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Civil Society: The Worthy Soul of Democracy [Public Lecture]

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Introduction

Civil society groups in Nepal comprise a baffling array of institutions, networks, and movements of citizens formed to defend their collective values, interests, and culture. It is an outgrowth of an open, tolerant civic culture that reconciles a sense of responsibility of individuals to realize their social nature. In an idealized form, civil society groups spring from the rational faculty of human will for free conversation across a wide range of voices. They connect citizens and reveal the values and context for learning, choosing, and engaging in the ecological, social, economic, and political processes and resolve the common problems. Modern civil society groups flourish under the canon of human freedom against necessity, wretched, inertial, and fragile conditions of life. The rational faculty motivates citizens to a common pursuit of critical knowledge, public policy, initiatives, and activities benefiting them, even those outside the group. One vital point made in the recent declaration of civil society is that of the domination of partiocracy, the rule by parties in every sphere of public life. It is rooted in the primacy of partial interest, distribution of state resources to clients, and undue accumulation of power. It fertilizes threats to national progress and its fledgling democracy's institutional checks, separation, devolution, and disciplining of power. Nepali civil society now finds the deviation of political parties from the civic culture of constitutionalism prompting citizens to cry out for popular sovereignty, fulfilment of their rights, solve the problems of the downtrodden and highlight the

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imperative to engage in eternal spirit of inquiry like early Nepali sages stalked along on extraordinary insight of karmic cycle.

The historic transition from the state of nature to civil society marks the glow of civility and socialized coexistence of diverse Nepal in a common political space-- the state, endowed with the duties of protection, education, and livelihood of citizens and regulating the need-based economy. It stimulates and enlightens them to know what makes one human. Environment, justice, democracy, human rights, Dalits, women, and peace defenders of Nepal have now palpably blazed the lure of civil society in education, policy advocacy, and charity. Yet they lack the feeling of inner oneness to leverage their collective strength and keep due diligence over wrong policies of the political society driven by the maximization of the virtue of *rajoguna* (power-lust) and the economic society driven by the maximization of the virtue of *tamoguna* (profit). Nepali democracy is fated to repeat the winner's curse if due diligence of courts, media, and civil society cannot give new impulses to democratic life based on the maximization of the virtue *sattoguna* of civil society for dissemination of intelligence, political moderation and public welfare. Civil society arises out of the superior disposition of human feeling, reason, courage and will. They shun selfish human nature and egotism, seek the means to cultivate *atmagyan* (self-awareness) and balance outer freedom, justice, solidarity and peace spawning positive material and moral outcomes to make their lives enduring and fulfilling in the thrill of the modern race of globalization. Nepali civil society groups, however, should attempt to revive the culture of remembering the continuous *shastrartha* (public discourse) of the golden chapter of its past and bring native art, culture, and wisdom back from the brink of neglect.

The old Nepali delight in social duties to family, society, nation, humanity and other species had fertilized Nepali civil society along with the perfection of *sattoguna* virtue of *niskam* karma (selfless service). The sovereignty of Nepalis embedded in the Constitution of Nepal now presumes the re-appearance of citizens as *janatajanardan* in the face of the crisis of politics, governance, polity, constitution and the state. It is a value crisis based on traditional politics of *sam* (persuasion), *dam* (money), *danda* (punishment) and *bhed* (division) and its aversions by the modern spirits of civil society, such as transparency, trust and cooperative action. They now seek the ownership of citizens in the political process and constant democratic oversight over the actors of governance. The operation of civil society calls for good governance and people's participation in decision-making to create conditions for political stability and ecological, social, gender and intergenerational justice essential to abolish the extremes, fear, misery and malaises of society. The great challenge for Nepali civil society is how to create an egalitarian society envisaged in the constitution of the nation with unequal abilities of citizens? Are the nation's social and economic policies couched in universal sustainable development goals sufficient for this? How can Nepalis move from social, economic and political determinism of life to a free world of democracy without reforming pre-existing realities? Are Nepalis capable of electing wise and good representatives in political parties and civil society? Are their agencies suitably enlightened to take the right decisions as a power of the public? If not, how can civil society provide Nepalis civic education, freeing them from constraints, grow judgmental ability and organize collective action to make education, power and wealth accountable thus making democracy useful? Any move from this condition requires joining the vibrant public sphere of civil society where they can participate in the public issues with different perspectives, seek optimal resolution of knotty order and blend local insights and social sciences to guide public policies.

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Equitable Democracy

Nepali democracy ensures the private property rights of citizens as an incentive to abolish the state of nature, create public order and uphold constitutional supremacy as a basis of ties between citizens and the state. The free will of citizens rooted in their sovereignty helps the moralization of the state and sets the primacy of public reason, justice and morality over laws and legal logic. Social peace occurs when Nepalis are optimally satisfied with equitable freedom and justice against others as they would allow others against themselves and legitimize the state to regulate each other's envy, greed and drive for power monopoly. Non-regulation of these elements reflects an absurd use of modernity in matters of technology and ideology yet retaining old habits of mind, attitude and orientation. Nepalis now face eternal anxiety disorder where leaders fear their rivals, a fear of fomenting instability and anarchy. They are trapped inside their own partisan frame, unable to know the motive, passion and ambition of each other, fear of deception, articulate their aspirations, feel superior over others, justify their deeds and viciously generate distrust, competition and conflict thus tormenting the ordinary citizens beyond the influence of democratic rationality, reason and science. Without a robust social contract, a workable constitution, as the state's *raison d'etat* no strength can protect Nepalis from the play of power politics and undue reverence to leadership hierarchy, not even the civil society's reenergized moral power of nursing human rights and technological power of connecting to digitalization. It only hints at the anarchy of free wills and loss of equitable democracy where all citizens are stakeholders. Socialization, in this sense, means learning to be rational and imbibing connections with creativity, culture and humanity. It is a tendency to become spiritual which is the springboard of this old Nepali nation and its dharma-driven civil society engaged in selfless service, education, organization, innovation and delivery of public goods. Civil society groups are aspirational, grounded in the emancipation of people and operate under the canon of humming public sphere, universal reason and virtuous public action enriched by its own native wisdom, public discourse and oneness of life-world. This means they need to evolve from the organic process of society so that it can contribute to enduring democracy's equilibrium, dynamism and stability based on the weight of public opinion and sanity of tradition.

Public Spirit

Alexis de Tocqueville claims that a vibrant democracy requires a strong measure of the public spirit of citizens able to cultivate virtues, act together to prepare good laws and realize their personal choice without deflating public interests. He says that exclusive individualism saps the civic virtues vital for participation in public life. The passion for self-love, an instinct for self-preservation, or private pursuit is not often evil. It is the drive for freedom, competition, innovation, creativity and self-actualization situated in the ethical and political universe. The doctrine of "personal is political" is acquiring salience now at a time when populism, fundamentalism, geopolitics and identity craziness tends to cripple the spirit of modernity couched in the autonomy of citizenship and the public sphere. To be sure, their instrumental rationality devalues democratic conditions and cares little about rational collective life. The productive use of individual creativity and feeling of self as a member of society generates a new type of sociability essential to mediate the social chasms in Nepali society and remain sensitive to the human condition. The rationalization of Nepali society can link citizens to the public sphere to debate on the realization of their rights, perform duties and secure solidarity for collective action on the mitigation of major issues they confront in everyday life including poverty, inequality and pandemic. Community,

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deliberative village life, civil society and local party offices in Nepal are the training centres for youth leadership for the workplace and local self-governance, leadership capable of balancing technical questions of planning, management and resources dispensation, catalysts of social change aiming to remove the vices and political questions of democratic debate, participation and decision making. Nepali youths are struggling to come to terms with the contradiction of democracy between what they are taught and the actual human condition.

Civic Education

Genuine civil society grows out of educational praxis, the purpose of which is to create free citizens and responsible leaders uncorrupted by the veils of personal ignorance and ego, corruption, bad laws and ineffectual policies. Civic education of Nepali leaders who can make a difference in the life of citizens is a must to rein in the vicious cycle of politics and set a balance between freedom, authority and order to aid the integrity of life. Nepali civil society needs enlightenment of their members, a law unto self so that education becomes reflective and civic, not rote learning and deterministic, risking the weak and alienating the Nepali intellectuals from their backward society. Alleviation of fear and basic needs entails Nepali civil society balancing rights and duties and acquiring an ability to discipline the dialectic of market and politics beyond hikes and roves. The cultural heritage of tolerance eased Nepal to host a variegated nature of civil society performing a bewildering array of functions thus enabling to maximize the condition in which they can develop their potentialities and express their voice and visibility. One general flaw of Nepali political parties, media and civil society is their inability to dissolve the pre-existing social order created by feudalism, caste hierarchy, patriarchy and power-oriented relations while the other is their self-dissolution into power or moving in multiple directions where opportunities are available. Still the other is a lack of effective scrutiny of dominant actors. This is why citizens' realization of their rights and transformation of informal society, economy and polity into a formal democratic rule is tormenting.

The multi- mode political socialization, role occupancy in the parties and polity and acculturation to democracy seem jarring. As a result, modern Nepali society has failed to make a distinction between the public sphere where public policies are debated, formulated, circulated and executed and the private sphere where personal life does not suffer from disorder beyond norms, constitution and institutions. The patronage-based character of Nepali political parties and the absorption of the associational form of civil society into their apparatus furnish the reasons why they have not been able to detribalize Nepali society vital to modern nation-building. The untidy character of Nepali party politics now, like the game of utilitarianism, exhibits a set of relations of power, not the teleological purpose of public welfare, political virtues and merits essential for sound leadership capable of uplifting the nation to ecological resilience, social cohesion, economic progress and political stability. The loss of ideology of Nepali parties to critically analyze both their inner life and state of the nation drifted them to bureaucratization thus marking a tension within their fusion, fission and feeble task performance to balance inputs and outputs of the political system. The party leadership is marked by a personal brand where followers uncritically hang around in conformity, not evolving coherent and critical plans and programs to expand the social base of democracy. The real advertisement of democracy requires two simultaneous processes: democratic awareness across every social strata and generation of people and service delivery to them so that they feel that it is better than other forms of the political system.

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The autonomous civil society's demands for their democratization can be justified as a duty of due carefulness. The linguistic communication among leaders for decency, morality and civilized idioms is essential for the socialization of young leaders, cadres and voters. The civil society of women, Dalits, indigenous, ethnic and the poor, the champions of modernism, are seeking a rupture from certain evils of society for equal social integration and system integration and even for the rationalization of political life. Political leadership, like civil society's, is socially constructed. Both need to evolve democratic leadership capable of cognition, self-assessment, representation and catalyst of social change on the basis of feeling, democratic faith, reason and national need. The impact of the money economy on Nepali politics has skewed the power of political parties and civil society for inclusive agenda-setting for citizens mostly frozen in agrarian and rural sites, which lack agencies for articulation, innovation and ingenuity. This has delinked many Nepali youths from their land, real economy and culture, converted them into labor and spread them into the global labor market to earn their living and send remittance to sustain their families and the nation.

Democratic Action

Only those citizenship-based civil societies are propellers of democratization, inclusiveness and accountability of governing institutions. To restore credit-worthiness newly blossomed civil society from the chrysalis of crises need rethinking and reconnection with the needs, rights and concerns of the public, demarcate self from other institutions such as NGOs, INGOs, cooperatives and business whose activities are confined to mutually negotiated mandate with the state and operate in the limited areas of project implementation. They can complement the native civil society in their myriad of social works and strengthen value-based politics. One general problem of Nepali civil society is their inability to learn from citizens' practical experience, their dialogical methods and rational social practices that are useful for social modernization and provide a spur to the endogenous mode of social progress. Civil society's affiliation with the international community with the universal values of freedom, equality, justice and peace do not amount to delink from native wisdom of ends-means compatibility. They can be utilized to standardize national values, institutions and policies.

The centrality of social activism of civil society in Nepal is to restore the sanctity of human life and see the future in terms of well-resolved national problems. The new social formation of civil society expects the redefinition of the relationship of domination by political parties over followers, cadres and ordinary people to their citizenship equality. The activism of associational life of Nepali civil society, driven by modern values of human rights, justice and peace with technological tools can perform democratic functions and introduce contemporary issues for reasoned debate, public attention and legitimate action. But the capacity of Nepali civil society to interpret and change the national condition of uncertainty citizens live by rests on their unity of action, not fragmentation. It requires them to protect the personal life of every citizen from the domination of the impersonal system of the market, polity and international regime, incubate social conscience around intimacy and help improve the lives of ordinary Nepalis better than before.

Many social movements of Nepal harbour the pre-existing order of life, split the public sphere between "we" and "they" and nourish a kind of fundamentalism that no longer cultivates the national identity of citizenship or cosmopolitan affinity to humanity. The persistence of parochialism marks the weakness of civil society in promoting civic

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education to produce active citizenry. They are faulted for not transmitting rational knowledge and scientific tools for social change. Despite the socialist constitution of Nepal, welfare state, amplified rights and liberal laws citizens find little scope for productive engagement in the nation. So long as the material basis of Nepali politics for production, exchange and distribution remain weak, they will be worried about their social identity, image, voice and struggles, not national identity. The social movements of citizens groups have caught civil society and policy wonks unprepared in matters of empathy, caring and collaboration and admit that the whole nation precedes parts.

Modern social technology and sprawling economic growth in urban nodes have flourished a consumerist culture and crass materialism and left the resilience of nature upon which polity and society are founded besieged. Nepali civil society can bind citizens for long if they balance cultural relativism, universal reason and a new order of the world. They have awakened the youthful enthusiasm of Nepalis inspiring them to reflect and change the condition of their living. The time has come for them to act as bridging and bonding social capital between political parties and the state, speak in favour of ordinary Nepalis and keep due diligence so that leaders do not make popular sovereignty an arena for power competition only. The sovereignty of citizens sealed in the Nepali constitution assumes that state power springs from the bottom-up. It is accountable to their choice. Nepali state is entrusted with the collective sovereignty of its citizens. It is deemed autonomous of the fissiparous bents of the nation's political parties which use their leverage against each other to monopolize grip on public institutions and flag general interests. The right of citizens to sovereignty, however, does not write to an awareness of working together for the common good and ability to participate in political power except habitual protests, street agitations and casting ballot papers. Nepal has recently seen the surge of discontents of peasants on the unavailability of fertilizer in time and delayed payment of their crops, informal workers on skewed execution of social security, general public on health, education and job and cultural group on the intrusion of their Guthis (trusts) and public spaces. The pandemic has encircled the nation enforcing lockdown and social distancing. But it has also set new learning opportunities for technology-driven transformative change in many areas of health, education, economy, ecology and geopolitics.

Middle Path

Classical Nepali civil society has flourished on the middle path between private interests that promote inequality and the provision of the common good that reconciles public interests and the public sphere for equality. Juergen Habermas argues, "Freedom from tradition is often experienced as alienation from the moral context of life." One finds the nation enmeshed in excessive cognitive, policy, material and institutional dependency, conflict residues awaiting transitional justice, emigration of youth and restlessness of subsidiary identity politics devoid of the feeling of national citizenship. The roles of autonomous Nepali civil society lay in propelling a shift from utility to charity, impersonality to empathy to each other and cultural and historical ignorance to native tradition of enlightenment as its Western version is reason-based, anti-spiritual, anti-institutional and anti-authority. They are stimulating public demand for good governance and seeking to arrest a drift to the restlessness of political parties, interest groups, media, professional organizations and social groups so that they can find a just settlement in the inclusive national dialogue, a coherent roadmap for the unity of the nation and democratic stability in the middle path charted by Gautam Buddha for the attainment of mindful society through nirvana.

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The populist propensity of many of these forces renounces the individual autonomy of citizens to an amorphous and agitated crowd and facilitates the control of self by others, not self-determination. The web of ties of partisan civil society groups indulged in hatred of the other is consuming their virtues and enervating their rivals, not lubricating the value of education for the rational contestation of ideas about the good life. In this context, the exigency of newly bubbled up Nepali civil society is to draw rules, resources, members and activities with citizens for their enduring relevance, functionality and sustainability. It is essential to spur the goodwill of citizens, revitalize the integrity of political parties and bring derailed politics back to a democratic, constitutional track exhausted by the pedantry of conflicting interpretation of the constitution by legal experts and disruption of the balance of power of Nepali polity.

The frequent de-composition of the elite civil society of Nepal by projects, parties, government and the materiality of geopolitics in the past has questioned their credibility, loss of sense of their steam, energy and grand narrative for unfriendly regime change. Their division, dissolution and disappearance are marked by their low steam now, members' cohabitation into governmental power, superfluous roles during great quake and pandemic and selective defense of general issues upholding a sort of political correctness. The social capital they generated in previous agitations is drained now for they were overwhelmed by a series of stirs of social forces such as Madhesis, Janajatis, Aadibasis, Dalits, backward society, Muslims, Chepangs and even Badis, demanding power, resource and recognition. Likewise, their utilization in projects for the promotion of democracy, development, human rights, good governance, upliftment of women and the marginalized and social transformation without reflecting indigenous knowledge, norms and culture cut their transformative impulse and reduced them to an incubator of instrumental politics, not higher values of life. Native civil society groups such as Guthis, paropakar and a series of philanthropic ones working for widows, children, the elderly and the disabled evolved from Nepal's cultural industries and organic in origin sustain resilience yet they maintain a break from those bonded from outside. Others are weakening parties through the formation of caucus groups, lobby and pressure point networks for sectoral interest satisfaction.

Public Maturity

The maturation of citizens as per the changing ecological, social, economic and technological circumstances of the post-traditional world is vital to liberate them from what Immanuel Kant calls three-fold tutelage of family, laws and fatalism and know the invisible web of human connection to species' lives. Nepalis' knowledge about the rule, rights, duties, the institutional path to participate and the democratic outcome of participation in politics, law and public policy lingers in a slanted way. The local civil society driven by enlightened citizens can shift the nature of centralized Nepali politics based on corporate bargaining among organized interests of powerful leaders of political parties which by no means is democratic if the voices of dissenting, marginal, poor, women, Dalits and minorities are not levelled up. It only marks the refeudalization of the public sphere of politics, not a sphere of equality, freedom and rights realization. The role of media and civil society lies in educating Nepalis to build their participatory competence and communication ability at multi-scale governance from Ward Assembly to vast cyberspace can enable them to adapt to the digitalization of globalization in production, marketing and delivery of goods, enforce the accountability and transparency of governing institutions and monitor the aptness of policies to solve common problems.

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The pluralization of the domain of power and inclusive base of politics have offered an opportunity on various scales but it entails multi-versal citizens' participation to fulfil deficits of essential needs and seek empowerment measures unconstrained in making choices in governance. Human and animal pains in labor in Nepal have not been substituted by wider application of science and technology and distributive justice. Nepali state is enmeshed in a web of international laws and obligations of a single global system. This system demands conformity to the spirit of the age. The migration of about half of Nepali youths abroad for jobs hints at the weak condition of the nation's labour market and their bigger stake in the world system. The state of democracy has yet to offer democratic dividends as the opportunity for economic participation is offered more by the international community than its internal labor market. It has created tension in the loyalty pattern of Nepalis. Economic despair does not shore up a participatory opportunity at the social, political and educational levels as scientific and institutional resources which are great levellers of society are unfairly distributed. This shows that Nepal's political leadership, narrowly confined to fractious party politics of top-down type, has yet to set up an easy-access political order where each citizen irrespective of age, gender, caste, class and regional distinctions can join in planning policies, apply socialist kit and reap welfare for them and their children.

Common Identity

If a political sphere is turned exclusively into power and wealth-seeking realms of powerful leaders, it does not foster a life of freedom where Nepalis transcend their self, primordial and economic interests and identities for a true path of *suttoguna*, concern over the survival of species, social affinity, national identity and humanity and chart a collective vision for the future. The reason is that each successful political movement of Nepal is backed by civic activism of civil society. Yet, when the political stir triumphed and leaders rose to power they left the critical mass of civil society, social forces and social movements in the lurch which prompted them to recharge their batteries to realize unfinished projects of democratic and peace dividends and fill the moral void of politics. The participatory democracy expects the construction of equal citizens out of tiered Nepalis, flattening the opportunity curve and opening civic space where their diverse mores would get along. It entails the formation of a we-perspective where no one is barred and each citizen is vigilant of human rights, the integrity of polity and legitimacy of governance as per democratic standards even in the midst of the crisis in political regime, public health and circular economy.

In Nepal, the provision of social inclusion has increased the group rights of some clusters of citizens while micro minorities are left out. Nepali state is weak to abolish Hobbesian elements of fear and material wants, protect property rights, limit the kleptocratic practice, set up rule of law in the frame of justice and execute the social contract by creating enabling environment for settling adversarial politics - rightful, uprising type, social movements and anti-systemic ones so that no one upends democratic rule. Political instability, resource constraints to finance all 31 fundamental rights and feeble institutions to execute them are key obstacles prompting certain groups to veer to regionalism, class, religion, caste, gender, ethnicity, etc. beyond the ability of the Nepali state to optimize their impulses while creating social safety nets for the powerless. Ethnicity is a pre-political concept. It negates the other and nonconformist social capital for its demand for pre-emptory rights offsets the democratic prospect of equal opportunity. A participatory society alone can foster a sense of civic competence, cultivate the concern for collective problem solving and foil the tendency of heavyweights to multi-polarize the political landscape by using a strategy of flipping over

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the public mandate and repeating the game of collusion and collision. In a time of health, economic and political crises, keeping the trust of Nepalis is central to addressing vital issues and exposing political cover-ups animus to the right to know. The participatory resources are not just the state, the market and civil society but a myriad of formal and informal, network-based virtual and visual institutions, organizations where the outpouring of multi-versal citizen activism demands the realization of their unrealized rights.

Conclusion

Since citizenship is the membership of the state, loyalty to it is the utmost duty of every civic-minded citizen. Only a virtuous state with a legitimate monopoly on power is capable of fulfilling all the rights of citizens and creating their stake and ownership in the polity. In a democracy, rule follows the rights and the rights require fulfilling public duties. Nepali citizens as a community of people have common interests to identify with the national community - the state. A participatory turn in Nepali politics demands the elimination of social and economic vices and violence in its domain. The effectiveness of the polity can only come if it creates robust impersonal institutions and an autonomous judiciary. The shifting role of the state towards public sectors for its dynamism and innovation can democratize the economy. It is a condition for the economics of peace, its culture to inspire civility and increase the efficacy of Nepalis in many dimensions of participation.

The first is the cognitive dimension. There is wisdom in saying: "Inner vigilance is the price of liberty." Nepal's enlightenment heritage still dominates the public and private life of citizens in urban and rural areas with many values and virtues of deliberative and participatory stuff to build knowledge, good citizenship and quality leadership. Its emancipatory appeal increases respect for human rights, democracy and good governance and strengthens security for both the civil society and the individual. But the effects of participatory demands in Nepal has led to the creation of caucus groups, network politics, the birth of new parties, social movements, extra-party participation and even violence as the affected citizens seek lawful mechanisms to "articulate." One can see a crystal disjuncture between the high participation of Nepalis in the elections, protests and movements and the low institutionalization of civic bodies to absorb them for orderly behaviour. Its intrinsic link to democratic discourse is essential to project inner light into the public sphere. Reducing the cost of education can raise the access of the poor and boost their social mobility to scale up the ladder of progress.

The second is the responsiveness of the polity to basic human needs and rights. It is a precondition for freedom to participate in public affairs. Without a productive economy and governance run by the best, brightest and public orientation with the ability to formulate innovative solutions to Nepal's persistent lack of overall progress, the middlemen will continue to free ride and block feedback between citizens and leaders. The core of self-governance is the capacity for self-legislation. It entails an inclusive public sphere at every layer of political power so that minorities, opposition and marginalized communities are not left out of the democratic process. To support efforts to provide primary health care, basic education, food, nutrition, water and sanitation and shelter at the local level are crucial.

The third is the social and gender dimension where political power in Nepal is couched in direct proportion to the representativeness of social diversity. Social equality across citizens is central to ensuring a participatory base of sustainable progress driven by social capital and social justice. The nation has to pursue the Nepalization process in response to prevent

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geopolitical fallout of rival paths adopted by great powers, Nepali political parties, elevate the people into citizens, standardize educational courses and preserve national identity through the promotion of centripetal forces — syncretic culture, Hindu-Buddhist religion, national symbols and historical aspiration to maintain the independence of the nation that make Nepali hearts swell with pride, not prejudice. Nepali citizens, political leaders and the international community together restored democracy and pooled national sovereignty for enlightened cooperation but they did not work together to create demos, citizens conceived of as meta-identity of Nepaliness that made sense of national political community – the state.

The fourth dimension is infrastructure development regarding matters of public good and enhanced accessibility of Nepalis to green technologies with emphasis on assisting the poor in adaptive capacity building, human development and entrepreneurship. Protection of the environment demands global and regional cooperation in matters of expertise, resources and technology. What one can see now is the voice of citizens articulated in the social and political movements to find democratic context, keep political and economic life afloat and liberate democracy from non-democratic elements. This is precisely the subordination of politics to money that evoked group-based identity which devalues the national identity of Nepali and the cosmopolitan identity of humanity.

The fifth dimension is private sector development. Equitable economic growth cannot be imagined without support for responsible private sector development. Weak contribution of tax to GDP, debt burden and huge trade deficits in Nepal cannot make a self-sustaining state at a time when income from remittance, tourism and trade is declining in the aftermath of the pandemic. The private sector too needs to embody business ethics and finance human development, social projects, ecological initiatives and social insurance to benefit the poor. National identity can be constructed only when political leaders are exonerated from their pre-political clutches and able to see the importance of civic space while at the same time building the trust of citizens in the belief that democracy delivers.