

# The effects of democracy on nepal



Nepal is a landlocked country which lies between India and the Tibetan Autonomous region of china. On the southern border, Nepal is covered by forest which is partly cultivated. On the north there are mountains like Mount Everest which is the tallest mountain in the world. In the year 1990, king Birendra installed a new constitution and at the same introduced a multiparty system of governance in Nepal. Protests from supporters of democracy made King Gyanendra to stop exercising the direct rule and put back parliamentary system which acted quickly to curtail the powers of the King in the year 2006. It was in the year 2007 when parliament voted to end the system of Monarchy and adopt the federal democratic republic system. This transition from the system of Monarchy to democratic system was completed in the year 2008 after the Constituent Assembly voted to abolish the monarchy system of governance (nepalhomepage. com, n. d.). Nepal was the only Hindu monarchy which was controlled by a prime minister until 1951. Nepal held its first election in the year 1959 but after a year King Mahendra made away with the cabinet, dissolved the parliament and more so banned political parties and then direct election was held in the year 1981 after the referendum of the constitution in 1980 (nepalhomepage. com, n. d.). The monarch system of governance in Nepal was not the best way to go in that it affected the country in a number of negative ways. This paper discusses these effects into detail, the transition to democratic system of governance and the effects of democracy on Nepal.

### Main body

The history of Nepal is greatly coupled with monarchy. Monarchy is a form of governance whereby the King is the head of the government which is not

elected by the people. The two dynasties namely Shahs and Ranas have made the history of Nepal. Shahs was responsible for uniting the nomads to the form t he country which is called Nepal. Ranas were the ones who took over the kingdom in the later years. Later the two dynasties entered into an alliance who buried their differences. In the flag of Nepal, this alliance is represented by the two triangular portions which represent the two dynasties. King Tribhuvan Bir Vikram Shah was the most famous King in the history of Nepal who was pro-people and pro-development. He initiated many reforms for the people of Nepal and many of the buildings in Nepal were named after this monarch. After this monarch King, he was followed by his son Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah who possessed modern ideas and he was the first king to initiate change in Nepal. His eldest son Birendra Bir Vikram Shah then took over who was a principled and a visionary man. Birendra Bir changed the process of initiating the system of democracy. Many people believed this King would drive Nepal to a state of fully-fledged democratic country monitored by the republic system. Unfortunately, this King was assassinated in some mysterious circumstances along with his family in the year2001. Birendra Bir was then succeeded by his younger brother Gyanendra, although he was not so conversant with changing times and the system of governance. He removed democracy system of governance in preparation of the possible attack from Maoist rebels in the Tarai region. At that time, Nepal experienced wide and violent protests which the monarch King tried to counter using his loyal and ruthless armed force. However, things did not go as he had planned. Therefore, he had to succumb to the international pressure and ordered the restoration of democracy and his executive powers were reduced (bharatonline. com, n. d.).

The institution of monarchy was regarded as a symbol of national unity and nationalism. The monarch was viewed as a lord who protected the sacredness of the universe of Nepal and Nepal mandala because they do possessed spiritual and temporal powers. The monarch system of government was considered to exist because of reasons of state where citizens were supposed to sustain their private and public life with the aid of the three aspects; peace, amity and cooperation. The King ruled with the belief that a King does not go wrong which was used in the formation of this system of government. Two reasons were used to foster the monarch institutions. The standardization of legal and economic practices, administration, spread of the language, literature and culture and arts and tradition all meant to initiate national identity. The Rana had inactivated people politically up to the year 1940 when king Tribhuvan provided guidance to the political parties and the leaders of the parties with an aim of taking the country out of autocratic Rana rulers. The Monarchy assisted in resolving the problems between the aristocracy and the democracy where it sought to establish an environment for the common good. Symbols were transformed to the institutions that aspired for democracy. Monarchy institution was most important for political institution building to stipulate the expected behavior of the entire force though it was difficult to achieve. Monarchy helped other institutions to attain a status of single national community.

It was the responsibility of the monarchy system of administration to provide security to the society and shield people from the threats of imperialism and native radicalism. This why social change in Nepal took place in a slow pace.

Some monarchs were held captives by their local aristocracy and some held the image of the constitutional monarch. In Nepal, monarchy is considered to be a tool of continuity in terms of history, society, institution and the statehood. King Birendra was responsible for the restoration of democracy, human rights and social justice in the government system of Nepal. Nepalis found their sovereignty in a unity between political life and the monarchy institution (asiarecipe. com, n. d.).

According to Jayshi (2007), the King of Nepal was embarrassed three times in a span of two weeks. He publicized a diamond jubilee birthday celebrations which was scheduled to take place on July 7 but it turned out to be a sham where the top government officials, Nepal army, bureaucrats and the diplomatic corps all decided to stay away from the function. The function was attended by about 700 people unlike in the past when thousands of people used to turn-up to salute their King. The very next day many people turned-up for a function presided over by the prime minister as the head of state the privileges which were enjoyed by the Nepali King. In order to save the monarchy, the Nepal King was supposed to relinquish some of his requirements and more so take a dramatic step. The King used to favor his grandson making the prime minister to be the favor of the most people in Nepal and from the Nepal's military. Gyanendra's son was a drunkard and bad behavior. The media in Nepal mainly called for the end the monarch system.

It reached a point when those demanded the monarchy system to be retained were outnumbered by those needed its abolition. Nepal is still recovering from the tragic massacre in the royal palace in the year 2001.

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Krishna, a political scientist said monarchy and democracy cannot go together in Nepal. He insisted that a King and monarchy had no place in the new Nepal. Krishna Pahadi was named prisoner of conscience by the amnesty international at the time of King's absolute rule demanded that the parliament was supposed to take measures and set a tribunal to try King Gyanendra for the crimes he committed against the people as the head of the government. He predicted that the King would either be fled or convicted together with his family giving the parliament a chance to do away the monarchy institution he represented (asiarecipe. com, n. d.). Nepal army was for the opinion of demolition of the monarchy system and suggested referendum was the best way to do this. Groups close to the royal palace insisted that only a referendum could salvage the situation Nepal was in and abolish the monarchy system of governance. Kamal Thapa who was the leader of the pro-palace Rastriya Prajatantra Party claimed that referendum was the only way out since there was a lot of protests and campaigns against the monarchy system. But Pahadi was against the idea of referendum and termed the exercise as meaningless and felt there can never be a free and fair election as long as the King went unpunished. He said that Nepal was in mood of developing a democratic nation but until the King gets the punishment for the crimes he committed, this idea cannot be possible. King would use his powers to prevent the assembly election from taking place, Pahadi warned (Jayshi, 2007).

According to Foster (2007), Nepal's King was forced to restore democracy after intense street protests and the politics of Nepal has reached a point of a standoff. The month of December was proposed as the month to hold

elections to put in place a constituent assembly which would write the new Constitution for the new democratic Nepal although the month was later postponed to June after six months of the initial suggested month. The process of the politics in Nepal seemed to be moving slowly coupled with some behind the scenes negotiations in Delhi which was the principle hope of progress (Foster, 2007). In Kathmandu, the future of the unity interim government which was headed by the aging Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala hanged on a balance. The effects of the monarch system of governance were greatly felt in many parts and sectors of the Nepal economy. Teachers had gone for strike due to low payments, Universities were not functioning as they were supposed to, people were not paying pensions promptly and other crises that initiated the establishment of the democratic system of government. The people of Nepal had been fed-up by the effects of the monarchy system of administration and therefore they felt a republic country was the best. Nepal experienced a lot of chaos, unrest and walk-outs before it became a fully functioning democratic republic. The road to Nepal's democracy was not an easy task due to powers a king possessed and the need to curtail them (Foster, 2007).

The restoration of democracy system of governance happened in the year 1989 to the year 1991. In spite of the problems and great opposition the monarchy system encountered, most people expected the system to endure for more years. The sudden collapse of the system was catalyzed by the India's actions in the month of march 1989 to impose a semi-blockade of Nepal. In 1962, the Indian government restricted the movement of goods. India was not only concerned with economic issues but also the work permit

and Chinese arms issues. New Delhi felt that Nepal was supposed to be pressured into returning to what had been agreed with last Rana maharaja in 1950. Nepal experienced acute shortage of commodities especially kerosene where blame was put on India. The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe made the Nepalese activists to feel encouraged and hopeful about achieving similar changes in Nepal (Whelpton, 2005). . The Marxist-Leninists' conference which was held in August 1989 agreed to abandon Maoism and adopt alliance with Congress to struggle for the parliamentary system which was a short term aim. Nepali's congress agreed to launch a movement that would see restoration of Democracy in Nepal. The movement was prospected to be launched on 18th February which was the anniversary of the establishment of the post-Rana interim government. India politicians accused the opposition groups for enhancing foreign interference in Nepal. When the movement was launched, it began by demonstrations from party supporters among them were students who were predominant. Many people died in Kathmandu and other places in the country due to rampant police crashes with the protesters many arrest. Many political parties' leaders were arrested and others were placed under house arrest (Whelpton, 2005).

Nepalese people who believe in nationalism, socialism and democracy were represented by a party known as Nepali Congress Party. The party was founded in 1947 with the aim of safeguarding human rights, freedom, justice and equity to the Nepalese people. The party has been in fights against the hereditary Rana Regime and the autocratic Panchayat system and was on the forefront in the campaigns for the establishment of the multi-party parliamentary democracy system in Nepal. The party believed that



monarchy was not the best way out for Nepal due to the problems that were attached in the system. The party has severally gone an extra mile in seeing the establishment of the parliamentary democratic system by overseeing two revolutions successfully in 1950 and 1990 which were 2007B. S. and 2046B. S. respectively. The party is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities by promoting parliamentary multiparty democracy; enhance good governance in Nepal and provision of a constitutional monarchy. The party also is also committed to fostering people's basic rights through strengthening of the freedom and championing among the people the cause of national unity and dignity. The party feels that multiparty is the only way to go in the realization of political freedom, decentralization of the system of governance, removal discrimination and prejudice between people of different statuses (nepaldemocracy. org, 2001). Moreover, the party was aimed at realization of balanced development of different cultures, languages and traditions, high respect for individuals' dignity in the country, economic prosperity and social justice.

The Nepali congress believed that Nepal had major challenges it would face in the 21st century which it had to accept. With realization of the challenges that Nepal faced in the future, the party focused on the transformation of the socially and economically backward country into a more developed and prosperous nation. The party would accomplish this by eradicating illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, corruption and ever growing prices. In quest for a society based on equality and justice, the Nepali Congress decided to use the principles of the democratic socialism and decentralization in 1957. That was convinced beyond doubts that a society can achieve economic prosperity

through implementation of the democratic social programs in a balanced manner (nepaldemocracy. org, 2001). This would see a fair distribution of resources based on equitability and attain a social justice. In order to ensure everyone enjoys the fruits of prosperity, the party was charged with distributing the fruits to every household of the Nepalese society. In accordance with the rule of the country, the party felt that private sectors also need to benefit from the economic freedom opportunity without any problems. The private sectors were seen as the tools for the growth of the economy and creation of the employment opportunities. In this regard, the government will provide private sectors for the development of socio-economic infrastructures to enhance social justice and security to poor people. In order to enhance development for the people of Nepal, the Nepali congress focused on the people because the ultimate goal of development in a society is upliftment of the people's lives. To accomplish this, the party promoted education, skills development, training and rights to information, foster of health services, eradication of poverty among the people, creation of job opportunities and income generation to the Nepalese people.

The party promotes self confidence and provision of social services in every Nepali citizen (nepaldemocracy. org, 2001). Political parties involved themselves in practices which were unhealthy and non-political to gain the power. The government remained weak because no political party enjoyed the majority. The manifesto declared that the forthcoming general election was an avenue to do away with errors like corruption, horse-trading, and aggressive attitudes among the politicians. Nepalese people had already been fed-up by these anomalies and therefore felt the need for a strong

government and a strong parliament to end evils exercised by the coalition government. The government which was put in place after the 1991 general election and other governments formed after 1994 and led by Nepali Congress achieved a lot economic prosperity and transformed peoples' lives. In realization and implementation of the uplifting programs, the Nepali Congress allocated 400 million rupees to the dependent people in the society like the elderly, handicapped and the widows. The party also launched a program to uplift the poor in the society and ensure that their lives improve and encourage women to participate actively on the development agenda. The party engaged in charity activities by providing soft loans and ensured prices of commodities was reduced. The Nepali Congress also aimed at increasing revenue collections, reduce expenditures and realize increase in tourism income, water resources, forest and agriculture (nepaldemocracy.org, 2001). The party also oversaw the expansion of industrialization and economic process, invited NGOs and private sectors to take place in the economic development which ultimately created job opportunities for the Nepalese people. Nepal's economic growth process will be catalyzed by its friendly environment which encourages national and international investment. The Nepal's fast economic growth rate has made the Nepali Congress party to increase the per capita income for the people to the level of 700 US dollars prospected within the next twenty years. The party supports the idea that the Bhutanese refugees need an opportunity to return to their home country peacefully and respectfully. The Nepali Congress party has undertaken major changes in the Nepal republic since the establishment of the Democracy system in the country (nepaldemocracy.org, 2001). All the

transformations were aimed at improving people's lives and erode the evil that had been rooted by the monarchy system of governance.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the agenda for our national politics is the preservation and protection of democracy. Democracy and economic development are important political and economical movements in poor countries like Nepal. The monarch system of governance has a lot of limitations on the economy of a particular nation and people's lives and should be avoided as much as possible. Under this system, Nepal entered into social and economic crisis which left the economy of this country collapsed and it took many years to rebuild. Nepalese people became jobless because job opportunities were minimal due to unfriendly environment for the investors. Poverty levels increased in Nepal as a result of poor administration, bad governance and lack of programs to help the needy in the society. With the monarchy system, power was normally retained in one family because people played no role in installing a King. Therefore, bad traits from one king was easily transferred to the other King either his son or brother and the status quo remained in terms of governance.

The system was characterized by poor education, bad health, unemployment, poverty and other aspects that indicated deterioration of the economy and social life in general. There was a major need to shift from a monarchy system of governance to democratic system. As a result, there were widespread rebels and campaigns to reject the monarch system of governance in favor of democratic. When democratic system of governance

was put in place in Nepal, many things were revolutionized and people's lives changed completely. People were given the opportunity to participate in the general election to elect the parliament which was responsible for the running of the country. The effects of the new system were felt in all the parts of Nepal where people's lives improved drastically. The Nepali Congress part oversaw the distribution of resources equally to the people and ensures social justice. Under the democratic system, a lot of things have been transformed for good. Nepal can now enjoy the fruits of democracy which include but not limited to good education, improved health, reduction in poverty levels and creation of job opportunities. Therefore, for a nation that is keen to grow economically and socially, this system is the way out.