INFLUENCING POLITICS THROUGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORM: A CASE OF DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN NEPAL

Introduction

After the end of Second World War, the regional, ethnic, linguistic, resource, geo-political, and religious issues began to have more importance in human welfare. Whenever a state failed to properly address these problems, the latent conflicts turned into political movement. Poor and developing countries have been found more vulnerable to violent conflicts due to inequality in distribution of resources and opportunities, inadequate service delivery system, injustice to identities and beliefs, ineffective governance and administration, inefficient socio-political transformation and intolerant leadership (Pathak, 2005). He further added that most of the political changes of the twentieth century were waged between the states, almost all the major conflicts around the world that took place in the 1990s were fought within the state. According to Dahal (2001) as a result, the frequency and intensity of the volatile internal conflicts are significantly increasing in number around the world.

The first people’s movement initiated in Nepal in 1991 is considered as the creation of interwoven and complex web of socioeconomic, legal and politico-ideological problems. The People’s movement has strong connection with socioeconomic variables such as caste/ethnicity, sex, occupation, education, employment, income and so forth (Pathak, 2005). He further added that lower castes, Dalits, marginal ethnic communities and poor people in rural areas were discriminated against in the previous Panchayat regime. However, social discrimination and economic discrepancy between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' are continuing and most of the resources have been centralized towards urban areas and a few elite families even after the
restoration of democracy (Dryzek, 1996). Consequently, the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized people have fuelled in the hope of social justice, equity, security, freedom and dignity in a republican state.

The position of Nepal in the two dimensional map of democracy has been demonstrated in figure 1.1. As (Lawati, 2005) described, the addition of Nepal to Lijphart’s thirty-six established democracies did not make any significant difference to the factor loadings. Nepali political institutions lie fully on the majoritarian cluster in the two-dimensional map: it is majoritarian in both the federal – unitary and executives - parties dimensions.

In emerging multicultural democracies, consolidation of democracy may become tricky if the question of the state (appropriate institutions) is not settled (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Holding periodic elections may not be sufficient in multicultural societies to consolidate democracies. Accom-modative political institutions are required to address the cultural cleavages (Reynolds, 2002).