

Women, Peace and Restructuring



ASMITA

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**Defining the Public Agenda and Strengthening
Constituencies for Peace and Reform in Nepal**

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Constituencies for Peace and Reform in Nepal

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Preface

*Asmita Women's Publishing House, Media and Resource Organization (in short, **ASMITA**) had executed the project entitled Defining the Public Agenda and Strengthening Constituencies for Peace and Reform in Nepal from January 15 to December 31, 2006. This report presents a concise account of the project.*

Women are one of the most important constituencies related to the establishment of peace, and comprehensive social restructuring, which includes all kinds of restructuring -- political, economic, social, legal, familial, and so on. Therefore, women's role becomes very crucial in the attempts of establishing peace and restructuring the society. For the success of those attempts, it is indispensable to determine women's agendas, some of which should be addressed immediately and some in the long run.

The main objective of the project was to bring forth women's agendas into public debates through media activism. Generally, media activism involves the execution of discussions and advocacies on a specific agenda of women (or of any specific social group) through various forms of media. It is assumed that it would make the common people aware about the agenda and inspire them to stand in support of the agenda. Moreover, it would exert pressure on the persons at the decision making level to consider the agenda and build policies in women's favor.

When the project was initiated, the king had taken all the state power in his hand, the armed struggle of the Maoists was continuing, and the parliamentary parties as well as members of civil society were preparing for the movement against the king's autocracy. The purpose of the project was to investigate the situation of women in the then ongoing conflict in the country and bring into light the facts and figures related to it through various forms of mass media. However, as the triumph of the people's movement pushed the whole country into a new situation, it exerted some impacts on the project. Though we did not make any alteration in the pre-set objectives and programs of the project, we had to consider about women's role and position in the new situation. For instance, now, we had to think about what the implication of restructuring of the state, political inclusion and proportionate representation would be for women.

In the changed context, two issues need special consideration. First, if it is imperative to provide justice to the thousands of women who had suffered unimaginable pains during the conflict, the tradition of impunity in the country must be ended. Ironically, those who were responsible for serious violations of human rights and crimes against humanity during the armed conflict have come to the power by virtue of the people's movement of April 6-24, 2006. The Comprehensive Peace Accord signed by the government of the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Maoists on November 21, 2006 has mentioned to form a high level commission for truth investigation and reconciliation that will investigate on such matters. It is doubtful, however, that the 'winners' will genuinely investigate on their own deeds, and publicly repent or accept punishment for their crimes. In such context, we, the media activists, should persistently raise the voice to end impunity, and to provide justice for the conflict-afflicted people.

Secondly, in several agreements, proclamations and the interim constitution the SPA along with the Maoists have astonishingly made high promises in favor of women. Though most of the promises are not fully implemented in practice yet, they have opened the door to exert pressure on the ruling parties. It is still vague how women will be incorporated in the process of restructuring and inclusion. The high-powered agitations by other minorities (like hill ethnic groups and madhesis) seem to be overshadowing the agendas of women. It is not

clear what will be the position of women in the federal, autonomous or self-ruled provinces aspired for by the minorities and some political parties. These ambiguities indicate that there still is a need of a lot of interactions, debates and contemplations for establishing women's agendas assertively. The project concludes that in order to work in this direction we should continue our task of media activism.

We would like to express our gratitude to The Asia Foundation Nepal for the financial support it provided for the project. This report is the synergic product of the contributions made by several individuals and organizations. It is not possible for us to thank each of them personally. So, we would like to express our gratitude to them collectively. This project was coordinated by Anju Chhetri. Different members of the project team had taken different responsibilities according to their field of interest, expertise and project requirements.

The task of producing and publishing/broadcasting of print and electronic media materials under the project was led by Anju Chhetri and Manju Thapa. Both of them were also involved in writing investigative reportings/features a part of project activity. Two journalists, namely, Kulmani Gyawali and Bishu Sharma (Bimala) were commissioned to write features. We must appreciate the skill, experience and diligence of Rishi Acharya in the production and broadcast of the radio program. Similarly, Shanta Bhandari, Bharat Adhikari, Anubhav and Devendra Chhetri had played active role in the preparation of various segments of the radio program. We would like to thank Samanta Acharya who provided technical support in the initial episodes of the program. Shanta Bhandari had also performed the tiresome job of collecting and documenting the materials related to the project theme.

Two television documentaries were produced under the direction, concept and script of Anju Chhetri. The ever-enthusiastic cameraperson Sindhu Pokharel had done the job of location shooting. Dandapani Upadhyaya showed his excellence in editing the documentaries within limited time span. Alina Shakya had looked after the management and accounting. Likewise, Ganesh Bhandari and Prajjwal Shakya had assisted in various activities under the project. The enthusiasm of Prakash KC who would

run here and there for the official work of the project is also unforgettable. Finally, the compilation and editing of the project report was done by Saroj Pant. He was also involved in the review of the materials related to the project theme.

In fact, this report has been prepared with the enthusiasm and excitement for determining the proper place of women in New Nepal, which is supposed take shape in the near future. Therefore, a kind of haste can be found in the report, and several important matters may have been lost in the rush. There may be some errors as well. We, however, hope that women's issues raised by the project will compel the people, from the common mass to the architects of New Nepal contemplate for a while over the issues.

Project Team

Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	i-iv
	Part I: The Project and Its Activities	
1	Introduction	1-7
	Background	1
	Objectives	2
	Methodology	3
	Timetable	3
	Limitation and Constraints	4
	Organization of the Report	6
2	Activities Conducted Under the Project	8-15
	Collection and Documentation of the Materials Related to the Project Theme	8
	Review of the Available Materials on the Project Theme	9
	Writing and Publication of Investigative Reportings/Features	10
	Production and Broadcast of Radio Program	11
	Production and Broadcast of TV Documentaries	14
	Publication of the Book Based on the Project Outcome	15
3	Onto the Texts: Conflict, Peace and Restructuring	16-40
	Part II: Published Articles	41-104
	<i>Maoist Political Campaign: The Price of Non-involvement</i>	41
	<i>Women in the Field of War Created by Men</i>	48
	<i>Women's Intervention in the Peace Process</i>	53
	<i>Destitution Forever</i>	58
	<i>Rape: The Way of Subduing the Opponents</i>	64
	<i>Conflict-engendered Widows: Small Expectations</i>	70
	<i>Women in the Insurgency</i>	76
	<i>Transformation in Women's Life: Brought about by the People's War</i>	83
	<i>The Quest for a Decent Life, Emancipation and Revolt</i>	94
	Part III: Conclusions and Recommendations	105-107
	<i>Part IV: Appendices</i>	109-113



Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

This project was basically executed for the purpose of reducing the adverse effects of the violent conflict, which started in Nepal since 1996, on women. The project was designed to apply both the print and electronic media in order to reveal the real situation of the women afflicted from the conflict. It was expected that the project would not only make the common people informed about the distressing condition of conflict-afflicted women but also inspire the people to take affirmative actions to change their condition. Secondly, it was thought that the project activities will exert pressure on the groups directly involved in the conflict to seek peaceful solutions of the problem.

When the project was being implemented, the country was going through a great political turmoil. The king had taken all the power in his hands. The military suppression had greatly multiplied in the name of controlling 'terrorism'. The armed struggle of the Maoists had been expanding. The parliamentary political parties and members of civil society were preparing for an extensive movement against the repressive monarchy.

Finally, by the appeal of the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), support of the Maoists and widespread participation of civil society and common people, the people's movement achieved success. The king had to give up. The power came in the hands of the parties. The Maoists came to the path of peaceful struggle and signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord with SPA. Both the Maoists and SPA came together to form interim constitution/parliament/government. Now, everyone's attention has been focused on the forthcoming elections for the constituent assembly, which will supposedly determine the political system of future Nepal.

In the meantime, great debates took place on matters of restructuring the state and political inclusion. All these events had certain impacts on the implementation of the project. In the project, which was started by the objective of finding out the real situation of women in the violent political conflict going on for a decade, and bringing out the findings before the public, but, now, it became essential to raise the issue of women's role and position in the peace process, constituent assembly, proportionate representation, restructuring of the state and democratic inclusion. The pre-set objectives and activities of the project were not changed; however, a little change was made in the themes of the project. Therefore, the project not only dealt with the women's involvement in the conflict and its impacts on women, but also carried out discussions on the implication of restructuring and inclusiveness for women.

Objectives

The main objective of the project was to execute media activism for creating the atmosphere that would reduce the adverse effects of violent conflict on women. Other specific objectives were as follows:

- to reveal women's situation in the conflict through various forms of mass media;
- to make people informed about the crimes against women during the conflict-situation so that they may become inspired to execute affirmative actions to pressurize for punishing culprits;

- to exert pressure through media on the groups directly involved in the conflict so that they will be more responsible for their actions;
- to collect factual documents about the incidents related to women and conflict, which will be useful for the women activists, human right activists, media personnel; and
- to find out the ways of conflict resolution, peace building, and women's proper role and position in social restructuring, and offer recommendations.

The following methodology was applied to fulfill the above objectives.

Methodology

The method of media activism was applied for the effective implementation of the project, and fulfillment of the pronounced objectives of the project. Media activism involves raising certain issues or topics in various media continuously for a certain time period. Its first purpose is to make common people informed about selected issues and another purpose is to exert pressure on the people at the decision making level for resolving problems. Media activism also provides accurate information and conceptual instrument to the individuals and groups of the civil society, who act as a mediator between the power-holders and the powerless common people.

The specific issue selected for the existing project was what the conflict, peace, restructuring, inclusiveness, justice, equality and independence in relation to women entail. Therefore, the programs of the project comprised publishing and broadcast of media products related to the same issue.

Timetable

The duration of the project was nearly 12 months (from January 15 to December 31, 2006). The first three months of the project were spent on gathering reference materials related to the project's theme, that is, 'women, peace and restructuring', and studying them. The purpose of this was to ascertain the prime issues, geographical areas and social

groups for further investigation. In the same period, the selection of the topics for investigative reporting, features, radio programs and TV documentaries was also done. The publication of investigative reportings/features had been started from the fifth month of the project commencement. The broadcast of the radio program under the project was started from August 20, 2006. The last two months were allocated for the production and broadcast of two TV documentaries.

Limitation and Constraints

The project had some specific limitations of its own kind. Particularly, those limitations were related to the selection of the topics, time and human resources, which is explained below.

- The wide-ranging topics like conflict, peace and restructuring are not just related to women. Conflict affects every person, peace process requires cooperation and support of everyone, restructuring should determine the status of each and every social group. But, since the project has to focus on women's aspects or gender issues, the members of the project team had often been worried by the question that whether the activities of the project become biased and one-sided. Nevertheless, the project team was aware about the fact that these topics had not been dealt with from gender perspective so far, and the need for presenting the topics from gender perspective was an inspiration for the team.

- Since the project had to be completed in a pre-set schedule, indepth study and research could not be done on several essential issues. Timeliness has a great significance in media. During the project period, the course of events was changing with a great pace in the country. New issues were raised. But, the project team was not able to raise those issues profoundly. The issues of the project were already set; the team had to face some difficulties in raising new issues. As it was essential to probe into the women's involvement in the conflict, the impacts of conflict on women and the attempts of resolving the conflict, it was equally essential to ascertain the role and

position of women in the peace process, Constituent Assembly, Election, restructuring etc. in the changed time and context. The project team felt a little difficulty to deal with the issues added. The sole cause of this was the limitation of time.

- The availability of material resources was at the convenient level. But, in case of human resources the project team realized some problems. The project team wanted to involve local media personnel in the task of preparing media materials thinking that their work may be more authentic since they were more knowledgeable about the local condition. But, it became very difficult to find media personnel who could produce desired media materials from gender perspective. Moreover, the media personnel, having expertise in presenting the complex social phenomenon like conflict from gender perspective, were never found. Due to this reason, the responsibilities of the members of the project team increased. Many had an illusion that just putting all the data related to women at a place was the gender perspective.

Besides above limitations, the constraints encountered during the project implementation were as follows:

- The first three months after the project started, the country was going through political uncertainty, upheaval, agitations, shut-downs, blockades and strikes. For that reason, it was extremely difficult to travel within the country. Therefore, during that period, the project team had to stay in the Kathmandu valley and confine to the work like gathering and studying reference materials, interacting with the individuals and organizations involved in the field of conflict resolution and peace building. Such situation, however, ended after the victory of the People's Movement II.
- Since the time schedule was very tight during field study, the team members could not spend sufficient time in the place visited. This had created some trouble. For instance, the team members could not meet some important source persons because when the

team members reached their village they would have left their home for some days or weeks and the members could not wait for such a long time. Due to unavailability of communication network in such places, it could not be made sure whether source persons were residing in their home or not before going to the place.

- For preparing the media products under the project, not much difficulty was faced while acquiring information from the source persons like experts, government officials, sufferers, witnesses etc. However, a little hesitation in expressing their views frankly was there among some of the persons badly affected by either the state or the insurgents. Such persons also did not want to remember the dreadful past.

Despite the limitations and constraints the project, more or less, was completed with in the time schedule.

Organization of the Report

The book comprises four parts. The first part presents introduction of the project, the activities executed under the project and the review of reference materials. The project also had an objective to review the published materials on conflict, peace, restructuring and inclusiveness vis-a-vis women. The review is given in Chapter 3. Selected articles published under the project in different newspapers/newsmagazines are given in Part II. Though the articles are given in the same form as they were published, some minor alterations have been made in the process of re-editing.

Part III concisely presents the conclusions drawn form the project implementation, and the recommendations based on the conclusions. Numerous materials were collected on the topics like conflict, peace process, restructuring of the state and inclusion with respect to women. These materials included newspaper clippings, journals, book, booklets,

research/seminar papers and even CD's of documentaries. A list of selected materials is given in Appendices. The list may be useful for the future researchers, women activists, human right activists and media personnel.

Notably, the Maoists have introduced and established several of their ideological jargons in the intellectual discourse of Nepal such as people's war, people's army, people's power, people's court, militia, base area, and so on. Though the Maoists may have specific meanings for these jargons, several analysts put these terms and phrases using inverted commas or italicized letters to show their neutrality. In this book, however, the Maoists jargons are not put in that manner. First, in order to avoid the unreadability of the book because the jargons come so much repetitively. Secondly, the research team does not have any preconception or bias toward such jargons.

The description of the activities under the project is given in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Activities Conducted Under the Project

The methodology applied for the implementation of the project was media activism, which has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. Several programs/activities were designed for media activism. The activities related to the project are described below.

1. Collection and Documentation of the Materials Related to the Project Theme

Authentic facts and figures were needed to utilize in the production of investigative reportings/features, radio program and TV documentaries -- to be produced under the project. Likewise, up-to-date information was also needed for the same. Therefore, materials related to the topic 'Women, Peace and Restructuring' were collected as far as possible. Related news and articles from selected newspapers and magazines were also gathered and kept in a systematic way. One of the objectives of doing such thing was that such materials would be helpful for future researchers, women activists, human right activists, etc.

A lot of materials have been produced on the decade-long conflict in Nepal. The mainstream newspapers and magazines, which have already been exhausted by politics, are found focusing too much on the political conflict. It was not easy to select the materials related to women from the huge heap of conflict-related materials. On the one hand, there was a

need to analyze and understand the objective reality and the series of events holistically, on the other hand, sorting out gender or women aspects and events was also necessary. So, though most of the materials gathered were directly related to women and gender issues, some were related to wider topics. For instance, the book *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal* edited by Deepak Thapa (2003) was related to a wider topic, and the dissertation *Whose Revolution? Can the Maoist Movement in Nepal Lead to Women's Empowerment* (Maycock, 2003) was directly related to women.

Innumerable books, booklets, newspaper clippings, seminar papers, articles from magazines/journals, research papers were collected in the process. Apart from this, materials downloaded from internet, and audio/video CDs were also collected. With the help of computer, a database of all these materials has been prepared. The database will be helpful not just for ASMITA but also for other researchers and activists in future.

2. Review of the Available Materials on the Project Theme

Before plunging into the field of work, it was necessary to have pre-knowledge and updated information. It was also important to become cautious that already published or broadcast stuffs would not be repeated or duplicated in the materials to be produced under the project. Moreover, it was equally significant to know how the materials produced from feminist or gender perspective had raised women's issues. For these reasons, the collected materials were reviewed. Though the review was not done on the basis of any theoretical model, it helped to understand the objective reality and how the realities related to women were being presented.

The first three months of the project were allocated for the review. However, while the review was coming up to finish, the country entered a new situation. The issues like constituent assembly, restructuring of the state, inclusive democracy, just peace and equity became major political agendas of the country. The reviewer had to probe into these

topics as well. The negative-sounding topics like conflict, violence, oppression, defiance, tyranny and war were replaced by the positive-sounding topics like reconciliation, non-violence, cooperation, peace, restructuring, democracy, autonomy, and inclusion etc. This certainly presented an opportunity for the project team. Now, the team members had a chance of contemplating about their every activity in the context of a new, democratic, peaceful, prosperous and sovereign Nepal, and what women's position will be in it.

3. Writing and Publication of Investigative Reportings/Features

Ten investigative reportings and features were published in different newspapers/magazines under this activity of the project. The journalists affiliated with the project had utilized their time, labor and skill to write the articles. However, since ASMITA did not have its own newspaper/magazine at present, the project team had to depend on other publications to publish the articles. For that reason, the team faced some minor inconveniences like the articles not publishing in time, rejection of the articles that could not fit to the newspapers' publication policy, important portions of the articles edited out because of the space limitation of the newspapers etc.

Whatsoever, all the ten articles were published in papers within the scheduled time. Among the papers in which the articles were published, two were dailies (*Nepal Samacharpatra* and *Rajdhani*), one was weekly (*Samaya*), and one was monthly (*Mulyankan*). These papers are considered well-reputed and having circulation throughout the country. So, it can be assumed that the articles reached thousands of readers. Among the articles, five were written by Anju Chhetri, three by Manju Thapa and one was co-authored by Chhetri and Thapa. One article was written by Bishnu Sharma (Bimala). The remaining one article was prepared by Kulmani Gyawali, a local journalist from Bhairahawa. A brief description of the published articles is given in Appendix I, Table 1.

The subject matters of the published articles were: The excesses women and children that took place during political campaigns of the Maoists; the right and wrong of women's participation in military sector; the atrocities against women executed by the vigilante group backed by the state; violence against women that took place during the conflict (specifically rape which is considered as the most heinous crime after murder); the present condition of conflict-spawned widows and their expectation in the changed context; the positive and negative changes in the life of rural women that have been brought by the Maoist armed struggle; the active involvement of women in the Maoist party, army, movement and dominated areas. In order to link the articles with the contemporary context, topics like restructuring of the state, political inclusion, interim constitution/parliament/government had also been touched in relevant places of the articles.

4. Production and Broadcast of the Radio Program

Regarding the influence and reach among the population, the production and broadcast of radio program was the most effective activity. The program was named *Sama-shanti*, which was formed by coining two Nepali terms – *sama* (equity) and *shanti* (peace). So, the word *sama-shanti* literally means peace with equity and justice. The program *Sama-shanti* was about 30 minutes long. The broadcast of the program was started from August 20, 2006. According to the project plan, 20 episodes of the program had to be aired. So, the twentieth episode of the program was aired on December 31.

The program comprised three segments: discussion or talk, radio feature, and monologue. Usually, the discussion used to be 12 minutes long. Two resource persons would be invited for the discussion segment of each episode. On the condition when two persons could not come at the same time in the recording studio, this segment would be presented as talk with one person, and a three minute recorded comment on the topic by another resource person would be aired. In the monologue segment, a resource person would speak about herself for 2-2.30 minutes. Whereas the persons invited for the discussion/talk segment were experts in their

respective fields, the monologue segment included mostly the women who came up the hard way from the grassroots level.

The radio feature would be about seven minutes long. Most of the features included in the program were based on the field-investigation outside of the Kathmandu valley. On an average, four minutes of the whole program would be spent on narration, bridge music, signature and closing tunes etc. In the preliminary episodes of the program, 2-4 minutes were also allotted for news. But, the news segment was closed down later because the gap between program recording time and broadcast time created difficulty in updating the news. The time allocated for different segments of the program is shown in Appendix I, Table 2.

The program was broadcast from five FM radio stations. They were: HBC (Kathmandu), Saptakosi (Itahari), Kalika (Chitawan), Bageshowari (Nepalganj), and Radio Bheri (Surkhet). On the basis of their location, the radio stations cover different geographical areas. For instance, HBC covers the Kathmandu valley. Likewise, Saptakosi, Kalika Bageshowari, and Radio Bheri covers the eastern part, central plain, plain of mid-western region, and hill of mid-western region of the country respectively. These FM radio stations were selected for reaching varied parts of the country as far as possible.

While HBC broadcast the program in the Friday evening, others broadcast the program in the morning of Sunday and Monday. Regarding the population coverage, these FM stations could reach from one to seven million people. On the basis of the population reach of the radio stations, it can be said that the program *Sama-shanti* was able to reach millions of listeners (See Appendix I, Table 3).

The program *Sama-shanti* would always start from two opening tags: '*Sama-shanti*, the weekly radio magazine for gender equity, conflict resolution and sustainable peace'; and '*Sama-shanti*, the weekly radio magazine that analyzes the armed struggle, and the issues of centuries old social conflict from gender perspective'. What the subject matters of the program were can be assumed from these opening tags or mottos.

Each of the 20 episodes of the program was a special episode entirely focused on a particularly selected topic. The varied topics selected for the episodes were: restructuring of the state and women's inclusion; the impacts of armed struggle on women and children; violence against women and rape; conflict-afflicted widows; women's involvement and active participation in the Maoist movement and army; disappeared citizens; condition, return and rehabilitation of displaced people; reconstruction of physical infrastructures; women's participation in the interim constitution/parliament/government and constituent assembly; and women's role and participation in the peace process. A brief account of these topics is given in Appendix I, Table 5. Mostly, the radio feature and discussions/talk segments were focused on the selected topic for an episode.

Nine personnel were directly involved in the production of the program *Sama-shanti*. The program was produced and directed by Manju Thapa, who also took the job of anchoring in the program. In the task of production and direction, she was supported by Rishi Acharya, who had produced some of the memorable radio features for the program. Samanta Acharya had provided technical support for the program. Shanta Bhandari and Bharat Adhikari had worked in making radio features, and anchoring. Ganesh Acharya (from Surkhet) and Tula Adhikari (from Nepalganj) had prepared one radio feature each in the program series. Anubhav and Devendra Chhetri had given their voice in anchoring (See Appendix I, Table 4).

An audio CD has been made compiling all the 20 episodes of the program *Sama-shanti*. Though the project plan did not include this task, it was done for a particular purpose. Audio magazines have been very popular these days, and several social organizations produce audio magazines for awareness raising and advocacy. The audiences who could not listen to the program on the broadcast time can utilize the CD. This CD will be distributed free of cost to researchers, women activists, human right activists, and community based organizations. The CD will more or less inform about current gender issues to those who are active in the building of New Nepal.

Considering the affirmative response of the program audiences acquired from different means, the suggestion of experts, and the encouragement attained from the resource persons who came in direct contact during the program making, ASMITA has decided to keep on the broadcasting of the program. Consequently, the broadcast is continuing, though the organization does not have enough financial resources to continue the activity. The importance of the program has increased for ensuring proper participation and representation of women in the constituent assembly election going to be held in the near future, and for fulfilling women's agendas.

5. Production and Broadcast of the TV Documentaries

This activity included production and broadcast of two television documentaries as per the project plan. Each of the documentaries was made approximately 27 minutes long. The first TV documentary *War-Spawned Widows: Waiting for Justice* has dealt with the problems of conflict-spawned widows. It is estimated that about 6,000 women have become widow due to the decade long conflict. Therefore, it has become more important to give voice to the widows in such a time of peace building. The documentary presents an overview of the past sufferings of the widows, their problems and present needs, and suitable ways of their rehabilitation.

The second TV documentary *Conflict and Rape: Reminiscences* presents the existing condition of the sufferers of rape attached to the conflict. The documentary has mostly included the testimonies of the sufferers, in which the sufferers have painfully remembered the brutality befalling them. Their existing life is also shown in the documentary. Finally, the documentary has dealt with the question of providing justice, relief and compensation to them.

Both the documentaries aimed at giving more space to the sufferers' voice. For this, interviews of 44 sufferers were captured on film, among these 33 were the widows resulted by the conflict, and 11 were the sufferers of conflict-related rape. Due to the limitation of time length of

the documentaries, several interviews of the sufferers had to be omitted during editing. The visuals for the documentaries were filmed the places like Dandeldhura, Mahendranagar (Kanchanpur), Surkhet, Dang, Banke, Taulihawa (Kapilvastu), Nawalparasi, Kathmandu, Morang, and Sunsari (See Appendix I, Table 6).

For both the documentaries, the task of direction, research and script writing was done by Anju Chhetri. The job of editing was done by Dandapani Upadhyaya. The cameraperson Sindhu Pokharel was involved in location shooting or videography. Since it was not possible to film every visual needed for the documentaries, some visuals, particularly the visuals related to the conflict period, were borrowed from other persons and agencies, namely, Nepal Television (NTV) and Nepal 1 and the photo journalist Tilak Koirala.

Both the documentaries were already aired on two satellite television channels of the country: NTV and Image Television. As in the case of the radio program, a VCD of the documentaries has been made for the purpose of narrowcasting. Initially, the VCDs was produced up to 500 copies and distributed to the concerned stakeholders.

6. Publication of the Book Based on the Project Outcome

Finally, the project plan had also included the publication of a book based on the project outcome. The book was to be published in Nepali and English version separately. The present book has been published as per the plan and its Nepali version is also available. Remarkably, the ASMITA organization has always endeavored to make its every activity transparent for informing people about its work and keeping records of its accomplishments. For that reason, the organization has been publishing most of its projects' outcome in a book form for distribution.

In this way, in spite of the obstacles and constraints beyond the control of the project team, all the activities of the project have been completed successfully. The project was started by the review of available references on the main theme of the project -- Women, Peace and Restructuring. The conclusions of the review are given in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Onto the Texts

Conflict, Peace and Restructuring: Feminist Concerns

Background: A Color in the Rainbow

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) or CPN (M) formally started the armed struggle, referred to as people's war, on February 13, 1996. The party, however, had made preparation for the armed struggle for a long time. There were tangible reasons behind the impact and stature that the people's war gained in ten-year time. The social structure based on various kinds of inequality, discrimination and exploitation provided a fertile ground for the people's war. The undemocratic behavior, conservative attitude, lust for power and lack of vision of the leaders of democratic parties plowed the ground for hostilities. Whereas the idea of armed class struggle that had been enduring just as a rhetoric provided technical knowledge and seeds; the organizational skill of the CPN (M) leaders, and rural people's submissiveness and readiness to sacrifice played a major role in the development and expansion of the people's war.

In fact, the Maoist people's war has precisely brought above the surface several suppressed or gradually emerging conflicts and contradictions embedded in Nepali society and nation. The conflicts and contradictions are related not only to the economic classes but also to ethnicity, region,

religion, language, sexual orientation, physical state (differently able or 'disabled') and generation. Thus, a tangible rainbow of seven types of contradiction has appeared in the Nepali sky covered with conflict. A distinct color in the rainbow is -- women.

The present review is basically related to women and the ten-year long violent conflict. Most of the scholars of the conflict consider that since the Maoists gave voice to the issues of women, *dalits* (oppressed castes), ethnic groups, *madhesis* (the people who originated in the plains) and the people of neglected areas (e.g., Karnali region of the country), they have gained such stature. Overshadowing the decades of efforts for women's rights, welfare and empowerment, some of the scholars have even said that the Maoists have played 'an unprecedented role' in making women politically empowered.

But, has the Maoist armed struggle really empowered women? Have the Maoists fully addressed women's issues in a right manner? Have they liberated women or can we believe that they will definitely liberate women in the future? In order to get answer to such questions, one has to look at the Maoist Party's thought on women and women's issues. Similarly, one has to see the nature of the proportion and involvement of the women directly involved in the Maoist movement (that is, the party, people's army, militia, united fronts, sister organizations, and *janasatta* or the people's power). One can reach a conclusion by exploring the impact of the armed struggle on the life of common women.

In the meantime, a great change was happening in the political scenario of the country. On the call of the alliance of seven parliamentary parties, backing of the CPN (M) and participation of common people, the 19-day long people's movement for peace and establishment of democracy achieved success. The absolute monarchy, which came in the center of the state power by the support of the army, was then compelled to step backward.

After several events that took place since April 24, 2006, the seven party alliance (SPA) and the CPN (M) have come to the center stage of politics. Both have made several announcements, decisions and accords, sometimes jointly and sometimes separately. Many steps have been taken on the basis of those announcements, decisions and accords. The

Comprehensive Peace Accord of November 21, 2006, the Interim Constitution promulgated on January 15, 2007, and the formation of the Interim Legislative-Parliament are the most significant ones in this regard. The Comprehensive Peace Accord of November 21 has opened the doorway for a long lasting peace. The only objective of the Interim Constitution and Interim Parliament is to execute the polls for the Constituent Assembly, and administer the governance during the transitional period. The first phase of the management of the Maoist people's army and arms under the inspection of United Nations Organization has already been completed.

Due to the misunderstandings and mistrusts still prevailing between the SPA and the Maoists, the Interim Government, the main responsibility of which is to execute Constituent Assembly polls, has not been formed. Particularly, the difference between the number of the Maoist people's army (30 thousand 8 hundred 52) and the number of arms (3 thousand 4 hundred 28) has made other political parties and international community suspicious. In addition, the protests made by the Maoist people's army coming out of the cantonments breaking the code of conduct have made the situation more perplex. On the other hand, the movements of the *madhesis*, which have become more and more violent, and comparatively peaceful movements of ethnic groups have created doubt whether the Constituent Assembly polls will be held in June or not. But then again, it is not enough to carry through elections; a fair, free and secure environment is the pre-requisite for any election. The eight parties including the Maoists have not been able to give guarantee in this regard.

Whether the elections would be held in June or later, no alternative for the constituent assembly polls can be thought about. But, how will women be incorporated in the constituent assembly? What are the actions being taken by women politicians, activists and the organizations struggling for women's rights and welfare during the transition period? What are they doing for the establishment of sustainable and just peace? These questions have also become equally important in the changed context.

This review of reference materials is a part of the project *Defining the Public Agenda and Strengthening Constituencies for Peace and Reform in Nepal* conducted by the ASMITA organization from January 15 to December 31, 2006. The main objective of the project was to bring forth

the women's agenda related to the present conflict-ridden situation of Nepal into public debate. The main purpose of this review was to help fulfill the project's objective. That is, this was a pre-study before the production of various media materials to be produced under the project.

The project just aimed to put forward the information related to the project theme among the public through different mass media. Therefore, there was a very little space for theoretical analysis of academic standard in this review. However, in order to design the queries for field investigation and scrutinize the information gathered during the investigation, it was necessary to have gender consciousness; otherwise, such attempts would be just a collection of facts and figures. The present review executed to help the ASMITA's project, therefore, was not done according to an established research model, though gender perspective had been used as an insight in the study done.

The first three months of the project (from February 15 to May 15, 2006) were allocated for the review. The tasks of collecting the materials, listing and categorizing them into essential and supportive were done during two months. Whereas them directly related to women and women's issues were considered essential materials, the materials which would help to comprehend the political conflict (particularly the Maoist armed struggle and the activities conducted by the state in the name of counter-actions) were considered supportive materials. In the last one month, we made a review of the materials selected according to the objective of the study.

Since the project was aimed to produce and publish/broadcast investigative articles, radio program and TV documentaries related to 'women, peace and restructuring', the present pre-study had its own limitations. Definitely, understanding the conflict entirely and seeking concrete ways of conflict management and peace establishment were necessary, however, more attention was paid on providing support in the implementation of the programs and activities schemed by the project. In the days after the study of the materials gathered was complete, the political events were changing rapidly, and there was a flood of debates and discussions on the new structure of the country. Hence, this review has been updated to avoid of its being irrelevant, though it is not complete due to the limitation of time and space.

Types of Materials Gathered: The Mountain and a Pass

Both primary and secondary sources were used in this study. The primary sources included those documents and reports which the concerned groups had produced. For instance, the study reports of the government task force and various political parties on resolving the Maoist 'problem'; the party documents, reports, publications and original texts written by Maoist leaders were taken as primary sources.

According to the principle of literature review, information should be collected from direct interview of the main actors, subject experts and from those who have been affected, and field investigation or participant observation. This could not be done because of time limitation. However, the information gathered was cross-checked by frequent interaction with the colleagues involved in various investigation activities of the project.

Regarding the secondary sources, a mountain of reference materials has been formed related to the ten-year long Maoist movement and political crisis of Nepal. Searching the reference materials needed for the project purpose was like making a pass in the mountain. In fact, for the past ten years, the intellectual and political discourses in Nepal have been revolving around the Maoist movement and the crisis created by it. Since most of the materials comprise simple description of events, a lot of repetitiveness is found in them. Specifically, in the materials that have come in the media exhibit more repetitiveness.

The news, articles, features, interviews, editorials etc., related to the Maoist movement come in the media everyday. Studying all those items in a short span of time was not possible. A brief scrutiny of the newspaper cuttings already available in the ASMITA library and acquired from the Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN) was done. Notably, CWIN has been preparing collection of newspaper cuttings related to the conflict in several volumes according to subject categories since 1996. Among those cuttings, the materials related to women were studied briefly.

The reports published by several human right organizations comprise the incidents that occurred during the ten-year long conflict in a systematic manner. Among them, the *Yearbooks* published by INSEC are very useful. Different books on the loss of humans and materials edited by different authors like Karki and Bhattarai (2003); Sapkota (2004); and Shrestha and Upreti (2005) are available. The description of the same loss is also given in *A Decade of Disaster* (2006) recently published by CSWC. Nonetheless, the remarkable point is that in all these materials the facts and figures are not categorized and analyzed in terms of gender or applying gender perspective. Moreover, just presenting the description of incidents that happened on women does not mean applying gender perspective. This weakness is even found in the materials under the rubric of 'conflict from gender perspective' (See for instance, Shrestha, 2001: 134-148).

Since more profundity and analysis are found in the materials published in magazines than those published in newspapers, some selected magazines were studied thoroughly. The magazines studied were: *Mulyankan Monthly*, *Himal Khabarpatrika Quarterly*, *Himal South Asian* (Monthly, in English), *Nepal Weekly* and *Samaya Weekly*. Most of these magazines had published a special issue on the tenth anniversary of the Maoist people's war in February 2006. These special issues are very useful in understanding the basic nature of the Maoist movement. But, the sad part is that, these special issues had not included any article on the impacts of violent conflict on women or women's involvement in it, except the article about a commander of the Maoist people's army published in *Mulyankan*.

Initially, this review had mainly focused on books. During these ten years, a lot of books on the Maoist movement have been published. These books are very useful in understanding the emergence, development and expansion of the Maoist movement. According to Tilak Pathak (2061 BS: 84), *Domestic Conflict and Crisis of Governability in Nepal* edited by Dhruva Kumar was the first book on Maoist revolt and conflict, and that was published in 2000.

The books published in English rather than Nepali are more informative to understand the Maoist movement in its entirety. The books like *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal* (2003) edited by Deepak Thapa; *The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspective* (2003) edited by

Arjun Karki and Seddon; *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal Maoist Rebellion* (2004) edited by Michael Hutt are some of the noteworthy books. In this regard, *Politics of People's War and Human Rights in Nepal* (2005) written by Bishnu Pathak is a recently published work.

The Materials Directly Related to the Theme or the Construction of a Pass

Not many materials are available to know the actual condition of the women directly related to the Maoist movement (Maoist party, army and sister organizations), and the official view of the Maoists on women's problems and issues. The secondary texts produced by non-Maoists may not be much reliable. The Maoists have written less on women and women's issues. However, by studying the materials they have produced in whatever extent, their view on women and women's issues can be delineated.

The person who has written much in this regard is -- Hisila Yami (Parvati). She had already written the book entitled *Marxbad Ra Mahila Mukti* ('Marxism and Women's Liberation') along with Baburam Bhattari in 2057 BS. Her article 'Women's Participation in the People's War' is included in *The People's War in Nepal* (2003) edited by Karki and Seddon. Recently, in the year 2006, she has published *War and Women's Liberation in Nepal* and *Janayuddha Ra Mahila* ('The People's War and Women').

The Chairperson of the Maoist Party Prachanda has written articles like '*Marxbad-Leninbad-Maobad Ra Mahila Muktika Sawal*' ('Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the Question of Women's Liberation'), '*Mahila Muktika Samasya Ra Aajko Aawashyakata*' ('The Problem of Women's Liberation and Today's Need'). These articles are collected in the book *Nepali Krantika Samasyaharu* ('The Problems of Nepali Revolution'). Apart from this, a few more articles by Prachanda are also found here and there (for instance, the article *Bicharko Bikassanga Mahila Mukti Andolanko Sambandha* or 'The Relation of Women's Liberation Movement with the Advancement of Thought', which is published in the magazine *Mahila Dhwani*, 2060 BS). His interviews also include his views about women. Particularly, in his quite a long interview given to the journalist of *Revolutionary Worker* in 1999 comprises his opinion about the relationship between the Maoist movement and women (Karki

and Seddon, 2003: 75-115). Though it is clearly seen that the interview has come out to publicize the rationale of the people's war in the international sphere, it certainly presents the Maoist interpretation of how rural women get involved in the Maoist movement.

The book *Dispatches from the People's War in Nepal* (2005) by Li Onesto is the collection of the reports which were written after field investigations in the base areas of the Maoists. It seems that the book was written to publicize about the people's war in the international sector. Though the book is slanted toward the Maoists, it is useful in understanding the impact exerted by the Maoist movement on the remote rural societies particularly on the rural women.

The thoughts so far expressed by the Maoist leaders about the movement and issues of Nepali women seem to be good samples of subconscious plagiarism. The thoughts produced by orthodox Marxism about 'the woman question' are embedded in the minds of the Maoist ideologues in such a manner that the thoughts are often repeated in their writing. In the context of Nepal, the Maoists have not added any new and original concepts about 'the woman's question'. The patriarchal oppression, which is found everywhere from interpersonal relations to family, kinship and the state, and even embedded in almost all ethnic and caste groups in varied forms, cannot be interpreted within the framework of class contradiction. Probably, the Maoist leaders understand this because, in some of the articles of Hisila Yami, apprehensions about patriarchy beyond the class contradiction model can be found (2006). But, in general, the Maoist leaders' writing prepares ground for the recruitment of women in the people's army and offers justification for the recruitment.

Among the texts written from non-Maoist perspective, the book *Janayuddhako Seropherobhitra Mahila Ra Balbalika* ('Women and Children around the People's War', 2001) written by Shova Gautam is available. In order to identify the materials directly related to the project theme, the materials written by women authors were also studied. Among such materials several articles (published in 2003) of Manjushree Thapa and her book *Forget Kathmandu* (2003) are notable. Atrocious behaviors toward women by both the state and the Maoists are vividly depicted in her writing. Likewise, the articles by Gautam, Banskota and Manchanda (2001); Pettigrew and Shneiderman (2004); and the dissertation of

Maycock (2003) are significant source texts, in which the Maoist movement has been critically analyzed from gender perspective. It is explicitly shown in the Maycock's thesis *Whose Revolution? Can the Maoist Movement in Nepal Lead to Women's Empowerment?* that since the Maoist movement is also not free from patriarchal concept, behavior and leadership there is a very little possibility that the Maoist movement lead to women's empowerment. Showing the weaknesses of women's movement in Nepal, he has ascertained the inevitability of women's movement for women's empowerment.

Lately, numerous materials have been published on restructuring of the state and political inclusion. Their subject matters are mainly focused on federal system of governance, autonomy or self-rule of nationalities, proportional representation of all the different social groups in the central power structure. The book written by Govinda Neupane (2000); Sitaram Tamang (2063 BS); Mahendra Lawati (2005); Prayag Raj Sharma (2004); Harka Gurung (2006) and Shankar Pokharel (2063BS); and a long article of Pitambar Sharma (2063 BS) published in *Mulyankan* are specifically noteworthy. These works represent different perspectives. In the advertorial '*Janajatio Aankhama Sambidhan Sabha*', published in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, the perspective of Nepal Federation of Nationalities on restructuring of the state and inclusion has come. The notable aspect in it is that it states, "Women's representation at all levels of the state should be 50 percent."

After the voice of making federalism and ethnic autonomy or self-rule should be the main basis of state restructuring was highly raised, the Interim Constitution was amended and it was declared that Nepal would be a federal state in future. But, clear-cut concepts have not come forth about what kind of federalism, autonomy or self-rule to what extent and how women, *dalits* and differently-able-people would be treated in proportional representation. Mainly, the voice has been raised for making ethnicity, language, religion, and geography to some extent the bases of federal structure. However, it is not clear how the use of natural resources, economic transformation and progress, and the condition of some ethnic communities' dependency on others for their livelihood are managed.

While considering the issues in relation to women in the context of the strong presence of male dominance and patriarchy in many social groups

and religious communities, how to guarantee that such groups and communities would not obstruct the women's freedom in the name of keeping their ethnic or religious purity? Unfortunately, women's perspective on restructuring of the state and inclusion has not appeared in a consolidated form. Making the claim for 'a half share in every place' by pointing to the naturally attained half share in population, the women intellectuals are just in the wait and watch situation. From restructuring of the state to the ethnic autonomy, woman's analytical perspective is essential.

The main task is to change the centralized state system, which has been in existence for about 250 years, into the system of devolution. If this task/aim is forgotten, the groups of people that have less population and are less vociferous would be abandoned. The present debates on restructuring of the state and inclusion should be taken to a wider scale because this would be a great help to the forthcoming constitutional assembly.

In order to understand the present political conflict analysts seem to be concentrating on three factors: national structure of Nepal, main political actors, and sequence of events. First, it was necessary to understand Nepal's national structure, which provided ground for the emergence and expansion of the Maoist movement. However, structure is not a static phenomenon; human beings are continuously involved in shaping, sustaining and changing structure. The motives, desires, interrelations and interactions of human beings, which change in accordance with their material condition, work to change the structure. Therefore, understanding the human agency became the second important task. In the context of Nepal, that the monarchy that wants to keep up the tradition intact, parliamentary political parties and the Maoist are considered as the main actors.

There is a sociological perspective which holds that social actions should be understood from within. For that reason, some analysts, in order to understand the existing conflict, seem to have attempted to understand the principle and perspective of the Maoists, the most prominent actor. Thereupon sequence of events and process seem to be given importance, that is, the analyses of how the events have been developing are found. Precisely, the media and the organizations involved in human rights and

peace are found to be concentrating on the course of events, as the social scientists and political analysts are found to be focused on structure and theoretical analysis of the actors' ideologies.

The Maoist Movement and Women: Holes in the Claims

A serious analysis of Nepal's national structure, main political actors, the ideological and organizational base of the Maoist movement and sequence of events demands longer time and space. So, according to the major objective of the present review, it will be more relevant to confine to a brief discussion in the relationship between the Maoist movement and women. When the thoughts expressed by the Maoists on women and the objective reality are analyzed comparatively, several holes could be seen in their claims.

The Maoists' main perspective on women is based on the assumption that women's movement, like the movements of other marginalized or minority groups must be brought under class movement because any other kinds of liberation is not possible before class liberation. Very few communists accept the fact that feminism is one of the contending ideologies committed for the total transformation of society; and women's movement has an independent identity and history. The Maoists are not exception in this regard. In their view, there are just three variants of women's movement in the world: first the revolutionary stream that goes under a communist party; second, the bourgeoisie or reformist stream; and finally, the revisionist (?) stream (Parvati, 2003: 170). Instead of presenting reliable answers to the questions and challenges put forth by feminism as well as by socialist feminism that has been developed within the Marxist discourse, discarding them by alleging 'bourgeois' and 'revisionist' has been considered their ideological triumph by the Maoists. The Maoist perspective to look at women and women's issues is set up on the foundation of orthodox Marxism. In a sense, the Maoists have just presented Nepali interpretation of what from Marx to Clara Zetkin have written about 'the woman's question'. The Maoists hold that the semi-feudal, semi-colonial structure and comprador capitalism are the main causes behind the subordinate position and patriarchal oppression of Nepali women. Therefore, in their opinion, class liberation is a prerequisite for women's liberation. Prachanda in his article 'Marxism-

Leninism-Maoism and the Question of Women's Liberation' writes, "... The question of women's liberation is inevitably and essentially linked to the question of class struggle."

The Maoists' attitude and strategy on women's issues are of a populist sort. An example in this regard is their demand for women's equal right to parental property. The demand was also included in the Forty Point Demands, which the Maoists submitted to the then Deuba Government on February 4, 1996. The demand of women's equal rights to parental property is a very old and important demand of Nepali women. Nepali women had fought a long legal battle to fulfill the demand, and the state was compelled to make some legal amendments in favor of women's property rights.

As far as the Maoists' demand for women's equal rights to parental property is concerned it obviously had a populist purpose. Though the Maoists consider private property as the root cause of all evils and talk about collective ownership over property, they have said that women's equal right to parental property "has become the main slogan among the various slogans of women's liberation in the present time of new democratic revolution" (Yami and Bhattari, 2057 BS: 21). But, isn't it a less progressive attitude than that of capitalists? For capitalism generally emphasizes on will system for the transfer of private property. Many feminists and women activists of Nepal say that daughters must be given equal rights to property only until the system of giving parental property rights to sons exists. In their view, equal right to parental property is necessary to establish women's equal status as men in the society.

Many analysts are found to be appreciating the anti-alcohol campaign run by the Maoists in the initial years of the armed struggle. The Maoists have been presenting the campaign as if they have pioneered and expanded it throughout the country. This is a completely false claim. Various women's groups of villages, particularly the mothers' groups had already started the anti-alcohol campaign two and a half years before the onset of the people's war (*Asmita Monthly*, Saun 2053 BS). The campaign was such that it carried a possibility of becoming a bridge between the educated urban women activists and rural women. The educated urban women were protesting against violence against women in different ways and demanding to formulate law to control it. Alcohol

consumption has been one of the main causes behind the violence against women. Thus, the anti-alcohol campaign conducted by rural women had played the role of linking city-centric women's movement to the grassroots of the society. But, the expansion of the anti-alcohol campaign has been obstructed by the Maoists' violent intervention, and now, it is merely limited to the area of Maoist influence.

The Maoists' view on patriarchy overtly shows their theoretical limitation. Patriarchy is the oldest and the most enduring system of oppression. Patriarchy as a system of oppression has strengthened itself by changing its form in accordance with the changing politico-economic structure. The feudal structure has one type of patriarchy and the capitalist structure has another type of patriarchy. Therefore, the Maoists' view that patriarchy will perish if the politico-economic structure is transformed is right to some extent. Yet, for the Maoists, thinking that patriarchy also functions independent of politico-economic structure would be going beyond the boundary of Marxism. Violence against women can be taken to understand how patriarchy functions independent of politico-economic structure. For patriarchy, violence against women is both the most effective means of oppression and an elixir for its perpetual existence. The presence of violence against women like rape, battering, sexual harassment, sexual slavery etc. is not just the remnants of old system. It shows the ability of patriarchy to function independent of the politico-economic system.

Rape, the most brutal form of violence against women has been used as a topic of political propaganda by both the state and the Maoists. The reports comprising the statement like 'thousands of women have been raped by the troops of the state in a planned way' or 'the Maoists have raped numerous women under the threat of their gun' were propagandized by both sides. Such exaggerated propaganda would certainly deprive sufferer women from immediately needed justice, compensation and empathy. When a crime is linked to structure and process rather than considering it as the crime committed by individual(s) on other individual(s), it becomes extremely difficult to bring the crime within the framework of legal action.

In this manner, the Maoists' perspective on women's issues seem to be orthodox, one-sided and populist in nature, however, their capacity for

politically organizing numerous women in the country's remote areas is commendable. In this regard, whereas the social condition in villages, attenuated presence of the state in remote areas and women's exploited and neglected condition played supporting role, the main role was played by the Maoists' organizational mode. In the initial years, the Maoists had executed the campaigns against social malpractices like alcohol consumption, gambling, polygamy, child marriage, domestic violence, untouchability and dowry. They had also rendered rights of parental property to women in the area under their influence. The mainstay of their success in such tasks was obviously their guns. It was quite natural that seeing instant solution to their problems innocent people were attracted to their party.

The Maoists had made a policy to incorporate more and more women into their organization (Karki and Seddon, 2003: 75-116). Many cases have been published in which when a Maoist man was arrested, killed or made disappeared by the security forces, the women of his family would join the party. Secondly, it is also seen that the Maoists have enrolled adolescent women who were bored from burdensome domestic chores and school girls in their organization by alluring them, and even using force sometimes. Except a very limited number of women who joined the party before the inception of the people's war, the number of women who have joined the party after understanding its principles is very less. Nevertheless, from the women leaders at the topmost level of the party to the ordinary women cadres at the lowest organ can tell the party's current stand and working policy the same as the leaders have issued. These women even use the same pet words of their leaders while speaking. The Maoists characterize such parroting as 'women having high political consciousness'.

On the basis of the Maoists' claim that there are 40 percent women in their people's army, it can be assumed that there are 10-12 thousand women in their people's army. The Maoists detest the concept of women's empowerment and they consider it as the slogan brought forth by the imperialists to nullify women's liberation movement and communist movement (Yami and Bhattari, 2057 BS: 42). But, how women can be liberated without being empowered is not clear in their rhetoric. The Maoists seem to consider that picking up guns by thousands of women has opened the prospect of women's empowerment. Ram Bahadur Thapa

(Badal), a senior leader of the Maoists, though emphasizing on raising women's political consciousness, writes: "Women can break their shackles becoming empowered rather than by being fragile. For that, women should pay attention to the process of militarization seriously. ... In order to protect their dignity and existence, women should speed up the militarization process at both the physical and mental levels. ... Additionally, they should link every fragment of their thought to the militarization process (Badal, 2058 BS: 41)."

If militarization or picking up guns is considered as women being empowered, the prevalent definition of empowerment has to be altered. In simple words, empowerment is having control over the decisions that affect one's life. This is also a subjective state; after its attainment persons can analyze their destitute condition and will be inspired to change the condition. According to the famous spokesperson of empowerment Paulo Freire, empowerment is the development of critical consciousness, for which education plays a major role. How much critical consciousness is found among the women affiliated to the Maoist Party can be appraised from the fact that the women in the party are not in a position to generate ideas and policies but rather in the position of receiving and implementing the ideas and policies made by their male leaders. In such a party the great asset of which is the regimentation of its cadres, it is not easy to believe that critical consciousness has been developed in the party.

The Maoist Party has been making another claim that it broke the stereotyped image of women by arming them with guns. Crumbling the stereotypical images of both male and female as well as the attempts made for it have been a part of women's movement. Any endeavor related to that is hailed by the feminists. But, just changing the stereotypical image of women and keeping that of men intact does not bring a desired result in the society. Whether the stereotypical image of men within the Maoist Party has changed or not is also a significant question. Definitely, there are a few reports which indicate that men's stereotypical image has also been changed in the Maoist party (for instance, Paudel, 2061 BS; Onesto, 2005; Yami, 2063), but since such studies were not done by minutely focusing on men's behavior and man-woman relations, they do not reveal much.

Furthermore, the assertion that the stereotypical roles of male and female must be changed for women's liberation does not merely mean that men and women should interchange traditionally defined men's work and women's work respectively. But, it also means to eliminate the hierarchy created by patriarchy characterizing men's work at public place as superior and women's work at home as inferior. Secondly, the patriarchy-spawned hierarchy that considers men as superior and women as inferior does exist in the jobs at public sector (in Maoist terminology 'production sector'). Women are being brought into the works at public sector somewhat, but they have been posted in subordinate positions, and several examples could be found in which men are uncooperative while working under a woman boss. Therefore, the problem is not attached to structure or the pattern of work but also with consciousness (Hartmann, 1979). It is not clear what the Maoist have been doing to deal with this problem.

There certainly are some socialist feminists who think that since a violent revolution creates a space in society to ascertain women's rights and welfare, women should take active part in it. However, they have not thought about the use of extreme violence, widespread violation of human rights, increase in crime against humanity, growth of the violence against women under political cover, and the state oppression over innocent people in such revolution. Feminists, though have analyzed violence from different theoretical perspectives, do not hold any ambiguity about whether to use violence or not for social change. Feminism, which is different from any other political ideology and social movements, does not consider the end (the desired goal) is separate from the means. Instead, it regards that end and means are indivisible. According to feminist viewpoint, violence is the weapon so far used by patriarchy, and neither a violence-free society can be built by the use of violence nor a non-sexist society can be formed by the sexist tactics (Tuttle, 1987: 334). Additionally, for the feminists, who have been struggling to end all kinds of violence against women, supporting violence is not right ethically.

All these arguments do not mean that women must not carry guns or join the military service. This is an inevitable phenomenon in the process of social development. Attempting to stop women from joining military service or any other kind of job in public sector on their self-decision is not only wrong but also illegitimate. Women have been struggling to ascertain and preserve their space in public sector jobs. The only point is

that women should not be incorporated in an army merely for the purpose of killing or being killed. In the case of the Maoists, their attitude and behavior toward women are comparatively less negative. There are several examples of showing respect to women's dignity and pride by them. But, a million dollar question is: Will women be liberated from their strategy?

On analyzing the experience of revolutions world over it can be seen that those who had been in leadership positions before a revolution would reach high ranking positions in the political structure after the revolution as well. In the case of the Maoists also, the condition is such that men who are in main decision-making posts would naturally fit in decision making posts after a revolution. Though the Maoists have sloganeering for women's special rights, it is unbelievable that the male leaders who have come through a long struggle for power would yield their positions to give a way to women's advancement. At a glance, the Maoists seem to have done a revolutionary work by sending 29 women representatives (40 percent out of its total 83 representatives) in the interim legislative-parliament. Women have never before reached the parliament in such a large number. But, it cannot be said that the Maoists do not have any vested interest in doing so. Apparently, it is their strategy for the forthcoming constituent assembly polls for they have not incorporated women in their central committee, which has been re-shuffled a couple of times recently. Secondly, it still has to be seen that whether the women parliamentarians, who have to obey party policy and orders issued by male leaders, can maintain their independent status or not. Whatsoever, a sizable number of women have become parliamentarians; they can utilize this as an opportunity to become capable legislatures. For this, whether they carry on the party's political line and women's agenda equally or not is yet to be seen.

What impact the Maoist armed struggle has had on women should be viewed on the context of its total impact on the whole society. The fact cannot be ignored that the armed struggle created pressure for urgent change on the ruling class, which wanted to change neither themselves nor society, and which was merely involved in power games. In a sense, the Maoists have put their finger on the aching nerves of Nepali society. As mentioned in the Maoist publications, reforms like the end of gambling, alcohol consumption, polygamy, dowry and untouchability

have taken place in the areas of their domination. Such iniquitous practices have been directly affecting women. So, the Maoists' campaign against the iniquitous practices played a significant role in spreading their influence among women. But, could not the party, which had hundreds of committed workers ready to die for an ultimate cause, bring such changes without using violence to such extent? This question is still alive. Nonetheless, the sustainability of the social changes brought by force is always at danger, it is essential to think about preserving these changes.

In the ten-year period of violent conflict women had to suffer all kind of extremities like murder, violence, beating, rape, sexual harassment, torture, illegal imprisonment, and disappearance. The state showed its real face. In the pretext of several police operations like Operation Romeo, Operation Kilo Sierra 2 targeted at the Maoists, emergency and peace-and-security, the Maoists, their supporters and many innocent common people had to suffer unprecedented oppression and torture. The actions executed by the Maoists, however, were also not like 'natural response to fight back the oppression'. Those were obviously executed to create terror. Even in the people's courts established by the Maoists for providing immediate justice to common people, decisions were made in the manner prevalent in the Medieval Age.

The ten-year long violent conflict, however, has now ended after the loss of material property worth millions of rupees, death of 12 to 15 thousand people, injuries to 20 to 50 thousand people, disappearance of 18 hundred people, displacement of 200 to 250 thousand people and mental disorder of numerous people. In these figures, it is very difficult to locate women sufferers' condition statistically. First a clear-cut categorization of all the sufferers has not been made yet. By whom and how they have been victimized? What is their present status? And, what kind of support do they need at present? Such questions have to be resolved. Since the condition, position and location of women are different in society, the nature of the support they needed should also be of a different kind. While making data base of the sufferers (victims?), gender dis-aggregated data are essential. The sufferers of the ten-year long violent conflict must not be forgotten in the pretext or eagerness of building new democratic Nepal. Let's hope just this much for now.

Conclusion: Interdependency, Blended Democracy and Injurious Complacency

On the basis of the rigorous study of the works of reference on the project theme in the first three months of the project period, and intermittent study during the rest of the scheduled time, the reviewer would like to present the following conclusions.

- Nepal has come to the point from where it can neither move back nor remain stagnant. Restructuring of the whole nation is inevitable. The system of unitary state has to be converted to the system of devolution. However, the restructuring has not been taken comprehensively. All the discussions, debates and conversations have been found to confine to the restructuring of the political system or the state. Looking from the women's point of view just the restructuring of state is not enough. Restructuring is needed everywhere from the family to all structures and sub-structures of the society because all the communities or social groups which have been vociferous in the demands of autonomy or self-rule, are patriarchal in this way or that way. It cannot be said that their desire for maintaining racial purity will not camouflage patriarchal values and customs. How the socio-cultural oppression, exploitation and subordination of women will be ended in various communities is still unclear.
- Until yesterday, when Nepal was practicing unitary system of governance, the main trait of the nation was dependency. The center or Kathmandu and the ruling elite was dependent on the periphery or the regions outside of Kathmandu and marginalized/minority groups. Ironically, the periphery was also dependent on the center, particularly for the development of various kinds. After the triumph of the People's Movement II, the oppressed, exploited and neglected groups have been demanding independence or autonomy. This is a good sign in the direction of building up of new Nepal. It indicates that the marginalized groups want to break the decades-old state of dependency and take the responsibility of their progress on their own. They want to be independent. Progression is not possible without breaking dependency. Historically, politically, economically,

socially and geographically, the ground reality of Nepal, however, is that all the marginalized/minority groups, sooner or later, have to realize the value of interdependency. The point becomes more explicit when viewed in the context of women. For instance, if a highly patriarchal social group gets autonomy, the women need help from the women of other social groups in the struggle for their rights, independence and autonomy. From time to time, the central government may have to interfere in such patriarchal social group in order to administer universal human rights. Therefore, in the context of Nepal, only semi-autonomy is viable, and interdependency is an inevitable element.

- Two elements semi-autonomy and interdependency should be the main features of future Nepal. As far as the political system is concerned, Nepal is entering into the democracy of a unique kind, if the political actors work with better understanding. On the one hand, the central government has to take on more responsibilities to bring immediate changes in all sectors of the nation, and that means the formation of the left or socialist state. On the other hand, the pressures of globalization, need for economic prosperity, and the autonomy/self-rule sought by various social groups demand more democracy in the prevalent sense of the term. Thus, the main characteristic of the state will be based on socialist and democratic (liberal?) values and concepts. The ideological backgrounds of the political parties, which are predominant in the current politics, also indicate the same. But, both socialism and democracy (liberalism) are monolithic ideologies that usually do not easily accept voices against their foundational assumptions. Today, voices against the monolithic ideologies can be heard in the discourses and debates forwarded by the marginalized/minority groups. Since the ruling political parties have missed to understand this simple fact, the present transitional period has become more anarchical. Thus, it can be anticipated that the Nepali democracy will be formed by the blend of socialism, democracy and affirmative cultural values of various communities and social groups. In order to ascertain their appropriate space in the democracy, gender experts, feminists and women right activists should raise their agenda persistently.

- Not only a drastic change has occurred in yesterday's and today's conditions, but the mode and style of portraying the conditions have also been transformed. Till yesterday, the number of the people killed in the conflict, their identity and the situation of their murder would be documented. And, that was also not easy, the conflicting groups would try to suppress real facts and propagate confusing information. Today, due to the openness in the circumstances, it has become easier to collect information. Therefore, it is necessary to gather authentic information and keep detail records of the people who were killed, maimed, made to disappear and displaced. It is equally important to investigate into the present condition of the families of those who were killed so that the state could provide appropriate support (compensation, arrangement of employment, children's education etc.), and a feeling of revenge may not rise up in them. Till yesterday, we studied about who had been displaced from where, but, many of the displaced people are returning to their home today. So, it has also become important to investigate on the problems encountered during the re-settlement, rehabilitation and re-integration of the displaced people. Many of the displaced people have not still returned to their home or they do not want to return, it is also necessary to find out the causes behind such matter.
- General amnesty may be rendered to the people who were guilty of murder and minor excesses during direct confrontations. But, the people who were alleged as involved in the misdeeds that come under the category of personal crimes should be punished as per the law regarding the nature of their crimes. It is necessary to know that what the state, political parties and the Maoists think about this matter for the voice to end the condition of impunity has been raised at present. Most of the atrocities committed against women like rape, murder after rape, beating, expulsion from house, kidnap, disappearance etc. fall under the category of personal crimes. If the state and the Maoists have already taken actions against the guilty for such crimes, punishing them again may not be needed, but the people must be informed about the actions. Women should raise their voice for punishing

those who have not been punished yet. Under the guise of the Maoists and security forces many criminal gangs had committed a number of crimes during the conflict. Giving acquittal to the criminals in the pretext that ‘the excesses just happened during maintaining the law and order’ or ‘it was all necessary damages that occur during revolution’ will be a great mistake.

- An enormous change has occurred in the strategy and working policy of the Maoists after their plenum in Chunwang in October 2005. Nowadays, they repeatedly talk about peaceful struggle, multiparty competition, cooperation and dialogue with other democratic parties, constituent assembly, commitment to accept the results of the constituent assembly polls, management of arms and people’s army etc. They have made democratic republic as the working slogan for the time being, though they have not discarded their strategic goal of people’s republic (and it may not be right to expect this!). All these facts indicate that they are being attracted toward democratic modes of struggle. Those who suspect whether this is just a tactical move of the Maoists, should understand that democratic struggle and armed struggle cannot go hand in hand. One will overtake the other at a certain point.
- The Maoist leaders have repeatedly uttered the expressions like: ‘we respect human rights’, ‘we are accountable to Nepali people’, ‘we have also committed some atrocities and made errors for which we have already apologized after self-criticism’. Likewise, the political forces (parties) which had represented the state time and again have accepted most of the demands of the Maoist Party, and publicly regretted for their past mistakes. In this context, all the mistakes, shortcomings and weaknesses of the past ten years should be examined and documented carefully. This is essential not for punishing guilty, but for keeping the mistakes in memory so that they will not be repeated again. Let’s hope, the High Level Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is yet to be formed as provisioned in the Comprehensive Peace Accord, will take effective steps in this direction. The media can play a pressurizing role in this regard.

- Similarly, the interim parliament and/or the government should approve the Rome Statute, 1998 related to international criminal court, as soon as possible, so that no one would dare to commit crimes against humanity in future. This issue should be advocated in the media programs to be produced under the project.
- It is also necessary to study the condition of women in the Maoists' base areas and the changes that have been brought by the Maoist movement in the women's condition.
- The Maoists have been claiming that their philosophy is 'the most revolutionary and hence it is also dynamic for it changes according to space, time and situation'. However, a lot of orthodoxy can be seen in their attitude. The Maoists have not moved an inch right or left from whatever Marx, Engles, Clara Zetkin to Lenin, Stalin and Mao have said regarding 'the woman question'. They not only remain uninfluenced by the women's movements and feminist discourses of the past half a century, but are also uninformed (for example the writings of Comrade Parvati). Their theoretical limitation to see women's issues from the perspective of class struggle encompasses all the issues and problems of women into class struggle. They have strongly grasped the notion that women's problems will be gradually resolved after the issue of class struggle is settled. This raises the question that would not the patriarchy invent new disguises for its survival in the meantime.
- Women's problems (e.g., violence against women) had already been there in the society for a long time. The conflict made these problems deeper, wide-ranging and multidimensional. Though some latest studies had shown that the rate of trafficking in women/girls in the country was declining (Asmita, 2006), the violent political conflict was added as a cause among the various causes responsible for the trafficking. Till yesterday, rape had been a crime committed against individual women by individual culprit(s), but, now, it has acquired political dimension, too. A woman would not be raped simply because she was a woman but also on allegation or suspicion of her being a Maoist ('terrorist'?). It was observed that in order to harass the Maoists

and their supporters the state security forces used gang-rape as a weapon. Because many police posts in the bordering towns were removed due to the violent actions of the Maoists, many women from very poor and oppressed castes residing there were raped by dacoits. Some reports have shown that due to the displacement caused by the conflict, flesh trade is increasing in city areas, and that there are a sizable number of women who are engaged in flesh trade conducted under the cover of cabin restaurants, dance bars and massage parlors. Some other reports have mentioned that displaced women struggling for their survival often fall prey to labor exploitation. All these matters need further investigation.

- Feminism and Marxism are not completely antagonistic ideologies. There is a commonality in the goal of both ideologies. Both want total transformation. The Maoists think that feminism is a bourgeois ideology put forward to crumble and weaken the proletarian liberation movement (i.e., the total movement against feudalism, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism and expansionism). On the contrary, feminists are dissatisfied that the Maoists have given subsidiary status to the crucial issues of women by putting the issues underneath the class struggle. The feminists claim that the movement to end patriarchy, which is inherent in interpersonal relations to family to political parties to the state, should go hand in hand with the proletarian movement. Obviously, there is a lack of dialogue between the followers of the two ideologies. Therefore, there should be dialogues and theoretical discussions between the adherents of the two ideologies. How much the Maoists, who claim that they are 'different from any other communists of the world' listen to women's voice and how assertively the feminists would present their arguments, will determine the destiny of such ideological discussions.
- There is a remarkable presence of women in the huge organizational structure of the Maoists. According to the Maoists' claim, there are 30 to 40 percent women in their people's army. But, it is not just sufficient to see the involvement of women in the Maoist Party quantitatively. How they are involved should also be analyzed. How many women are there in the decision making

level of the party? How are the role, work and working mode of women and men set in the party? How does the relation between male and female exist in the party? What types of problem have women been facing in the party just because of being a woman? In what types of job do women engage in within the party? What are the plans and strategy the party has made to bring women in its decision making level? All these questions also need further investigation.

- In most of the materials, which have analyzed the Maoist movement from gender perspective, the questions to be explored are usually put in a conventional way. For instance, what is the proportion of women directly involved in the Maoist movement? How women's problems have been solved by the Maoists? Naturally, the answers to such questions also have been conventional. Consequently, such queries confine a study to gathering percentage of women's participation and series of events. Such queries obviously put the Maoists at the center and establish them as the 'new savior' of women. It is imperative to change the mode of questions during the investigation under the project. The questions to be asked during investigation can be: What kinds of change have come in the idea, organization and working mode of the Maoists due to the women's involvement in the party? The Maoists have been claiming that there are 40 percent women in their party (particularly in their people's army). Because of such involvement of women what changes have come in the thought, organization, working mode and stereotypical roles of male and female in the party?

In sum, the Maoist movement has exerted an enormous pressure on the state to take several important steps and responsibilities in women's favor. Though the obstinate attitude and actions of the Maoists have obstructed the pace of women's movement a little, they have rendered several benefits to women. But, remaining complacent being assured by the hope that merely the one-sided approach and actions of the Maoists would empower and liberate women will spoil women's movement, which is ultimately injurious to women.



Women of Rukum

Maoist Political Campaigns: The Price of Non-involvement

- Anju Chhetri/Manju Thapa

“More than 15 hundred people of Rukum have lost their life during the 11 years of Maoist people’s war. In that number, 98 percent are male of the age between 17 to 40 years, and most of them belong to the *dalits* (oppressed castes) and ethnic groups. About 4,000 children have lost their parents. The cease- fire has been declared at present, and the country is heading toward peace. The peace process must end successfully in order to lessen the pains implanted in the hearts of the common villagers, women and children of Rukum.”

This is the evaluation about the impact of people’s war in Rukum made by Nanda Bahadur Bista, a district level leader of the Nepali Congress. Though the explosion of bombs and bullets is not heard at present, the people of Rukum are sandwiched between the *purano satta* and *nayan satta* (old and new powers as described by the Maoists). The haunting imprints of people’s war can still be seen in every village located at an hour walking distance from Khalanga, the district headquarter of Rukum. The effect of people’s war can be observed even in the pains of the displaced people living in Khalanga. Every family has borne the painful experience of the incidents like disappearance of family member, murder, torture, abduction, rape, forced labor, extortion etc. They are now optimistic that the ongoing peace process will free them from the compulsion of undergoing through such painful and coercive situation.

Bimala Bohara and Krishna Rokaya study in grade seven. At about 11:00 am on May 24, 2006 they were hurriedly climbing down the hill to Gujildhunga carrying small bags and breathing heavily. There was food for fifteen days in the bags of both. On the order of the Maoists, the group that was to construct the road 'Sahidmarga' was assembling at a house in Gujildhunga. All had to be assembled before noon. Thirteen year old Krishna was in his school dress. He had attended the school that day because he would be missing his studies for the coming 15 days. In the family of Bimala and Krishna, there was not any young and energetic person who was able to go for building road. Bimala's father was very old and sick while there were only mother and small siblings in Krishna's home. Therefore, the burden of following the order of the Maoists came on the shoulders of these two adolescents. Rush, pressure and compulsion could be explicitly observed on their face. Their family could not deny sending someone because the Maoist people's-power had made the rule -- a person from each family or else pay the penalty of Rs. 3,000.

When moving toward Syalapakha VDC from Khalanga, a fairly large gathering of people in a house near the road was seen. Considering that it might be some sort of village discussion program, no question was asked about the gathering. But, after meeting Bimala and Krishna on the way and talking with them, the meaning of the gathering was clear. While returning later, the woman of the house where people had gathered to go for constructing road was asked about the gathering, she said, "About 15 people left for that. My son also went with them representing my family. He was studying in class eight. They said, they would return after 15 days. I had given expenses (food) to my son. It would take two days to reach the place and two days to return, and they would build the road for the rest of the days. I hope nothing wrong would happen to my son!"



Bimala Bohara and Krishna Rokaya

Previously, when going to build road under the Maoist campaign, people might get killed or injured in a confrontation with the state security forces. The people who have heard about such incidents were still a little frightened thinking about the confrontation. The woman innocently says further, “Now, peace is being restored, isn’t it? They shouldn’t have taken away my son.” Lila Rokaya, standing beside the woman, says, “My younger sister has also gone with them. She studies in class seven.” It was known that two Maoist cadres had come to stay in the house in Gujildhunga, a day before to gather and take away the villagers for building road.

Dilshova Sunar and Sapana Sunar of Bhandarikanda village located in Sankha VDC sharing their experience of digging road last year says, “One person from each household of our village went to build road last year.” Dilshova went leaving her four very small children alone at home and Sapana had gone carrying her one year old baby. Dilshova’s husband has married another woman and migrated to India, and Sapana’s husband has also brought *kanchhi* (second wife) and lives in Dang. Dilshova says, “If I had three thousand rupees, I’d buy new clothes for my children.”

“Oh, from where can we get three thousand rupees?” asks Sapana. She lightheartedly remarks, “While going to build road, they instructed us to play drill, but since I had very small baby, I did not follow their instruction. They would show dance and play music. Their dance, music and speech are amusing. But, no one can be content working under pressure.”

The experience of Lila BK of Sankha Bhandarikanda is also not much different than theirs. “A person from each household was taken away last year. At that time, I had gone to the hospital at Salle taking my small son. My elder son was studying in Khalanga. When I returned home, I knew that my second son went to build road with the villagers,” She says, “He even did not wait for me. He thought that a person from every household had gone with them, and if no one would go from our family they might penalize us. Because of this fear he went with them. Since my son was very small, I couldnot sleep well for several days until he returned home.”

Bhagawati, a social mobilizer working at Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN), Khalanga expresses her grief that when her younger brother was taken away to build Sahidmarga or Martyrs Memorial Road, he was injured by a stray bullet fired by the state security forces. The people do not differ the idea of building road from the campaign called build our village ourselves. But, since their experiences of forcibly taking away to build road in whatever condition, taking not to their place but to Rolpa and there is always a danger of attack by the state security forces, the people are not found to be heartily supporting this move of the Maoists.

The president of Rukum Journalist Federation Narayan Shah, describing the event he has witnessed, says, “The Maoists had come to assemble people for digging Sahidmarga in Daphen village of Rukum Aathbisakot. Twenty-seven year old Khadke Buda of the same village announced that it is better to kill oneself than to go for digging road forcibly, and he eventually committed suicide. Shocked by this incident the women of the village decided not to send their men to build road. They told about their decision to the Maoist cadres who had come to take away people for building road.”

Whether be it the issue of digging road or partaking in the open-air meeting of the Maoists, the villagers of Rukum recount similar type of experience - one person from each house, or else pay three thousand rupees. The construction of 19 kilometers road from Tila to Ghartigaun of Rukum by the Maoists is still under progress. Before it, they had already completed the construction of 13 kilometers road from Nuwagaun to Thawang, informs Sharun Batha, the person in charge of Rukum people’s government. When asked, don’t you take children to build road? He responds, “ Our intention certainly is not to take away children for that purpose. We have given the authority to the villagers to decide about this matter. When the children see that almost everyone from the village has gone for building road, they willingly follow them. In some circumstances, the villagers themselves decide that the children should go for building road, considering that the children of 13-14 years of age work at home. The children who go to participate are involved in the work according to their capacity.”

Some may agree with this explanation and some may not. But, such situation should not be created in which children have to comply with the Maoists' order of going to build road, even at the cost of leaving their school. The act of involving people in such campaign by threatening them of penalty or punishment rather than in a persuasive manner can be counter-productive to the Maoists themselves.

Social Change

What kind of social change has come in the areas predominated by the Maoists in the past 10 years? What kinds of change are seen in the role and characteristics of women? These are pertinent questions, though their answers are not obvious. Such changes cannot be brought about in a systematic manner in the time of war. In such situation, the old regime becomes incapable to carry out its activities and the rebel group mostly concentrates on enhancing its military actions. The women when asked about the change brought about by the people's war became reluctant to reply. Specifically, they could not openly share the experiences which carried anti-Maoist overtones. Some of the women of Rukum, who have requested anonymity, have similar experience and misery: "When a complaint is filed against polygamous marriage by a man in the Maoist camp, somehow, they find out about such deed, they often imprison the man and his second wife in a labor camp. Later, they force the man to live with the second wife, while giving the first wife her share of property and divorce from her husband. It's a nice thing they have done!"

The important change realized by Lila BK of the same village Bhandarikanda is different. She says, "The good thing that the Maoists have done is the abolition of caste-based untouchability. The so-called high caste Thakuris used to oppress and humiliate us in the past, but they don't do so these days. The Maoists would take the *dalits* (oppressed castes) into the house of the so-called high castes wearing shoes or sandals, and they would tell the *dalits* to fill water in the pots of Thakuris from the public tap. Thus they have helped to eliminate caste-based untouchability." A local teacher, Subarna assesses that due to the awareness raised by the Maoists, the lust for jewelry among women has declined considerably, and their political consciousness has also risen.

Journalist Shah, who holds critical views, about Maoists activities, has a different opinion. He says, “In Rukum, there was a bad custom of abducting girls and marrying them. Now, the dowry system has diminished to some extent. But, the credit of this change cannot be given to the Maoists alone. Such change has occurred due to the spontaneous awareness among the people.”

As per the women’s experience, there are so many changes that can be labelled negative. A woman of Sankha VDC expressing her discontents says, “There was an open-air meeting of the Maoists in Khalanga on April 12. On behalf of our family, I had gone to the meeting, carrying my small baby. Usually, they issue an order to participate in each of their programs, if we don’t comply with the order, we have to pay fines. It may have been fruitful to the women who have joined their party, but how can I say that it is beneficial to women like us who make their living with hard labor. We cannot go to the district headquarters without their permission. Those who could somehow make some earnings have left the village.”

A district level party activist of Nepali Congress widowed due to the Maoist insurgency, Sita Woli’s utterance reflects a common voice of many women of the area: “The ten year long people’s war has ruined the life of many women and children here. The women, who have untimely become widow all of a sudden, have to take up economic burden of the family. Well-settled families have been shattered abruptly. Women’s health has degraded. The happiness in the family has vanished. The children, upset by mental problems, feel insecurity most of the time, it has hampered their education.” These horrific traumas caused by the war can be read on the faces and listened to during talks with many women of Rukum.

The expression, perception and assessment of the people engaged in the Maoist people’s war are different. Dilmaya Pun, who has been a whole timer activist of the CPN (M) since 2000, says, “A lot of change has come among women after the people’s war. They have become fearless, clever and capable of speaking against grievances. A political aware-

ness is rising among them. The untouchability has been demolished from the village.” Similar views are articulated in the statement of the chief of Rukum People’s Government Sharun Batha: “The women have a rebellious sentiment toward the exploitation against them. The political awareness that they must rise against the defective customs is now visible. Women have embraced the idea of the women’s rights over parental property. The property cannot be divided among the rightful heirs in the area without allocating the share of daughters. That’s the change the people’s war has brought here," he states.

- *Samaya*, June 22, 2006, Pp. 20-21

Women in the Field of War Created by Men

- Anju Chhetri

“Women can reconcile more easily. We feel free to go anywhere, meet anyone -- maybe because everyone knows we weren’t carrying guns; we weren’t in the death squads.” This statement of Alenka Savic, the Manager of the international organization Mercy Corp, represents an effective strand of feminist discourse, however, her opinion does not fit well in the reality of international politics. In practice, women have carried guns either by enlisting themselves in national army in several countries or joining rebel groups. Entering the battlefields they have become a member of death squads as well. In the context of Nepal, the women guerrillas of the Maoist people’s army, present the best example.

Since the inception of civilization, human beings have been fighting for different causes. The world had experienced 118 wars from the beginning of 1990 to the end of 1999. The number of people killed in those wars was estimated to be six million approximately. Most of the wars in the world have occurred to acquire power. And, there have been male leaders at the center in every big war, revolution or revolt, which took place in the history of human civilization. Very few women have become a state -head -the highest position in modern state power machinery. Due to this reason, women are less responsible for war.

Though women have been less responsible for war, they are utilized as volunteer health workers, spies and combatants in the time of war. On the one hand, the rebel groups prepare women 'guerrillas' in a planned way. On the other hand, due to the impact of women's voice that the participation of women must be secured in every institute of state mechanism, the state has begun to recruit women in the state army. Recently, All Nepal Women 's Association (Revolutionary) affiliated to Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) has put forth the demand that there must be 40 percent women in the national army, supposed to be restructured in the future by assimilation of Nepal Army and Maoists' People's Army. It is good to recruit more and more women in the army. It can be done by making a ten-year plan. It can be expected that this will help to change the unwholesome image of the army. But, there should be a lot more discussions on for what kinds of work women should be recruited in the army. There are different opinions among the feminists on the issue of recruiting women in the military service.

A segment of international feminist movements emphasizes that women must not be admitted in armed forces. On the basis of the experiences of the western countries, they argue that women could not reach the highest position of the army, they are always kept in subordinate positions and they are sexually exploited. In the same manner, another segment of feminists says that women should not be send to battlefields with lethal weapons. If women are recruited in the army, they should be engaged in limited sectors like information, transportation, administration, health and development. But, the third section of the feminists opine that such arguments confine women to their stereotypical roles. Therefore, the feminists, who hold the opinion that the stereotyped image of women must be corrected, say that women should be engaged in all kinds of military jobs. But, does not such attempt strengthen the structure constructed by men and let women just coalesce in that structure? Such issue should be considered carefully.

The growing population of unemployed educated women is ready to enter any field that is likely to offer employment for them. Moreover, since the military service is a challenging sector, the women are more drawn toward it. This fact has been confirmed by the crowd of women that had gathered around the military headquarters when the Nepal Army

first announced the policy to enroll women in the armed forces. Women were recruited in the Nepal Army for the first time in 2003, in non-ranking posts, without disclosing their actual number, and they were engaged in the sectors like policing, exchange, transportation and administration etc. But, the women enrolled in the second phase, that is, after six months, were also deployed as infantry.

It is alleged that the Nepal Army began to enroll women merely by imitating the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), because the Maoists had already begun to recruit women in their guerrilla force in great numbers. But, the fact one should not forget here is that women activists had been demanding for long to enroll women in the national army by amending the military law. By whatever reasons women have been joining the Nepal Army in all kinds of job. It is estimated that the proportion of women has reached five percent in the Nepal Army. The proportion of women's enrollment in the military service is much smaller in other countries of the world also.

Citing the source *The Military Balance 1998/99* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), the book *Gender, Peace and Conflict* (2001) has presented the number and proportion of women enrolled in the armed forces of 25 different countries, namely, Australia, Bahamas, Belarus, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, UK and USA. According to the data given in the book (p. 6), in the national army of South Africa, there are 16 thousand 998 women, which is 24.3 percent of its total armed forces. This is the highest percentage among the countries enlisted. Similarly, there are 199 thousand 990 (14.5 %) women in the armed forces of USA. In Russia and New Zealand there are 145 thousand and one thousand 370 women soldiers respectively (both have 14.4 percent of women in their total armed forces). The data reveal that India is the country that has the least number of women in its armed forces. In India, the number of women in the armed forces is just 200, which is 0.02 percent in its total army. The editors of the book Inger Skelsbaek and Dan Smith write in the introduction (p.7): "US and Israeli armed forces deploy women in direct combat roles." It indicates

that the practice of engaging women in combatant roles has not gained wider acceptance yet.

The standing committee member of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) has written an article in *Mahila Dhwani* (Chaitra, 2057 BS), the official mouthpiece of All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary). In the article entitled '*Samajik Krantima Nariko Apariharya Sthan Tatha Adhikarko Sawal*', Badal discusses about women's indispensable part in social revolution and the issue of women's rights. He writes (p. 41): "... Women have to pay serious attention to the process of militarization. Women's exploiters are armed from their head to toe. The enemies cannot be terminated merely by precepts and ideals. In order to protect their dignity and existence, women have to augment the course of militarization at both physical and mental levels. They have to convert each and every part of their body into a sharp weapon; the hands that would grind spices have to be converted into the tools of making detonators and bombs; the shoulders that would carry a *doko* (a cone shaped basket carried on the back) have to carry guns. Additionally, every component of thinking must be conjoined with the process of militarization." This assertion of Badal explicitly illustrates the Maoists' conviction, purpose and policy regarding militarization of women.

In accordance with their policy, the Maoists have enrolled a large number of women in combat troops of their people's army. Does this indicate that the Maoists have really acknowledged the capacity of women? Some observers like author Manjushree Thapa are dubious on this matter. Thapa in her article 'Girls at War: The Failings of Kathmandu' (included in the report *Women and the State: In the Storm of the Maoist Insurgency*, Center for Investigative Journalism, May, 2003) writes: "... the presence of women in the military wing has tended to come to most attention, but there has been little opportunity for independent analysts to examine whether or not these women merely serve as 'cannon fodder'. Neither is it known what percentage of these female recruits are underage girls. ... the CPN (M)'s claims to enjoy the wide participation of women (are) exaggerated."

Explaining the reasons for recruiting women into people's army, the central committee member of the CPN (Maoist) Hisila Yami says: "Women have not been recruited in the people's army because of any compulsion, pragmatic reason or instant advantage. Among the oppressed communities women are the largest group having the largest number that spreads from home to caste, ethnic groups, the people of regional, religious and linguistic communities. As they say where there is oppression there is resistance, women have a double power of resistance because they have been experiencing double oppression -- class oppression and gender oppression. Realizing this fact, we have involved them in military sector." (Quoted in Matrika Poudel, 'Maobadi Senama Mahilaharu' or 'Women in the Maoist Army', *Mulyankan*, Bhadau, 2061 BS, p. 12). The Maoists have claimed that there are 40 percent women in their people's army.

The participation of women in the people's army and the Maoists' claims on this matter will certainly be analyzed in the coming days. In addition, the claims about whether the Maoists' people's army incorporating 40 percent women or not will be known immediately after the process of arms' management starts. However, the higher ratio of women's participation in the People's Army or the moments of gallantry shown by women combatants in battlefields will gradually become a matter of the past. Instead, the crucial issues to think about at present are: how many soldiers the would-be national army should contain, what kind of structure it should have, how the People's Army of the Maoists will be integrated and how many women should be enrolled in it, etc. The Maoists had recruited women in their people's army to fulfill a political goal to a large extent. Their main objective was to fight against the 'enemies'. They would kill the 'enemies' or be killed by them. They did not need any proficiency to join the People's Army. They just had to have the guts to hold and fire guns. They did not have to get any educational qualification and pass a series of systematic military training because they were recruited merely for fighting battles and become a carrier of death. However, women in the national army of new Nepal should not be involved as war mongers but as the defenders of peace and democracy.

- *Nepal Samacharpatra*, August 17, 2006, p. 4

Women's Intervention in the Peace Process

- Anju Chhetri

It was the time of a complicated armed conflict. Because of the fires-and explosions caused by the forces of the State and the Maoists, human casualties and material loss were increasing everyday. The conflict-afflicted population leaving their villages to dwell in district headquarters and cities was also increasing in number. On the other hand, conscientious civil society groups were active in restoring human rights, peace and justice, reducing human casualties, ending war, providing relief to the people displaced due to conflict, providing legal support to conflict-afflicted people and going to the conflict-ridden areas to gather information, etc. In due course, in order to support the efforts related to human rights, peace resolution and conversion of conflict to non-violent forms, women established the network *Shantimalika* (which literally means 'a garland of peace groups') in March 2003. The network executed a national peace conference, peace rallies, and silent demonstrations for peace carrying placards. The network that was active in the time of battle has now fallen into inertia -- a lock has been hanging on the door of its contact office after the triumph of the People's Movement II.

Exerting pressure for gender issues and just peace, by means of several networks, is the most effective task for women. Women understand this. The women organizations affiliated to political parties and women groups

of specific communities have, therefore, formed various networks and fronts to advocate for political, ethnic and regional issues. For instance, *Antar-Party Mahila Sanjal*, *Loktantrik Mahila Sangharsha Samiti*, *Samabesi Loktantraka Lagi Upeksit Mahila Morcha*, *Aadibasi Janajati Mahila Samuha*, *Mahila Rajneetik Kendra*, *Sambidhansabhama Mahila*, *Himalayan Indigenous Women Network*, *Loktantrik Ganatantraka Lagi Mahila Manch*, etc.

No one can deny the significance of women organizing in a group or network; however, the need and importance of such group are established by its real contributions and tangible achievements. Organizing such group just for conducting meetings and seminars does not justify its cause. Any NGO capable of acquiring financial support from donors has been doing that sort of activity for a long time. Women's activism, which is mostly confined to workshop, meeting and seminar, has failed to show clear-cut standpoint in some crucial issues.

By analyzing women's activism it becomes obvious that women activists are not able to put forth their opinion or conduct extensive discussions on the issue pertinent to current situation. At present, the matter of restructuring of the state has been raised considerably. But, why the women activists have not put forth *their* plans for state restructuring? What is *their* opinion about the 'inclusive state' and 'proportional representation'? What is *their* idea about arms management? Why haven't they spoken about the Eight-Point and Five-Point Agreements between the seven-parties and the Maoists? Regarding women's activities, the presentation that requires intellectual and thoughtful exercise is found to be very weak. We, women should do a lot of preparations and sharpen our mind on the issues at hand.

Women should have presented their opinion on every issue of the peace process. However, most of the opinions have come out merely on the issue of representation. While the political parties have been presenting different road maps for peace, women, too, should have presented their own road map for peace, however this is not happening. Similarly, women have not made any preparation on the issue of state restructuring. No substantial discussion on the elements to be incorporated in the Interim Constitution has come from the women's side. The women's groups are

Women are not assigned the role of negotiators even at this point of time. Nevertheless, in order to exert pressure on both the conflicting parties engaged in the peaceful settlement of the ongoing political conflict, the activism of the civil society and the women's networks for peace has to be more effective. At this moment, when the efforts to establish just and sustainable peace continue, women can make their contributions more valuable together by pronouncing their views assertively and bringing conflicting parties across gender interactions.

just approving the decisions made by men. When we talked with women activists, we found them to be discontented with such trend. But, preparing a blueprint representing women's concerns on such burning issues reminds one of the Nepali proverb - *Who will bell the cat?*

Now, the situation is that the guns are silent. It has not yet caught the course of sustainable peace. Women should persistently keep an eye on the whole peace process until peace is not established. They should make the seven parties, the Maoists and the society realise that there are brave women who could fight for peace and justice. Ironically, the women, who came out to the streets demanding women's representation in the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee, have disappeared now when their demand was fulfilled. Women groups should not forget that in order to maintain pressure to remove the possible obstacles in the peace process activism and responsibility of women networks, fronts and struggle committees are needed more than ever.

Women have prioritized their activities in accordance with their perceptions, and their different views have determined the nature of their participation in the peace process. Giving reasons for why she did not want to join the civil society movement started from July 26, Dr. Meena Acharya says, "We should exert pressure for peace on both the conflicting parties. We should also monitor whether the Maoists are following the points included in the Cease-fire Code of Conduct or not. Chasing the government alone is not right." But, Sudha Tripathi, who has been

participating in the civil society movement expresses a different opinion: “The restructuring of the state and the peace process will not move further unless the election for the Constituent Assembly is successfully held. Therefore, wherever there is a need to exert pressure for the election of the Constituent Assembly, I will be there to express solidarity.” The members of the civil society and women (whose role is limited) confined merely to those observer's, pressure group or witnesses, have not become an indispensable link for peace between the conflicting forces.

Those who were the main players in the armed conflict yesterday have now become actors for peace. The Maoists had started the insurgency with the conviction that the total transformation in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres and the restructuring of the state is not possible without armed struggle. When the Maoists started to fire their guns, the state arms were also fired in the name of protecting the people and exterminate the insurgents. Thus both the warring forces had presented their cause to fight. After fighting for seven years, the conflicting forces, on their own initiative, had embraced peace talk twice, in 2001 and 2003. When they could not come to an agreement on the issue of Constituent Assembly, both returned to war. In the ongoing peace process also, both the forces have come together with certain commitment to peace. But, whoever may have taken the initiative, the fact is that both of them have embraced the peace process. There has already been an agreement on one of the major agenda of the Maoists, namely, to hold elections for the Constituent Assembly. The political parties, ambiguously though, have presented their different roadmaps for just peace. But, the issue of the management of the Maoists arms has impeded the peace process. Though most of the political issues are determined by the views of the actors (mostly men) at the political centers, women should not give up their activities that they can carry out from their place.

There is an international basis, which gives women an opportunity for their affirmative intervention in the peace process. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 has shown commitment to the participation of women in the peace process. It has emphasized the issue of women's access to the tasks of the rehabilitation of conflict-afflicted women and children, and the reconstruction of the destroyed physical structures.

Additionally, it has emphasized the need of gathering information and statistics about the impacts on women and children during the armed conflict. The women peace activists around the world have taken this as a historical decision in favor of women.

What women have seen is that the nature of war has changed globally. In today's war, not only soldiers are dying, but the number of deaths among common citizens is also increasing. Those who are engaged in war do not fight in battlefield only; they also target village, town, school compound and women's body. For a long time, women were merely known as war-victims; however, they have consistently demanded recognition as the active agents in the prevention of war, rehabilitation of victims and reconstruction of physical structures.

In this backdrop, women demanded with the UN that their participation should get space and recognition in peace processes. Since women's demand could not be overlooked, the UN Security Council passed the Resolution 1325. This decision has helped the women of the conflict-ridden countries the world over to struggle for their participation in the peace process and reconstruction. Nepali women are also struggling for the same. But, since the political arena is predominated by men, it is difficult for women to get position as negotiators in the peace process. In the past, the dialogue team was formed thrice, and in the second time, a woman minister was included in the team of the government. Calling it a 'shadow representation', Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the then coordinator of the Maoists said, "It is an unscientific view that only the physical presence of women will help address women's issues." However, if the leaders constantly articulate such illogical ideas, the women's proportional participation in every sphere will become extremely difficult.

- *Nepal Samacharpatra*, August 29, 2006, p. 4



Gangamati with her Children

- Kulmani Gyawali

After the vigilante group murdered her husband, Heera Pasi of Baraipur-9, Kapilvastu is facing enormous difficulties in raising her children. On the one hand, there is a pain of her 28 year old husband Ramwali burnt alive after severe beating right in front of her eyes, and on the other hand, there is a compulsion to provide care for her seven small children.

Her four sons and three daughters, aged two to ten, have stopped going to school after the murder of Ramwali. “We, the unlucky children don’t have kismat to study. There is always a problem to get evening and morning meals,” says Heera, who has been feeding her large family by wage labor.

The pain of Lalinou Kewat of Sirsihawa-5 Shivabhari is even more intense. On February 17, 2005 the vigilante group killed her elder son Awadhram after severe torture. Due to the shock of that incident her second son Guru Prasad Kewat also died within a month. No other options were left for Lalinou than wage labor in this old age to feed her huge family of 12 grandchildren and two daughters-in-law.

Before killing Awadhram, the vigilante group looted all the goods and chattels in the house. “The house is empty. The culprits left nothing. We

will have to beg for food if I don't get work," says Lalinou, crying. Her grandchildren, who had just started to go to school, have now given up their study to go for wage labor.

Similar state of destitution prevails in the families who have lost their dear ones in the serial killings, which was started in Kapilvastu in course of defending the Maoists by the vigilante group. When Lautu Chauhan of Hardauna-2, then working in the fields, saw that his elder brother Nachan Chauhan had been seized and beaten by the vigilante group accompanied by the state army, he immediately went there and requested to free his brother. But, the group did not even spare Lautu. "Repeatedly saying that you too are a Maoist, they battered him badly. They poured kerosene on his body and burnt him alive," Lautu's wife Gangamati, who lives by wage labor, says, "He asked for water to drink while he was gasping in pain. They never gave him a drop of water and he died. We could not even cremate his body according to our ritual, dogs ate of his body."

Except for a couple of cases, the victims of such incidents, which are too horrific to hear, are non-political. The people who were working as farmers and laborers in remote villages became the main target of the vigilante group.

Lalmati says that since her son was literate, the Maoists used to give him the task of delivering their letters and sometimes ate in their homes, her son became victim to the vigilante group. She says, "When the Maoists come to our village fully armed, you cannot deny their orders, but, committing crime such as killing someone in cold blood is a thing deserving condemnation."

The families of those who did not have enough knowledge about the Maoists, when killed, are now facing difficulty in feeding themselves besides the pain of separation with their near ones. After the murder of their guardians, many have lost their companions with whom they could share their happiness and sorrow. Kalika Bhandari of Chanai-9 says that when your husband is killed, even your neighbors' behavior toward you changes. The vigilante group killed her husband Tilakram on February 20, 2005. Before that incident, she did not need to show much concern

about the household matters. She is facing immense hardship in shouldering household responsibility now. Laxmi, the widow of Netra Lal Bhandari of Nandanagar-9 says, “The life becomes extremely miserable when the breadwinner of the family suddenly passes away.”

Women and children were the most affected people owing to the series of murders committed by the vigilante group. The women, who did not have any concern about politics and were destitute and illiterate, when their guardian was killed, had to bear the additional problem of feeding themselves. Most of them became homeless, after their property was robbed or lit to fire. Several of them even left the village.

Sakur Pasi of Baraipur-9 was killed on February 22, 2005. His wife Dena Pasi along with her eight children have since migrated from the village. She was forced to do so because she could not find any shelter in the village after the vigilante group burnt down her hut. “We don’t know where they are now,” says Himawati Pasi, her neighbor.

The emergence of the vigilante group gained momentum when the local residents of Ganeshpur VDC captured some Maoists collecting donations and beat them to death with the help of the security forces. The vigilante group committed a series of terror since February 16, 2005. In the series of murder, which took place with the support of local administration, 38 people lost their life. From the terror of the vigilante group, 42 VDCs of the district were terrorized.

Initially, 13 people lost their lives on February 25 and after that day till June, 2006, the number of people killed had reached 38. The vigilante group, with the help of the administration, set fire on 708 houses. More than one thousand houses were robbed then. According to the eyewitnesses, when the vigilante group was burning Nachan and Lautu alive in Hardauna VDC, and Ramwali, Ankat and Sakur Pasi in Baraipu VDC, the state army was nearby, but instead of stopping the heinous act, the army helped them.

The activities of the vigilante group had not come to an end in Kapilvastu till now. The local in-charge of the Maoist Party Sanjeev Kumar says that the administration has been providing protection to the people who come out to attack the common people. He says further, “If no action

against them is taken from anywhere, our people's court will punish them.”

Body not Found, Cremation Postponed

The vigilante group had killed the people who were working in the farms or staying at their home, by beating with canes, stones and woods, on the excuse that they had helped the Maoists. After murder, they would hand over the dead body to the army barrack. When the persecuted villagers went to the barrack to take the body, instead of giving the body, the army would send them away with threats of severe consequences. Describing the ill-treatment from the security forces when he went to ask for the body of his son Bishnu, Mekhnath Panthi says, “When I went to ask for the body, they kicked me out.” The cremation of the bodies burnt alive were performed after three days by collecting the bones after being eaten by dogs and crows.

Since they did not get the body, most of the families did not perform the cremation according to their custom. Several of them are in financial crisis. “We are in a very desperate situation. The vigilante group killed our young son, who we hoped would take care of us in our old age. We even don't have money to meet the expenses for his funeral,” says the old man Mante Kahar of Sirsihawa-1. His fifteen year old son Sibadh was killed on February 17, 2006. With the expectation of Netra Lal Bhattarai, Kiran Poudel, Bishnu Panthi, Tilakram Bhandari, Nachan Chauhan, Lautu Chauhan, the cremation of others persons killed by vigilantes, has not been performed yet.

Though such a considerable number of people lost their lives, no one of the persecuted families has been given compensation. The families whose kins were killed on the allegation of being a Maoist were afraid of asking for compensation. The compensation, however, was not given even to the families who dared to ask for it. “I registered the application for compensation in the District Administration Office for three times but got nothing,” complains Laxmi, wife of Netra Lal Bhandari, who was killed by the vigilante group in Nandanagar-9 on February 23, 2006. On the one hand, there is financial burden on the widows of the decease and on the other, pain of being alone also cuts them deep in their heart.

“When you become alone, you won’t get support as before,” says Laxmi. Her application at District Administration Office to get the government allowance for widows has also remained unheard.

When compensation was asked for the death of Kiran Paudel of Birpur-9, killed by the vigilante group while watching TV at his home, the administration proposed to his family to say that the Maoists killed him; but they declined to do so, says his brother. CDO Narendra Dahal informs that the compensation of Rs. 2 million 450 thousand for the families of those who were killed by the Maoists, Rs. 607 thousand for those whose property had been destroyed, Rs. 69 thousand for medical treatment and Rs. 334 thousand for scholarship have been sanctioned so far. No compensation has been provided to the families of those who were killed by the vigilante group, because there is no policy in this regard.

The number of people asking for compensation is increasing. CDO Dahal says that if the government formulates a policy to provide compensation, everyone will get the support. Those persecuted by the vigilante group did not get relief from the government body obviously because they were alleged to have assisted the Maoists. The fact, however, is that they were neglected by the Maoists, too. Several of the persecuted families had expected that the Maoists would help them because their dear ones had died in the name of being the Maoists. “The government neglected us, and when I couldn’t give care to the children, I went to meet the Maoists to ask for help, but they proposed that they would help me only if I join the party. Now, where should I go?”, persecuted Laxmi Bhattarai complains.

Sanjeev Kumar, the Maoist Party In-charge of Kapilvastu says, “We have been making a plan to provide relief to all those who were killed in our name. The party was in situation of war then. So we could not provide relief in time. Now we are gathering data in this regard.”

The children of the families victimized by the vigilante group could not go to school. Since the financial condition of the family is very weak, most of the children are forced to engage in the wage labor. “We have a wish to send our children to school for study but how can we meet the family expenses?” Asks Gangawati of Hardauna-2, pointing to the half-

destroyed hut. She has sent her 10 year old son to Delhi, India for the job of dish washing. Of her six daughters and two sons, no one goes to school.

The women, children and elders of the persecuted families, who have become destitute by losing their only guardian -- all wish for actions taken against the culprits and a long-lasting peace in the country. However, no one has filed any complaint against the criminals. "We wish we could live peacefully," says Kalika, whose husband Tilakram Bhandari was killed by the vigilante group in Chanai-9.

The persecuted families demand that strict action should be taken against the chairperson of the then cabinet of King Gyanendra, who encouraged the vigilante group in Kapilvastu assuring to give them direct support; and the then Home Minister Dan Bahadur Shahi, the Local Development Minister Tanka Dhakal, the Education Minister Radha Krishna Mainali, Army Chief of staff Pyar Jung Thapa. One of the victims says, "In an interview with the magazine *Time* King Gyanendra encouraged the vigilante group saying that he welcomed the move of the people of Kapilvastu, who have challenged the Maoists, rising against them. The person who misled the people must be punished."

On February 21, 2005 a meeting organized in Ganeshpur VDC, Commander-in-Chief Thapa, Ministers Shahi, Dahal and Mainali had announced that those who engaged in counter-action against the Maoists would be provided protection and arms. Dr. Prakash of Birpur demands that if this is the legal state, action should be taken against the then ministers who encouraged the vigilante group. The victims have also raised the voice that the local administration and state army -- who had provided arms, training and financial aid to the vigilante group -- should be investigated.

The human rights organization Advocacy Forum is taking initiative to take actions against the people involved in the murders in Kapilvastu. The coordinator of the Forum in Kapilvastu Om Prakash Aryal says, "We have been trying to take legal action against both the vigilantes and the Maoists who were involved in murders."

- *Nepal Samacharpatra*, September 2, 2006, p. D



Rape: The Way of Subduing the Opponents

- Anju Chhetri

“On October 15, 1999, only mother and my three-year old brother and myself were in the house. The ‘enemy’ (the police) had already surrounded the house. They were led by sub inspector Ram Singh Thapa. ‘Who is in the house?’ A voice came from outside. ‘It’s us,’ mother replied. After we heard the order that all of us should come outside, mother and I came out of the house. As soon as we came out, they shouted at us and tied mother and me with a rope. They took us to the police post at Gajulkot. The inspector of the post Rajendra Adhikari was not there at that time. He came after a while, drunk. He kept mother outside, took me into his chamber and tied a strap over my eyes. He tore all my clothes. He started to torture me shouting why I married a Maoist. I could not bear the torture and lost senses. I learnt later that he had raped me while I was unconscious. In the meantime, the sub inspector had taken mother into the kitchen of the post and raped. When we were in the detention for 19 days, they raped both mother and me several times.”

When Dibyajyoti Thapa (29) of Gajul, Rolpa was recounting the outrage she and her middle-aged mother underwent seven years ago, a question rose in the mind of this scribe: "How many women might have been

victimized during the last ten-years of armed conflict?" However, it is not easy to find real data in this regard. It was not possible to investigate and keep records of such incidents during the time of war.

The Maoist insurgents have been claiming that the state security forces have raped women in a large number. "All of our women comrades who were captured and killed had been raped by the security forces. Among the 2,500 women martyrs in the people's war more than one thousand were those women who were killed after rape," says Pampha Bhusal, the central committee member of the Maoists. The chairperson of the Maoists Puspa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) has also publicly said in an interview with the TV channel *Nepal 1* that a large number of women were raped in Rolpa and Rukum.

In that way, the central leaders of the Maoists have been stating in the media and public forums that thousands of women of their party were raped by the state security forces. However, the Maoists have not been able to keep an authentic record of the incidents that could support their claim. "More than 50 women were raped in a single district during the war. But, since we were in war, we could not keep their record," says Jayapuri Gharti, the chairperson of the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary) or ANWA (R). Obviously, it is almost impossible to keep record of such crimes in the middle of war. In today's changed context, however, the Maoists should help the human rights groups and media personnel in identifying the sufferers of such violence and documenting the atrocities. When the situation will return to normal tomorrow, such documentation plays an important role in investigating the incidents and gathering essential proofs in order to punish the culprits and give justice to the sufferers.

Available Data

The Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), a non-governmental organization working in the field of human rights, has given the accounts of some incidents of rape in its *Yearbook* (Nepali version, 1996) as follows:

“When a person informed the group of policemen that had arrived in Melgauri village of Pipal VDC, Rukum that some Maoist leaders were hiding in the House of Shetu Jaisi, the police surrounded the house and opened fire. In the chaotic situation while the villagers were running here and there the police captured three young women of the age 14, 17 and 18. The police took them in a house nearby and committed gang rape.”

“A woman aged 46 and her 21 years old daughter of Jedwang VDC-2, Rolpa were gang raped by the police in their own house at 10 o’clock in the night on March 15, 1996. Since the police used to come to the house everyday even after that incident, both the mother and daughter left the house. The police wanted to arrest the father and son of the family. When they could not find the father and son, they had raped the mother and daughter.”

It has been recorded in the *INSEC Yearbooks* (1996-2006) of INSEC that during the ten-year long armed conflict, 81 women were raped in 61 incidents with the involvement of the state security forces. On analyzing all the rape cases recorded in the *Yearbooks* since 1996, it can be seen that the highest number of rape cases has occurred in Siraha and Sindhuli. On the contrary, very few rape cases are recorded in the *Yearbooks* from Rukum and Rolpa, which are supposed to be the districts where a large number of women were raped. In Rolpa, the number of rape incidents committed by the security forces is just five. “I could not report all the rape cases that occurred in Rolpa. The reason for this was that due to the adverse situation I could not go to the sites of incidents committed times, though I had heard about the incidents. In some cases, I did not report them because they lacked necessary proofs,” admits Ghanashyam Acharya, the INSEC representative for Rolpa and who is also responsible for gathering the cases of human rights violation for documentation in the *Yearbook*.

Similarly, the *Yearbook* has mentioned just one case from Rukum in which three women were raped by the state security forces. In this regard, the INSEC representative for Rukum, Jeevan Khadka says, “Many times, when I went to the sites of incidents after hearing about them, no clue of the incidents could be found. I did not report such unproved

incidents for the *Yearbook*. Some incidents may have been undocumented, however, I don't think that there were so many rape incidents in Rukum."

The *INSEC Yearbooks* also mention that the Maoists had raped seven women. Responding to this fact Pampha Bhusal says, "I know about one incident. We killed the culprit. Except that I don't know about any other incident." According to the information acquired during the study, an adolescent girl raped by a Maoist cadre had given birth to a baby in a shelter home in Nepalgunj a year before.

The Advocacy Forum-Nepal, a lawyers forum for human rights and rule of law, has documented 30 rape cases perpetrated by the state security forces, Maoists and vigilante groups. Likewise, ANWA (R) has published a book entitled *Mahila Sahid Gatha* ('The Tales of Women Martyrs'), which includes brief descriptions of 950 women killed during the insurgency. It is mentioned in the book that 35 Maoist women were killed after rape by the state security forces.

On analyzing the statistics acquired from the three different sources mentioned above [i.e., INSEC, Advocacy Forum and ANWA (R)], it seems that just about a hundred rape cases related to the ten-year long armed conflict have been recorded. Definitely, the incidents may have been more than that. But, to ascertain the real figure there must be a serious investigation and inquiry. Statistically, the documented number of rape cases related to the conflict seems to be very less. However, it indicates the rising trend in rape, as the most brutal form of violence against women.

Rape is the expression of coercion and hatred. Men try to confirm their superiority and ego through rape. Therefore, feminists hold the notion that women become victim of rape at personal level in society. Till yesterday, rape was a crime against women committed by an individual or a group of individuals in Nepali society, but after the outbreak of armed conflict, it has also acquired a political dimension. Women have been raped not only because they are women but also because they are insurgents, terrorists or members of a weaker class/community. Dibyajyoti and her mother were raped by the police not only for being women but also because of the reason that they were daughter and mother of an insurgent.

The security forces arrested Ramita Chaudhari (name changed) of Sarlahi from her own house and took her in the Sarlahi Barracks because she had visited the Maoists to ask help to get rid of domestic violence. The security forces blindfolded her, tied her legs in chains and imprisoned her in a dark room. They tore her clothes, smashed her on the floor and physically tortured her. Unable to bear the torture, she lost her senses. After she regained her senses, she learnt that she had been raped. When Ramita was asked to recall her suffering after four years, this scribe was feeling very uneasy. However, it is necessary to collect the testimonies of sufferers in order to document the incidents, and this is a worldwide practice as well. In order to punish culprits and give justice to sufferers, investigation about atrocities has been carried out in many countries of the world.

But, can investigation on the heinous crimes against women like rape committed during the war be carried out and the culprits punished? Can the sufferers be given the feeling of justice? Certainly, it is not easy to find solutions to these questions. The Maoist leader Bhusal says in this regard, “We must have the guts to punish the culprits and we can do so. We have said that when we become an associate in the state-power we will punish those who had suppressed and tortured people during the people’s movement and people’s war, and it does not mean that only those will be punished who fired guns. Our demand is that the security personnel who were involved in rape must also be punished. We have every detail about who was raped when, where and which security officer was in command then. On this basis, we can demand for the punishment of the culprits. Even if the culprits belong to our party, they will be punished.”

A human right activist Renu Rajbhandari says, “We have requested the leaders of all the eight parties that in order to document and investigate about the sexual violence against women during war time, a separate commission of persons who are sensitive to and informed about women’s issues should be formed.” Similarly, according to another human right activist Mandira Sharma, “A sufferer should be assured that a serious

investigation on the atrocity she had undergone is being carried out. If we have a political will, we can and have to execute investigation on sexual violence of such a serious nature and take action against the culprits. We must not allow the state to grant general amnesty.”

Definitely, all the crimes that were committed during war are not forgivable. Moreover, no political party should be hesitate to punish the culprits involved in the heinous crime like rape against women, and to give justice to the sufferers. In the present situation, in which the peace process has already begun, everyone should have a commitment to work towards this direction forming an effective mechanism.

- *Rajdhani*, October 31, 2006, p. 2

Conflict-engendered Widows

Small Expectations

- Anju Chhetri

“We always keep hoping that someone will come to support us. You are the fourth group that has come to see and understand our condition. Whoever come to us, we expect that they will render some help for our children’s education,” says Krishna BC, a mother of five children.

On March 20, 2003, early in the morning, the state security forces arrested nine people of Chhing village located in Syalapakha-3, Rukum from their own homes accusing them of being the Maoists. The security forces took the alleged Maoists to Kaildeu village, shot them dead and threw their bodies on the bank of a small river nearby. This incident at once made eight women of the same village widow. Among the people murdered, one was Krishna’s husband Tek Bahadur BC who was a school teacher. Three and a half years have passed since the incident. All the widows have their own house in the village and their life is going on somehow, however, each of them has a worry about whether they could provide education to their children or not.

More than 13 thousand people have died during the decade of violent conflict. It is speculated that at least six thousand women have become widows due to the conflict. But, how many children the widows have, not even a guess has been made in this regard. Till date, the group that has acquired compensation, relief and facility from the state comprises



Shova BC

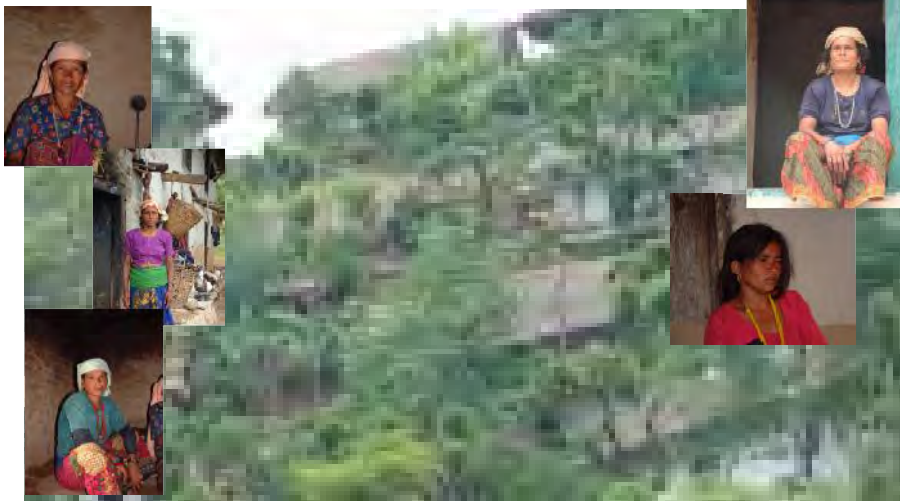
only the families of state security personnel and the families whose members were killed by the Maoists. The common people whose family members were killed by the state security forces for being a Maoist or in a cross-fire do not have any access to the relief provided by the state. Therefore, Krishna did not belong to the group that was entitled to get immediate relief from the state because

her husband, an alleged Maoist, was killed by the state security forces; though she believes that he was not a Maoist.



The wife a soldier of the People's Army

Now, as the state is moving forward in the peace process, a voice has been raised that the people who will come to the center of the state-power should make it their foremost responsibility to provide justice to thousands of widows like Krishna and their children who suffered from indirect violence caused by either the state or the insurgents.



Chhing village of Syalapakha-3, Rukum, and the common women who became widows after a single incidence.

Pampha Bhusal, a central committee member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), explaining the party's plan on providing relief to the people victimized by the state, which is to come to effect after her party joins the Interim Government, expresses her commitment, "Immediately after our party joins the Interim Government we will provide much more relief and facilities than the old regime to our people whose family members became martyr or were made to disappear in the war or who had suffered mutilation. We will make an arrangement for the livelihood of their families and their children's education."

Expressing commitment in favor of sufferers is appreciable. However, some leaders at the central level have not made earnest efforts to understand the fragility of the situation. Therefore, they should not utter biased statement like 'we will provide much more relief and facility than the old regime to *our people*'.

Even after the Maoists join the interim government, the program for relief and rehabilitation has to come by the common agreement between all parties representing in the government. Therefore, instead of saying 'our' and 'their' sufferers, today's need is to become conscientious of providing justice to all the sufferers of the conflict. During the wartime, the compensation, relief and facility provided then by the government to the women whose husbands were killed by the insurgents was not reasonable.

The state, so far, has been providing compensation, relief and facility to the sufferers of conflict through the Ganesh Man Peace Campaign under the Ministry of Home. In due course, the compensation of 7 hundred 50 thousand rupees has been provided to each wife or family of the security personnel who lost their life in the war or clash. The provisions for the arrangement of the pension and salary for the army, armed police and civil police are different. The families of the security personnel who were entrusted for safeguarding the state and controlling the violent acts of the insurgents have attained compensation and relief sufficient for running a family of simple Nepali standard. However, due to the pain caused by the untimely death of dear ones, the relief enough though to run a family has not given happiness to them.

The families of the ordinary people and political activists who were killed by the Maoists have been given 1 hundred 50 thousand rupees each as a relief and compensation. There is a provision of giving scholarship to the children of all those who have been bereaved by the Maoists. However, the scholarship has not been distributed in a systematic way. Only the children of those who are vociferous and have connections with the authorities have been able to get the scholarship. This scholarship distributed under a program of the Ganesh Man Peace Campaign was given to 1,002 students last year, and in the year before that, it was given to 997 students.

First the district administration office at the local level makes a recommendation for scholarship grant and it is issued to the office after it is approved by the center or the ministry in Kathmandu. In August-September, 2006, some widows of the security personnel of Banke, Dang and Surkhet came to Kathmandu, and surrounded the finance minister demanding scholarship for their children. "We did not know which ministry was responsible for making decision on scholarship grants, so we surrounded the finance minister. But, we knew later that the Home Ministry was responsible for issuing the grants," complains Shova BC, the president of the Conflict-Afflicted Single Women's Network, Banke. Those widows of the security personnel who took pains to come to Kathmandu were able to get scholarship grants for their children.

For the children of conflict-afflicted families, the government has made a provision to give scholarship grant of Rs. 5,000 per year up to class five; Rs. 12,000 per year up to class 10; Rs. 14,000 per year up to intermediate level; and Rs. 20,000 per year up to master level. But, the fact is that all the conflict-afflicted children do not have an easy access to the scholarship. Even some of the widows of security personnel were able to get the facility only after a lengthy struggle. The children of the common people afflicted by the conflict hardly ever have access to the scholarship.

Since the office of The Ganesh Man Peace Campaign has not maintained the systematic records of the people who have acquired compensation and relief, explicit statistics are not available on how many con-

conflict-spawned widows have acquired the facility. The government should keep systematic records in this regard, and it is necessary to make a lot of improvement in the process of distributing the relief and compensation. There are also complaints that while distributing compensation and relief by the concerned authorities (the relief distribution departments of the police and the army) many of the widows of security personnel have been insulted. This illustrates that the state and the concerned authorities are not sensitive toward conflict-afflicted people.

Group of Specific Widows

The violent conflict has produced a large community of war-created widows of a distinctive kind in Nepali society, and even that community also has sub-divisions. Among these widows, everyone has her own particular experience and pains. The widows and other family-members of those who are directly involved in insurgency firmly believe that when the Maoists form the government, they will make all the arrangements for them and their children. The widows of these directly involved in the war had already anticipated they would face problem and misery any time in their life. Therefore, they have little complaints about the situation they are in. Since they live in villages, they are able to make simple arrangement for their livelihood. Some of the widows of Rolpa have sent their children to the school being run by the Maoists in Thawang. However, the situation is not the same in other areas.

There is a widespread rage among the widows of those who were killed by the state just for being ordinary supporters of the Maoists. The number of such widows whose family has been completely destroyed, is also much larger. These widows who were killed by the insurgents think that the insurgency was the sole cause of their grief. They are trying to reassemble their family broken into pieces. Moreover, they are struggling to acquire the government scholarship for their children, hoping that some other organisations, too, will come forward to support them.

The district offices of the Women Development Department had distributed small amounts of relief in 15 conflict-affected districts to some women persecuted by the Maoists and the state in 2004-05. The non-

governmental organizations like Sathi, B Group and Rara Human and Environmental Resource Development Venture have provided small relief and support to some conflict-spawned widows of Banke. However, in the districts dominated by the Maoists, organizations are hardly ever given permission to implement any program among the conflict-spawned widows.

Whatsoever, it is, now, expected that after the Maoists are included in the interim government, the conflict-afflicted women will be sorted, and relief and facility will be provided to them. The conflict-spawned widows and their families should be assured that they are given justice by the state inasmuch as its capacity. The people at the leadership positions, while engaging themselves in the big political issues like restructuring of the state and constituent assembly elections, must not forget the problems and pains of the conflict-spawned widows and their children. An arrangement for providing compensation, relief and facility should be made after the classification of the conflict-spawned widows, gathering their expectation from the state and understanding their present condition. Only then, it will be confirmed that the state has fulfilled its responsibility toward the conflict-spawned widows of every kind and their children.

- *Nepal Samacharpatra*, November 4, 2006, p. B

Women in the Insurgency

- Manju Thapa

Fifteen years ago, Pampha Bhusal was staying in the Ishwori Girls Hostel of Tribhuvan University at Kirtipur and studying Master of Arts in Sociology. Today, some of her friends of those days are professors and some are engaged in different non-governmental organizations. However, she is in the central leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which is drawing everyone's attention. Hisila Yami, who was teaching at the Engineering Campus at Pulchowk one and a half decade ago, is also a central leader of the same party now. And, Jayapuri Gharti of Rangsi, Rolpa is working as the president of the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary) or ANWA (R) affiliated to the Maoist Party.

An entrepreneur of carpets and woolen fabrics till a few years ago, Manu Humagain at once left her flourishing enterprise and joined the armed struggle. She worked underground for the industrial department of the party, and, at present, she is the treasurer of the ANWA (R). Arrested while working in the party's cultural sector, Chunnu Gurung was raped and killed. Uma Bhujel, who had set a new record by leading a jail-break operation in Gorkha, is still working as a brigade commissar of the Maoists' People's Liberation Army (PLA). Devi Khadka, who wit-

nessed ruthless murder of her elder brother and suffered cruel and horrific torture herself later, is now taking up a serious responsibility in the party. In the Maoist party, there are numerous such names and deeds, which the party should never forget in these days of cease-fire and peace process.

Numerous tales of contribution, struggle, pain and sacrifice of many women like Pampha, Hisila, Jayapuri, Manu, Chunu, Uma and Devi are hidden in the background of the present strength and stature of the Maoist Party. One of the specific characteristics of the armed struggle launched and led by the CPN (M) is the participation of women and the role played by them in the struggle. Pampha Bhusal says that when the Maoists commenced armed struggle, there were hardly 12 women cadres in the party including herself, however, in the ten-year's time, women's participation in the party has reached almost 40 percent. She says, "It is nearly 50 percent at the district level." It is not easy to verify such claim. The scholars, who have studied the Maoist movement closely, hold different opinions about the data related to the women's participation in the movement.

According to Shova Gautam, a human right activist, the participation becomes 40 percent only when the militias who were involved in courier service in villages are also counted. Expressing his suspicion about the Maoist Party's commitment to develop women's leadership, freelance political analyst Jhalak Subedi says that their claim can be true at the village level but women's participation at the topmost or leadership level has not been encouraging. How much workforce is involved in the Maoist Party and the organizations affiliated to it has not been disclosed by the party. Its leaders argue that these figures cannot be made public in war-time. According to an article of Sadip Bahadur Shah published in *Samaya Weekly*, there are 67,000 workers in the CPN (Maoist) including its army, cadres and committed adherents. Its sympathizers are 200,000. Assuming that at least 30 percent of their cadres are women, the total number of women involved in the Maoist insurgency including their supporters becomes 20,100. Thus, amid the various estimations, the exact figure of women engaged in the Maoist insurgency cannot be said with certainty. However, it cannot be denied that in comparison with women's involve-

ment in other political parties, the extent of women's involved in the Maoist insurgency is much larger.

The above fact notwithstanding, a large number of these women involved in the Maoist Party are ordinary cadres. Though the party has involved women in an encouraging proportion, it has not been able to pay proper attention on improving their capacity and promoting them to the leadership level. Jhalak Subedi infers that probably the androcentric thinking embedded in the party has created this kind of obstruction. However, differing with that notion, Pampha Bhusal argues that the difference between the leadership capacity of men and women is simply because men have long political experience but most of the women have entered politics and have developed their leadership capacity during the last ten years only. However, Pampha and other Maoist women cadres accept the fact that since the Maoist leaders and cadres have also come from a patriarchal society, the remnant of superiority complex in men and inferiority complex in women have affected leadership development to some extent. This acceptance indicates that in reality even the Maoist Party has not fully become a champion of gender equality.

Women have been found to have involved in the Maoist insurgency during the ten-years period in three ways. First they are organized in different sister organizations of the Maoist Party. The largest number of women are organized in the ANWA (R). This is the first entry point for the majority of the women involved in the Maoist insurgency. According to Pampha Bhusal, the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union (Revolutionary) and the All Nepal Farmers and Workers Association are the most favored entry points for women to join the Maoist movement. Apart from these varied sister organizations, a large number of women have also joined the insurgency through the Maoist army (PLA). At present, it is said that there are about 40 percent women in the Maoist army; such a claim will soon be validated when the process of confining the Maoist army in temporary cantonments is over. There is not a single woman commander at the division level, the highest structure of the Maoist army. Under the division, about six women are working as deputy commanders and deputy commissars, at the brigade level. At the battalion level, under the brigade, it is said that the number of commanders, deputy commanders, and commissars is equal among men and women.

According to Pampha Bhusal, women cadres are approximately 50 percent at the district level of the party organization. However, there are just 25 percent women in the party's district committees. She further claims that the figure would have reached near to 35 percent, if the party's central committee meeting held in Chunwang, Rolpa last year had not demoted the members of all committees one rank below in the name of party rectification. Though a large number of women are engaged in the Maoist Party as ordinary cadres, there are very few women in the policy level. Showing her concern in this regard, political leader Shashi Shrestha says that the leadership capacity of women may remain low. In the Maoist Party structure, where the number of women decreases as one looks upward, there are two women in the central committee, while the number of women in the standing committee and politburo is nil.

A large section of the women involved in the Maoist insurgency is active in the local people's government (*sthaniya jana-satta*) of the Maoists. The party has established village people's government (*gaun jana-sarkar*), district people's government (*jilla jana-sarkar*), etc. in the areas of where it has strong domination. The Maoists claim that in local people's governments, the participation of women is almost 50 percent. While a few women are engaged in the people's court (*jana-adalat*), some work in the cultural front. Certain factors are responsible for the involvement of women in the Maoist insurgency in such a huge proportion despite the risk of oppression, torture, murder, and violence from the state. The condition of being insecure even at home, the desire for vengeance for the murder and oppression of their kins the longing for emancipation from socio-cultural exploitation and discrimination, and other causes have motivated women to involve themselves in the insurgency. Moreover, the power of firearms held by the CPN (Maoist) also attracted them.

These women, who worked for the party associating themselves with its different bodies, have undertaken several roles such as extending the organization, leading the fronts of social struggle, commanding and fighting in the battle fields, providing service and treatment to the injured in war, conveying information, conducting publicity, and so on. Jayapuri Gharti says, in the course of these activities, more than 2,500 women

belonging to the party became martyrs. Among the widows created by the armed struggle, estimated to be 6,000, most of them are the wives of those who were killed for being a suspected Maoist cadre or supporter. In the process, many women had to endure detention, battering, sexual harassment, mental pressure and tortures, whereas some women were even raped. Many other women, who were not whole-time members of the party, were found to be supporters of the party and the insurgency. During the insurgency, they carried out jobs like arranging food and shelter for party's leaders and cadres, maintaining communication; and boosting up the morale of the whole-time cadres.

The Maoist leaders, till today at least, have generously praised, in their speech and writing, women's contributions that helped bring the armed struggle to the present stage. The leaders have been telling that the struggle gained such strength in such a short time due to the unprecedented participation of women, their greater ability to maintain confidentiality, and take stand against surrender etc. Emphasizing the need for women's participation and leadership in the future, Chairperson of the CPN (Maoist) Puspa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) writes, "Because of the high morale inherent in women for rebellion against oppression, emergence of a group of women leaders capable of providing ideological, political and organizational leadership is indispensable, not only for the success of revolution but also for the prevention of counter-revolution. ... Considering that women's leadership role in revolution, army and every part of the state-power, in comparison with that of men, provides enormous guarantee for safeguarding against the danger of counter-revolution is the significant specialty of our ideological synthesis (*Mahila Dhawni*, vol.21, No.1)."

In view of such evaluation of the Maoist leaders, and the increasing rank of women ready to sacrifice for the revolution during the past decade, it can be easily predicted that women will soon occupy the central stage of the mainstream politics. Nevertheless, the analysts affiliated to other parties apart from the Maoists have the perception that the continuity of women's participation at present and the condition for their leadership development will be determined by the policy and program the CPN (Maoist) formulates in the days to come.

Pampha Bhusal believes that if the insurgency makes progress as in the past, women's participation in the party, its sister organizations and other bodies may reach near to 50 percent both qualitatively and quantitatively in the coming 10 years. But, one does not have to wait for long to see if her beliefs will turn into reality. There is a vast difference between the challenges faced while executing underground politics and those after joining open politics. There are no bases to guarantee that after coming to the open, the pace of women's participation and activism will remain the same as the pace and intensity with which they had organized themselves in the party and engaged in the struggle while working underground. For example, the central committee member of the CPN (UML) Surendra Pandey acknowledges that nearly 25 percent members in the then CPN (ML) were underground women cadres before 1990, but after the party came to open politics the proportion of organized women cadres declined about eight percent.

It will be a great challenge for them to acquire proficiency and develop the skill necessary to stay persistently competitive in the open politics. In order to develop their competitive quality, the CPN (Maoist) has to make clear-cut policy and programs, and implement them effectively. Therefore, nothing can be said at present after coming to the open politics whether the Maoists, will create an environment in which women are cast aside gradually or create condition to ensure proportional representation by developing women's participation. However, in view of the male-centric views like 'it is not essential to have women in the dialogue committee to raise the issues of women', 'women have to come into the leadership positions only through their ideological and political competitiveness', often expressed by the Maoist leaders like Baburam Bhattarai and Krishna Bahadur Mahara, no one can be assured that there will be women's equal participation, activism and full gender sensitivity within that party in the future.

The agreement to form an interim legislature by November 26, 2006 has already been made between the Maoists and the government of the Seven Party Alliances. Since the present parliamentarians will continue to stay in the interim legislature, the number of the members representing other parties will be less, whereas the Maoist Party will have 73 members. If

the Maoist Party really respects the contribution made by women during the time of armed struggle, and if it wants equal participation of women, or in its own words, of the most oppressed groups, in politics, it can start the proces from the establishment of the interim legislature.

The Maoists should nominate women for 50 percent of the seats given to it in the interim legislature. Otherwise, all its claims and promises pertaining to women made so far will be nothing more than its political tactic designed to deceive the women affiliated with the party in particular and all the women in general. The first real test to know whether the Maoist male leaders are just power-hungry or truly sensitive to equal rights and participation of women will be the establishment of the interim legislature.

-Rajdhani, November 14, 2006, p. 7

Transformation in Women's Life Brought about by the People's War

- Manju Thapa

Roasting a thick corn bread over the glowing fire Krishna BC wiped her tears, and said, "I would make my four children sit around me, my husband would be with us, and we would eat flour meal or anything we could get. But, today, I have neither my husband, with whom I could share my sorrow and happiness, nor all of my children. Two of my children are in Kathmandu, one is in my mother's home, and I am passing my days just with this daughter, missing those who are not with me. The remembrance makes my dizzy, and I smoke cigarettes a lot."

Five years ago, Krishna of Syalapakha, Rukum had never anticipated or imagined about such days. Her husband was a school teacher who would bring salary in home and arrange the finance and expenses needed to the family. Krishna's job included just looking after the farm, taking care of the property (cattle), and carrying out the household chores like cooking, washing and rearing children. But, unexpectedly, the time has now made her the head of the family and put the entire responsibility of the children solely on her shoulders. In the month of April 2002, one day early in the morning, the then Royal Army snatched her husband Tek Bahadur BC from his bed, accusing him of being a Maoist, took him to the vicinity of the Kailadeu river and shot him dead along with other eight fellow villagers without any interrogation. The unanticipated pain and burden of responsibility started in Krishna's life after the incident.

Since the Maoists started the People's War ten years ago political, social, economic and cultural fields have undergone a lot of upheaval. Direct and indirect impact of the armed conflict can be felt enough in the life of women. The flame of any political war or social conflict not only burns its instigators but its heat also affects entire gamut of society. In this context, the time has already come to seek answers to the questions like: What impact did the ten-year long people's war exert on the life of common women? What kinds of changes have come in the conventional roles of women? How many gender-discriminatory customs have disappeared?

It is not wrong to try to find out the change in common women's life brought about by the People's War in the places claimed by the Maoists as their base areas (*adhar kshyetras*). Both positive and negative changes have taken place in the life of common women due to the People's War. While some changes are the result of the planned programs and policies of the Maoists, others are the compulsion spontaneously created due to the People's War. Some changes can be observed objectively and some lie in the subjective experience of the people. The pain undergone by innumerable Krishnas is endless and profound, however, let's first talk about the positive changes.



Krishna BC



The women of Rolpa discussing on armed conflict

In the base areas like Rolpa and Rukum, polygamy by men was considered as a matter of bravery and pride before the start of the People's War. One generation earlier polygamous marriages were abundant. After the inception of the People's War, however, there has been a widespread decrease in the practice of polygamy, and the common people say that it is a good change brought about in favour of women. Sapana Sunar of Bhandarikanda, Rukum says, "If you give an application to the Maoists against the man who has committed polygamy, they will separate the first wife from the man ordering him to give her share of property. Then, they send him and his second wife to the labor-camp." In order to address the problem of polygamy, the Maoists have stopped it not only in practice but also prohibited it by formulating law.

The judge of the district people's court (*jana-adalat*) of Rukum run by the Maoists, Yagya Bahadur Pandey says, "In the party's Directive Legal Draft 2060 BS given to us, polygamy is banned, and it is stated that the right to self-determination should be given to first wife." Since some persons have already been punished for polygamy, many people are informed about this rule of the new people's power (*jana-satta*). It has been regarded as a positive step not only by the Maoists' supporters but also by their opponents too. This is the first and generally accepted positive change in favor of women brought about by the People's War.

The law notwithstanding, Pandey has undergone some difficulties while executing justice in polygamy cases. Though the people's court always sides with the first wife, Pandey has experienced that when a man brings the second wife the order to compel the man to stay with his first wife has not been much effective. He says that there are a lot of incidents in which the second wife is sent back and the man is ordered to stay with the first wife. But, the man and the second wife often meet secretly and flee to India after some months. On the contrary, decisions are implemented successfully if the second wife is declared legitimate and his first wife is divorced with her share in property and the right to self-determination. In such condition, it has been found that some of the first wives, who were divorced, have remarried with another man.

Whether by the pressure of the Maoists' policy or for fear of punishment, the practice of polygamy is decreasing. On the other hand, the practice of re-marriage among the widows caused by the war and other women has become common. In the assessment of Jeevan Khadka, the representative of the Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) for Rukum, because of the policy of giving women the right to self-determination, re-marriage has become an unconstrained practice among widows. The increase in the practice of remarriage among widows is certainly a positive trend. In some cases, however, it was seen that when a widow took such step without making proper arrangements for her children, the latter had to undergo a lot of misery. Arjun Pariyar of Chhing-3, Rukum, has been carrying out the responsibility of rearing and education of his three small grand-children even at the age of sixty plus with a great difficulty. He was compelled to take this burden because of the murder of his son by the security forces and the re-marriage of his daughter-in-law. Thus, a serious issue of children's right is also linked with the re-marriage of women.

Ghanashyam Acharya, a human right activist of Rolpa, infers that the practice of child marriage has also been vanishing due to the Maoists' policy. The Maoists kept Rammaya Pun of Korchawang-3, Rolpa in labor-camp for 35 days for marrying at the age of 17, though by her self-decision. However, her husband Mahesh escaped punishment because he lived in Kathmandu. Pandey says that in order to dissuade child marriage his party has given training to the parents of villages in Rolpa, where the practice of child marriage is high. He claims that because of the Maoists the practice of child marriage has declined by 80 percent. The truth in this claim, however, remains to be verified yet. In the view of the common people residing there, the practice of child marriage has become less due to the time factor and accelerated more by the Maoists' policy.

The issue of women's equal right to property is one of the crucial issues of women's movement in Nepal. In the Maoists' base areas, common people are not found to be much informed about property right to women. However, the people's power has made an explicit policy on it and started to implement it, at least among their cadres and supporters. In any family, when property is being partitioned, it must be apportioned to all

daughters. Particularly, the daughters have to ratify the partition. Assuming that it may become unmanageable in practice it was decided that the rule will be applicable to the cases following the year 2004, when the Maoists promulgated its Legal Draft, and that only unmarried daughters will be given property-share, says Pandey. Among the Maoist families, when property is partitioned, it has been a general exercise to compulsorily apportioned property - to daughters. The common people who come to the people's power (*jana-satta*) for the registration of property division also have to apportion property to daughters. If a daughter does not want to take her share in the property willingly, she has to come before the people's administration officer (*jana-prashasan adhikrit*) of the people's power and sign an agreement, which states, 'I obtained the property-share by converting immovable property to movable one' or 'I do not take my property-share on my own wish'. Similarly, when a land is to be sold, it can be done so only after both husband and wife sign the related documents. By making the provision of writing the name of both husband and wife as the owner of the land, the people's power has been trying to make women the actual owner of property. Sufficient information about these provisions, however, has not reached the people.

At present, in Khadi of Rukum, there is a reformatory for prisoners, where 12 women have been serving sentences on the charge of different crimes. The reason, for which most of these women got punishment is abortion. The law of the people's power has the provision of allowing the abortion of foetus up to four months if both partners do not want extra baby, and if the pregnancy is caused by incestuous relationship and rape. Except that, if abortion is done without the permission of the people's power, one has to be accountable to their law.

Assuming that most of the women submit application for divorce due to unbearable circumstances the people's power has given the right to self-determination to women. Excluding the people who visit the people's power with their problems, others are almost uninformed about the rights and the repercussion of their acts. Thus, the Maoists' attempts to strengthen women's legal status, formulating rules and regulations that are helpful in changing women's social status, and implementing those rules and regulations in the areas of their rule and among their party

cadres are undoubtedly commendable. However, except for the decrease in polygamy and child marriage, other rights and practices initiated by the Maoists have not spread much among the people.

Plow on the Shoulders of Women

This event occurred a few years ago. Chijmali BK of Kotgaun, Rolpa had an eight years old son with her. Her husband was in jail on the charge of being a Maoist. Her husband's younger sister had joined the People's War as a whole-time cadre. When the time for cultivation came, the villagers did not help her, and she did not have money as well. If the land was not cultivated, what would they eat in the coming year? They were in a tremendous difficulty. She stopped to think about this and that, and picked up a plow on her shoulder she went to the field, her son closely following her. The mother and son plowed the field and planted rice the whole day. Because of the People's War male members of the family were either killed, imprisoned or left home for the party's work. All of a sudden many women became the head of their family and were compelled to plow their land. Consequently, in several villages of Rukum and Rolpa, the sight of women and children plowing the field is not considered unusual. In the villages, fallacious ideas like if women plowed, the crop yield would decline and landslides or catastrophes would occur in the village etc were quite widespread. This change has struck at the roots of such superstitions. Moreover, because of the entry of women in the realms of work restricted for them, the structure of stereotypical gender roles has been changing. Though plowing by women is an act of compulsion, our party has also encouraged it as a good work, says the Maoist worker Sita Khadka.

In the initial years of the People's War, the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary) or ANWA (R) and the CPN (Maoist) conducted campaigns against gambling, card playing and alcohol consumption. Since gambling, card playing and alcohol consumption always triggered domestic violence and family strife, the campaign to prohibit these things quickly became popular among the people. A cadre of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist) or CPN (UML) in Rolpa, Meena Sharma has experienced that though the gambling, card playing and al-

cohol consumption have not been completely stopped in the areas under Maoist influence, they have drastically come down. It is assumed that many women are being drawn to the People's War also because of this campaign. The Maoists claim that the customs of *char khane* (taking gifts by a bride's family from her groom's family) and *jari* (compensation money paid by the man who marries another person's wife) prevalent among the ethnic communities in western Nepal, have been almost abolished, but the common people say that these practices have only declined to some extent. Prem Kumari Gharti of Khadabang, Rolpa says, "Such practices have declined to some extent but have not disappeared entirely."

Among the women who are associated with the Maoists in different ways, the use of jewelry has been done away with completely. In the assessment of Subarna Shahi, a school teacher of Chhing, Rolpa, the longing and unhealthy competition for jewelry is also decreasing among other women of the base areas.

These aspects of cultural change are certainly important in protecting women from violence and empowering them psychologically. But, the point to be considered is that has the mentality of common women and men has changed to such extent that they are ready to throw away the bad customs and manners even in the normal situation when there is no fear of the Maoists' arms. If that had not happened, the sustainability of the transformations brought by the People's War would be called into question. Talking to the common people of the villages in Rolpa and Rukum, one can realise that the arms of the Maoists are the main driving factor behind the transformations rather than their ideological tools and training.

Rising Political Consciousness

Due to the ten-year long People's War, the political consciousness and awareness of common women has risen considerably. In spite of the culture of guns, the rapidly changing political process has raised political interest among the people. Their interest in political activities taking place in their locality and the whole country has greatly increased. Since

the conflict has affected the matters related to daily life of the people, it has become a matter of interest for them to know about what is happening around. This equally applies to women as well.

Another facet of the reality is that in the base areas it is mandatory for every household to send at least one person to attend their program. In the villages, the situation is such that most of the young men cannot stay at homes either because they have joined the Maoists or because they want to escape excesses and harassment from both sides. In such situation, mainly women go to the Maoists' programs to show their presence somehow, and hence women have become regular audiences in political programs. Obviously, it has enhanced political consciousness in them. Because of these reasons, the mentality of raising voices against oppression and exploitation, expressing their political opinion and updating their political information has become quite common among women. Though women protest against unacceptable behavior of the Maoists privately, their consciousness and voice have not been very articulate, particularly in the base areas. However, the protest made by women in places like Naumule of Dailekh district shows that the awareness of women may change into direct action against injustice and tyranny perpetrated by any party or group.

The participation of women, in the People's War in different ways, is another achievement of the past ten years. Whether the engagement of women in a violent movement is an achievement or an unnatural phenomenon can be a topic of debate. However, it cannot be ignored that a multitude of women are ready to devote themselves in the People's War by joining the people's army (*jana-sena*), the party and the party's sister organizations. This illustrates the longing for emancipation, love for freedom, patriotism and courage inherent in women. President of ANWA (R) Jayapuri Gharti claims that in the course of action, more than 25 hundred women have become martyrs during the insurgency. A large column of women carrying guns has given a new interpretation to women's stereotypical image.

Thus, it should be acknowledged that the People's War has brought some positive changes in women's life, and has created new role and identity for women. However, while recalling these achievements, it will be unjustifiable if we forget the life of innumerable women who have fallen in the People's War.

Immeasurable Pain and Hardship

Krishna is just an archetype. Numerous Krishnas, bound to live with the pains and wounds they got in the course of the People's War, are found in the base areas. There are no authentic data on how many women have become widows in the ten-year long People's War, in which more than 13 thousand people died. However, because of the war the number of widows has greatly increased. The mental suffering caused by the widowhood is in its place, many women have not only lost their husband but also several of their family members. Besides, the women limited to the household chores till yesterday have suddenly become family-heads, and the compulsion to deal with single parenthood, financial burden and social responsibility have made them more vulnerable. After the murder of the male members, who could manage the economic affairs of the family by doing any kind of job, the women are facing difficulty in meeting financial needs of the family. Since many of them have neither an income nor a means to make it, they are caught up into a whirlwind of worry, stress and crisis. Many of them are entrapped in such a compulsion that they cannot meet the expenses of daily life, children's education and medicines, according to Bimala Pariyar of Syalapakha.

The sorrow of the women from the displaced families expelled from their homeland on charge of being an oppressor or feudalistic is even more severe. Wearing just a pair of clothes and taking a little money, they have migrated to district headquarters, other big cities, such as Kathmandu and India with their whole family. Deprived from the means of earning in a new place and circumstances, they more or less are in a precarious situation. Very few smart ones have acquired the governmental relief and taken up a profession. The life of the majority is distressing. Among the displaced people, the problem of women, who have become alone after their husband were killed or migrated to another city, is even

more terrible. Many of the displaced women dwelling in Khalanga of Rukum are compelled to take up the job of stone-breaking, or preparing and selling of alcohol in order to meet the family expenses. After the Maoists killed the husband and son of Dhanamaya Buda, she and her daughter with impaired hearing are compelled to make their livelihood through selling jars of alcohol. The education of their children has crumbled. Those who died have become martyrs of the Maoists or the state, however, the women who survived are dying being crushed under various burdens, says Seeta Oli, a cadre of the Nepali Congress in Rukum.

During the course of the People's War, hundreds of women have been deprived of their right to live. The death of the state security personnel or the women cadres functioning as combatants of the Maoist army is not considered abnormal. However, the ordinary women confined to their household have also been killed by both sides under the pretext of being an informer or a terrorist. Though there are no reliable data in this regard, right activist Acharya has estimated that the number of women killed by the state is much larger. There are many women who suffered battering and torture from both sides for being an informer or a terrorist. Shanta Kumar Oli, a leader of CPN (UML), in Rukum, assessed that by carrying out a large-scale suppression in the initial years of the People's War created the situation that the people could not stay at their homes, probably for that reason many women joined the People's War. The women, who were injured in such atrocious actions, and fell sick due to work burden, worry and other factors, could not get treatment in time. That's why women's health has been deteriorating, Khem Khada, former chairperson of District Development Committee in Rukum says.

Rape has been used as weapon against women in various kinds of war. It has been observed that the conflicting groups all over the world, have applied rape of women belonging to opponent group as a stratagem to demonstrate their hostility towards the opponents and demoralize them. The base areas like Rukum and Rolpa also could not remain untouched by this trend. In the ten years' period, the state army and police had brutally committed individual or gang rape of the women of the insurgent group in a large scale. The gang rape of the wife and daughter of Maoist leader Sunil of Gajul, Rolpa by the state security personnel is the ex-

treme example of barbarism. The number of Maoist cadres killed after rape is enormous. In a few instances, the Maoists have also committed rape of ordinary women. These sexual crimes, which have been used as a weapon to offend and psychologically intimidate opponents should be put on record so that the cruel incidents of history do not become common occurrence in the future.

The ten-year long People's War has dispensed several things to women, and snatched away several things from them. The achievements, made in the form of giving a role and identity for women should be protected constantly. The most pressing need felt at present, however, is the support and relief to those women who have become weak and helpless from the terrifying happenings. Moreover, it is essential to keep the systematic records of the gender-related crimes that had occurred during the war so that the conflicting groups will be alarmed of the description of crimes they had committed in the name of war. It can be hoped that such events will not recur in the days to come.

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A Quest for a Decent Life, Emancipation and Revolt

- Manju Thapa

Manju Rokaya from Dhakeri, Mahadevpur VDC, Banke was studying in grade eight. In her village, the Maoists murdered Shankar Shah, a local resident, for being a *suraki* or a spy. Fifteen years old Manju was also arrested for the charge of Shah's murder. She was kept in the police custody of Banke for three months and was given severe torture, and sent to the district jail later. Even after her release from the jail, she was arrested and imprisoned several times on various charges. After her release, the situation was so tense that she could not go to her home and stay there to continue her study. Because of the torture in the police custody, she was suffering from ill-health. Her father had already gone underground politics of the Maoist Party. Her elder and younger brothers had also joined the party. The raid of their home and harassing of the family by the police was still going on. Manju was an ordinary cadre of the All Nepal National Free Students' Union or ANNFSU (R), but from the view point of age and intellectual level she was not mature enough to join the underground politics of the Maoists. If she had not been tyrannized and harassed in the name of being a member of a Maoist family, no one can guess where she would be today. After suffering the imprisonment on a baseless charge and viewing that she could not reside in her home safely, she was compelled to join the Maoists' armed struggle as a full-time cadre. At present, she is the vice-president of the Banke district branch of the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary) or ANWA (R).

This is the true story of a Manju of Banke district. But, like her, there are many Manjus who were forced to become part of the Maoist movement even before adequately understanding the ideological aspects of the Maoist politics. The path of the armed struggle taken by the Maoists was not smooth. The Maoist leaders and cadres had to face the risks like suppression, torture, arrest, murder and violence in every step of their lives. Moreover, even the families of the persons involved in the Maoist revolt would be brutally suppressed and tortured by the state. So, why did women, generally supposed to be weaker, became ready to march along the path of the revolt filled with many adversities and risks? Why did women, defined as polite, patient and peace-loving, stood up in revolt? In order to resolve such curiosities, I had held discussions with common women of the Maoists' base areas, Maoist women cadres, independent political analysts and women human right activists. On analyzing those discussions and the events related to the insurgency, I found that there were some specific reasons behind the women's fascination for the Maoist struggle.

Pragmatic Strategy and the Compulsion of Circumstances

Chairperson of the Maoists Prachanda, in an interview with the RIM's publication *A World to Win* (No. 27; 2001), has said that the correct policy of his party in giving outlet to the rebellious sentiment, created by the objective condition of Nepali society, was the motivating factor for women's participation in the movement in such a large scale. He claimed that since only the proletariat can understand women's potentiality, only the proletariat can lead women on to the path of emancipation in a right manner. For that reason, he says, his party has regarded the woman's question as one of the crucial issues, determining the fate of the revolution. Looking at such assertions of Chairperson Prachanda, it seems that the CPN (Maoist) has been giving great importance to women's participation from the very beginning of the armed struggle. Just like Chairperson Prachanda, other Maoist leaders also claim that correct ideology, correct working guidelines and correct programs of their party have attracted a large number of women toward the revolt. However, many women involved in the Maoist armed struggle say that they have joined the revolt due to the pragmatic strategy of the Maoists and the compulsion of the circumstances rather than by understanding their political ideology and strategy.

A Major reason for the involvement of women in the Maoist movement was the reform campaigns against the wrong practices like domestic violence, gambling, card playing and alcohol consumption, which had been pushing women to poverty and oppression. Similarly, the Maoists' action against the victimizers in the domestic violence like child-marriage, monogamy, battering and contempt had engendered a sense of confidence in women that the party was opposed to women's oppression. The actions against a few victimizers by the party created such a situation, which impressed hundreds of women. Jane Kumari Pun Magar (Kavita) of Uwa Thulagaun, Rolpa says that she joined the Maoist Party because the actions against child-marriage, forced-marriage and polygamy taken by the party in her village impressed her and she heard that the party respected women. First associating with the party's Young Communist League at the age of 15, she enrolled at the People's Liberation Army after two years. Today, she is working as a platoon commander under the Basu Memorial Brigade.

It was widely publicized among women that since the root of women's second-class status in the society and the oppression against them was attached with the class discrimination, it was essential to abolish class discrimination for the full emancipation of women. The politburo meeting of the party held after 10 months of the outbreak of the armed struggle had concluded that the People's War should not just focus on class struggle but also address the contradictions related to caste/ethnic, gender, cultural and regional oppressions. According to Pampha Bhusal, a central committee member of the Maoist Party, specific initiatives were taken to make women understand that women's liberation was not possible without class liberation. More and more women started to join the armed struggle. The restricted traditional roles, the oppression of women prevalent in the society, the desire for freedom from inferiority complex and acquiring equal rights had attracted many women toward the Maoist revolt. The party cadres were successful in convincing women that the Maoists would liberate women from the oppression and grant equal rights to them. Since the party was skillful in identifying the problems of women's oppression and gender discrimination prevalent in the society and take direct actions to eliminate them, the party was able to enlist many women in the revolt, says Amrita Thapa, the Secretary-General of ANWA (R).

State Oppression and Atrocities

In the pretext of suppressing the Maoist terror, the random persecutions and outrages by the state is another important reason that forced women to join the

revolt. Manju, mentioned in the beginning of this article, is an example. Women became the foremost group who suffered the torture and oppression carried out by the state in the name of suppressing the Maoist insurgency. As the state oppression increased, some joined the Maoist Party and others escaped from their village. In the name of searching for the Maoists, the state security forces made house-to-house raids and carried out atrocities like threatening women, elders and children, with physical torture, psychological intimidation, arrest, sexual abuse, and rape. When the condition of insecurity worsened to the point when they could not live in their own houses and no option was left for them except being killed or to kill, some women stood up in revolt. It is found that in the Maoist affected districts like Rolpa, Rukum, Kalikot, Gorkha and Sindhuli, the women had become ready to undertake the risks of involvement in the revolt by organizing a group rather than staying at home frightened by the state oppression.

Aruna, the Political Commissar of the Battalion No. 8 under the Pili Memorial Brigade, says, the oppression and terror unleashed by the state in Kalikot during the Kilo Sierra 2 Police Operation (1998) forced her to think that the old regime was not ethically right, and rather than bowing in front of the excesses, sense of fighting against it arose in her mind. When women were being severely strained by the state oppression, it made easier for the Maoists to draw women to their organization. The situation turned favorable for the Maoists to gain confidence of the people also because the lack of presence of other political parties in the villages. Manjushree Thapa, in her book *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy* (2005), has well described the non-existence of the existing state mechanism in the remote villages and the mental state of the women -- detested and exhausted by a boring life. Empathizing with the women of Kalikot and Jumla, she has remarked that if she were born in such village, and uneducated, ineligible for any kind of job, deprived of equal rights comparing to men as well, she would have naturally joined the Maoists. She infers that in such a condition in which the government and other political parties were unable to offer better options to women, the best move for a dynamic young woman would be to join the Maoist revolt.

During the period of 11 years, many people -- those involved in the Maoist movement, supporters of the Maoists or ordinary people suspected as the Maoists -- were killed by the state security forces. The CPN (Maoist) finely implanted the lesson in the mind of women of the families ruined by the state that joining the Maoist movement means fighting against the exploitation and oppression

prevalent in the society and that if the state carries out killing and abduction during the fight, the women have to rise up to avenge the mistreatment.

In order to avenge the arrest, killing and abduction of dear ones, too, women had enrolled themselves as full-time cadres. After her brother was arrested and killed, Anita of Kotgaun, Rolpa left her home to join the Maoist as a full-time cadre, and her sister-in-law Chijmali BK also turned a staunch supporter of the party. It is found that the party cadres have well motivated women to involve themselves in the revolt by conducting the activities like visiting the families of those killed or made to disappear for being a Maoist, expressing sympathy to them, publicly honoring them as the family of a martyr or the family of a disappeared person, helping them during the time of cultivation and so on.

The oppressed and detested women suddenly saw the power and glory of the Maoists carrying arms in the villages. That too allured women to be closer to the people with arms. Many women, who had been suffering from double and triple exploitation because of being a poor woman, and belonging to an oppressed caste or ethnic group, attained support of arms. It created the situation in which they could speak standing upright before their exploiters. Their sense of inferiority ended. Like Salikram Sapkota, a lawyer residing in Nepalganj, many people presume that there is a predominance of women from *dalits* (oppressed castes) and ethnic groups in the circle of the Maoists, though it cannot be demonstrated statistically.

Not only the political ideology of the Maoists but also the power of arms had drawn many women to the Maoist insurgency, says Shashi Shrestha, the central member of Jana Morcha Nepal (open political wing of the CPN Unity-Center-Mashal). She opines that if the Maoists had only ideological weapons and no physical weapons, women would not have joined the party in such a large scale. Though the question like whether the involvement of women in violent politics is right or wrong for they do not like violence, is a matter of ideological debate. One, however, cannot forget the fact that a number of women have been drawn to the insurgency because of the lure of guns.

The Issue of Sexual Abuse

It seems that the desire for an empowered and decent life free from social and state repression seems to be the most important factor for attracting a large number of women to the armed struggle. On the contrary, however, some women

were drawn towards the insurgency assuming that there was sexual freedom in the party, Shova Gautam, a human right activist says. She states that in Gorkha, she met some *dalit* or oppressed caste women, who had become full-time cadres in the armed struggle considering the likelihood of marriage with so-called upper caste men and a fascination towards sexual freedom.

Generally, a majority of the women involved in the Maoist revolt seem to be drawn toward it due to the reasons and conditions mentioned above. However, there might be other minor individual reasons behind the involvement of some women. A few women had joined the Maoist revolt with understanding and approval of the political and ideological aspects of the CPN (Maoist). Some of the women, who were affiliated with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Center), the forerunner of the CPN (M) and the sister organizations of the CPN (Maoist) before the start of the armed struggle, seem to have joined the revolt with theoretical perspective. However, most of those women, who joined the revolt later, were influenced by the Maoists' behavior rather than their ideology.

There may be whatever reasons behind women joining the revolt, the CPN (Maoist) has conducted plenty of training and interactions for retaining them in the party. The party has made investment and effort for encouraging women to join the revolt and providing political training to those women, who have already joined the party. According to the former member of ANWA (R) Sabitri Gurung, the party has not only educated women theoretically but has also inculcated in their mind that without sacrifice and renunciation nothing can be gained, let alone class emancipation or women's liberation. Such lesson has inspired women to embrace death without any difficulty. For that reason, women have adhered to the party.

What kind of behavior did the women, who had set foot on the difficult path of revolt assuming it to be the best means to fulfill their dream of a beautiful future, experience within the party? How much did the patriarchal exploitation and discriminatory behavior bother them within the Maoist movement? Such questions are the basis for spotting differences between saying and doing of the Maoists. Since the CPN (Maoist) and its sister organizations were working underground, assessing the real and entire situation inside their party is not easy for external researchers. However, on the basis of the nature of events that come out to the public from time to time, some non-Maoist researchers have concluded that women have been bothered by patriarchal practices within the CPN(Maoist). Comparing the data gathered from different sources, it can be

estimated that there are more than 20 thousand women cadres in the Maoist Party. Despite the stupendous participation of women in the party quantitatively, the meager presence of women in the leadership positions is considered as the result of the masculinist thinking existing in the party. Moreover, one of the controversial issues within the CPN (Maoist) is linked with the sexual exploitation of women.

Sujita Shakya, a central leader of ANWA affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) or CPN (UML), in an article on *The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives* (edited by A. Karki and D. Seddon, 2003), has mentioned that the female guerrillas and militias often fall prey to unwanted sexual relation and rape. A woman, who had left the CPN (Maoist), states that most of the run-away woman guerrillas have mentioned rape as the reason for their exit from the party, and accuses that the party has not paid proper attention to the control of immoral sexual relations and rapes. Human right activist Mandira Sharma has also heard from a woman, who had worked with the Maoist military wing for a long time that she and some other women had become temporary wives of party comrades and that the most disheartening moment in her life was when she was raped by a comrade junior to her. Sharma says that such incidents made her suspect that there may be a lot of problems of sexual violence within the CPN (Maoist). But, the women who still work in the party repudiate such allegations and suspicions. Pampha Bhusal says that the negative attitude and behavior toward women have rooted among very few persons who have infiltrated the movement as remnants of patriarchal society. Actions have been taken against them as far as they are found guilty.

In the Maoist movement, some new values and definitions have been added to the issues of love, marriage, sex, and male-female relation. Generally, the issues like joking, playing and sexual relation between male and female by mutual consent within the limit of the values and definitions cannot be a matter of concern. It should however never be forgotten that sexual relation by mutual consent and sexual exploitation are completely different things. Therefore, the issues raised here are not concerned with the sexual affairs between men and women by mutual consent within the CPN (Maoist). As far as the matters of sexual exploitation of women cadres and the violation of their human rights are concerned, some events related to them do certainly exist within the party. However, the condition is not such that it would raise an alarm.

In the past, in order to stimulate the surge of revolt and spread its fire everywhere, any kind of persons were enrolled in the party without giving them proper theoretical training. Some incidents have been published, in which a few anarchist, unprincipled and wicked men, who had entered the party in the way just mentioned, had committed sexual exploitation and rape of women cadres. But, since the actions taken against the culprits and decisions made in favor of women's dignity by the party organization have not come into light, it has provided credence to the allegation of sexual exploitation within the party. This condition seems to still in existence among the cadres at the lower levels of the party. At the central leadership level, too, it has been heard that when a leader having different opinion has to be degraded or defamed, he is accused of sexual exploitation, his relation with some woman is publicized, and when the action is being taken against him the woman related to him, is also chastised. In such incidents, no attention has been paid on the impact of these actions on women cadres.

The Condition of Women Within the Party

Within the revolt, the situation is neither completely free from women's sexual exploitation as claimed by the Maoists, nor is there the prevalence of sexual exploitation as alleged by its opponents. The condition of Rangita Shahi, a 16 year old militia from Humla, who had been dumped in the Teaching Hospital of Banke-Kohalpur nearly abandoned corroborates this. Rangita, who says that she had joined the insurgency at a tender age of nine, has been physically sick for the past two years.

In a conversation with us, she said that since she had to take military training at the tender age and do vigorous exercise even during her period, she started to suffer from the problems like stomachache, indigestion and uterus prolapse. Her physical illness and debility confirm that the Maoist cadres, responsible for providing treatment to her, were not a bit sensitive and supportive towards her. 'Just as a Nepali adage goes, 'A utensil used in need is thrown as junk when not needed', she had now been a burden for the concerned Maoist cadres, because she could not carry bombs and grenades any more. It reveals the fact that the Maoist Party exploits the feelings and labor of its cadres as far as it can, but when the cadres become sick or debilitated, the party abandons them.

Human right activist Shova Gautam says that the CPN (Maoist), in the wartime, had not been providing specific facility and privilege to its women cadres during menstrual period, pregnancy and post-natal state, but had involved them in

the work as normal cadres. That was also an exploitation of women. Nevertheless, several Maoist women like Rama Paudel (Rachana) of Raipu, Ramechhap put forth the explanation that since all women do not have the same body and health condition, everyone of them does not need the same facility during such specific conditions, though rest and facility have certainly been provided to needy ones.

The president of ANWA (R) Jayapuri Gharti has experienced that some female cadres insist to carry on even when the party women are requested to take rest during such specific conditions. They are keen on carrying out their responsibility. The inaccessibility of several facilities and privileges, which is considered as the violation of human rights in normal circumstances, can be natural difficulty during wartime. Since war itself is not a normal and systematic affair, the depriving of women from such facilities and privileges may not be considered abnormal. However, providing treatment, physical comfort and emotional support, to those cadres who are sick and maimed is the responsibility of the party. Pitiful situations are observed in some places, where concerned local leaders of the CPN (Maoist) have shown weaknesses and carelessness in carrying out their responsibility.

In the name of revolution, the CPN (Maoist) has taken many things from women luring them with a dream of a beautiful future. These women have dedicated their house, family, study, skill and whole life to the revolution. The women were even asked to sacrifice motherhood in order to prevent failures in the revolution. Chairperson Prachanda, in an interview with Li Onesto published in *The Revolutionary Worker* (February 20, 2000), has said, "The practical problems women comrades are facing -- we can say the whole party is facing -- are mainly associated with taking care of small children. ... the party is not coeraing, but strongly encouraging men and women comrades, pressing couples, not to have a baby for 5-7, or even 10 years, because it will be a big practical problem. We explain that on this question, it is also a kind of sacrifice. ... There are so many cases of couples who are not having babies right now ..." On the one hand, there are women who did not bear children accepting the call of their leader, on the other hand, there are numerous women who gave birth to babies but left them at the age of just 12-18 months in the hands of other family members to join the revolution. The sacrifice of motherhood on the appeal of the party is the self-motivated decision of the women cadres. However, the most important ques-

tion is: What activities do the party will launch in return of these sacrifices so that total change will be brought in the life of women cadres and general women?

The need for investigating into the problems, discriminations and difficulties faced by the women involved in the Maoist revolt has also been felt by the leaders of the party. In 2002-03, the Women's Department of the Maoist Party had conducted a survey among women cadres under the leadership of Maoist leader Hisila Yami. According to the findings of the study, the majority (74.56 %) of the women included in the survey said that gender discrimination exists in the party. Similarly, 25.78 percent of the surveyed women had complained that there is a general tendency of looking down on women in the People's Liberation Army. Based on the survey, Yami concludes in '*Nepalko Janayuddhama Mahila*' ('Women in the People's War of Nepal'), a translated article published in the monthly *Dishabodh* (No. 1, Bhadau 2063 BS), that the problems related to women exist in all the three fronts of the revolution (that is, the Party, the People's Army and the United Front), and it is essential to detect and eliminate the existing gender exploitation in the party earnestly. Thus, the overview of the survey findings and the nature of events related to the revolt confirms that women within the Maoist movement have borne with discrimination and exploitation to some degree. However, since the Maoist Party is such a force that has led the revolt with a definite ideological-political philosophy, the women involved in it feel empowered and respected in comparison with the women from other organizations. This can be vindicated by the conversation with the Maoist women cadres.

Future Prospects

From the very beginning, the women involved in the Maoist revolt have been taught that women's liberation is possible only after class liberation. But, for the time being, the Maoists have signed the cease-fire and peace agreements, and that has postponed their goal of building a classless society and class liberation. In such situation, how does the Maoist Party address the sentiment of the women involved in the revolt in search of a dignified life and liberation from all kinds of oppressions? What kind of policy and programs does the party put forth to realize the dream of a wonderful future for women? How does the party compensate the women for the sacrifice they have made in the revolt? The Maoists are not the sole controller of the state machinery at the present time and they have to share power with other political parties. In such circumstances, it is important to

know how the CPN (M) presents its caliber and stance differently from other forces in order to bring total transformation in women's life. How does it make others acquiesce to its agenda? In all this process, it remains to be seen whether it renders justice to the women involved in the revolt or not? All these questions will be resolved in the near future.

In all the initiatives and activities carried out since the agreement between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance was signed on November 27, 2005, women's participation has not been given any importance. The male leaders of all the existing parties have hardly ever thought that women's opinion and perspective also deserve some value in the crucial national issues. The Maoists, too, have not shown any distinctly different stance in favor of women from those of other parties. Accordingly, there is not much hope among the women who had plunged into the revolt believing that Maoists would give them justice. Since there still remains a lot of steps to be taken for the building of new Nepal, it is better, for the time being, to give the Maoists and other political parties a benefit of doubt that they will do substantial work in favor of women.

- *Rajdhani*, December 19, 2006, p. 2

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Appendices

Appendix I: Tables Related to the Activities Conducted Under the Project

Table 1. Brief Description of the Published Articles

S. No.	Writers	Titles of the articles*	Main themes	Publishers	Dates of Publication
1	Anju Chhetri, Manju Thapa	<i>Maoist Political Campaigns: The Price of Non-Involvement</i>	The accesses of the Maoists	<i>Samaya Weekly</i>	June 22, 2006
2	Anju Chhetri	<i>Women in the Field of War Constructed by Men</i>	The rationale of women's involvement in the armed forces	<i>Nepal Samachar-patra Daily</i>	August 17, 2006
3	Anju Chhetri	<i>Women's Intervention in the Peace Process</i>	Women's role and involvement in the peace process	<i>Nepal Samachar-patra Daily</i>	August 29, 2006
4	Kulmani Gyawali	<i>Destitution Forever</i>	The atrocities of vigilante group during conflict	<i>Nepal Samachar-patra Daily</i>	September 2, 2006
5	Anju Chhetri	<i>Rape: The Way of Offending the Opponents</i>	Rape as a major form of violence against women	<i>Rajdhani Daily</i>	October 31, 2006
6	Anju Chhetri	<i>Conflict- engendered Widows: Small Expectations</i>	The condition of conflict-afflicted women, and their expectations from the existing government	<i>Nepal Samachar-patra Daily</i>	November 4, 2006
7	Manju Thapa	<i>Transformation in Women's Life: Brought by the People's War</i>	The positive and negative changes brought about by the Maoist people's war in the life of rural women	<i>Mulyankan Monthly</i>	November 2006
8	Manju Thapa	<i>Women in the Insurgency</i>	The state of women in the armed struggle	<i>Rajdhani Daily</i>	November 14, 2006
9	Bimala Sharma	<i>A Haven for Displaced Children</i>	The state of the children displaced due to conflict and their rehabilitation	<i>Rajdhani Daily</i>	November 30, 2006
10	Manju Thapa	<i>The Quest for a Decent Life, Emancipation and Revolt</i>	Women's active participation in the Maoist movement and the party	<i>Rajdhani Daily</i>	December 19, 2006

* The titles of the articles are translated from Nepali.

Table 2. Segments of the Radio Program and Time Allocation

(Total time = about 28 min.)

Segments	Time (min.)
Discussion/talk	12-15
Radio feature	7
Monologue	2-2.30
Narration, bridge music, signature tune etc.	3-5

Table 3. Description of the FM Radio Stations Broadcasting the Program

FM radio stations	Geographical location	Population reach (estimated)	Day/time of broadcast
HBC	Kathmandu valley (central region)	4,000,000	Friday 7:05-7:35 pm
Radio Bheri	Surkhet (hill of midwestern region)	1,000,000	Sunday 7:30-8:00 am
Kalika	Chitawan (central plain)	7,000,000	Sunday 8:00-8:30 am
Saptakosi	Itahari (eastern plain)	2,000,000	Monday 7:30-8:00 am
Bageshowari	Nepalganj (midwestern plain)	5,000,000	Monday 7:30-8:00 am

Table 4. Persons Involved in the Production of the Radio Program and Their Respective Work

S. No.	Involved persons	Work
1	Manju Thapa	Coordination, production and anchoring
2	Rishi Acharya	Production, anchoring, feature production
3	Shanta Bhandari	Feature production, anchoring
4	Bharat Adhikari	Feature production
5	Anubhav	Anchoring
6	Devendra Chhetri	Anchoring
7	Ganesh Acharya	Feature production
8	Tula Adhikari	Feature production
9	Samanta Acharya	Technical support

Table 5. Specific Themes Selected for Each Episode of the Program and Description of the Program Segments Prepared According to the Themes

Episodes	Selected specific themes	Subject matters of features	Participants of Monologue	Topics and participants of discussion/talk
1	Restructuring of the state and women's inclusion	The situation of women's empowerment during the 12 years of multi party democracy	Conflict-afflicted woman Kalyani Khadka of Dolakha	Women's position in restructuring of the state inclusion: Dr. Meena Acharya
2	Restructuring of the state and women's inclusion	The condition of women's participation in different political parties	Laxmi Shah, a <i>madhesi</i> woman active in politics	The need of state restructuring for full inclusion of women: Shanta Manavi
3	Restructuring of the state and the inclusion of <i>dalit</i> women	The problems faced by <i>dalit</i> women due to social discrimination	Dhana Kumari Sunar, an activist in the <i>dalit</i> movement	The issue of inclusion of <i>dalit</i> women in the state restructuring: Ahuti and Durga Sob
4	Restructuring of the state and the inclusion of ethnic women	Familial and cultural status of ethnic women	Educationalist Subhadra Subba	The issue of inclusion of aborigine and ethnic women in the state restructuring: Dr. Om Gurung and Rampyari Sunuwar
5	Impacts of armed struggle on women	The campaign of plowing field by women, an indicator of change in gender roles	Maoist cadre Savitri Gurung	Positive and negative impacts of armed struggle on women: Shova Gautam and Manarishi Dhital
6	Impacts of armed struggle on women (Comprehensive)	Violence against women and its impacts during the conflict	Political activist Sarita Maharjan	Inevitable justice for the women raped during armed conflict and their rehabilitation: Mandira Sharma
7	Armed conflict and the rape of women	Women's rape during the time of armed conflict	Thakurani Devi Mehta from Sunsari and active against violence	Inevitable justice for the women raped during armed conflict and their rehabilitation: Dr. Renu Rajbhandari
8	Widows generated by conflict	The condition of the women who became widows after their husbands were killed in the massacre at Syalpakha Rukum	Guheshwari Devi, an 81 years old mother who has made a lot of struggle in her life	The need of a network of war-engendered widows, their activities and condition: Shova BC
9	Women's participation in the Maoist movement	The process of women's enrollment in the Maoists' armed struggle	Manu Humagain, the central treasurer of All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary)	Women's participation in the Maoist party, its sister organizations and fronts and continuity of this trend: Pampha Bhusal
10	Women in the Maoist army	Women's involvement and undertakings in the Maoist army	Kamala Naharki, of the Maoist women cadres renowned for the Gorkha jail break incident	Management of the women engaged in the Maoist army in the coming days: Amrita Thapa
11	Citizens who Disappeared due to the armed conflict	Mental torture suffered by the families of the citizens who disappeared	Motimaya Poudel whose son has disappeared	The efforts of bringing out facts about disappeared citizens: Parliamentarian Suresh Kumar Karki
12	Displaced women and children	Residents of Dhanusha who were displaced from their home village	Urmila Devi Yadav who has been suffering the pain of displacement since her childhood	The problems that women and children have to encounter during displacement and support they needed: Subodh Pyakurel

Episodes	Selected specific themes	Subject matters of features	Participants of Monologue	Topics and participants of discussion/talk
13	Return and rehabilitation of the displaced people	The complexities faced by the displaced people of eastern Nepal in returning to their home village	Adolescent girl Balika Raut from Dang, who is compelled to take up family responsibilities after the arrest of her parents	The things to be considered while the displaced women and children are being returned back: Mukti Subedi; Returning of the property of displaced persons and rehabilitation: Parliamenarian Surendra Pandey
14	Investment and rehabilitation for the conflict-affected women	The impact of investment program for the conflict-affected women in Banke	Meena Tiwari from Nawalparasi, who had been tortured during armed conflict	The support provided for the conflict affected women from the NGO sector and the service required to them: Dr. Arjun Karki
15	Reconstruction of physical infrastructure destroyed in the course of armed struggle	The difficulty encountered by the women of Rajapur, Banke when the rice mill of their area was destroyed	Devaki Dahal from Kabhre and wife of the martyr Bhimsen Dahal	Reconstruction of the destroyed physical infrastructure during the conflict: Shyam Sundar
16	The impacts of armed struggle on children and their rehabilitation	The children residing at the Nepalganj Children's Home	Sati Buda conflict-affected girl from Rolpa	The impacts of armed struggle on children and their rehabilitation in the coming days: Shiva Prasad Poudel
17	Minimum one third participation of women in the interim parliament and constituent assembly	The role played by women in parliament in the past	Purna Subedi, a central adviser of CPN (Maoist)	Minimum one third participation of women in the interim parliament and constituent assembly: Suresh Ale Magar and Sarita Giri
18	The issues of children's rights in the state restructuring	The pain suffered by children during the armed struggle (focused on Surkhet)	Laxmi Chaudhari from Dang, a girl working as bonded domestic worker	The issues of children's rights in the state restructuring: Dr. Gopal Krishna Shivakoti
19	Women's role and participation in the peace process	The condition of women's role and participation in the peace process	Devi Khadka, the central vice-president of All Nepal women's Association (Revolutionary)	Meaningful participation of women in the peace process and the causes of their least role in it: Dev Gurung and Pradip Gyawali
20	Women in the interim constitution	The place of <i>dalits</i> , ethnic groups, <i>madhesis</i> and women of remote areas as in the interim constitution	Madhuri Dixit, a 73 year old woman, active in politics from the Rana era, a member of CPN (UML) at present	Discussion on the women's rights as put in the constitutions of Nepal so far; analysis of women's rights included in the interim constitution: Meera Dhungana

Table 6. Brief Description of the TV documentaries

Titles*	Time length (approximately)	Main themes	Types and number of individual captured on film	Places of shooting
<i>War-engendered Windows: Waiting for Justice</i>	25 min.	condition of the war-engendered windows; overview of past events; present needs and appropriate measures for rehabilitation	war-engendered widows=33;rape victims=11; experts, counselors NGO officials, etc. = 8	Dandeldhura Mahendranagar (Kanchanpur) Surkhet, Banke, Taulihawa (Kapilvastu) Nawalparasi, Kathmandu, Morang, Dang and Sunsari
<i>Conflict and Rape: Reminiscences</i>	27 min.	Testimonies of the victims of rape during the conflict; present condition; how to provide them justice		

Appendix II: Bibliography

Due to the limitation of space, the following list generally comprises selected books and booklets related to the topic 'Women, Peace and Restructuring'. Items like research papers, theses, journal/magazine articles, news/features published in newspapers, articles downloaded from the internet, governmental/non-governmental documents are very less included in the list. All such materials were gathered for the specific purpose of the project. They are available in the ASMITA library for the use by researchers, media personnel, women activists and human right activists.

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*Foot notes

*BS stands for Bikram Sambat, which is a widely used calendar in Nepal. It is 57-58 years ahead from AD.

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