in November 1990 and the general election was held in May, 1991. However people were in the mood of making the country a republican state and this was proven by their activities. People targeted against the monarchy, against the Prime Minister; they smashed vehicles and public properties and also vandalized King's monuments in different places. Forcefully leaders called off the protest without fulfilling the people's demand of republican. United people's movement front was formed jointly by communist and congress party. At the same time, another left fraction led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai was not satisfied with the dissolution of Panchayat and formation of interim government. The fraction wanted to move ahead as people's desire for republican state. The fraction alleged to the establishment of fraction to unholy alliance compromised with the monarchy for the sake of their chair and power.²

1990s constitution and constitutional monarchy

With the huge reservation of the tiny left fractions, the people's movement was called off and formation of interim government, constitution drafting recommendation committee and parliamentary election drew the attention of the whole country. Dissenting groups also were not able to move ahead. Therefore, the faith of monarchy was saved for the time being³ which was formally stated by the then general secretary Prachanda Nepal

Communist Party [Mashal]. The republican aim of the parties and people were postponed for the time being. Monarchy tried to be constitutional in the eye of party leaders. However, the first appointment as per the new constitution falls under debate in Supreme Court. "Appointment of the ambassadors as per the constitution is not by the council of minister but it is sole right of the king" verdict given by the Supreme Court.⁴ After the supreme court verdict, the King started to regain his power slowly. Parties were threatened. Dissenting fraction tried to justify their past analysis. Again political leadership got confused due to leadership crisis. The then united people's front - the third largest party in the parliament started to prepare for armed struggle using the parliamentary platform.⁵

People's War Launched by the Maoists

After the dissolution of the parliament, the then Nepal communist party [Mashal] had turned in to Unity Center and confusions prevailed. The great debate started within the party. The debate was either to continue in parliamentary politics accepting monarchy, or to revolt for republican by arms struggle.⁶ The party got split into two. One fraction continued to take part in parliamentary election and another fraction started arms struggle with the name of Nepal communist party [Maoist]⁷. Others parliamentary parties were in big confusion. Initially they blamed to the Maoist party as a criminal later on tag of terrorists. Sometimes, they called for negotiation and sometimes, they issued red corner notice. Fighting continued for 10 years with a

couple of attempts for negotiation. The state also declared emergencies a number of times, issuing emergency order and application of terrorist and destructive acts banned ordinance. Thousands of human lives were lost, hundreds of lives disappeared, thousands of imprisoned, wounded and severely tortured. Politically, nothing happened. Royal massacre took place; Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, younger brother of late King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev was declared the new king but majority did not accept him as a king. Then political complexities increased day by day. Even in that condition, political leadership was weak. They themselves got confused about what to do with the Maoist and monarchy at a time. The power balance became triangular. King, parliamentary parties and Maoist were divided in three parts. King seized all the power and parliamentary party leaders accused corrupt and Maoist accused as a terrorist.⁸ Masses of the peoples were dead against the king Gyanendra and it was a golden chance for them to declare a republic state since they did not tolerate the royal massacre back then. Unfortunately party's leaders went to palace and asked the King not to charge anymore in corruption. One of the reasons for this was also because of leadership crisis.

People's Movement of 2006

This was a big movement against the monarchy for election of constituent assembly. Election of constituent assembly was not possible because of monarchy. Now political leaders were compelled to set the political agenda of republic and constituent assembly after the heavy pressure from the

civil societies. Again, parties were not prepared for going to republican state. Agenda of republican and constituent assembly were both put forwarded by Maoist party. That was why they hesitated to accept it. Because of such hesitation, the life of monarchy extended more and more. 12 point understanding was signed for movement. Based on the understanding, people's movement took place but at last parliamentary parties compromised with monarchy to re-instate the dissolved house. Re-instated house, on 18th May 2006, called for a proposal which claimed Nepali Magna Carta. It was huge chance to declare republican with the help of people's movement. Instead of doing that, parliamentary parties chose to declare just the parliamentary proposal, and that made no change to end the monarchy. Finally they negotiated in Interim Constitution that mentioned the faith of monarchy will be determined from the decision of first meeting of the constituent assembly. Based on constitutional provision, parties could declare republican though parliament but parties were not prepared for that. One proposal tabled in interim parliament about declaration of republican state before the election of constituent assembly. In the voting, interim parliament was divided even though proposal was passed by majority. The direction of the parliament was to declare republic before the election of constituent assembly. That was another great chance for the deceleration of the republic. People's mandate and parliamentary order both were valid and legitimate in place. Because of leadership crisis it did not

happened. Mainly problem of indecisiveness prevailed time and again.

The Day of Declaration of the Republic

The Interim Constitution has been already fixed the process of declaration of republic. The faith of monarchy was to be decided by the first meeting of the constituent assembly had written in the constitution.⁹ The provision was that furthermore, if king has done any conspiracy against the election of constituent assembly, interim parliament can pass the proposal of republican by two third majorities. The chance to declare republican were there but leaders never tried. It is because of leadership crisis. Election of constituent assembly took place. Before 15th day of the election, result declaration meeting has to be there and the task of the first meeting was to declare republican. Constitutional provision was clear though there were huge hesitations in the political parties and leadership. Army has their own stand, monarchy had played different suspicious role, parliamentary parties were not fully convincing after declaration of republican the room for their. However, top brass deputed the taskforce to arrange declaration of republican. Formal document was prepared by the taskforce and track 2 methods applied and negotiated between the Army and Maoist party. After getting confidence from different corners of the society and concerned stakeholders, the task of declaration of republic completed.

Analysis of the Case of Republican in Nepal

All the movements of people explained earlier were equally competent to declare the republic state or removal of the monarchy. People were always in favour of republic. Leadership also formed the bottom of the heart but for some reasons, they compromised. This is the reality of the Nepali politics. From the very beginning, number of chances were lapsed by the political parties not because of their intention but because of their dilemma which I termed leadership crisis. My analysis is that if republic state was declared as mentioned before with the strong impact of leadership, the situation of the country would have been better.

If we see the map of the world, there are numbers of countries; some are prosperous and some are not. There is a big question why? It is because of lack of resources or leadership (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Because of revolutionary development of information and communication technology, the paradigm shift has taken in number of sectors including politics. Society has been moving very fast along and with the fast moving society, politics and political leadership has to transform and develop accordingly. Major trend of the world politics of 21st century has turned into trade and development. Because of tremendous development of science and technology, the society has heavily affected even in politics and political leadership. Lead role player has major impact in each sector of the society. Leader's decisions and their behaviour is mean key to the society.

However, Nepalese society is still in developing stage. If we compare Nepal from development point of view, it is still behind with respect to development infrastructures and level of development. In terms of development, Nepal is lagging behind for centuries as compared to European development. It is also because of leadership. Most of the underdeveloped countries are facing leadership crisis. The very fact is that, Leaders are by-product of the society and truly reflections of the society. Nepalese society is in the stage of transformation and its expected rate will be not enough by the rate of evolutionary development. So, expectation of development is revolutionary with transformational leadership. Therefore, we need to find out problems existing in our country's leadership. For that purpose, we need to find out core elements of leadership crisis and its solution at a time.

Conclusion

Republic Nepal was a dream of people and leadership. Several chances to achieve it were missed time and again are a fact. When the then King Tribhuvan had accepted republican through his royal address, Military coup was observed against two third majority holding elected government in different events But leadership had failed to grasp the chances of republican. Having popular support and revolutionary spirit was not grasped properly. It means leadership failed to lead the people properly. People were prepared for republic but leadership was indecisive. With this logic, core characteristics, skills and qualities of the leadership are charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized

consideration. As mentioned in introduction chapter, the skills and qualities of leadership are to be decisiveness, transparent, honest with the people and society and to lead to achieve the goal of republic as mandate had given by the people. Based on these parameters, I came to conclusion that Nepalese politics have been suffering from crisis of leadership in particular mission of declaration of republic which is especially in lack of decisiveness. Nepal has been facing number of challenges in politics because of crisis of leadership. Leadership always has been indulged in crucial problem and never been tried to face it. Instead of that always compromise with the problem. Same thing repeated with monarchy. If leaders were daring to declare republic since last century, Nepal would have been much developed, and much matured in politics. It is not because of people but it is because of leadership. Leaders are always in confusion, which creates crisis everywhere. I call this crisis created by leaders themselves as leadership crisis. Nepal has been facing leadership crisis in many ways and many areas especially when it comes to the declaration of the republican as one typical example. The aim of the politics and political leadership is to liberate from poverty, illiteracy and underdevelopment. However because of leadership crisis, it could never happen. Without overcoming the problem of leadership crisis, society will not achieve their goals as they were compelled to be under rule of monarchy for almost 250 years.

Notes

- ¹ From the restoration of democracy country entered in to the transition then 2017 BS, 2036, 2046, 2052, and 2062/63 are the evidence of the transition.
- ² United national people's movement coordination committee- press note –13 Oct. 1990
- ³ Press statement issued by Nepal communist party [Mashal] 15 oct. 1990
- ⁴ Supreme Court verdict in the case of Advocate Radheshyam Adhikari vs. GON, 1991
- ⁵ Selected articles of prachand-2006
- ⁶ Party document of Nepal communist party [Unity Center]
- ⁷ 13 February 1996, first statement of declaration of peoples war by CPN [Maoist]
- ⁸ Royal Address of King Gynendra, Magh 19, 2059.
- ⁹ Interim Constitution 2007, Article 159

Competing Interests

The author declares that no competing interests exist.

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