

# **Civic Education**

**The Problems and Possibilities of a Democratic Public Life in Nepal**

**Dev Raj Dahal**

**Society for the Promotion of Civic Education in Nepal  
(SPCE), Kathmandu, 2002**

# Contents

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page No</b>
Foreword	
Introduction	3
The Context of Civic Education in Nepal	4
Critical Discourse on Civic Renewal	8
Civic Competence for Governance	10
Constitutionalization	11
Political Institutionalization	12
<i>Autonomy of Political Space</i>	12
<i>Accountable Political Leadership</i>	13
<i>Articulation of the Periphery to the Center of Global Village</i>	14
Building Social Capital through Socialization	14
<i>Family and Friends</i>	15
<i>Schools and Colleges</i>	15
<i>Public Institutions</i>	17
<i>Media and Opposition</i>	18
Democratization	19
Citizen-Centered Development	20
Conclusion	21
References	22
Index	24

# Civic Education

## The Problems and Possibilities of a Democratic Public Life in Nepal

Dev Raj Dahal<sup>1</sup>

*"We are the partners of this round sphere,  
Sharing in the one plate,  
We are the worshippers of sacrifice,  
We Nepalis, the citizens of the world !"*

Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota from "We Nepalis"

### INTRODUCTION

Universal citizenship is a distinct product of the modern state system--a state system that recognizes the political equality of citizens in the process of decision-making in *polis*. People are, however, neither born democratic nor are they all educated about their citizenship rights and duties. It is civic or political education that fosters youths' democratic attitudes, skills and knowledge to engage and work on important public issues and make democracy a way of life. Civic education aims to equip boys and girls for life in the public realm and engages them in the analysis of major rules and regulations of society, public and private institutions, actors and vital social issues enabling them to find ways to resolve social problems. The commitment of citizens to civic education means that each problem thus selected is of social significance. In this sense, civic education is a training for democratic citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Preparation for democratic citizenship requires that youths develop a habit of service, civic skills, and the competence needed for adequate civic action.

Carefully designed community work linked to classroom reflection can enhance the civic connections of students with the life of their communities. It is only by becoming active participants in civic life--being players, not spectators -- that a genuine sense of the empowerment of youth is attained. Youths learn more by the demonstration of successful examples or their "role models" in life than by rote learning. These examples provide them "four central components of civic learning--motivation, skills, knowledge and values--by employing all the relevant pedagogies" (Ehrlich, 1999:4). Informed and effective citizens are probably the only remedy for public cynicism and ignite a surge of interest about civic engagement. Civic education is democracy in action. It is a practice of cognitive liberation shaped by democratic theories. The role of a scientist, in this sense, should not be the separation and detachment of self from the public life but engage them in a dialogue, planning and social reforms.

---

<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful to Dr. Srikrishna Yadav, Dr. Peter Hering, Mr. Philip Hoffman, and Mr. Harka Gurung who provided the initial impetus for launching the debate on civic education in Nepal.

<sup>2</sup> "Productive citizenship" depends on the civic renewal of "service-based institutions," joined with schools, a nursing home, cooperative extension systems, hospital, public health departments, and a settlement house to promote grassroots civic involvement and change in institutional culture. Two concepts are central: *public work* and *commonwealth*. Public work means sustained public effort whether paid or unpaid by of people who undertake projects of civic utility. Public work highlights *stakeholding, ownership, accountability, and cooperative work*. Expertise is important, but the experts do not dominate. Rather they are part of a broad undertaking which draws out the talents of the community. Commonwealth is the notion that a society's richness is related to its public infrastructure--such things as parks, libraries, roads, bridges--but also to government and other institutions that serve public purpose" (Boyte and Kari, 1998:7).

The primary concern of civic education is to create "civic culture" committed to broaden and deepen democracy in the public and private life of citizens. The core content of civic education lies in establishing a golden rule of politics: "A good society requires an order that is aligned with the moral commitments of the members" (Etzioni, 1996:12). The new golden rule seeks to establish a balance between public order (collective goods) and individual autonomy (for the rational pursuit of private interests) of citizens. Public order may be attained in any regime that follows the rules of social conduct but individual autonomy of citizens is guaranteed only in a democratic system. Civic education, in this sense, serves to widen the relationships among individuals, groups, and nations.

There are broadly four realms of civic education. The first realm is the *socialization* of youth, that is, learning and awareness of children and youths about their families and communities, constitutional and human rights and duties and participation in social life. Socialization makes children and youth capable of becoming helpful, trustful, and respectful. The second is *participation* of citizens in the institutional life of the state, the market, and civil society and achieving collective consciousness. This is the phase for becoming civic-minded, and seeking social engagements such as helping the poor and disabled, making the neighborhood environment clean, involving oneself in literacy programs, organizing public meetings, cooperating in the promotion of social peace, moralizing the schools, etc. Participation in "a common educational heritage progressively tends to suppress differences of birth, status, profession and wealth and to unite the individual educated people to the basis of the education they have received" (Mannheim, 1936:155). The third is the *humanization* of the public life by which citizens develop an understanding of the national obligations beyond borders as well as the connections between locality, nationality, and humanity. And the last one is the development of their full *faith in democracy* and *acquisition of knowledge about civic competence*. This is the process of gaining access to, and influence over, every decision affecting their life, liberty, and property. In the course of reexamining the scope for accelerating the pace of civic education in Nepal the first part of this paper deals with civic education in the national context, the second part elaborates the emerging discourse of civic renewal in Nepal, the third part examines several crucial processes required for civic education, and the last part draws a brief conclusion.

## THE CONTEXT OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN NEPAL

Civics as an optional subject for IX and X grades existed in Nepal until the advent of New Education Plan in the early seventies when it was replaced by social studies in the high schools and *Nepal Parichaya* (Introduction to Nepal) was introduced at the intermediate level in colleges. With the dawn of multi-party democracy in Nepal in 1990 and promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal the same year, His Majesty's Government of Nepal modified the school course on social studies and college course on *Nepal Parichayay*. Nepal began its tryst with four processes of democratization: *political openness* for organization and expression; *breakthrough* in a number of social, economic; and political initiatives to create support groups within the larger population; *democratic consolidation* through social mobilization, electoral and development participation, and the regime's tolerance for protests and opposition; and *expansion* of the sphere of politics. The Preamble of the Constitution refers to the notions of sovereignty of people, governance on the consent of popular will, securing the people justice in the future and basic human rights for the people.

The "sovereignty of people" embedded in the Constitution implied an increase in the responsibilities of citizens. Sovereignty of people also implies that they are the legitimate source of political power and they cannot be reduced to the status of *raitis* or *praja* (subjects). This change has increased the need for civic education to enable the citizens to understand the direction, control, regulation, circulation, and representation of political power and its imperative to serve the public interest. Civic education articulates

the notion of citizenship rights providing each person equal dignity to participate in political decision-making. The Constitution also made multiparty, constitutional monarchy, and human rights inviolable aspects.

A number of political parties have been trying to offer political education to their cadres in their own ways, but the political education provided by them to train their cadres, supporters, and voters appeared insufficient. It was insufficient in the sense that party schools offered courses to justify their own policies and programs, highlight the importance of a particular party and criticize others rather than introduce citizenship values--the values of being a responsible member of the state and civil society. The general school curriculums of Nepal also do not offer much scope for the younger people to learn about the values, institutions, and processes of democracy. At the government schools, authority exercises enormous power through control over the curriculum, its contents, methods and coordination of educational activities. The bulk of the private schools, in contrast, focus more on conforming to the market standards and high-tech cat-walk than humanities, liberal arts, and national needs. Inegalitarian social and economic stratification and the unequal distribution of power in society primarily determine the school system in Nepal. High school policies generally emphasize math, science, literature, and social studies rather than civic skills and action. A sample survey of the course materials from Grade I through X reveals glaring deficits in both the content and methodology adopted. Another review suggests a steadily decreasing share of the social studies across the grades I-X as one precedes upward, a trend arguably objectionable (Aditya, 2001:1).

This essentially meant that in most of the Nepalese schools education has become *rote learning of textbooks*, closed, ritualized, and rigid affair to achieve *puretyain* (priesthood) rather than making it a conceptual and problem solving activity. Education thus starts from the *imposition of concepts and ideas by teachers, thought-control, indoctrination, and rigid conformity rather than active participation, dialogue, and ownership in the production and sharing of knowledge*. In a way, it can be called "banking education in which the riches of knowledge are deposited in the empty vault of a learner's mind" (Heaney, 1995: 4) leading to suppression of their power to argue, contextualize, and question the validity of knowledge. The results are: a culture of silence, social inaction, passivity, and withdrawal of youths from the responsibility of social life leading to "characterlessness," to use the concept of Karl Mannheim. Such education kills fundamentally the imagination, curiosity, inquisitive spirit, and creativity of students (Freire, 1985:2), and does not provide democratic and social consciousness.

Democracy cannot function if youths as "change agents" leave their society and let it stagnate. The need for civic education in Nepal was, therefore, acutely felt as successive governments preferred to confine themselves to being the "policy makers" at a time when public life began to fragment along the familial, class, ethnic, regional, communal, caste, and ideological lines. It was in such a context that the general-secretaries of the major political parties--Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist, Rastriya Prajatantra Party, and Nepal Sadbhavana Party--and public intellectuals realized five years ago the need to introduce civic education in Nepal (IDEA, 1997).

That same year, Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS) in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) organized the first seminar on "How to Educate Young Generation about Democracy in Nepal?" in Kathmandu involving schoolteachers, university professors, and government officials involved in social science education in<sup>3</sup> Nepal. A year later NEFAS-FES jointly organized workshops in five development regions

<sup>3</sup> The results of the baseline survey on civic education pointed out the following deficits: The schools have common set of activities; children are not equally involved in civic activities; the content is divided into do's and don'ts and practices varied significantly; public and private schools have different methods in the modes of rendering civic education to the common people; the notion of charity prevails among the people but the concept of rights in such education is poorly realized; and the education system is oriented more towards examination and neglect of the traditional social values rather than using them for civic knowledge and engagements (Koirala et al. 2002: 3).

of the country to discuss the contents of civic education and collect the necessary feedback from various sectors of the society to prepare a book on "Contemporary Nepali Society." A similar initiative was undertaken by the American Center in Kathmandu around the same time. The Higher Education Board of His Majesty's Government of Nepal also realized the need to introduce civic education as an optional subject into its curriculum.

Accordingly, in 1998 the Higher Education Board of His Majesty's Government of Nepal took the initiative to design a course on civic education under the title "Contemporary Society"<sup>4</sup> and circulated the idea to a number of 10+2 schools. As a consequence, two books have been prepared on the theme: *Samakalin Nepali Samaj* 1999 (Contemporary Nepali Society) by NEFAS and FES and *Civics in Nepal Course*, 2001 along with Teacher's Guide<sup>5</sup> by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and FES in cooperation with USAID. Meanwhile, the American Center provided needed materials to write the textbooks, facilitated training to potential trainers, and organized meetings of the donors and civil society organizations involved in fostering the idea of civic education in Nepal. Efforts are now also being made to train teachers to engage and teach several hundred students from schools in the program intended to develop civic knowledge, skills, and civic virtues for their meaningful role in public life. The curriculum of the "Contemporary Society Course" was designed to incorporate

- *Principles of Democracy and Knowledge about Constitution* (political structures of the nation, rule of law, separation of power, and checks and balances).
- *Rights and Responsibilities of Democratic Citizenship* (fundamental rights and duties, civic knowledge, civic skills, civic virtues, majority rule with minority rights, protection and promotion of public goods in society, etc).
- *Risks of Nepalese Society and Ways to Solve Them* (the principal means of civic education is to nourish harmonious forms of youths' development and thereby to reduce poverty, inequality, exclusion, untouchability, corruption, authoritarianism, social ills, violence, drug-peddling, ecological decline, etc).
- *Social Justice and Human Rights* (three generations of human rights, for example, civil and political rights; social, economic and cultural rights; and rights to development, empowerment of women and the international human rights instruments endorsed by Nepal).
- *Transformation of People into Public* (local self-governance, media, system of elections, political parties, NGOs, and civil society).

The formulation of this course has a certain purpose: to strengthen participatory democracy in Nepal by means of

- imparting political data (information) and knowledge (interrelationships of several concepts) in an impartial manner so that students perceive and analyze the political reality with their own vision, rather than the vision imported by their teachers, parents, and public authorities;
- offering perspectives to relate that knowledge to the empirical world of concepts and variables, even normative ideals for a better life to support their self-affirmation and articulation;

---

<sup>4</sup> The persons involved in formulating the curriculum were: Dr. Sri Krishna Yadav, Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan, Dev Raj Dahal, Lal Babu Yadav, Abdul Kayuum, Keshavanand Giri, Jagadish C. Regmi, Narayan Sharma, and Rishikesh Upadhyay.

- enhancing civic competence and scientific skills to grasp the ecological, social, economic, and political world of what is (facts) and what ought to be (values), thereby capturing the entire realm of politics;
- remaining closeness with everyday life of people and orienting the individuals toward civic action, and revelation of causes and consequences of problems and interrelationships between the life-world and political system;
- facilitating a constant research feedback between people and the political system that adapts to human norms and responds to the needs of people;
- stimulating dialogues and interactions among the people, public officials, and students to identify the risks of society and furnish ideas to solve them; and
- integrating civic education with other types of education and reinforcing the validity and reliability of knowledge gained through inquiry and innovating new ideas and concepts to reshape the democratic life of the people.

Civic education has intrinsic links with democratic citizenship for it improves the knowledge and skills of youths to participate in the affairs related to the family, community, and the nation. It links the word to the world and visualizes the real life of the public in the educational process of students. The participatory learning and action (PLA) method enhances experience by including children, women, poor, and others excluded in the process. It can also help in the construction of a rational culture thus making civic education inseparable from society and from a working life. Democracy differs from dictatorship in the sense that in the latter power is centralized while in the former it is diffused horizontally and devolved vertically to the lower tiers of local self-governance.

In theory, a separation of powers means reducing the prospects for its abuse and fostering the three essential aspects of democracy: "one relates to some basic minimum civil and political rights enjoyed by citizens, another to some procedures of accountability in day-to-day administration under some overarching constitutional rules of the game, and another to periodic exercises in electoral representativeness" (Bardhan, 1998: 3). Even this conventional formula is far from sufficient; for it cannot erect a balance among social, economic, and political powers. As a result, the enforcement of laws is subjected to self-interest orientation and arbitrariness. In the absence of a balance, the legislative, the executive, and the judicial elite senselessly continue to promote their corporate interests at the cost of the societal needs. In the new context of globalization, newer types of checks and balances are required among the other instruments of governance—the state, the market, and all the intermediary institutions, organizations, initiatives, and movements called "civil society."<sup>6</sup>

Due to a lack of civic awareness, the political leaders of Nepal are often caught in factional fights, even at the expense of weakening the authority of the political society to mediate and communicate between the state and citizens. And the boisterous behavior embedded in their political culture has often produced a politics of deadlock, confrontation, and mutual paralysis rather than mutual accountability, tolerance, and compromise. The crucial challenge for Nepalese politics thus lies in protecting the rights of minorities (even if its first-past-the-post-electoral system legitimizes majority rule) so that it can help the majority and minority develop a shared identity of *Nepaliness* and the vision of a common future. Most citizens find it easier to identify with individual leadership, not political parties. Due to the patrimonial nature of political leadership, Nepalese political parties have neither been able to become true representatives of the society nor responsive to the citizens' needs. Factionalism in the political parties has created a weak parliament and a weak parliament in turn has produced an unstable and weak government.

---

<sup>6</sup> Civil society "is a multitude of autonomous human associations, identities, networks and movements forged for the sake of protecting themselves from the arbitrary and unjust decisions of the holders of power and wealth and promoting their rational self-interest" (Dahal, 2002:10).

A project for democratization of the political parties is, therefore, necessary to liberate them from the mortal danger of defending "single truth." The mode of civic fellowship creates a public space without imposing any singular way of life. Partnership with civic associations requires responsibility and the acceptance of certain basic norms of ethical behavior. Diversity of thought and action is essential for the growth of individuality and creativity and erect an institutional safeguard so that leaders are held accountable to their promises. Likewise, effective punitive action must be brought upon the self-seeking leadership, whether corporate executives, bureaucratic or political ones, as they are still bound by the culture of clientalism and feudalism and, consequently, are disinclined to accept citizens' equality in the distribution of opportunities. The liberation of civil society from party control is equally central to managing the demand side of the political equation. It is not amazing that Nepal is finding it hard to provide elected governments that are effective, representative of diverse societies, and moderated by a legal system to be trusted by all. It requires building an indigenous civil society to enforce accountability and transparency of leaders' promises and actions.

Nepalese today find themselves in a process of cultural shift from the "sovereignty of the state" to the "sovereignty of the people," from representative democracy to participatory democracy, from equity to economic growth and from public monopoly of wealth to privatization of public property—a privatization that is thought to liberate the economy from democratic control. It was a kind of modernism that sought a break of ideology from the feudal mode of production to science and technology. In Nepal, however, the transfer of state assets to the private sector could not build a sound public economy conducive to either the modernization of mentalities or cultural adaptations. The new economy brought in by "information revolution" requires a new system of tax collection, investments, work and business start-ups, and the ability of the government to govern.

On the economic front, policy failures are manifest. In the face of crisis-prone statistics, the failure of post-multiparty leadership is *instructive*, because they started with soaring promises of empowerment of the people but with little delivery in poverty reduction, political empowerment, land ownership, and share in industrial enterprise and governmental jobs. The economic condition of Nepalese state is mired in deficit spending, stagnation, high unemployment, and grinding poverty. A large chunk of the government budget goes toward paying off enormous national debts that are mainly aggrandized by a self-seeking leadership with the complicity of the advisors and consultants who have ceaselessly flirted with "rational choice" schools. Lack of accountability in the proper use of foreign aid has also caused a drain of resources put up through donors' cooperation for strengthening "democracy, human rights, and good governance" in Nepal.

Can the democratic system cope with the internationalization of economies and societies in the days ahead? It can if a radical restructuring of politics is possible through effective civic education combined with the training of skilled work force to respond to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Knowledge about citizenship helps to distinguish *the citizens* from *non-citizens* and *foreigners*. The problems of citizenship and identities of native peoples have to be solved once and for all so that the *bona fide* citizens are not excluded from the citizenship and the enjoyment of fundamental rights. Both democracy and development are essentially embedded in the interrelationships of conditions both external and internal to a society. If the society is politically stratified with *proscriptive* and *prescriptive* norms in the enjoyment of opportunities, it cannot stimulate civic capacities for working collaboratively to create desirable change and even address the security concern of all the citizens. Empowerment needs decentralizing its power, authority, and resources and creating a mechanism by which citizens can leverage their decision-making power through the art of association and collective action.

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ON CIVIC RENEWAL

Modern organization is founded on the notion of "social contract" between the state and its citizens. The equality of citizenship not only challenges the privileges based on status and noble birth but also creates a basis for equal participation of all citizens in the governance process. The logic of Nepal's constitutional democracy has established the essential arguments for a system of civic rights and duties as well as the scope for the struggle of the marginalized people for social justice. These ideals provide nutrients to erect a solid boundary between the leadership class and different sets of citizens, foster their education and acculturation to civic spirit, prepare them for citizenship responsibility and builds their civic character. In a multi-cultural society like Nepal, youths' readiness to listen, respond to, and learn from each other's divergent experiences and perspectives is essential to engage themselves in the entire web of social and economic associations.

Civic education constitutes an active relation of politics to people's life and inaugurates a new regime of equality and brotherhood as opposed to unequal patron-client relationship. Nepal's traditional culture was built on the concept of duties of the subjects to monarch, *mohi* (tenant) to *jamindar* (landlord), *jajamans* to priests, children to their parents, and pupils to their teachers, not on equal fundamental rights and duties. Unfettered personal power built on such duties and party connections have undermined many of the civic institutions and government. Critical debates on civic rights and duties can be expected to rectify undemocratic anomalies, strengthen the bedrock of citizens' attachments with the polity and the state, and build a social and national consensus for policy coherence and concertation. They also help in the revival of the national spirit. A few questions can thus emerge pertinent for intellectual drill:

- How can the concepts underlined in the structural and normative foundations of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, such as directive principles, separation of power, checks and balances, fundamental rights, social justice, welfare state, etc, guarantee human security for all the citizens? Are the globalization and economic liberalization policies of the government consistent with these goals? It is often argued that democratic space exists within the nation-state. As citizens are losing control over their national economic, social, and political matters to global forces, the civic order of democracy is deteriorating. This has brought an authority crisis for the government and loyalty patterns of citizens to the state, political parties, parliament, and the institution of governance.
- In such a condition, how can democratic polity be effectively institutionalized in Nepal? Is it possible for the institutions of governance to remain inclusive when the vision of rebuilding the Nepali nation faces four crucial challenges: alleviating poverty, ending social exclusion, combating political alienation, and managing the post-modern form of popular ecological, gender, human rights, civil society, and social movements which are struggling outside the political space for equality and equity? How can democracy serve as a legitimizing instrument of national coherence in both the domestic and foreign policy matters and provide the citizens a shared collective identity? A live discourse on civic education is, therefore, needed on how Nepal's democratic institutions have imbibed civil liberties which inspired the democratic struggle while the state protects the heritage of the nation's syncretic culture and equips the citizens with the power to shape and reshape the vision of democracy that they and their institutional partners, such as political parties, media, civil society, and a host of associations, often reconstitute. The practice of democracy becomes dull and unresponsive if democratic discourses freeze in the public mind leaving the leadership free to interpret only those what they see and believe. A culture of silence is the fatal consequence of democratic deficit in such a situation.
- What are the fundamental values of citizenship, besides fundamental rights and duties? Citizenship begins with commitment to and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, national anthem, national flag, and social harmony in a spirit of brotherhood among all the people of the nation irrespective of religious, racial, linguistic, class,

caste, and gender diversities. If the values of citizenship are deeply internalized by the people, social conflicts are largely undermined and people take more personal responsibility for what is happening in their family, community, nation, and the state. A radical reconstitution of citizenship is, therefore, required to make democracy functional. In this sense, civic education to children and youths is expected to enable them to select the most workable of the choices that their polity offers to them and constantly protect their power of thinking, working, and creating everything the nation lives by.

Democracy cannot be explained merely in terms of rational self-interest, as many utilitarians believe. An application of absolutely utilitarian thinking destroys the ethical basis of democracy, weakens the political identification of the people, and increases citizens' responsibility without devolving power and authority to them. One has, therefore, to find a solution to the problem of what is to be done in the case of a clash between political rationality of democracy in the long-term perspective (the needs of citizens to survive and develop according to their own ideas, priorities, and decentralized governance) and the economic rationality of the market in a short-term sense (exchange, efficiency, and competition of interest relations and structures).

If *dharma* (institutional duties) that glues the social sectors of society for shared life is in decline, all that is left to political power cannot represent broad majorities and the power of the leadership becomes disproportionate to their representativeness. When power is disproportional to its representativeness, injustice is the outcome. In such a situation, how can the state ensure regulatory conditions that are acceptable to the majority of citizens? Civic education is, therefore, needed to situate citizens' interests in the realities of power and provide them cognitive services enabling them to judge the performance of their leaders on the basis of value criteria in terms of sustainable development, democracy, human rights, and good governance. Citizens also need a multitude of stable intermediary institutions to ensure their participation in the public life of the nation. These institutions are particularly valuable to bind all the members together, even the minorities and marginalized, for the national purpose. Social trust and concern for fellow citizens help those who are lacking something fundamental for their survival and a dignified life. Critical discourse on civic education equally evokes the voice reduced to silence through manipulative practices, misinformation, and ill rationalization and stimulates all of those intangible values and beliefs upon which democracy is grounded.

The duty of democratic leadership is to protect the weakest members of society, entitle them to their inalienable rights and equal opportunities of education, and economic and political participation. If the rights of citizens remain unenforceable, like party manifestoes, the vision of the society envisaged in the Constitution becomes a mere utopian imagination in which the horizons of popular hope and aspiration remains beyond people's reach and, consequently, rationalization of life-world suffers. The crucial civic task ahead for the polity concerns with the quest of bridging this growing hiatus in the words and deeds of political leaders and saving the polity from its performance crisis. The art of civic education must be utilized to exercise the power of the public for good governance--that is just, transparent, and accountable to a sovereign people. It is precisely the orientation of political, economic, and social actors to public interest that makes democratic stability both *possible* and *achievable*. Proper civic education helps in reforming the nation's political culture, strengthening its public institutions and articulating the democratic life of the public.

## **CIVIC COMPETENCE FOR GOVERNANCE**

To achieve the fruits of democracy, civic planning must capture the five crucial processes that strengthen civic competence for governance:

## Constitutionalization

A country becomes democratic not only through its constitution but also through the constitutional behavior of its leaders and citizens. Knowledge about the Constitution and rule of law among citizens, therefore, becomes very important. Democratic political processes maintain intrinsic links between the principles of political action defined in the Constitution and those of personal conduct of citizens and their leaders. The constitutionalization of the behavior of the state, the market, and the civil society, in this sense, can create a virtuous circle of democracy. The application of the Constitution in every sphere of national life is the primary goal of democratic governance. Citizens in general and their civic and political institutions in particular actively constitute vivid political life: a life of open argument and contestation. It is a life underlining the vision that defines the job of all those actors and provides playing fields and rules. The rule of law should not result in a situation using the *thalus*, powerful political class, as the classic Nepalese aphorism says: "Law exists for the Poor, Immunity for the Rich." In such a situation, the notion of political community built on a common agreement on law and a desire for mutual advantages between the leaders and the citizens suffers. "Civility without democracy" argues Stephen L Carter "is like dieting without discipline."

In Nepal, there is a dilemma in the constitutionalization of political power. First, the Nepalese state, the market, and civil society are deeply penetrated by the international system and have forged solidarity more with the outside forces than with the native citizens. As the Constitution became weak in domesticating the circulation of political power, it naturally caused societal denationalization. To beef up the idea of constitutional patriotism, the national forces must comply with the vision of the Constitution articulated through the Directive Principles and Policies of the State.

Second, the uneven level of support given by the various political parties to the Constitution has made it a highly "contested terrain." The multiple social, economic, and political identities competing for power, therefore, do not follow the constitutional rules of the game that encourage responsibility, ownership, and empowerment. Disharmonious socialization of party cadres and citizens on rival constitutional visions has consequently posed internal challenges to the integrity of the state and its polity to adapt in society. Civic education in such a context is urgently needed to provide knowledge to all the social actors, including the political leaders, party cadres, and elected representatives to make them act according to the constitutional vision, norms, values, and institutions. In a democracy where people are sovereign, it is the rule of law that glues the citizens to the public order and civic virtues. It is equally essential to bring the country to law and order and make it capable of rendering services to a community that will fight for the people's rights and interests. Law and order is fundamental to the nation's future. But, it would be "unfair to enforce the law unless it was part of a larger economic security program along social democratic lines" (Epps, 2000: 1).<sup>7</sup>

In Nepal there are some difficulties, however, in the realm of realizing the three classic public goods – namely peace and security, law and order and basic needs. Public order in Nepal has decreased due to the steady breakdown of democratic rule. In a multi-ethnic state like Nepal, uncontrolled social mobilization of citizens burdened by mass poverty continues to generate vicious political struggles among a myriad of interest and ideological groups for power and booty that overwhelm the fragile democratic institutions and processes. As citizens become more conscious of their identity, they demand political participation and seek recognition of their civil rights from the state. The question is whether the ruling Nepali Congress Party (NC) and a number of left, right and center opposition political parties and civic forces will respect the limits that the country's

---

<sup>7</sup> Ronald Dworkin argues, "It is wrong in principle for the state to deny people the right to work on terms they are willing to accept, in order to improve the economic situation of workers generally, unless it provides unemployment compensation or other relief...sufficient to make their circumstances plausibly as good as they would be if people held a job under the outlawed terms." (Quoted in Epps, 2001,1).

fledgling constitutional democracy sets on the power of the Nepalese state. Nepalese political parties often lack clarity of ideological divides that set the ground for legitimate clashes among multi-party contestants in a parliamentary system. This implies a need for mass civic awareness, for only such awareness can restrain the tendency toward social clashes and division. In other words, the leaders themselves need to be well versed in the constitutional rules of the game, before the Nepalese realize the benefits of multiparty politics. In any case, national integration does not emerge from a consensus of the interests and ideologies of political parties, but from the normative practices citizens generate to order their civic life in a new politics involving peace, freedom, justice, solidarity, and enhanced participation.

### **Political Institutionalization**

Institutions are the carriers of social memory and experience. They hold the leaders accountable to the present and future generation of citizens. Institutionalization of roles and responsibilities of organizations and actors provides consistency in decision-making, predictability in their behavior, and accountability in performance. It is a process by which organizations and procedures are governed according to the laws of the land rather than personal whims of leaders. In Nepal, many of the post-feudal institutions associated with the state require to be sufficiently secular or functional in serving the interests of public. The growing unaccountable political activism of many rights-based organizations have threatened to destroy public institutions and services due to their increasing politicization and polarization making it very difficult to identify shared interests. Policy failure in Nepal has emerged out of the contradictory models of operation of various political parties according to the objectives and programs of their respective political manifestos. These parties have become engulfed in deeply politicized crises with tendencies imperiling the autonomy of the elected government to act in a civic manner. If the elected government, the only democratic instrument of people's power in the public pursuit of common good and is constrained by democratic accountability becomes vulnerable to constant crises, the outcome can be imagined.

Over the past decade, the capacity of modern public institutions of the state to formulate and execute public policies has remained weak and, consequently, it has not been able to overcome the domination of workers, consumers and citizens. In order to achieve social justice and peace, poorer regions must grow faster than the national average and economically weaker citizens must have a larger share in the prosperity so that the "race to the bottom" is halted and the growing gap between the nation's poorest and the richest can somehow be closed. A number of factors, however render the institutionalization process difficult in Nepal:

*Lack of Autonomy of the Political Space from Social and Economic processes.* The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal has clearly laid out the autonomy of political space for citizens to compete for power, resources, and identity in a variety of institutional contexts. But, the increasing politicization and polarization of state institutions such as the police, the bureaucracy, public corporations, and educational institutions along partisan lines have, reduced politics to "social relations" and "economic transactions." This has weakened the autonomy of the political space to stand above *thulo manchhe*, the privileged social and economic elite and promote the delivery of public goods and services to ordinary citizens. This lack of autonomy of *raj* (state) *niti* (policy) from the powerful interest groups of society and *affno manchhe* (cronyism) and its continuous retreat from the society due to the ongoing 'People's War' are rendering the authority and capacity of government less and less effective in governance. An intensifying militarization of the state power for counter-insurgency operations, impunity of the human rights violators, and ugly political radicalization of the society are increasing the democratic deficit. All these processes have accompanied the problems of internal pacification of ethnic and regional groups, castes,

and class. The heavy reliance of political forces for survival on non-political territories -- for example, involvement of the army to restore security, law, and order and the attempt to introduce a harsh form of punishment through extra-constitutional forces and extra-judicial killing -- continue to generate *anti-political politics*<sup>8</sup> in the country leading to a Hobbesian 'state of nature.' Nepal needs a more directive welfare state, able to plan and act organically on behalf of the society as a whole.

*Weak Accountability of the Political Leadership.* The historical mode of urban-rural polarization has increased the distance between the political leadership and ordinary citizens, mostly peasants and workers. The "peasant, as the actual cultivator of land is compelled to share the major proportion of his produce with parasitic groups who have no role in production and whose income from the product is not available for use as capital in increasing agricultural productivity" (Regmi, 1999: Preface to the Second Edition). The Nepalese political leadership drawn mainly from the business, bureaucracy, and feudal power structure is pre-modern and pre-rational in its attitude and orientation and, therefore, incapable of getting along with those outside their own caste, clan, client, and relatives and accepting the people as citizens with equal rights and opportunities. Continuity of the traditional organic leadership structure of the Nepalese society even in the post-democratic phase suggests that the 'modern' governing leadership can never break its grip on traditional political culture of patronage and self-aggrandizement.

The "unwritten transcript" of society, rather than constitutional equality, governs the life of Dalits and women. The ineffectiveness of modern political leadership in dealing with massive corruption, rent seeking, concentration of wealth and the problems of law and order in the country reflect a rationality deficit in governance. In democracy, "the leaders must believe in the potentialities of the people, whom they cannot treat as mere objects of their own action; they must believe that the people are capable of participating in the pursuit of liberation" (Freire, 1993:150).

There is, moreover, a need to reduce the role of money in politics and create a condition of political stability by reducing the artificial contradictions among the socially non-representative characters of the political classes and their political parties -- preventing party leaders from frequently changing their allegiances from one political faction to another and migrating from the rural to urban areas and from political constituencies to Kathmandu where major decisions are made. This political class is deeply enmeshed in the culture of patronage, which hinders the prospects of democratic accountability and growth of a civic political culture. Without strong countervailing public opinion, watchdog institutions, and independent court, it is hard not only to enhance

---

<sup>8</sup> For the conception of politics to be adequate, it should involve the creation of a righteous space for the citizens to articulate and resolve issues of their concern. In this space, citizens can exercise their democratic rights and freedoms as well as include a variety of perspectives to deliberate on questions and seek answers. Politics is nothing but the processes involved in the execution of these public duties. Therefore, the *dharmā* (institutional duties) of politics is to serve the public. It is in this public sphere that citizens are motivated to question their leaders' accountability, remind them of their duty to society and the zeitgeist of time. Thus, the public sphere provides politics the legitimacy needed to make it the bedrock of *raj dharmā*— the rights and responsibilities of public figures to conduct statecraft. Politics is essentially public in the sense that the political sphere is shared equally by every member of the polity regardless of gender, wealth, class, or caste position or political power. It is not essentially a manipulative vocation. And, to the extent that it appears to be so, it is only those selfish politicians who make it a dirty game. When their numbers rise, politics gets mired in crisis. In Nepal, such a crisis has already led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the country and the suspension of fundamental rights and freedom of Nepalese citizens. It is a crisis whose roots lie in the malfunction of politics. If politics exclusively serves the private interest and exhibits apathy towards those who are not in politics, but who do make up the public sphere, it cannot become a matter of public or collective concern or, by implication, political. In no way does such politics treasure a common ground for citizens and leaders of all hues. To use the public trust for private goals is just as serious a crime against the public as any seizure of public property for private gain. Anti-public politics, therefore, becomes anti-political. Democratic politics intends to widen the public sphere as it is deliberative, participatory, public, inclusive, and transparent. Anti-politics, by contrast, is essentially individualist, exclusive, private, non-public, and opaque. Anti-political trends become contagious if institutional mechanisms are not geared to correct them in time, as has happened in Nepal.

accountability but also to check the abuse of power and test the legitimacy and effectiveness of the political class in their relationship with the citizenry.

*Articulation of Periphery to the Center of the Global Village.* In the context of rapid globalization, neither the local units can be independent of the national structures nor the national structures can become independent of the global system. Globalization has even made the local life of Nepal an intrinsic part of global citizenship in participation, communication, solidarity, harmonization, and collective action. The Nepalese societies are, however, dual in their character - largely rural and partly urban with a government which is essentially limited to the metropolitan core Kathmandu. Like the global system, the national government has a tendency to centralize power and opportunities by appropriating social surpluses of the rural periphery, its educated elites, commodities, money, and services. This has left the periphery devoid of 'critical mass' as change agents of society and weakened the base of meaningful citizenship.

One can easily detect the cultural gulf between the center and the periphery that makes it difficult to come to a common understanding about what 'being a Nepalese' means. Arbitrary rules and counter-structures imposed on local self-governing institutions have virtually deprived the elected officials of the requisite authority, power, resources, and the use of local knowledge for planning. Because of their closeness to local concerns, local institutions such as District Development Committees (DDC), municipalities, Village Development Committees, and Ward Assemblies can easily restore the notion of active citizenship if inclusion of these political units in the larger political body is accompanied by civic education and participation of youths, not just in voting but also in paying taxes and engaging in local affairs.

A macro-micro balance requires a greater devolution of authority and more control of the local government over taxation, spending, and natural resources. Governance in the modern context is shifting from its *monocentric* decision-making phase toward a *polycentric one* (the international system, the state, the market, and civil society) sustained by *multi-layered bodies*. Due to the lack of well-defined regulations on each level--national, district, electoral constituency, *Ilaka*, and village -- regarding who does what and how one gets paid for, there are the problems of collective action, the existence of federations and associations of local authorities notwithstanding. In a multi-level governance, the logic of collective action becomes multi-layered, derived from functionally differentiated institutional structures. The provision of constituency development fund and the focus on DDC as the locus of grassroots development has fostered a kind of patronage politics unleashing an anti-democratic spiral. The DDCs do not have popular mandate and, therefore, citizens cannot make them either transparent or accountable. As development laws, actors, institutions, and processes address techniques and practices for governing the citizens, there is a weak objective condition for the endogenous expression of popular power in decision-making. Local self-governance is, therefore, ill-equipped with its own distinctive art of governing the population which can hardly espouse the principles of ecological, gender, inter-caste, inter-generational, and inter-regional justice. Given the diversity of Nepalese society, it needs shared interests of all citizens in the multi-cultural mode of state consolidation.

### **Building Social Capital through Socialization**

Socialization is a process by which youths are cultivated to learn and accept the rules of conduct in a democracy. Learning means opening minds, awakening to the outside world, and inducting oneself into the political culture. Learning also means taking responsibility in the life of family, community, society, nation, state, and international community and

garnering social capital<sup>9</sup>. Individual citizens develop a sense of self-hood in the context of family, peer groups, communities, schools, media, religious bodies, and public institutions and cultivate their capacity to assume different roles in public life. In Nepal, there are a number of agencies for political socialization.

*Family and Friends:* The joint family system of Nepal makes family a strong institution of transmitting knowledge to a child. But, the "parent-child relationship in the home usually reflects the objective cultural conditions of the surrounding social structure" (Freire, 1993:135) dominated by the caste worldview. Parents are the children's first teachers. In most of the Nepalese families male folks hold the reigns of power. The initial phase of socialization centers more on children learning the bonds of love, affection, and attachments than authority of their parents. The authority and status of parents differ from those of Ward Chairmen, Chairmen of Village Development Committees (VDC) and mayors of municipalities, district leaders or members of parliament. The worldviews, values, and perspectives internalized become significant for shaping the attitudes and social, economic, and political behavior in an adult and the nature of political activities he or she assumes.<sup>10</sup> In orthodox families, the figure of a father is authoritarian who suppresses the spontaneous personality growth of his children and wants to mould them in his image and the custom and tradition he inherits. He completely discourages their critical thinking and the potentials dormant in them. In a less orthodox family, parents stimulate the inquisitiveness of their children and provide them exposure to understand the world of relatives, neighborhood, and community. Socialization "produces political attitudes, which in turn causes political behavior and underlies political structure" (Almond, 1993:16).

With the exposure of Nepal into the global processes of modernity and democracy, the Nepalese family system, the primary unit of socialization, is moving forward. This process is affecting parents' traditional relationship towards the treatment of boy and girl child and carrying the message of gender equality. Equal schooling opportunities for girls correlate with women's choices later in life about the number of children they have, their schooling and productive livelihoods. Some measures of women's rights on the inheritance of property have already been established in Nepal and they are stretching their public roles--in schools, social organizations, political parties, and civil societies from private housewives. Through a new style of civic engagements, Nepalese women are fighting for identity, equal power, and social justice to overcome their disadvantaged position.

Nepalese families have until recently acted as carriers of tradition, reference points to roots, and a sense of belonging. But due to the impact of universal norms of human rights, democracy, and communication, Nepalese society is shifting from *inherited* to *self-chosen*, *pre-rational* to *rational*, and patriarchal domination to a relationships based on social contract. As a result of these new forms of social mobility, the joint family system is breaking down with the emergence of the atomized nuclear family lacking in traditional community spirit. The broad social shifts underlying the decline of agricultural households, migration of youths in urban areas and abroad for job, postponing of marriage and child bearing, women working outside the home and the extension of life spans do point to the flexibility and complexity of Nepalese family arrangements.

Many children from the broken families and poor economic backgrounds are increasingly severed from their social roots and the social security that once their families provided. Some of them are converted into *kbates* (street children) while others are forced

<sup>9</sup> By social capital, argues Robert D. Putnam, "I mean features of social life--networks, norms and trust--that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (1995:664-5). The central premise of social capital is that social networks, resources and assets (though less tangible attributes such as power or potential) are common good available to all members of a community for their personal and collective well-being.

<sup>10</sup> "What develops is a person's increasingly informed, differentiated and inclusive understanding of within groups and between group commonalities and differences and a personalized awareness of how these understandings bear on one's everyday behavior" (Adams, 1997:40).

into child labor and are exposed to social risks of drug abuse, violence, crime, and alcoholism. Under the weight of new developments, people are shifting their membership links from *primary associations* such as families, relatives, social connections, caste, and lineage groups to *secondary associations* such as club, interest groups, voluntary associations, NGOs, civil societies, professional associations, political parties, and network societies at home and abroad for the satisfaction of their wants. New knowledge has provided people social mobility and new opportunities and the transformation of individuals and families from their primordial loyalties to civic institutions is strengthening the importance of citizenship among youths. The future requires wise investments, in human capital and things.

*Schools and Colleges:* Schools are the primary laboratories of democracies where children are exposed to the rationally manifest process of education, training, exposure, and complexities of life experience. At schools they learn how their rights undergo changes from child rights to citizenship rights and then voting rights to become candidate in various public institutions. But in Nepal schools are not uniform units of youth socialization for good citizenship and character. For example, the bulk of schools have become "disciplinary institutions" where teachers project themselves as "authority" figures--the ultimate source of knowledge --whose commands must be obeyed by students without critical self-reflection. Teachers and students rarely enter into discussion with adequate readiness to listen to, learn from, or be transformed by one another. Conformism to what teachers say is the conventional method of learning, which discourages the students to participate in the contestation of knowledge and preparation for the challenges of information-driven society. Civic education cannot simply be applied in an *instrumental* manner where youths are integrated into the education system and are indoctrinated to conform to the political system. It must have an *intrinsic* power to modify youths' perception about their "social knowledge" and enable them to critically and creatively deal with the reality.

The experience of transition into adulthood and full citizenship is shaped by factors of social and economic status, ethnicity, caste and gender as well as age variables. The role of schools lies in improving the capacities of the most talented students while cementing the common citizenship bounds required by Nepalese democracy. In this process, teachers should abdicate their monopoly on the truth or authority in knowledge and help the students apply skills and wisdom to conceptualize their problems and visualize their perceptions of themselves and their relations to society. The reconciliation of the *authority* of teachers with the *freedom* of students helps to overcome the problems of differentiation between teachers and students and makes them equal participants in the educational process.

The combination of conventional teaching and out-of-the-school approaches enables youths "to experience the three dimensions of education -- the ethical and cultural, the scientific and technological, and the economic and social" (ICE, 1996:8). Ivan Illich revealing the secrets associated with the fraud and salesmanship of schools argues for *de-mystification*, *de-professionalization* and *de-institutionalization* of education. He, therefore, advocates of the de-schooling of the society where all segments of the society affected by the decision-making on education are involved and says that the current search for a new educational wisdom must be reversed into the search for their institutional flexibility so that educational webs can "heighten the opportunity for learning, sharing and caring" (Gajardo, 1997:713).

Knowledge is neither separated from the social context from which it originates nor from the workings of political power, ideology, and interests, not even from the economic interests. It is not "something given or finished, but a social process that demands the transforming action of human beings on the world" (Freire, 1985:158). In Nepal's context, it is a transformation of the text of civic values into the national context that brings unity between the context and the text. Theoretical literature on civic

education can play a role in the critical realization of the process of social awareness and involvement of youth in dialogue with the people in "cultural action for freedom" (Freire, 1985:163). In this context, the deep-seated idealism of youths must be cultivated for their engagements in the voluntary sector--a sector that can serve a powerful medium to promote the values of citizenship. Volunteerism of youths in helping the weak, the poor, the disabled, the helpless, and the victims is also expected to revive civility in public life destroyed by the market materialism and statism.

The need for civic role "will grow, perhaps even faster, in respect to services that aim at *changing the community* and *act changing people*" (Drucker, 1994: 168). Connecting classrooms to the context of society and library to Internet helps youths to make informed choices and to catch up with the changes in the nature of work and in the demands for skills and knowledge. Youths are less expected to become desk-officer than soiling their hands and devoting their minds in the awakening and renewing the life of society. The cultural diversity, and the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Nepalese society must be a starting point for granting civic education to children and youths--an education that inculcates the values of tolerance, trust, reciprocity, and cooperation without undermining their creative potential to innovate and adapt to technological changes.

Citizenship in a broad national context implies the willingness to contribute to one's own country and making a difference in one's own community, in one's society, in one's country (Drucker, 1994:171-2). Compartmentalized education in the colleges and universities seeks to promote the acquisition of domain-based knowledge, which does nothing for enhancing civic qualities and the ability of students to engage in social services. They do not bear transformative vision and seek to transform partisan politics into civic lessons of consensus building, conciliation, compromise, and shared responsibility in social creation. The university system,<sup>11</sup> isolated as it is from the place of work and confined to abstraction and conceptualization of theoretical knowledge, must develop the expertise necessary to facilitate communication with the rural society at large, revive the ideals of National Development Service (NDS), and ignite the civic spirits of youths for voluntary works. It must serve as an anticipatory institution to detect the unfolding of global developments in values, knowledge, technology, and culture and help native citizens prepare themselves for safe adaptation in the international community. The university education, in this sense, facilitates the process of global citizenship by evoking, extending, and legitimizing the national potentials.

*Public Institutions:* Social attachments of youths to a variety of interactive civic and political institutions are important for finding suitable roles in the democratic system. Initially, the civic world was embedded in locally active membership associations. With democratization and renewed knowledge about citizenship, the focus of politics is becoming oriented more and more towards building the community at the levels of national governance. Accordingly, the edifice of civic patriotism, brotherhood, and sacrifice of citizens is stretching into membership in a myriad of interest-based associations, federations, and new modes of social movements transcending conventional politics.

---

<sup>11</sup> The universities would contribute to educational process by diversifying what they offer:

- "as scientific establishments and centers of learning, from where students go on to theoretical or applied research or teaching;
- as establishments offering occupational qualifications, combining high-level knowledge and skills, with courses and content continually tailored to the needs of the economy;
- as some of the main meeting-places for learning throughout life, opening their doors to adults who wish either to resume their studies or to adopt and develop their knowledge or to satisfy their taste for learning in all areas of cultural life; and
- as leading partners in international cooperation, facilitating exchanges of teachers and students and ensuring that the best teaching is made widely available through international professorships" (ICE, 1996: 9).

Some of them are class-based such as the political parties and trade unions; others are anti-institutional and non-class based such as ecological, peace, gender, anti-nuclear, groups etc; and still others are civic federations of indigenous people, cultural associations, federations of local government authorities, human rights organizations, etc, engaged in a modicum of representative governance. "Strong networks of association lead to a stronger sense of representation, greater political efficacy and enhanced faith in the possibilities of politics" (Dionne, Jr.1997:7). New socialization presumes to connect citizens to political power and embodies fellowship in occupation and civic enterprise and, consequently, erodes the existing inequalities of gender, caste and class relations. The interactive model of some locally rooted cross-class voluntary associations has helped to generate secular consciousness to rub off the existing fatalistic positions of people.

In this context, "a high sense of civic competence is especially relevant to open, democratic systems, where the effort to concert action depends almost entirely on the voluntary participation of citizenry rather than on coercion" (Rosenau, 1980:100). Folk societies of Nepal are still blinded by the irrationality of tradition and are removed from civic obligation as they are caught in the cocoons of primordial attachments. Local community, the government, and international community each have a responsibility to initiate educational reform for the education and training of young people in civic education. Only then citizens can develop a habit of obedience to constitutional norms. Nepal urgently requires a public policy debate for renewing its civic life, so that new socialization patterns can build public confidence in the institutions of governance and foster social exchanges, cross-fertilization of ideas and sharing of cultures essential for social integration.

Socialization is a process of learning about the art of democracy, about the relevance of public and private institutions, and about the transformation of a people into the public. It helps one to enlarge the sphere of identity from an individual person to a citizen and enables one to understand the power dynamics of the multiple forces of the society--from the families, peer groups, schools, and political parties to the global power game. Such a view presumes that individuals born in a family are not encapsulated in isolation. They expose themselves to the unpredictable changes of time and learn to leverage their relationship with the holders of power as well as with several networks, institutions, associations, federations, NGOs, and civil societies outside of family. The socialization process conceives a condition in which communication and participation are wholly free of domination and oppression. It is a process of forming individual identities and strengthening democratic public life.

"Self-identities are created and sustained in the context of a cultural community which supplies us with ways of feeling, speaking and understanding" (Tucker, 1998: 51). During this phase of citizenship youths often look for concrete examples from their superiors and public figures. If leaders govern in the spirit of the Constitution, they become not only a "role model" for future citizens of the country but can also lift the nation to a new era of inclusion, peace, and social justice. The animating vision of promoting civic education is expected to give each youth the means to take full advantage of civic competence, efficiency, excellence, and achievement to participate in the knowledge-driven society. The concept of lifelong civic education reconciles three components: "*competition*, which provides incentives; *cooperation*, which gives strength; and *solidarity*, which unites" (ICE, 1996:4).

*The Media and Opposition.* A less servile media--both electronic and print--are powerful tools to engage citizens in matters of public opinion formation and socialize them into political life by being heard and heeded. Improved communications provide people to make more informed choices, and defuse the rumors that often breed false consciousness. In Nepal, however, the critical press frequently suffers from the intolerant attitude of the government while the official media is habitually suffering from the credibility problem as they are disciplined and constrained by the power of the government to punish. Only the

free media can become a forum for variously contending discourses to a focus on real, acting citizens and provide critical information to them to make choices in public life. While partisan Nepalese media tend to inflame, rather than enlighten and edify the "we" spirit<sup>12</sup> and confuse the readers' minds, independent media have begun lending a voice to the voiceless and are increasingly testing the boundaries of what is allowed even during the state of emergency.

The media have also become a means to establish transparency and openness, a way to look into the political process and see who is deciding "what" and "how" in the commanding heights of political, economic, and social power. These are the virtues that help to improve the capacity of the public institutions to manage *voice* and *participation* as well as exert competitive pressures on the government. A less submissive media, greater public accountability, and judicial independence deserve importance in the dynamics of democracy as they help to establish people's basic right to know, to be informed about what the government is doing and why. Various types of interpretations of *the right to information*, among others, have raised a question mark regarding public access to decision-making, certainty of law, consistency in its applications, and its rightness. Only a just system of courts with the attributes of objectivity, stability, and autonomy can enrich the life of the majority of citizens.

Youths not only learn but also engage in the dynamics of politics through media education. They learn how to collect ideas, make speeches, write letters to the editor, communicate social issues, and realize the benefit of becoming public figures. It is only through civic education that the aggressive targeting by advertising agencies and producers of children and teenagers as consumers of their products can be avoided. It also inculcates youths to distinguish between the government and opposition and the role of opposition in a democracy including the inclusion of minorities. Governance in Nepal inherits a tradition of giving primacy to majoritarian policies over minorities and opposition, thereby enforcing centralization, exclusion, alienation, and rebellion in the country. Granting the opposition a choice only between surrender and rebellion is dangerous. It is the freedom of opposition that proves the democratic credentials of any civil society. Democratic politics often seeks an equilibrium between order and freedom, tradition and modernity, organization and aspirations, and the government and the opposition including the media that help citizens in forming their political will.

The cultural contents of socialization, so far expressed in Nepal, have involved the state ideology of *Nepalization*, *Sanskritization*, and indigenization, though a post-modern form of politics is marking a coherent cultural shift from the pre-rational toward the rational choice of citizens, espousing universal norms of modernity, democracy, human rights, and globalism. But this also continues to augment the growth of *social pathologies*--which spring when traditional forms of socialization and social integration break down and new relationships do not emerge to take their place. The affinity of citizens with local knowledge, resources, and cultural foundation, which were traditionally built with the state, has been eroded. The abdication of power by the government over national economic policy, in favor of markets and international institutions, has weakened the scope for suitable "national solutions." A strong socialization of youth to reclaim the people's sovereignty over economic policy and new civic virtues is one key to preventing the refeudalization of the public sphere and to promote the democratization of public life as well as humanization of the process of development.

Strengthening of state capacity, however, does not mean the bureaucratization of public life or the enslavement of the society by the state. Enhanced state power is essential to bring a social revolution to an end. The state should occupy the commanding heights of the national society because citizens claim their rights on the state on the basis of their

---

<sup>12</sup> This is a conception of citizenship which, "through a common identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality, aims at constructing a "we," chain of equivalence among their demands so as to articulate them through the principle of democratic equivalence" (Mouffe, 2000:155).

membership of the state, not on the basis of their membership of the market, political parties, or civil society. While fair election can rationally motivate the assent of all citizens and make governance action legitimate and accountable, a clear sense of citizenship makes democracy smooth and stable. Reinvigorating public life requires a new vision of leadership appropriate to national needs and *sanatan dharma*, the spirit of this age. New leadership must be participatory rather than status-bound and democratic rather than apolitical or anti-public, even hereditary.

### **Democratization**

There is a strong correlation between civic education and democratization. The educational process of civics provides four pillars--"learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be" (ICE, 1996: 7). These pillars help youths to enjoy their full-fledged citizenship rights including the right to participate in every decision affecting their life, liberty, and property and in performing their duties sincerely. Democratization process helps to expand the social base of political power and provides all citizens access to the institutional resources of the state, enlarges the public sphere, improves interpersonal relations, and consolidates common identities. It underlies an institutional mechanism that determines "who gets what" out of the political process and additionally unites the economy with the mental process. The centerpiece of civic education is the art of generating a strong national consciousness, making judgements, and taking public action. The iron rules of democracy reject paternalism and motivate citizens to speak, act, and engage in public life for themselves. Democracy consolidation is a purposeful process in which "democratic forms are transformed into democratic substance through the reform of state institutions, the regularization of elections, the strengthening of civil society and the overall habituation of the society to the new democratic rules of the game" (Carothers, 2002:7).

In order that democracy safeguard the reason for its own existence and not become a tool of politicians, civic education must enable youths to articulate the voices of ordinary individual citizens and their chances of personal and collective improvement. Concentration of power in the circle of families, interest groups, and factional coteries in Nepal has made life burdensome for the majority of the people. Law and order, as forces of public authority, have not reasonably facilitated the circulation of elites to expand the social base of politics. The policy of democratization, therefore, requires the development of sound policies that would ensure equality in the access to power and resources, entitlements, and social opportunities as demanded by the poor majority of diverse social and geographical origins.

Democracy provides the citizens a greater level of individual initiatives and creativity to ensure that they properly manage their affairs according to the laws of the land and realize their aspirations, potentials, and interests without undermining state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Effective support and cooperation from the advanced countries to the principles of equity, equality, reciprocity, and cooperation can greatly enhance the prospects for good governance. Undoubtedly, the only remedy for the democratic deficit in the country can be the growth of a vibrant "public" firmly entrenched in the democratic process.

### **Citizen-Centered Development**

Civic education is at the heart of personal and community development. The economic mission of Constitution is compelling, for it provides ground rules for *national economy* by developing enterprises -- public and private, *equitable distribution of economic gains on the basis of social justice* seeking to achieve national self-reliance, a just system, and conditions of welfare. Development is not just about right policies regarding citizens at the center; it is also about regaining ownership and recapturing their interest and skills to participate in a

policy culture and engage in production, trade, and occupational activities. It must have a liberating potential where the values of development are tested for the democratic attributes of inclusiveness, openness, equity, transparency, and accountability in public institutions. Improving people's civic knowledge in the key priority areas of development--agricultural, industrial, service or informational -- and facilitating the exchanges and investments central to economic life are essential.

Democracy intrinsically makes an assumption that citizens should have the rights to make choices and should share fairly in their nation's wealth. "Democracy helps development through accountability mechanisms it installs for limiting the abuse of executive power, and provides a system of periodic punishments for undesirable government interventions in the economy and rewards for desirable interventions" (Bardhan, 1998:13). The economy is the domain of virtue and constitutes the material basis for autocracy. Its democratization is, therefore, essential for it to serve the interest of the majority by means of providing equality in the control over resources.<sup>13</sup> If equality is the major theme for educational development, why does the logic of economy determine the notion of "public" and "private" education and produce their attendant effect on the growth of two-class citizens subsuming the legitimacy of existing class and caste-bound mentality in public life? If the citizens remain unequal in availing the opportunities, how can they work together in the task of nation - building? How to protect the just and democratic order of national society in the context of globalization thus becomes the central challenge for civic education.

Why does chronic hunger proliferate in Nepal in the midst of plenty? Hunger proliferates where private wealth means nothing in terms of public responsibility and public policies are not sincerely implemented to lift those left behind in the desperate underclass that poverty breeds. There must be something wrong in the economic rationality model and in the structure of political rule itself for this to happen. This implies that Nepalese governments do not follow the norm of golden rule --a rule that arbitrates between capital and labor. It is rather the capital that has the gold and formulates rules to subject the citizens to its preference. If capital reigns supreme, sovereignty of the people is reduced into mere consumerism and the nation-states into economies. As capital flexes its muscle, democratic governments are left to wonder about whether they can define their own destinies and those of their citizens. A constitutional state must ensure a sense of freedom and human dignity, not only for its all the citizens but also for the sustenance of its own autonomy from the domestic interest groups of the society and sovereignty from external domination. A production revolution, rather than a consumption culture or a kind of unilateral adjustment, strengthens the virtuous cycle of development because it intrinsically dynamizes the backward and forward linkages of the economy.

Does this mean *publicizing* the private sector and preventing the atomization of public life in Nepal? Obviously, the future of democratic development does not lie in the growth of only a few sections of the society. It lies in the evolution of the whole nation including the marginalized and oppressed. To be sure, the nation is definitely greater than the sum of its parts. In this evolution, the state and the leadership must elicit the support of the youths, while the educated volunteers and intelligentsia help to raise the political and economic consciousness of the citizens who have been exiled from the mainstream human civilization. Also needing a catalyst are both NGOs and the civil society<sup>14</sup> so that they can address the specific social ills. Only such a concerted effort can help to overcome the "enormity of the collective action problem in bringing about institutional

---

<sup>13</sup> Dworkin counters the arguments of utilitarians--who seek to maximize overall welfare, regardless of who gets what and demonstrates the "moral emptiness of a democratic theory that defends unequal distributions of wealth and influence or that leaves allocation of these goods to chance and unregulated markets" (Epps, 2001:3).

<sup>14</sup> Nepalese civil societies are particularly successful in raising the questions of human rights, women, Dalits, and the indigenous people's movement and have captured a place in policy discourse regarding the empowerment of people.

change and the capacity of different social groups in mobilizing and coordination" (Bardhan, 1999:14).

Only a well-disposed leadership with a vision grounded in the Constitution and the public economy can hope to make sense of the deteriorating environment, to balance between what is *desirable* and what is *possible*. Such a leadership is expected to explore the rich options available for collective action. At times, the public economy can serve as a safety valve that defuses troubling situations unfolding. An information society must have scientifically and technologically educated citizens who should understand not only the high value and high wage jobs but are also adequately equipped with the skills, training, and critical faculty to manage and adjust to the marketing requirements as well as to judge the myriad contemporary challenges, risks, and issues of society such as nuclear weapon, ecology, corruption, wars, violence, development, democracy, peace, etc that affect their lives.

## CONCLUSION

One may not know what the future of Nepal contains, but the success of its politics lies in managing a balance between the values of the nation's past and the new vision and between the legitimate identities citizens enjoy in contending for power and a common identity that democracy offers for all of them. The general sense of belonging and interactions among citizens within a shared norm of democracy shapes a distinct national identity. Managing the compelling vision that is crystallized into public needs, expectations, beliefs, and values will be a central task for the political leadership in the future. A leadership in command of state power can only harm the public life if it exclusively executes the ideology of rational self-maximization and disables the vast centripetal forces of the society - such as family, community, public institutions, and citizenship groups which are the fountains of civic spirit. A leadership upholding civic ideals is likely to choose the best option, often seeking to advance public order and social justice, realizing the two essential realms of civic education: *the intergenerational transmission of knowledge for continuity and change of national life and the development of institutional arrangements of schools, colleges, and universities to train those who will bear the knowledge in the future.*

What gives one optimism is the quickening pace of post-modernism that has effected structural transformation in many areas-Dalit, women, minorities, bonded labor, and marginalized people -- both necessary and possible. Under its impact a new kind of relationship between knowledge and identity has been developed. What is still desirable and perhaps also feasible is how to manage and sustain this process so that a modicum of equilibrium between the state and social power is maintained and the civic capacities are utilized both for strengthening local self-governance and making them effective instruments of collective action.<sup>15</sup> A civic praxis is, therefore, essential for the consolidation of democracy, not just action and reflection on the status quo. It is a praxis that often facilitates consistency in teaching and learning behavior.

One way to proceed with reforms calls for a sustained civic education and engagement of youths in public life of the nation. The other one is restructuring the high school and college curriculum in social studies and humanities to include civic projects and civic lessons, introduction of participatory methodology in learning, turning the students into independent learners and making them capable of coping with the workplace demands. Still, another would be establishing linkages of teaching with civic activities in the community, promoting cooperation by introducing group work, and accumulating the hard lessons of life-experience. There is the core task of establishing an ongoing process

---

<sup>15</sup> The empowerment process of marginalized people requires the institutionalization of social transformation which means creation of enabling environment through proper economic and social policies, elimination of all forms of discrimination, active protection of their rights, reasonable access to decision making, strengthening institutional support systems and legal machinery, and forging their organizations' partnership with NGOs and civil society.

of improving civic knowledge and skills of youths and welcoming them into society and willingly offering them the space that is theirs by right.

The government's investment in human capital should be combined with the cooperation of private sectors and civil society by continuously improving the contents of civic education, health, and employment conditions and enabling youths to participate in the knowledge economy. A number of civil societies of Nepal have already been involved in increasing the public understanding of governmental policies and have prepared newsletters, organized seminars, trainings, and workshops, written press news, organized protest against harmful policies, maintained internet sites, developed curricular materials for Dalits, children, women's empowerment, trade unions, etc with a democratizing effect on the broader public space. Civic education to encourage critical thinking and adoption of values of peace and dignity is essential to the transformation of rural Nepal. Educating young people for political and social responsibility contributes massively in the creation of social capital and translating the constitutional vision into reality.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, Maurianne. 1997. "Pedagogical Frameworks for Social Justice Education," eds., Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, New York: Routledge.
- Aditya, Anand. 2001. "Strategies to Promote Civic Education among Primary and Secondary School Age Children in Nepal," *PRAGYA*, Kathmandu, June 29.
- Alborno, Orlando. 1992. *Sociology and the Third World Perspective*, New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Ltd.
- Almond, Gabriel A. 1993. "The Study of Political Culture," eds., Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Ralf Rytlewski, *Political Culture in Germany*, London: MacMillan Press Ltd.
- Angell, Ian. 1995. "The Information Revolution and the Death of the Nation-State," *Libertarian Alliance*, London.
- Bardhan, Pranab. 1999. *Distributive Conflicts, Collective Action and Institutional Economics*, Berkeley: University of California, March.
- Bardhan, Pranab. 1998. *Democracy and Development: A Complex Relationship*, Berkeley: University of California.
- Boyte, Harry C and Nancy N Kari, 1998. "The Rebirth of Citizenship," *Commonweal*, Vol. 125, December 4.
- Carothers, Thomas, 2002. "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, January.
- Center for Civic Education. 1995. "On Character Building for A Democratic, Civil Society," *The Second Annual White House Conference*, Washington DC, May 19-20.
- Dahal, Dev Raj. 2002. *Civil Society in Nepal: Opening the Ground for Questions*, Kathmandu: Center for Governance and Development.
- Dionne Jr., E. J. 1997. "Why Civil Society? Why Now?," *Brookings Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Fall.
- Doherty, Ivan. 2001. "Democracy Out of Balance: Civil Society Can't Replace Political Parties," *Policy Review*, April/May.
- Drucker, Peter F. 1994. *Post-Capitalist Society*, New York: Harper Business.
- Ehrlich, Thomas. 1999. "Civic Education: Lessons Learned," June.
- Epps, Garrett. 2001. "Liberalism's Safeguard," *The American Prospect*, Vol.12, Issue 3, February 12.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1996. *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*, New York: Basic Books.

- Faux, Jeff. 2000. "Towards a Global Social Contract: The Politics of Global Economy," speech delivered at the *Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences*, October 25<sup>th</sup>, Mexico City, Mexico.
- Freire, Paulo, 1993. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin Books.
1985. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*, New York: Bergin and Garvey.
- Gajardo, Marcela. 1997. "Ivan Illich," ed., Zaghoul Morsey, *Thinkers on Education*, India: UNESCO/ Oxford and IBH Publishing.
- Heaney, Tom. 1995. "Issues in Freirean Pedagogy," *Threshold in Education*, June 20.
- HMG/Nepal, 1990. *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*, Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
- Institute for Electoral and Democratic Assistance, 1997. *Nepal: Consolidation of Democracy*, Stockholm: International IDEA.
- International Commission on Education (ICE), 1996. *Education for the Twenty-First Century*, a Report submitted to UNESCO, April.
- Koirala, Bidya Nath and Susan Acharya, 2002. *Reflecting on Civic Education in Nepal*, A Report Prepared by SPCE for the American Center, Kathmandu.
- Mannheim, Karl. 1936. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: A Harvest Book.
- NDI/FES. 2001. *Civics in Nepal*. Kathmandu: NDI-FES.
- O'Brian, Martin and Sue Penna, 1996. "Postmodern Theory and Politics: Perspectives on Citizenship and Social Justice," *Innovation*, Vol. 9, No. 2.
- Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Turning In, Turning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, December.
- Regmi, Mahesh Chandra. 1999. *Thatched Huts and Stucco Palaces*, Delhi: Adroit Publishers.
- Mouffe, Chantal. 2000. "The Political Community: Universitas or Societas," ed. Gurpreet Mahajan, *Democracy, Difference and Social Justice*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenau, James N. 1980. *The Dramas of Political Life*, California: Duxbury Press.
- Thompson, Bruce. 1997. Book Review of "Ernest Gellner: Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals," London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994," *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review*, Vol. 5.2.
- Tucker Jr., Kenneth H. 1998. *Anthony Giddens and Modern Social Theory*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

## INDEX

Accountability	Indoctrination
Anti-Political Politics	Information Revolution
Banking Education	Institutionalization
Centripetal Forces	Media
Citizenship	Mono-Centric Governance
Civic Competence	Modernism
Civic Culture	National Economy
Civic Learning	Opposition
Civic Life	Participation
Civic Skills	Participatory Learning
Civic Praxis	Political Space
Civil Society	Primary Associations
Collective Action	Poly-Centric Governance
Collective Goods	Post-Modernism
Constitutionalization	Public Economy
Critical Mass	Public Goods
Cultural Shift	Public Life
Culture of Silence	Public Sphere
Democratic Citizenship	Rational Choice
Democracy Consolidation	Rationality Deficit
Democratic Deficit	Right to Information
Democratic Leadership	Secondary Associations
Democratization	Social Capital
Development	Social Contract
Entitlements	Social Pathology
Globalization	Socialization
Global Village	Social Justice
Golden Rule	Social Movements
Good Governance	Social Opportunities
Good Society	Sovereignty of People
Humanization	Unwritten Transcript
Human Rights	



