

## Hindu Nationalism and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Nepal

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### Abstract

This paper represented the Hindu nationalism and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's ideology towards nationalism is not only affecting in India but also has been influenced the ideas and thought in the South Asian region particularly in Nepal because of Hindu population has the majority community in Nepal and minority groups includes Buddhist, Muslim, etc. However, Nepal has multiethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic country in the world map. From the Hindutva perspective in Nepal, it is a long history of Hindutva nationalism in Nepal particular since the 1960s. When the King Mahendra came to power in 1961 and declared the 'Hindu Nation'. He looked RSS of India as a friendly organization. After 47 years, Nepal became the secular nation in 2007. However, Hindutva ideology is more active and 81 percent population belong from Nepal. But Hindu nationalism has been affecting the domestic politics as well as the foreign policy of Nepal. At present, Nepal's government has been trying to coordinate with the secular state for the development, peace and stability of the people in the country as well as region. Thus, this paper attempt to explore the recent changing of Hindu nationalist activities as well as domestic politicsof Nepal.

**KEYWORDS-** Nepal, Hindu Nationalism, Majority, Democracy, Secular.

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### 1. Introduction

Nepal is a landlocked country in the South Asian region and located in the North side of China and India in the South, East and West side. The geography area of Nepal has approximately 147,181 square kilometers and about 2.93 crores (2017) population. Nepal is multicultural country in various type of groups like multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic group. Hindu community is the majority approximately 81.3 percent belong from Hindu religious and other group religious comprising Buddhist 9 percent, Muslim 4.4 percent, Folk 3 percent, and Christian 1.42 percent (2014). In this context, Nepal is the most important country regarding demography and cultural aspects in the South Asian region. From the geopolitical perspective, Nepal located between two nuclear power namely, China and India. China is rising power in the field of economically and military in the global politics. China and Nepal have been trying to build a new chapter in the bilateral relations in the area of geopolitical, economic, and strategic relations. On the other hand, India is also fasted growing economy and emerging

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power on the world politics. That is fact, India and Nepal have been improving the relations in area of geopolitical, geo-economics and strategic point of view.

In the briefly, the history of Nepal after of 1950s, Maharaja Junga Bahadur Rana dynasty to an end in 1951 in the country it was ruling as an autocratic manner in the country. In the first time of history in Nepal lead a democratic pattern and became the first general elections in Nepal in 1959 and elected by the election Mr. Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala as the Prime Minister of Nepal (Andersen; 1972) This is as the turning point of contemporary history of domestic politics in Nepal. On the other hand, India also became independence from British rule on 15 August, 1947. From these two events, it is as the major changing the geopolitics and geostrategic in the region of South Asia as well as world map. But in the year of 1960, Nepal witnessed a royal coup, which soft the progress of the 'democratic experiment came into domestic politics' the monarch expanded the country's foreign relation with China. Subsequently, New Delhi extensively supported the pro-democratic elements, especially the National Congress party, Nepal's policy in the side of New Delhi changed after the 1962 India-China border war and India switched to improving relations with the monarchy. In the year of 1970s and 1980s, there was economic co-operation between the countries as well as roughness over India's support for the Nepalese opposition and Nepal's constant feeling of vulnerability with India as the regional hegemony power. From the Nepali perspective, Nepal did not have a democratic government until 1990, when people of Nepal begin to demand the secular democratic country. This system came to force in Nepal in year of 2008. When the monarchy was abolished on 28 May, 2008 by the Constituent Assembly and now Nepal officially name is 'Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal' (Mulmi; 2011).

As the briefly, the history of Hindu nationalism and constitution of Nepal in 1962 declared the nation as a Hindu kingdom "United by the common bond of allegiance to the Crown" which means Hindu nationalism is first for the common people in Nepal and for both a king as well as the people are the main principle of Hindutva<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it began the Panchayat system of self-governance in the domestic system in which the ruler of Nepal Mr. Mahendra Bir Bikram Sheh Dev implemented the policy of homogenized of nation. He recognized right of the people including the right to freedom of religion and expression as well as equality before the law. All the while, main policy was focus to promote of one national culture, one national language and one national dress (Jaffer, 2007). By the 1990s, when three-decade rule of autocratic monarchy. Government of Nepal came to reduce towards the Hindu nationalist, the political and cultural landscape of the country as transformation of internal system. The Constitution of 1990 acknowledged that the Nepali nation though stills a Hindu Kingdom was 'united by a bond of allegiance to national independence and integrity of Nepal'.

On the other hand, RSS is Hindu nationalist organization in India. It established on 27 September, 1925 and headquarters is located at Nagpur in Maharashtra. It established by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. At the present time, it is as along the dominant politics in India through this organization and on the other hand, Hindu is largest population in Nepal. Therefore, RSS has link the king Mr. Mahendra who was Hindu nationalist since 1960s decade when Nepal declared a 'Hindu Nationalist State' (HNS). Since, RSS has

<sup>2</sup>Hindutva is a nationalist ideology, based on a modern day version of centralized intolerant Hinduism. It has nothing to do with a historical tradition of spiritual practices that we call Hinduism.

connection from Nepal and recently, came an earthquake in April 2015, RSS help to Kathmandu in the large field through human and financial support. Approximately, 20,000 RSS workers participating in relief activities in the earthquake ravaged at Kathmandu<sup>3</sup>.

In contemporary time, on 28 May 2008, Monarchy system in Nepal ended by the Constituent Assembly, since 2008 politically structure of Nepal is functioning within secular and Federal Democratic Republic (FDR) framework. At present, President of Nepal, Ms. Bidhya Devi Bhandari is the head of state and Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Khadga Prasad Oli is the head of government at the present time. Executive power is exercised by the Prime Minister and his cabinet and the legislative power is in the hands of Constituent Assembly<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. The concept of Hindu Nationalism

Hindu Nationalism is broader concept which taking for understanding the concept of Hindu nationalism is in two aspects first, the theoretical perspective and second, practical perspective. From the theoretical perspective, there have given several author definition of Hindu nationalist like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1996) was a freedom fighter, poet, writer, social reformer, historian, dramatist, political leader and philosopher during Indian national movement of freedom and main leader also after independence of India. He provided definition of Hindu nationalism as an ideology. He consider of Ideology under Hindutva rule and regulations. It has been accept to known as the 'de facto' concept. He did not draw a plan of action by which Hindus nationalism provide the platform of equal and liberty for all people, not any force on the Muslim religious and other religious, basically he saw under the Hindu nationalism of 'Actual' or 'Real' (Jaffrelot 2007). Veer Savarkar's nationalism did not conflict among the people of society, and in fact complex with his humanism. It given affords the opportunity of all people for progress and development with the human dignity. And other popular social reformer and Hindu fundamentalist is Dayananda Saraswati towards other religions. He was Indian and declared the definition of Hindu nationalism as the Vedic religion is the only true belief revealed by God<sup>5</sup>. That view is therefore central idea of religious philosophy which this is most important of any religious to understand this concept. It cannot understand his attitude towards other religions without it.

Benedict Anderson's main work on nationalism is the popular '*Imagined Communities*' in 1983. He work to understanding the concept of the nationalities and nationalism as cultural attraction of a particular sort, defining of the nation as an imagined community, in the sense that it generates a deep, horizontal comradeship regardless of actual inequalities within the nation and despite the fact that it is not a face to face community (Heywood, 2011).

From the practical level definition of Hindu nationalism is very attractive in the two aspects; first, moderate involved positioning itself as a patriotic party or action on

<sup>3</sup><http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/that-s-not-us-rss-steps-in-to-deny-nepal-rescue-act-tweet/story-4TdKhmt0bEBGyYySi5NxSJ.html> Accessed on 22 October, 2018

<sup>4</sup><http://www.weallnepali.com/blogs/Bijaya-Ghimire/nepalipoliticalhistory>

<sup>5</sup><https://truthabouthinduism.wordpress.com/2014/05/12/swami-dayananda-saraswati-as-a-hindu-fundamentalist-and-nationalist/> Accessed on 22 October, 2016. Accessed on 22 January 2019.

behalf of national unity and the protector of poor people. And other hand, second, more militant based on the promotion of an aggressive form of Hinduism. It has the symbolized by the campaign to raise the issue of national language of Hindi and protecting of cows (by banning cow slaughter), actually, according to Hindu religion cow is as the holy animal. Therefore, they demand to make the law of protecting the cow from the government.

### 3. Historical Background of Hindu Nationalism in Nepal: As the Multicultural Analyses

From the historical perspective of Hindu nationalism in Nepal, political reforms instituted in 1990s then non-Khas nationalities began asserting their own national identities within the boundaries in the state. A new constitution was introduced that year, confirming Nepal as a multinational (*bahujati*) and even multilingual (*bahubhasika*) country. The constitution, however, retained the Nepali (Khas) language as the official ‘national language’ and Hinduism as the sole ‘state religion’ according to Hindu nationalism and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Although the constitution provides liberty for ethnic non-Khas and non-Hindu religious communities to express themselves against the domination of the ‘one nation, one language, and one religion’ policy of the government the minority languages and religions remain without legal protection.

The major demands of the non-Khas nationalities in Nepal are including the right to autonomy, political representation in the central government, equal rights for their languages in the courts, in education, and in local and central administration and an end to the domination of Hindu religion and culture. The ‘All Nepal Nationalities’ Organization’ a Maoist sister organization to the Communist Party of Nepal, has presented the most radical demands, including the right of secession for all nationalities in Nepal. The influence of the Maoist Party, engaged in a violent ‘people’s war’ for more than six years, is increasing throughout the country and threatening its stability.

As the ruling class manipulating state institutions, Brahmin-Kshetris are the target of other nationalities’ criticism. The latter find it insulting to be categorized alongside low-caste Hindus. Mainstream scholars also define these groups as ‘tribes’. There are more groups in Nepal like the Tamangs, Gurung, Sherpa, Magars, Newars, Limbu, Tharu, Rai. These groups do not accept because they understood as the small ‘ethnic groups’ or ‘minorities’. They prefer to be called ‘nations’ and believe they fulfill all the criteria of nationhood for example, language, religion, culture, territory and a history of independent statehood, which would be attained over rights to withdrawal were granted. (Swamy; 2003) All these groups now accept the Nepali word *janajati*, translated as ‘nationality’ in English. In 1990, when eighteen of these groups gathered to generate a forum called Nepal Janajati Mahasamgha, they translated it as the ‘Nepal Federation of Nationalities’.

Table No. 1

#### History of Hindu Nationalist in the context of Ideology

Period	Polity	Ideology
Pre-unification (before 1769)	petty kingdoms	Hindu kingship,
Shah (1769-1846)	patrimonial, strong	authoritarian and autocratic, strongly

Rana period (1846-1951)	hereditary prime ministers	Hindu, supporters of British Raj kings as powerless figureheads
Panchayat (1960-1990)	party less democracy	Nepal as Hindu Nation and development of nation-building
Multiparty (1990-2002)	Constitutional monarchy	Development, liberal, hesitant moves towards multiculturalism;
Regression (4/10/2002-April 2006)	short-lived governments	King Gyanendra attempts to revive panchayat-style king-led polity, leading to collapse of 1990 Constitution
Reconstruction (April 2006 onwards)	contested: interim constitution pending constituent assembly	power-sharing between the seven-party alliance (SPA) and the Maoists, under an interim constitution assertive multiculturalism

Source: <http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/midea/pdf/darticle3.pdf>. Accessed on 10 January 2019

This is new phenomenon in Nepal of the search for National Identities as the repeat by Hindu nationalist and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). But has deep roots in the past since 1769, present-day Nepal was composed of small independent states and principalities of different 'nationalities'. The Gorkhali king Prithivi Naryanan Shah, forefather of the present ruling dynasty in Nepal, embarked on an expansionist campaign, bringing several small states and principalities under the control of Gorkha. His successors continued the expansionary policy, which came to an end only after their defeat in a war with the British East India Company (1814- 1816). In 1930s, the Nepalese government began to approve the name 'Nepal' as a modern nation state (Burghart 1996: 255). In general, people of different origins within the country's borders continued to live together in peace over the centuries. However, this ended when groups began to feel discriminated against by the state.

Soon after the Gorkha conquest of 1769, the Gorkhali king Prithivinarayan Shah proclaimed his country to be the 'True Land of Hindus' (Asali Hindustan). In 1854, Jangabhadur, the first Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. Rana, introduced written laws based on Hinduism, dividing the country hierarchically and subordinating all other nationalities to the Brahmin and Ksetris (Khas) ruling class. In 1960, King Mahendra, introduced the party-less political system called 'Panchayat', which proclaimed Nepal the only 'Hindu Kingdom' and 'Nepali or Khas the only official language'. Thus, king Rana ignore its multi-religious, multinational, multicultural, and multilingual character.

The Hindu ruling population of Nepal articulates its nationalism by approach of Indian Hindu nationalists, whose bright forms have been discussed by several scholars (Van der Veer 1994; Jaffrelot 1996). Thirty years of Panchayat politics (1960-90) channeled support to Hindu religious organizations such as the 'World Hindu Council or Visva Hindu Parisad (1964). This organization talk about ideology of Hindu and ongoing the process or activities are remain custom of Hindu religious in the world level especially in the country of Nepal and India in the South Asian region. (Smith; 2015)

And other hand, Visva Hindu Parisad while ignoring the issues of minorities and their rights. Only encouraged by Hindu fundamentalists, Nepalese Hindu extremists are gaining thrust. They have taken inspiration from Indian organizations like the 'Hindu god Siva's Army' (Siva Sena) to form groups like the 'Cows Welfare Association, Nepal'. It is noteworthy that a person found guilty of killing a cow is condemned to capital punishment by Nepalese law.

#### **4. Hindu Nationalism and RSS on the Domestic Politics of Nepal**

At the present time, there has democratic pattern in Nepal since 2006. All politicians too claim to stand for democracy, just as they claim to be building the nation and seeking 'all-round development'. Even King Gyanendra, when attempting to rule without political parties in order to turn the clock back to the Panchayat period of his father King Mahendra, claimed to be undertaking so in order to create democracy on stable foundations. They claimed inspiration from his grandfather, King Tribhuvan, 'the architect of democracy' while actually following the model of his father (Gellner; 2007). There are and have been challenging as well as radically incommensurable ideals of democracy in Nepal, a clash of visions that led to many deaths and great turmoil in the civil war that wracked the country between 1996 and 2007. Speaking broadly, four main ideologies can be identified, with four different understandings and claims about the implications of democracy of Nepal: first, monarchy, second, liberal, third, leftist, and finally, multicultural. Of these, the first is now declining system, but was for many years powerful and convincing to many. Second people that are who not demand the movement for Hindu nationalism and only belief on the progress of the people or welfare of the people. Third, leftist believe on the ideology of Lenin and Marxism. And the finally, in recently this has emerged in the context of Nepal democracy and the belief on the secular, but promises to play a large role in the Constituent Assembly elected on 22 November 2007 that provided all processes are laid in place and some degree of security can be guaranteed.

From political and social perspective, the people of Nepal has travelled a very long way since one decades. In 1947, when India and Pakistan became independent, Nepal was ruled by the century old hereditary and autocratic Rana aristocracy. The Hindu caste hierarchy still had the backing of law and the state's oppressive machinery. Hinduism of a traditional sort was still the state religion which meant that pro-democracy conspirators could be tortured as well as hung in the year 1941, the Brahman member of the Praja Parishad, Tanka Prasad Acharya, though debarred from his caste and his property removed, could not be killed. (Hachhethu 2005) The literacy was around 5 percent. On the other hand, the Ranas' subjects were expected to act out their subordination in the most humiliating ways. The political parties were banned during regime of Maharaja Rana. A kind of stability prevailed for 30 years, but it could not last. There were severe contradictions between various countervailing processes and forces: (a) the regime rhetoric of democracy, equality, and development for all, (b) the practices of increasing marketization, universal education and open borders, (c) continuing respect and exceptions of the people made for the royal family and those connected to them, and (d) the facts of massive and increasing inequality, especially between towns (and in particular the capital, Kathmandu) and the rural hinterland (Gellner 2007).

The Janajati movement is driven, fundamentally, by anti-Brahmanism and the overwhelming presence in public life of Bahuns<sup>6</sup>, revealed by the 2011 census to be only 13 percent of the population. The politics, the judiciary, the universities, and the civil service are all dominated by Bahuns. One attempt to quantify this looked at the leaders of the judiciary, civil service, trade unions, and so on, and found that Bahuns and Chetris together had two-thirds of the jobs, whereas hill Janajatis with 22 percent of the population had just 7 percent in the employments, and Madhesis with 31 percent of the population. From the dalits perspective according to Hindu cast system that is the dalits with nearly 9 percent of the population had just 0.3 percent of the jobs. These inequalities were labelled the 'hidden facts' of Panchayat Nepal by Gopal Gurung, and he was imprisoned in 1988 for publishing them. After 1990 he founded the Mongol National Organization which seeks to build a non-Brahman movement that can take power. Unusually, it is an activist movement with rural, not urban, base, and has managed to capture power in some local administrative units in the far east of the country. This small data trying to show that it is real situation of as the hegemony of Bahun or Brahmin (Hindu people) on the name of Hindu nationalism in Nepal. RSS organization has been assisting them to promote Hindu ideology.

#### **5. Transformative Perspective of Nepal: A Positive Development in South Asia**

Nepal is well engaged in a process of transformation, emerging from serious governance challenges in 2006 to strip power from king Gyanendra and to bring the Maoists down from the hills and into government system. These developments responded to deep positive development in society or in the region over the previous ineffective and occasionally brutal political order and over the poverty with which most of the country continued to be afflicted.

Nepal located in the south Asia region and between two powerful neighbours, India and China, 'like a yam between two rocks and often feels empowered economically and other strategic point of view relations between India and Nepal, both have relation since 1947 with a strategic treaty of Nepal with India, it has historical links also between India and Nepal (Lamont 2010). There experienced the tensions and interdependencies. In the South Asian countries has links of geography, historical, economic, political, religious and socio cultural nature as well as constant flows of population across borders, conspire to create deep attachment but also deep resentments. The open border, national treatment granted to the nation of the other and familial links underline the exceptionally intense relations between the two sovereign but have also contributed to frequent friction at the political and diplomatic level, including an economic blockade imposed by India against Nepal in 1989. Thus as often with a large neighbor of a small and proud country, India justifiably feels at times that it cannot win.

Of course, India also needs a positive agenda in Nepal. It could be more proactive and supportive of economic renewal for strengthen democracy as well as civil society in Nepal. India's approach too often appears reactive to events on the ground, suggesting a lack of actual strategy vis-à-vis this important and not as troubled neighbor. This is all the

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<sup>6</sup>It is translated as the Brahmin in English. This is high cast in the Hindu cast system.

more significant in a period marked by the abandonment of power by the Maoists in Kathmandu in early 2009<sup>7</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion

Ever since the historical relations between Hindu nationalist groups of Nepal and the rulers of Nepal came to sudden end in 2006. When Nepal was declared 'secular state and Federal Democratic Republic (FDR)', the rhetoric of the Nepalese Hindutva groups has turned more hostile than ever before. The initial reaction to secularism was seen in the form of protests, especially in the Terai region, and in comments that seemed to be indirect threats towards the religious minorities. The Hindutva groups' argument and continues to protest, that Nepal is a secular country, inter-religious relations will live together because of the minorities' activities will no longer be controlled by the Hindu state. Thus, at present time Nepal is a secular state which cannot reject any person in the world. Therefore, Hindu people as well as organization of the Hindu nationalist should understand the principle of secular and democratic view.

The second reaction came after 2008 when monarchy was finally abolished in Nepal. The Sangh Parivar realized it needed to mobilize the people of Nepal, as its most important ally in Nepal was finally gone. If the pro-Hindutva forces want to rise to power, they now need to contest elections. The Hindutva's ideology advocates in Nepal, who had been drawing up strategies with their Indian allies, decided to abandon advocating the reinstatement of the Hindu kingdom, realizing that continuing to sideline with an unpopular ruler could hinder their attempts at political mobilization. Instead, they decided to concentrate on simply demanding a Hindu Rashtra, which still has quite a lot of support among people. Hindu nationalist organization including the Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal (RPP) and Shiv Sena Nepal (SSN). The groups most closely associated with the Indian Sangh Parivar (mainly the HSS and WHF) seemed to prefer a strategy of political pragmatism over ideological purity. These groups should respect the values and norms, principle of any religion which increase friendly environment with all together.

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<sup>7</sup>Nitin Sethi, 'Jairam for major shift at climate talks', *Times of India*, 19 October 2009.



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