

Coalition for Environment and Development
Dialogue on: Strivings for Sustainable Futures
Institute of Governance, Kathmandu
16th and 17th October, 2008

Introduction of the project

Chair: Mr. Hari Prasad and Ms. Indra Adhikari

The two day dialogue on sustainable futures began with self introduction of the participants largely drawn from movement groups, academic and NGO circles. (A list of participants is available at annexure I). At the end of the introduction round Marko Ulvila, the Lead Researcher of the Project, gave background and overview of the project.

He started by telling that as a project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland under the broad heading of sustainable development and culture this was essentially an exploration in issues of environmental justice, social justice and political democracy and so on by combining our efforts and experiences in various fields to map out the ways for a sustainable future. The methodology adopted was to organise dialogues like this with movement groups and activists and academic community in different parts of the world. So far, about half a dozen dialogues have been organised in Finland, Tanzania, Kenya, Sweden and India and now here in Nepal, he said. Thanking all the participants for attending the dialogue Marko expressed hope that it would give further insights into the overall objective of the project.

He further went on sharing the experiences and explaining the basic idea of the study. He said that such a dialogue was needed because the world was at crossroads as the last 500 years had been utterly unsustainable – environmental sustainability and climate change seemed to be getting into a dangerous cycle. This was largely because of reckless use of fossil fuel and modern agricultural practice without paying any heed to the warning of scientists for last 20 years or so. The result was that the problem is precipitating the crisis faster which was coming towards us sooner than we expected, he added. So, we needed to review our relationship vis-a-vis energy consumption patterns. Similarly, the natural resources, which used to be cheap and abundant, was not so any more. It was not an endless treasure. It may come to an end sooner than we thought, he went on explaining further.

On the other hand, the world economy based on capitalist structures was in deep crisis, financial institutions were in deep turmoil. In other words, faith and optimism in free market economy had come under a big question mark, he maintained. “Also, especially in our part of world, I would say, there is also a serious crisis of meaning,” Marko remarked. Despite no shortage of food, habitation or other basic needs of life, people were not finding satisfaction in life. In all the industrial societies there was epidemic depression; drugs were resorted to by more and more people. In brief, the development model of the modern West which had expanded to other parts of the world had clearly proved unsustainable. So it was the most important departure for this dialogue, he said. He added that it was the time to review what kind of future we envisaged for humanity. ‘Through this dialogue we hope to get some of the answers, hopefully, and it has to be an open ended dialogue before we start prescribing.

Through this dialogue we hope to get a better understanding by sharing what has gone wrong and what structural changes are required that the world would be different-more sustainable and equitable', said Marko.

This process also aimed at some amount of introspection while sharing our experiences and facing up to the reality. So, looking at developing societies certain observations needed to be shared regarding the changing class structure of the destructive civilisation. Referring to the project booklet distributed to the participants, Marko shared a 2006 study about consumer culture as class phenomena. "If we look at figures depicting the pattern of the spread of consumer culture and global consumer class we find that there are 1.7 billion as a part of global consumer class (which forms) about 30 percent of the global population", he said. He remarked that this was a global problem caused by a minority sub culture; a minority lifestyle was causing problems for all. "This is an utterly unjust situation and the class perspective to look at this phenomenon is very helpful...Secondly, we see that consumer population in China is equal to that in US. In India, it is just half yet the number of people is bigger than any other European country. The amount of carbon emission is proportionate to that. So, cutting across Industrialised and developing countries, the North and the South, it is clearly a global problem and this study proposed to look into the class context to understand it" he said.

Another study in the booklet exploring the history and politics of consumerism clearly demonstrated that we needed to look at this class perspective to realise that it was not a natural process, but a created one, Marko added. Thus, "in creating consumerist culture the production of dissatisfaction is the key factor – the more people are dissatisfied the more they consume". Looking at the consumption pattern figures it became clear that the majority of people were living sustainable life style- especially in developing world. This project aimed to document some such sustainable lifestyles and workout mechanism so that it could become more and more sustainable.

The booklet brought out by the project also contained some examples of sustainable life style practices. Marko referred to the centuries old tradition of *Bishnoi* community of India where sustainable practices are organically embedded in the practices of daily life and a part of collective ideal – expressed through '20 Actions' everyone was committed to follow. Another interesting experience documented in it pertained to a young 'modern' friend named Lasse Nordlund trying to obtain first hand understanding of sustainable lifestyle by deciding to live a life by relearning stone-age technology, living without 'machine', outside the money economy, he said. "This is not to suggest that everyone should start living like that but to assert that an alternative life style is possible", Marko said.

In the end, Marko shared a few highlights of Africa Dialogues. In Kenya, some groups shared their perspective in their stories where initially the guard was the mountain, then, the Christianity came and the guard went up in the sky. Then they developed taboos that they won't cut certain tree and so on. In a way sustainable practices have been preserved as a part of indigenous religious systems and tradition. However, they also reveal some retrograde elements as well. For example they have been anti-women etc. So, they will also not take us naturally to sustainable future. Discussing education they shared that even after independence they continue with colonial education. Thus, it was clear that formal education had to have different ideas if we wanted to save the planet, Marko concluded his introduction of the dialogue.

Vijay Pratap, Senior Researcher of the project, picked up the thread left by Marko and said that exploring ‘strivings for sustainability’ was the vantage point. He said that the imperial powers laid their own structures in 500 years and destroyed sustainable ways of living by the indigenous people. Yet, a good number of people, the marginalised majority still retained their system of meaning and sustainable lifestyles. *Tharus* are one such example of an important indigenous community in Nepal. There are a total of about 8 crore indigenous people in India who maintained sustainable way of living. But they were clearly marginalised by development fundamentalists, said Vijay Pratap.

However, the irony was that global neo-liberal economic reforms, started in 1980s, had failed, even for their own elite. “The intervention of modernity has not been working even in the countries it was started and history is testimony to it. Their relationship with nature has been totally opposed to what we have. We always looked at the earth as our Mother – *vasundhara putra*, whereas the more radical of the northern environmentalist friends call themselves ‘Friends of the earth’. It would be considered sacrilegious to call ourselves ‘friends of our mother’, so to say. If these are our friends, you can well imagine about our enemies –the way they are consuming oil, water and so on. A matter of concern is that in the name of resolving the crisis they are compounding it. Take the example of energy crisis, the option of bio –diesel was floated which eventually created a food crisis. Thus the minority elite of the world are following a sure recipe for the destruction of the earth that virtually amounts to self destruction” Vijay Pratap went on explaining.

There is no compatibility in our world view. Take our relation with nature or family. In Europe instead of making the institution of family democratic, they destroyed it painting it as a regressive institution. We don’t segmentise life in isolated independent compartments. *Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha* – the four *purusharthas*, are the basic pursuits of life. Dharma is essentially ethically bound material pursuit. Look at the number of people on pavements not living life dignified enough. What does leisure mean to them? In this part of world, however, all these pursuits (*Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha*) form an integrated whole, however, modernity does not allow us to see the continuum.

In Delhi alone 60,000 Adivasi women are serving in households as maids. Mostly, we don’t take cognizance and when we do, we don’t have the courage to move away from the modernity race. We are forced by the structure to follow modernity without questioning. Resistance to this requires some kind of collective political will which obviously goes beyond the study project. It has to be a life-long engagement. In doing that the tools of Social Science are not sufficient. It may give, say a romantic, poetic point of view about Adivasi life that fails to make us aware of the ‘disconnect’, that modernity creates. We need to share our dilemma also to create a larger world view. Unless we try to unravel the politics behind such a ‘disconnect’, the task will remain incomplete. So, how to respond holistically? How to go about it?

The idea of sustainability should be seen not only in context of relationship between human beings and nature but should percolate down to all other aspects of life. We need to respond holistically. Unfortunately, whenever a solution is proposed it only compounds the problem. For example, billions of dollars, tax payer’s money, is being pumped into market to save the tottering economy (which is a subsidy to the ‘borrowing lifestyle’) but no one is questioning.

We have only one way. We must have a bank of right kind of questions, dilemma and learning to chart out a future course of action- a collective journey to a more egalitarian world, a sustainable future in terms of nature, social (Dalit/indigenous), culture, issue of identity etc. Also, we need to realise that the crisis of meaning is a global phenomena - it comes as a package, only specifics are different. In the North they are breaking nerves, in the South we are quietly following suit. We must share our dilemmas as well. We need to ask question as to what happened to the 'revolutionary' change that took place in Nepal with two million people on the street? Today, it goes out for FDI, its ideologues plead relationship with ADB/World Bank. It simply reflects our collective helplessness, as it were. Have we come to a dead end? We have to have the courage to face up to the realities of life. Why is it so? We need to put our heads together to work out a sustainable collective goal, Vijay Pratap concluded.

Some new entrants to the meeting requested to have a quick brief for their benefit. Vagish, a researcher with the project, shared a brief perspective of the dialogue by way of summarising the presentations of Marko and Vijay Pratap.

The house was opened for observation or comments.

Ganga Sharma (social activist) wanted to know from Marko that when under the spell of Globalisation local skill and cultures were going down, how could they imagine of sustainability? "Our programmes are dependent upon donors, who are hardly interested in sustainability. In that case what can be done?", she wondered.

Maya Kshetri (Bio-Nepal) said that food crisis (bio-fuel) should be attributed to only developed countries who were using edible crops like corn soybean, sun-flower etc., for bio-fuel. Also, all of them cannot be blamed. For them, the food-crops in agriculture are subsidised. They need market for it. That is why they are using them into bio-diesel. Also they claim that only 3% of food crops are used for making bio-fuel. But in India, Jetropha is being cultivated for bio-fuel. For this we are making use of marginal land and with non-edible oil seeds. We have close to .5 billion acres of land available world over which are degraded and abandoned. This land is being reclaimed for growing bio-fuel, Maya concluded.

Responding to Maya's formulations **Mamta Das** said that from Indian experience she wanted to reiterate that no land was barren land. "No land is degradable or abandoned land, the premise on which we proceed. In case of Jetropha the reality is that in most of the cases farm lands are being used- Farmers are coaxed to abandon traditional agriculture and take up Jetropha cultivation- to take loan for it and so on. Thus, a new way of life/agriculture is being thrust upon us" she said.

Hannu Virtanen in his intervention shared his own life experiences. "I was born in a small village in Finland. My parents were engaged in small scale farming – all my childhood was spent in these farms. They led more self-sustaining life style. By 1950-60 money economy had got in, we got money from selling milk of cow. My father built house. Later a taxing system was introduced which discouraged small scale farming and supported big farming. Finnish agriculture became heavily dependent on technology. Now agriculture is totally dependent upon European Union. Poor people need to be supported. Firewood was the main source of fire for heating (cold country needs heating). Now, people are so dependent on technology. If my

father's cart was broken he could make another one himself. But today if a computer breaks down, people can't write, the art of writing with hands is becoming history. In agricultural society people were largely at same level. Technology, however, created hard hierarchy- there is no space for democracy here", he said. He continued his view by adding that Finland had huge number of poor people. Politics was corrupt; which was true for every democratic country. Politicians amassed wealth- they had no connection with common man's life and that was a major problem. They are dependent on big industry for their election. Against this background he urged to bring about required change if we dreamt of a sustainable culture.

Sharada Sharma (International Planned Parenthood Initiative) said that once a certain programme came to an end – no donor comes forward, their community alone has to come forward. People must realise the need of sustainability to develop sense of ownership by the community. We need to see strong relationship between sustainable culture and our life. Only then we can hope for a sustainable future, she said.

Responding to Maya's bio-fuel and politics of energy **Vijay Pratap** said that the logic put forward for the bio-fuel was nothing but propaganda of automobile industry and they did not survive the test of truth. "Most of the people in our part of the world are non-fuel dependent pedestrians or cycle users etc. No land is barren. Dry land farming has been traditional practice for ages but modernity has erased the skill and even memory from popular conscience. Now even Kellogs & MacDonalds want to talk about natural agricultural and organic food. They have grown by displacing/decimating marginal farmers. Bio-fuel rationale rests on the premise of irrational use of automobile- if you look at the chain it involves -paint-chemicals contaminating water the consequences are far more devastating", he lucidly argued.

At this juncture **Suresh Dhakal**, Lecturer at Tribhuvan University, came up with his point. He said that Development was an 'imperialist' projection, we needed to think beyond 'development'; the term Development had to be questioned. Secondly, issues of sustainability of culture needed to be mapped on larger political-economic canvas. "The terms such as sustainability, development etc. are political in nature . In Nepal all the social movements are NGO driven but all of them start by saying they are non-political. These are grass-roots movements co-opted by NGOs, who claim to be non-political. This is absolutely wrong - either they are cheating people or they are not doing what they say they are", he was candid in expressing his views.

Globalisation is a phenomenon-to counter Globalisation and its hegemony a counter-hegemony is required. Referring to his Ph. D. study Mr Dhakal mentioned about one Sherpa community of the eastern hills who practice shifting cultivation. There is a common belief that shifting cultivation is un-sustainable/destructive, but my study found that it is quite sustainable. He felt, 'Culture becomes un-sustainable when state intervenes'. Referring to Latin American experience he said that governments with people oriented intention are also not able to do much because of class interest. Let's try to de-construct, he urged the participants. **Sharada Sharma** was of the opinion that the meeting should not deny modern technology but should synergise them.

Responding to queries raised earlier, **Marko** said that 'History of modernisation has been the history of cultural homogenisation'. Modernity, as Vijay Pratap pointed out, comes in a package. Hannu also pointed out an important feature of modernity that it

creates more complex hierarchies. So sustainable cultures become extinct and new culture is thrust. We need to decide. We are dependent on corporations so how can we go against them. Same is true for Donors. So what to do? At this dead end Gandhi becomes important. He gave a weapon called Non-Cooperation. The 'crisis of meaning' is accentuated by Television. According to a survey every Finn watched TV for 3½ hours daily. We decided not to have TV in our house- it saves time, saves money. Similarly, many of us have decided to do non-cooperation with Google, an American Corporation. This is our way of non-cooperation. Gandhi gave another method –*Swadeshi*. So, our strivings towards a sustainable future have to be built up by us bit by bit, every small resistance paves the way for the bigger one, Marko concluded.

Before the lunch break the Mr. Hari, co-chair of the first session gave his concluding remarks. He said, it was a complex issue because if modernity were not there, we wouldn't have been able to meet today. But if it goes on like this we will not be there to meet after sometime, anyway. No to T.V. is fine, but we have to realise that the urge is also very strong. The road towards sustainability has to be located amidst this contrasting scenario.

Adding to what Mr Hari said, Mrs. Indra Adhikari said that it was a rather new phenomena in the context of Nepal to have borrowed the concept of development from West. There seems to be no indigenous perspective on what is sustainable. People do not really know what to choose between the so-called mainstream development model which prefers to have 'fast development with mega projects' and 'sustainable development' which we are talking now.

Lunch Break

Chair: Mr. Uddhab Pyakurel and Ms. Deo Kumari Gurung

Dialogue Initiators:

1. Dr. Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan, lecturer of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.
2. Mr. Chandra Kulung, Ethnic activist, Nepal

As the first speaker, Dr. Bhattachan began by asserting that in Nepal there is no one way of life but there are several ways of lives. In fact, different people here represent at different stages of development; today we have here people representing hunting gathering stages along with those who have lifestyle of medieval and modern times. They are at different stages; represent different time zones that they live in, as it were. Alluding to an onion, he went on, "these different layers of peoples would make you 'cry' unless you dipped them into water to avoid tear –this metaphorical 'Water' is Right to self-determination to these Indigenous population".

Giving an idea of social reality and diversity he said that the dominant-class was constituted by Hill dwelling /Brahman-Chhetri caste / Male/Khas language speaking

Hindu. There are 125 dialects spoken and still alive in Nepal.

Explaining his point further he said, “Indigenous people and bio-diversity are so interconnected that one cannot be imagined without the other. Indigenous people are against Globalisation, against imperialism and homogenisation”.

Explaining the systematic destruction of indigenous people he drew parallel with that of American Experience where they were vanquished by (i) Gun (ii) Bible (in Nepal - Manusmriti & Veda) (iii) Treaty [he referred to the treaty signed during Shah Regime with *Limbu* community where Shah king promised to maintain their indigenous culture as their rights otherwise the treaty said ‘Let my kingdom be destroyed’.]

“Indigenous peoples have no innate attraction for Globalisation. There are many faces of capitalism-monopolist resources/capital”. Quoting J. Habermas Dr. Bhattachan said that meaning is lost in modernity. Decentralised collective violence has become sustainable. Then, referring to Michael Foucault he said that knowledge and power are also related. Thus, he concluded, the trio of Knowledge, Interest and Power and their interrelationship has to be understood by marrying Habermas and Foucault, as it were. In terms of Indigenous people ‘respecting, protecting and promoting’ hold the key and the present political disposition must respect them. Discontent is already brewing and one of the ethnic communities from the eastern Nepal has already picked up guns. If indigenous peoples don't get rights ensured by ILO Convention No. 169 and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), more will follow the path to pick up arms. In this situation, we, the state will be the culprit for destroying the community /mother earth and the world, he said. Taking a dig at the leftist power structure in the saddle, he said that if they respected ‘people’s will’ they must respect ethnic community and their rights.

The second presentation of the post lunch session was by **Chandra Kulung**, a representative of the Indigenous community. Coming straight from the heart his views were clear, crisp and forthright.

“Beyond political we must think of humanitarian issues also. Globalisation has affected indigenous people also. International community wants to help us on humanitarian grounds also. Indigenous people’s voices have been hurt. Kulung is also a deprived indigenous - deprived of all the processes, political process etc. We are struggling for our rights. Our community has been excluded. If your identity is not there, how you can survive? They don’t see future. Actually, that is why we want the present government to listen to our voice. Even today, we are not the part of the process in the Constituent Assembly (CA) which is the prime structure of constitution making process. Just having people from other community as indigenous people in the CA, cabinet and bureaucracy won’t help the community which is still struggling to have their own ethnic identity,” Kulung was categorical. Advocacy and human right workers should go to the field. Excluded groups remain excluded if the effort doesn’t reach grassroots. Indigenous people are manipulated by the political parties. People’s attitude must be good to give good governance.

Hindu based polity demolished cultures and indigenous people. They didn't allow them to come up. They collaborated against the general interest of people. We must live in harmony- good governance is crucial. Even a Village Development Committee officer (a petty officer at local level) in remote area is like a king. People in remote

areas have no means to communicate. 'People are power but they are powerless, therefore, we must enable them to have their share/say, Kulung was forthright in his views.

With this presentation the floor was opened for comments and observations.

Responding to the presentations **Sharda Sharma** started by saying that the session was very 'provocative' and she agreed with the idea that in Nepal people live in various stages. But she felt that the distinction between indigenous and capitalistic group was not clear enough and she thought all those who are deprived should get opportunity. She felt that education played a very decisive role as only educated people could get the benefits of everything.

Narendra K. Gurung, an ethnic activist, felt that a 'horrendous situation' prevailed in Nepal and indigenous people like Sherpa, Gurung had very difficult choice; their situation was terrible; they cultivated land but that did not give them enough. Neither NGO nor Govt. came to their help, he felt.

Pointing out some regressive practices he mentioned about a '*Churia Mai Mela*' where scores of animals were sacrificed by all linguistic groups but common people are not taken along. He observed that tradition/culture must modernise all of them. He lamented that though there are 36% indigenous people who live in Nepal but dominant social groups continue their dominance. Concluding his remarks in Nepali language he warned, if Indigenous People's issues were not addressed the situation was explosive. Inclusion is a must but in practice it is hard to find.

Suresh Dhakal felt that it would have been better to see examples of various sustainable cultures, which would have focussed the issue. He observed that cultural taboos hinder development. **Ganga Sharma** was of the opinion that in the on-going process of constitution framing, participation of all the groups in Nepal must be ensured. Secondly, she said that NGOs are doing good work in Nepal but they had no idea as to how much fund flowed to NGOs for Indigenous population? She was of the opinion that NGOs must be transparent in terms of budgetary support that they got from donors.

Reacting to the present political situation in Nepal **Hannu Virtanen** said that when new political process began, lot of talk was heard about multi-cultural issues but nothing concrete seems to be emerging so far. Talking about composition of ethnic communities in different constituencies especially Tharu in Kanthapur, he said, not a single community of Nepal would be in majority in a electoral constituency. Referring to the talks with members of Constituent Assembly he said that they had different views about Tharu state. He concluded by adding that in industrial society, ethnic identity or their autonomy may create greater problems.

Dr. Bhattachan responding to some of the issues raised said that 'Respect, promote, protect the rights of indigenous peoples including the right of self-determination and ethnic autonomy as solutions to address the problems facing indigenous peoples. He was categorical that right to self determination was the solution. Marko narrated the condition of the Sami community in Finland, who took to reindeer farming and they were chased away; were not given proper respect. 'After the WSF we tried to bring their issues in public after which some change is taking place in their life', Marko

added.

Ila Sharma was of the opinion that there was no bitterness among communities and they needed to find amicable solutions of co-existence. She felt that cooperative could be a very important model. She suggested two ways of cooperation i) internal harmony (ii) international relation for alternative.

Responding to the animal sacrifice issue **Vagish** said that highlighting the ‘inhuman’ part of animal sacrifice was a part of colonial agenda to look down upon the indigenous traditions as ‘uncivilised and barbaric’ as it conveniently overlooked the fact that animal sacrifice was a part of biological selection where mostly male animals were killed who are any way burden on the species if left alive and grow in number. Interesting part of this viewpoint was that while pointing out the ‘uncivilised’ nature of the Indigenous traditions the colonial powers glossed over all their own atrocities and massacres (be it during the great revolt of 1857 where millions of Indians were butchered or the more recent one in Iraq where the genocide is committed in the name of Democracy) as a part of ‘civilisational project’ or the white man’s burden to civilise those they ruled. It is therefore important, he felt, that one had to be careful before accepting the self image created by the modern education that reinforces the view that indigenous people have ‘inhuman’ practices as a part of their life style or livelihood.

Ila wondered as to what was wrong in sacrifice? **Narendra** was not convinced and felt that if thousands of animals were killed it was definitely problematic. Hannu tried to give example of how killing male animals made economic sense. **Ganga** shared that the govt. of Nepal recently tried to stop funding to the culture of sacrifice of animal in a particular case in Kathmandu but Indigenous People not only objected the government decision but organised a strong protest to continue it and later it was revoked. **Dr. Bhattachan** was of opinion that the State must refrain from meddling with religion. By giving examples he tried to show that each time State has done so it has messed up the issue. He again reiterated that the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous people and rights enshrined in ILO Convention No. 169 that stipulates autonomy and land rights remains the most appropriate solution.

Mamta said that there was a need to be careful before we uncritically accepted the notion that indigenous community were backward, which was clearly a colonial construct. Our uncritical Western way of thinking does not allow us to look for other alternatives which may be there and are denied. We say we need to deconstruct notion of development, yet we feel the way we go about IP, she expressed her surprise. She felt that, ‘we must ask some difficult questions about nation state vis-a-vis implementation of International treaties. **Ila** felt that indigenous People were not special species, sitting on the other side of the fence- whose land reforms or religious practices must be protected. **Hannu** said that Nepal govt. had only said they won’t pay for sacrifice but it had to face a strong protest in Kathmandu itself. Comparing with Finland with other societies he said that Finland too was a traditional society. The President was the head of church in Finland; separation of State and religion is not done yet. In Nepal what govt. did was right to withdraw from the religious affairs.

At this point of time the Chair called for the attention of the participants to focus on the subject matter of the dialogue.

Narendra shared another fact of a temple where people used to be cremated in a

nearby temple located outside the city and when this area was sparsely populated. Now the city grew and the temple is a part of thickly populated area but the cremation practices continue even today creating lot of problem to the inhabitants. He wondered if this practice be allowed to continue in the name of protecting the rights of Indigenous people?

At this juncture **Dr. Bhattachan** again came up with his comments. He cited the example of Tharus who used to live in dense forest of terai. Until 1950, they conserved, preserved, protected 'sal' trees, Rhino, crocodile- all the flora-fauna were preserved by them. This was the time when only they could live there. Any outsider would not dare enter the forest due to mosquitoes which would cause Malaria (Tharus were biologically immune to it). After 1950 with American 'aid' DDT was sprayed into the dense forest. As result all mosquitoes were gone and Tharus too were gone; as their lands were confiscated by others. Even the state took over the lands of Tharus and installed national parks, conservation center etc.etc. In the area of Chitawan/Bardia National Park, where Tharus are found now, they are surviving as mere petty help in these areas. However, they are still culturally associated with forest; every Saturday they go inside the jungle to worship, because their Gods are there only, they did not know about the law.

The "upper caste" people were like sugarcane-tip and Indigenous peoples were like with Radish, said Dr. Bhattachan in his candid style. "The first is like "upper caste" people which wants to go up; it could grow anywhere you transplant and if one burn them they would grow greener next year. Whereas the Indigenous peoples, like root of radish, go down the earth; they like to be there but you can't transplant them in another kitchen garden, even with utmost care. That was why Indigenous peoples are not found everywhere, whereas "upper caste" can be found anywhere. He again referred to ILO Convention No. 169 and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and maintained that minimum standards were guaranteed by International laws which must be followed.

However, there is a deep rooted bias in the rest of the population against the Indigenous communities. They considered them uncouth. But the case is not so. He cited an example of a nomadic tribe of Nepal called *Route* who was once invited to speak in a forum. To gather the opinion of the people participating in the meeting he asked them to make a guess about such an incidence - what will they do? He demonstrated practically that every time you get stereotypical response that 'they will destroy me, speak in their own language that no one would understand' and so on. He then narrated an actual incident when they were asked to speak they were very succinct in expressing their views, they said, "we *Routes* love nature. Don't teach us how to cultivate or settle down – Let us continue our tradition"- they were very precise, very clear.

Dr. Bhattachan cited another interesting example about the communication gap between others and one of the ethnic communities called *Tamang* community who eat meat of dead cow, they don't kill, which is illegal in Nepal. Once someone complained that a *Tamang* had killed a cow. Police asked if he did kill a cow? *Tamang* replied in his crude language, *Maile Mareko Gai Ko Masu Khayeko Ho* (I ate a dead cow). Here he argued that he did not kill the cow but ate the meat of dead cow. But due to his language, it was understood and interpreted differently as his confession and he was put behind bars for 20 years. Dr. Bhattachan was unequivocal in

concluding that Indigenous people's rights could not be protected without free and prior informed consent.

Sunita Acharya was visibly disturbed and rose up to ask Dr. Bhattachan, "why are you so furious about Brahmin? Talk about the issue – we have to think positively and develop!". Prof Bhattachand quickly responded by saying that there were three pillars of society – (i) Class (ii) Gender (iii) Ethnicity. The social status/ gender/ ethnicity do make differences. Gender and ethnic problem are far more problematic in Nepal. Man manufacture knowledge – woman have to follow. The fact is that ethnic problem in Nepal had not been tackled so far, concluded Dr. Bhattachan.

As the last interjector before tea break **IIa** was of the opinion that our attitude should be to look at the solution. 17% of land is protected area in Nepal. The real issue is how to go about democratisation of protected area. The questions of Carbon trading, community forest management and so on are crucial issues in terms of the rights of Indigenous people, she felt.

Tea Break

Session continues....

The last session of the day began with the presentation by **Mamta Das** from India. Speaking at length she started with a 'doubt' if India was the largest democracy in the world. The constitution of India committed itself to protect people's right to live with dignity, ensuring Human Rights taking all diversity issues in stride. But today we are at crossroads as far as industrialization, Globalization and destruction of people's life and livelihood were concerned. India claims to have achieved a growth rate of 9%, yet, it seems to be heading towards a civil war, which is already taking place in various parts.

She pointed out the paradox of robust economy verses large number of people loosing their home, displacement, people living on pavement and so on. 9% of world's indigenous Population lives in India, 23% of India's population are of Indigenous People.

But as we marched on the path of development we alienated them further through a number of legislations. Marginalisation and exclusion of Indigenous people are not a recent phenomena. Mamta identified four crucial actors namely: (i) Nature- forest, land and river. She claimed that there were no other examples than India where a number of (IPs) have been removed from their places; (ii) Collective Sustenance based on natural way of sharing, 'our land/ our culture'. They have been hit very harshly by Indigenous laws; (iii) Language and Culture – traditional language has been sidelined as a calculated thought, she felt and cited the example of a child who comes to the school in tribal area of Orissa, the first thing that is done is to change their name, then they are taught in Orria/English/Hindi but not the tribal language; (iv) Sacredness of nature is threatened by big projects – people bring varied cultures and marginalize them. The above four factor intrinsic to IP in India are threatened.

Then she came to share various forms of struggle's taking place? Drawing upon her

close association with 5 (five) campaigns of fighting against mega projects she elaborated upon how they have organized and fought against Imperialism.

To begin with we need to understand as to why India focused on Developmental Projects especially in the areas where Indigenous people live, she proposed. She continued by pointing out that regions of Orissa and Chhatisgarh having thick indigenous population was a mineral rich area. They have rich deposits of Bauxite, coal, chromites, aluminium etc. British colonial anthropologists had pointed as to how they can be extracted. Once mining begins there, it destroys the ecological system and displaces thousands of people, those who have preserved the nature through their integral cultural practices. For example, Bauxite is like a sponge, it releases water regularly. Thus, Indigenous people of this area preserve the lush green mountain of this area as their God through a symbiotic relationship developed over ages. In the name of irrigation, mega dams are constructed to get water. The areas around dam areas are least irrigated and least electrified; water travels to 200/400 K.M. for miner's need but would not be given to peasants just two K.M. away from the source.

After giving this background, she came to discuss the issue as to why are people resisting? "People' resist all over, they are not idiots; they understand what is happening and they are asking questions," she said. They seem to be saying, 'if you want to help us, build small dams'. Mining needs digging, displacement is a natural consequence. They promise house would be built elsewhere. Aforestation has not worked anywhere in the world. Some people gave land in hope of compensation and money somewhere else. People have no option but to resist. Of five struggles she has been closely associated with, one of them is Kashipur project where the struggle is going on for 13 years. She said that strategies of struggle evolved from within.

Giving a case study of Niyamgiri Mountain in Orissa, literally, lord of law, she informed that people worshiped mountain, no tree was cut by Dongria Konth tribe who live there. They enjoy status of national Heritage. But the Govt. signed an MoU with Vedanta Aluminium Ltd., a British Company. Interestingly, it was a company with same owner and different name. Government/ Supreme Court conveniently shut their eyes, gave permission to mine. People resisted and people lost their lives. What was most disturbing, said Mamta, was the fact that State appeared as a handmaiden of the corporations and remained oblivious of the problems of its own people. Same was the story of Kalingnagar where Govt. came to support the corporations and not for the people, never if they were Indigenous People. As a result, in India a new definition of poverty has emerged where people were never poor, we suddenly find them at the bottom of sustenance, she lamented.

Mamta urged to look into the notion of development, politics of development and the agenda of the nation state. Socio-economic fabric is being destroyed by their own Govt. Referring to the plight of people of such displacement she quoted a victim saying, "we used to grow gold in our country and we can't even break-brick on the roadside." "We are fighting against global forces our struggle has to be globalised" Mamta concluded her presentation.

Deo Kumari Gurubg, the co-chair of the session, said that the day's dialogue aimed at looking for definitions and methods of finding condition of I.P. and their issues. What was the best method to regenerate river? How did it benefit tribal/ Indigenous

people and so on? However, we need the development also. In this situation how could one strike a balance or what kind of strategy be adopted was the most crucial question, she felt.

She shared her own experiences. “ I am born in the foothill of Kanchanjanga – it was barred from mountaineering because it was a political Issue, if opened, Tibetans could cross-over.” Now it has been opened, local people get business, travel and tourism thrives yet environmental conservation is also taken care of – this is a great balance. So, the real question was, Deo Kumari said, as to how to consolidate tribal group. Community forest management holds a clue- takes care of their needs and conserves the nature also.

Coming to NGOs she was of the opinion that NGOs are easily influenced by political Parties. In fact it was a kind of necessity because if you don't have such links you can't work, she felt. Then there is a politics of the donor agency. So she felt that the meeting must be focussed on these issues.

Kulung drew attention to the relationship among people's struggle, indigenous commission and the Government which played a vital role. **Suresh Dhakal** highlighted the shifting paradigm where we always used western lenses to understand about indigenous people. Citing example of a few hydro-electrical projects in Nepal he said that the policy of compensation favoured landlords and no one cared about those poor landless people who depend on the land and lose their livelihood without compensation.

He gave another example of *Chepang* community, an endangered Indigenous community, lived in the area of *chun-dunga* lime quarry. There were lots of caves, lots of bats and most importantly the *churi* tree (with soft pulp to make soap, vegetable ghee) which had great economic and cultural value to the inhabitants – *churi* tree was given in dowry as gift. Once they started lime factory – caves were gone, bats disappeared, *Churi* tree vanished and with that all their livelihood support was destroyed.

He cited another instance of an indigenous community called *Bote-Manjhi*, who depended on aquatic resources. There was a law to get land registered for cultivation that they have been taking care of for ages, though they won't get “*Lal Parcha*” declaring legal right to them. Now even that right has been taken away and they are deprived of their sustenance, Said Suresh.

Narendra wanted to know from Indian experience of handling ethnicity and reservation vis-a-vis their demand for reservation in Nepal. At this point **Indra** put forth her concern about the new experience of setting up federal polity and federal structure in Nepal – so that their voices are heard at the centre. “If federal Govt. is not able to protect rights nor is able to represent the hopes and requirements of the people, then why should one have a federal structure? What is the use?” she wondered. **Ganga** shared her experience of working with tribal people of Orissa. “Govt. is doing something good, something bad, development is somewhere in between” she said. Clarifying her stand **Mamta** said, she didn't depict people of Orissa as bad? But situation of the state deteriorated recently with lots of corporations entering the State and Poverty is acquiring new meaning. Reacting to Indra's scepticism about federalism Mamta said, it was not federal state per se that was the problem. “The

problem comes up when market/ corporation comes in and the state becomes the protector of corporation rather than the people”, she added. She further added that they started doubting democracy, because freedom of expression was curbed, shorn of this what Democracy was, she asked.

Continuing her interjection she posed the issue of how to bridge the I.P.’s struggle within the state? Connection was becoming stronger even at national level they engaged in creating dialogues and seeking support. It was the mass-struggle that kept these forces (state/ corporation) at bay – it wasn’t easy for them to come up openly against people. But now Orissa Chief Minister says “No body can come between state and development”, as if the claws are out in open, she concluded.

Kulung was of the opinion that the issue of Federal vs Indigenous people could be resolved by involving people in development and governance so that people’s views are represented. **Indra** said that the federal structure required to protect the interest of people. If they were also taking corporation’s side – what meaning of federal structure remained. “We witness that people’s rights and not protected even by the representatives” which must make all us think about it in new light, she urged. The day’s deliberation came to an end by the Chair giving thanks to participants and inviting them to be present the next day.

17.10.2008

Learning from Struggles

Chair: Mr. Vijay Pratap and Ms. Shobha Gautam

Marko began the session by sharing experiences of the project in Africa. He said, in August two days programme in Kenya was held in which different movement groups came; diverse ethnic groups participated. They expressed similar concerns as in India and Nepal which included questions about people's livelihood, logging, mining, hydro power etc. Similar problems surfaced in dialogue held in Nairobi. Issues of tradition expressed so strongly yesterday here was their concern as well. Modern beliefs have changed everything. Education system in Kenya helped produce useful servants and workers for the Imperium rather than improving the native lot.

Similarly in Tanzania three meetings were held out of which two were held in Bagamato, a historical city, a port, with population from India. Domination by asymmetrical power relation came strongly in Tanzania debates. They felt the need of a truth commission and voiced support for a new kind of North-South dialogue. For the third dialogue, we went to a village with sacred forest and sustainable lifestyle. They were concerned about bio-fuels and they (villagers) wondered who are going to benefit from it.

Vijay Pratap was of the opinion that since this session was meant for sharing movement perspective, WSF process also forms the par of movement and should be a part of discussion.

Responding to this **Marko** shared his account of involvement with WSF processes at different places tracing its history from Porto, Alegre to Mumbai and at Tampere and so on. He drew attention to 'via- compasina', world's largest movement of the small farmers. He also talked about his involvement with the Greens and said, "my aim has been to connect city and village Greens as two of them currently do seem to shared their vision much." He felt that the WSF forum was a great opportunity to overcome apathy and loss of vision owing its origin in the post fall of communism. The great significance of WSF process has been to provide platform for convergence of issues, groups and perspectives and from this angle it has been very popular at least the first five years. This clearly indicated that 'people felt need to come together' he added. So, 'South Asian Social Forum' could be held in Nepal because Nepal has emerged as a 'Super power of people's movement' and this must radiate to other parts which could be maximized by greater engagement with Social Forum process, he added.

Shobha said that earlier they had thought of organizing South-Asian Social forum in Nepal in November, but due to political turmoil and other activities it could not be done. But they wanted to conduct it and she urged Vijay Pratap to continue helping them to organize it. For the political change in Nepal she felt that credit must be given to political parties and civil society that they came forward and brought about such a transformation.

She said that structural violence was increasing all over and the real issue was to protect the rights of IPs. In Britain people claim indigenous stature for seven generations. Here also the similar questions faced us. So, we needed to resolve if

Brahmins and Newaris were both indigenous or not? Indigenous People have clear idea about the sources of water, for example. Today when multi - story buildings have come up all over and there were severe water crisis in Kathmandu, IP must be consulted to give us clue in this regard, she suggested. Same was the case with fuel etc. She concluded by saying that there was a need to understand the struggle of IP's in Nepal to find a clue to Sustainable development and for this Government, poor people and movement groups need to interact and understand each other.

Vijay Pratap said that the European Greens were almost apolitical about liberation and proposed to look out at environmental Justice with Social Justice as a continuum. He went on saying that de-politicisation was part of a universal trend. Like corruption which affects the legal system; the corporate sectors push their case by bribing and so on. We had Adequate Information now about how one system is linked with the other and they need to be understood together. Thus, experiences of struggle and actual sustainable life- style practices in Nepal need to be understood against the backdrop of the larger context. The single- issue movement also be understood and seen in the perspective, he urged. **Suresh Dhakal** suggested that Forest users Social Forum would be a good idea. He felt that they didn't talk much about Social Capital, which had very strong presence in a traditional society like Nepal.

At this juncture **Vagish** presented a quick summary of previous day's deliberations for the benefit of those who were not present. **Hari** said that *Jan Andolan* taught them that politics help them meet their interest collectively. It was clear for the people of Nepal that unless they fought, they would be finished; threat came from guns in Jungle and Kathmandu. Thus they had no choice - life was threatened and they got into struggle. This taught them that unless there was threat to life, issues of sustenance didn't become real concern of the people. He felt that all the issue ultimately boiled down to the issue of governance -if they promoted governance this could create spaces to accommodate all the issues and movements to have peaceful and environment friendly approach, said Hari.

Ganga was of the opinion that since 1950 villages were left out and neglected. People closer to Monarchy enjoyed all power. For at least 10-12 years the livelihood of people was affected, they (Nepal Communist Party-ML) rallied people against all this. In the meanwhile King started '*Tika- Pratha*' of nominating people as Ministers. Popular frustration reached new heights, all classes got together and the path became open. Now we are in the process of making a new constitution. This is the time of political crisis. Constitution holds the key to resolve the crisis.

Manoj sharing his Nepali Dalit perspective expressed his disappointment calling it a 'hopeless situation'. He said that even though the Indian constitution was written by a Dalit, the situation of Dalits had not changed much. So, Nepal also holds similar disappointing possibilities for them. **Ganga** expressed her disliking for the expression 'Dalit' and proposed that all be called as human beings. She lamented that though in the name of Dalit so much funds were coming but attitude was not changing. This led to some arguments between them. Hari intervened by saying that a derogatory word 'Dalit' could not help people grow. He said, "My experience is that poor don't want to be called 'poor'. By leveling one community 'Dalit', it connotes 'bad', it cannot do good to them".

Now was the turn of **Hannu** who shared his experiences by recalling that in 1997 in

Nepal Maoist struggle had been active already. “I realized that it would be a big issue. In Finland, I come from rural area. We had a civil war just after independence... officially 38,000 people were killed; real number would never be known, though.” In 1918 (at the time of independence of Finland) the Leftist movement was strong, but they lost the war and working class people were massacred; concentration camps were also set up; many died of hunger. In Finland, villages have village book and each one of them mentioned about civil war. Normally, people wouldn't talk about it, Hannu said. In Nepal power comes from village. They flooded the streets of Kathmandu and changed the power structure. Today people are still thinking/ conjecturing as to what will happen now? They are keeping their fingers crossed, he said. Vijay Pratap intervened by pointing out that such a history project of drawing parallel between Finland and Nepal may be exciting but was not within our preview of the project.

Now it was the turn of **Manoj** who dwelt again on the Dalit issue. He said that all Nepali people were de jure free even during the Monarchy as we had Panchayati Democracy. In India, Dalit situation had not improved even though Ambedkar was involved in framing the Constitution. In Nepal, bonded labor were legally freed a couple years back but one find even today that there are bonded labors in the society. Even today if someone tried to help bonded labor, he/she felt reasonless and they would not come up as government gave no support. So, he expressed dejection by saying, “condition was hopeless, will remain hopeless, the malaise so deep rooted for thousand years cannot be eradicated in 10 yrs. Today, a Dalit can not get a room on rent if he reveals his Dalit identity. Dalits are compelled to add some Brahmin surname to get room on rent in Kathmandu.” He expressed his surprise as to how participants could gloss over such a truth under sweeping generalizations! **Prabha Kaini** came forward and said she agreed with Manoj. “Dalit must claim and get their due. No need to change their name Dalit” she was forthright.

Savyasachi (Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi) said that when constituent assembly was framing the Indian constitution the debate was whether they should use caste name, tribe etc. But the problem was that you ‘drop surname but don't drop attitude’. Terminological struggle are fierce but it is attitude which must be questioned, he opined. He cited personal experiences from Gandhi's life and said, “disarm our mind which is colonised by various kind of concepts, habit, attitude etc.” **Bina Mahat** said they must look at good things and not just the bad ones. ‘Such changes take time. We have to be hopeful’ she urged.

Teknath Dhakal said that Nepal was hierarchical society; there were castes within the caste also. So, *Upadhyay's* daughter cannot marry *Jaisee* caste people's daughter . We must keep in mind that Dalits are economically weak and socially backward but situation is changing. He gave example of one 'kami' who earlier had changed his name to 'Ghimire' (higher caste), wanted to change back to 'Kami' to enjoy facility given by the state. We should empower them, education etc. and slowly & slowly their status would change, he suggested.

Referring to Ganga - Manoj debate Indra said that constitution was vital to ensure rights of the people, but if it was not effective in doing so, what did it mean? The Constitution may be borrowed from outside but the society is hierarchical and thus, implementation of the constitution will be doubtful and difficult. Giving her own example she said, “I am progressive in idea but will not marry a Dalit man as they will not be acceptable to my mother or brother - I must sustain in society.” Speech and

action are two different things, she said.

Lunch Break

Post lunch session: “Roadmaps of transformation & sustainability”

Chair: Mr. Marko & Ms. Prabha Kaini

Presenting the agenda of the session Marko said that apart from Gender, class and ethnicity identified by prof. Bhattachan there was a need to add nature in the list of most important aspects to be considered when we chart out roadmap for future. **Savyasaachi** emphasized the need to be careful in choosing the terms of reference. For example, the word indigenous needs to be defined properly. He proposed that rather than being born in a particular class or ethnically, one's relationship with nature / ecology should be the principle criterion for defining 'indigenous'- learning from nature, being close to nature and give & take with nature could be crucial parameters. Alluding to a book entitled 'Sita's Kitchen' by Ramchandra Gandhi (the grand son of Gandhi)- he talked of forest as '*Aranya*' - that what cannot be fought. This, according to him, gives a clue to relate to the issue. Experimentation is very good way of understanding nature - we must question experimentation confined to laboratory alone that western Science defines. Gandhi gives three other motion of experiments (1) We know some truths are given – We do not question it, we only know how to internalize this truth. Experimentation here would mean we go out, say truth, get beaten and question whether this was what he meant or some problem in my implementation (2) The second proposition in experimentation is when you do not agree with a formulation and go out and see for yourself if it is right or not (3) The third experiment Gandhi suggests is that when we are stuck with some terms for example take Development or sustainability – this is called a method of decommissioning in which try to talk about or write about most intimate experience or concept like justice without using the word development or the one you are looking actual alternative for. If you want to understand you have to give it a voice. We can't be imposing our terminology or categories on. Nature does it what nature says / represents? Otherwise good motivation or intentions are not going to be fruitful if we go along with same over generalizations and terms.

I spent five years in Bastar and my whole vocabulary changed - I lived where there was no light, no radio - all my terminology changed. Coming back here has been a tremendous struggle for me to communicate. Some of us went into mental trauma to relate to the 'new world'. Against this background Savyasachi proposed to replace the word sustenance with Resilience. Indigenous communities can be sustainable but may not be resilient enough. After all, unless we are threatened with dire consequences resilience doesn't come to you. To conclude he said trying to read Gandhi and trying to understand three words of the title of the autobiography 'My' 'experiments' with 'truth', and many things will suddenly start revealing their true meaning. This is a very good part of struggle and it should be looked like that.

Deo Kumari Gurung was of the opinion that for a clean road- map we needed to go

to grass- roots, classify target group, which is not just caste but we need to target ecological region. She gave an example of community Forestry they started in 1990.. It was in 1984 that in Nepal the environmental Ministry started when some British and German came to tell how to conserve forest. But a donor agency can't go to grass-roots due to political threat here. The real question she felt was as to how to combine Dalit problem & ecological crisis in the framework of sustainable development. In rural areas people are displaced from their land, they came to towns changing the ecological balance. Their occupation changes, in the meanwhile forest also changes. After a period of civil war and prolonged insurgency which had positive outcome. Many Dalits now want to be recognized by their caste name. There are instances when many Dalits are raising the issue just to get benefit from government or donor agency, she wondered. Two years of civil war they can say with pride they are Dalits and indigenous people, she felt.

What is happening to the population composition in urban areas? Many people in the Bagmati river area, it has changed drastically. So, how should government react? All urban people are not rich. What type of people are being rehabilitated in the Kathmandu valley? We need to understand why they move away from rural areas, what created the threat that they are displaced, will they go back? And so on. Only then population balance can be maintained.

Forest system management has been developed from rural hinterland. We need to find out what type of programs should be launched. How local people should be empowered and how they can turn into a pressure group are some important questions to think about, she said.

Manoj agreed that they should recognize themselves as Dalits/tribal/indigenous people/ tharus. But he wanted to be clear as to what are the facilities that government has created for them? Speaking in Nepali language he was categorical in asserting that the process that was underway was not going to help Dalits or their empowerment. He referred to several examples of inter- caste marriages taking place between them. Giving example of 'Baitadi' sacrifice and Dalit atrocities, he shared the information that every year during Dashain about 100 buffaloes have been sacrificed in one of the temples in Baitadi. Interestingly, all sacrificed bodies are to be taken by Dalits and eaten it, which is practically impossible. Earlier, Dalits used to do so even if it was very difficult because they were helpless in the society. Today, when they smell changes in society after Janaandolan II, Dalit have started becoming assertive and they denied doing so last year. As a result there was physical fight between Dalit and others which was later settled after the intervention of the district administration. The basic point was whatever formal constitution does, it will not mean much unless everyday discrimination was not done away with. "When I needed money none of the so called Dalit NGO's helped me, Vijay Pratap did. I didn't get my hostel just because I was a Dalit." So, sooner or later the Dalit issue has to be recognized, Manoj said.

Sunita Acharya expressed a sense of confusion if people were talking about modern consumerism or Dalit issue or caste issues. She said that there was hierarchy in all society. "And for that matter all the Nepalese are Dalits any way" she said. This can be solved only if some basic problems are tackled like that of employment, safe environment etc. She said that lots of resources were allocated but they did not reach Dalits so far.

Maya Khetri cautioned by pointing out that not all indigenous practices were good. She cited an example of Community Forestry which was widely appreciated decade ago. But in a place called Humla when Community Forestry was introduced sheeps were the chief mode of transportation for goods. But as the forestry programme became successful, there was no grazing ground left for sheep and they were abandoned creating mass starvation by those who depended on sheep. So, she warned about selecting best practices in environmental sustainability.

Hannu picked up the comparison between India and Nepal and said that India was heading the same way as Nepal –that is towards civil war. Law has been there but practice is not there. The laws are made by highly read people who do not know the external reality. So they can't address them in the law. That is why after 60years. India has still the problem of untouchability. Real life experience is very different than what you read in the books in university, he said.

Sita BK speaking for the first time said that if the system focused on health and education the situation would change. Many Dalits were not following their occupation. She advocated for modernization so that Dalits could follow their occupation well.

Narayani Tiwari started with referring to her study of Gurung community for five years and said that since culture was ever changing, sustainability was not possible. Referring to the Maoist “people’s war” she said that from 1996 to 2006 because of high corruption and mismanagement such a revolution was inevitable, and *Jan Andolan* brought about new Nepal. However, people’s expectations are not fulfilled yet as they await new constitution. Economic revolution is expected- poverty eradication is expected. But, she felt, “Development Dynamics and political Dynamics are reverse to each other. NGOs are not in a stable condition to help all, government is also not clear how to make NGO sustainable or if they should help them at all”. “Why don't we make agenda that only man & women will be two castes in our upcoming constitution” she wondered.

Heini (Finland) said, “People are consuming more for happiness without realizing that resources would end sooner than they expect. West must try to unlearn many things and discover the real meaning of happiness”.

Sanjeeb Ghimire stressed the need to make parliamentarians aware about the issues of sustainability & sustainable development. “We have un-privileged classes in society facing discrimination but their problems seems to be glamorized more than they exist in reality specially by NGO and some other groups who are creating sensational proportion about it” he felt. State initiation was very important tool to address this issue. Finance Minister made statement to have double digit growth without realising that growth is not just numerical jugglery but has to be seen in terms of sustainability, he said.

Bina spoke about reaching the matters of sustainability, which must respect liberty. Mentioning about a practice called *Chhanpadi*, in Western Nepal, (a practise of ostracizing women during menstruation and delivery) when women folks are kept outside in caves etc. They were really bad and we must correct them, she argued.

Suresh Dhakal said that development had already destroyed our happiness which is

on the wane. The moot question, he felt, was to seek clarity if we were looking for alternative development or alternative to development? Development has been an imperialist project, he said, and resilience was another word we needed to reclaim to find method and ways to a sustainable roadmap for the future. Since we see ourselves with a Western glass, we actually do not know as to what we do not know, he reasoned. The question of regaining power comes emanates from the people's movement. Regain the power we must for enhancing the resilience of the losers of this war.

Shobha Gautam was of the opinion that no one should be discriminated and Dalits must be treated properly. She said that there was a need to be on cautious side in dumping religion as such. Giving examples from Hindu religion he cited many good things like worship of Tulsi, Peepal that help preserve ecology. Vedas have many things to relate to present, she felt, which in fact were very close to ecological process. Richness of culture has to be protected and for that we must come out of our dependence upon Western elites and their consumerism, she said. To make a social sense of the community, the rights of people of different regions must be respected and we must fight for basic rights of everybody, she said.

Bhuvan Pathak began his intervention by saying, "Fortunately, I am born as a *Brahmana*, so, I know fine means of exploitation by virtue of caste affinity". In *Uttarakhand* they don't acknowledge caste issue. This is just a way of disguising the exploitation, he maintained. To reinforce his point he narrated a story of a Brahmin friend who one day told him that since they had no space in power, they should declare that caste system was over and out. What fun left in caste system, his friend said. That was an example of a typical brahmana mind, Bhuvan said. He expressed his disappointment with the fact that a nation with such a recent history of people's movement was negating the caste or Dalit issue all together. Caste was an issue of power sharing, he asserted.

Talking about sustainability he felt 'nothing is sustainable, they are renewable'. Can we talk of life without progress? He wondered and added that progress is always anti- sustainability, we cannot leave it. Then he shared his experience of documenting life histories of common people. He said they were finding tremendous ideas and insights in the process. Sustainable production was not possible without sustainable consumption, he argued, and added that there were number of sustainable practices existing among people and we need to record them, document them and learn a lesson or two from them.

Leena Rikkila talking about Nepali constitution making process said that most of the best documents were useless but hope was that people's movement had set on positive note, though system seemed to be going down at the moment. She suggested that People's representatives should go back to their constituencies for consultations. They needed to put emphasis on the terminologies while the process of constitution making was more important than the constitution making itself, she concluded.

-Tea Braek-

Dr. Prakash Mahat, (erstwhile Member of legislative assembly and ex-foreign

Minister of Nepal) began the post lunch session with declaring, “I don’t know much about 'New Nepal'. I do want better Nepal- inclusiveness, peaceful, democratic Nepal, where rights of all are protected, no one is discriminated against”. A peaceful people’s participation in Nepal has made it possible. It was such a peaceful power of people's movement that no one could retaliate; your conscience doesn't permit you to kill peaceful, non- violent struggle of people. A Truly Gandhian movement has brought about this change. Problems however persist. Constitution has to be framed. “One however, doubts if new constitution would actually be there or not; one party is suddenly talking about 'people's republic’, the nature of which is not known. Yet, we are sure that we will have democratic constitution. It would be democratic and all will be represented. *Madheshis* (a term used for dwellers of *Terai*, the foothill) are more than represented. Jan jati will also be a part of the process and we are moving in right direction”.

He continued his observation and added, “Parties are also thinking to make their own constitution democratic giving representation to all sections. Alternative Development/ Sustainable Development is talked about. But we have not got even basic mainstream Development. So we will have that first, then we will be able to appreciate the importance of alternative development”. Still what could be done was to make people aware of their rights, he said. “Maosis are selling dream of mega-project to make us prosperous. We can't convince people that let's stop it. You will regret later. They won't be convinced. So, it is better to focus on livelihood issue making them beneficiary of these processes.” He gave an example of a Hydro Power Project of Dolakha district, where each person was made a partner; share was sold to residents of the area so that they became partners in progress. He also alluded to a few successful Forestry projects where community forestry transformed the hill area with lot of free coverage belonging to people who ensure its propagation. He expressed hope that development process could be made participatory and people's ownership could be ensured by many other ways than with the big capital alone.

He went on commenting on the future of Democracy and options available. He said, “Three things important for Nepal- (1) Make democracy people oriented/participatory, (2) Impunity- Unless you use force you won't get it. In view of rampant criminalization in the society they feel his law is only for breaking. So, law based society has to be established. (3) Real participatory democracy is established. For this, we need to discuss the role of central government, federal government and local government. In this regard, he felt that they were only thinking about various geographical areas like *Madhesi* etc. But discussion must move to making people's right central to debate, he said. However, no one seemed interested in what real people want, he felt. “We have 75 districts out of which only in 14 districts one or the other group is in majority. So, there is no alternative to co- existence. No basis for ethnic based polity in Nepal. Federalism is to take government closer to people - that is what I see as the ultimate goal” he concluded.

Ganga Sharma said that they must appreciate their (IP's) positive culture. To harness alternative energy- biogas, solar energy etc., we must have rules & regulation in place, she felt. She once again highlighted the importance of Donor-Recipient relationship and suggested that transforming life should be the concern of donors. She suggested saving their life and life style through cooperative. They can reduce the loan and strengthen their economic power. Village centric plan should be given importance and transparency through public audit would be an important measure to ensure people's

strength, she said. Thus, economic power should be transferred to the peripheral groups. That was why she felt the Constitution was very important. She suggested to have 10 years plan as cultural transformations take longer time.

Prabha Kaini made her observation by pointing out that for Indigenous people their own skill, own knowledge & participation has to form the core of the cultural sustainability. We should give alternative to the big models and show that bigger projects were not working for poor people. She suggested to start with IPs own experiences rather than imposing from outside.

Indra expressed her doubts about the New Republic of Nepal though we are taking it after Janaandolan II. Though we removed the kingship from Nepal, such a culture is yet to be removed from society which was not confined only in the palace but it is deeply rooted in each and every organization of the society. Main task today is to transform the society which is not easy task. We should apply so many strategies for that. Making people aware, make them to pressuring the elites and civil society to transform the society. She said that Nepal needed a kind of transformation of society so that power was vested in people. In democracy there is no alternative to political party. As there is no any alternative of political parties to rule the country in democracy therefore there was no option to pressurize political party to become democratic as the structure of the political party remained unrepresentative with regard to the marginalized community's participation. Civil Society have still very vital role to play to make political parties more inclusive. She lamented that there are no proper representation in major political parties; only handful women in the decision making bodies of governance and political parties who can play a significant role in changing the structures of the society; women representation in the decision making bodies like in polit beaureau/central committee of major political parties whether it is Maoist Party or Nepali Congress or UML. As political parties are and should be the main change agents, I wonder if our political parties which are so traditional in terms of representation can lead us towards better Nepal. I am now neither pessimist nor very much hopeful. But one positive thing I can explain is that people are now very much aware and assertive which may lead towards democratic transformation.

Uddhab started by identifying two focus areas of the whole dialogue (1) Development (2) respecting identity. Dalit, women, Janjati & Madhesi- are four types of marginalized people in Nepal. While there was movement going on, each and every political party along with leaders was raising the agenda of inclusion of all marginalized communities. But now there is a paradigm shift in which people have started raising the voice of the community where they belong to. You see here that Janajati started raising only their problem and forgot to say something about other marginalized communities; others also followed the same. Dalits stopped talking about others; if he is male, he stopped taking about problem faced by women. However, I think we should take it easy. It is obvious today because we are in the process of constitution making and if we are not bringing our problem in the fore, we may not get space in the new constitution.

Coming to the debate on Development he said, "Since we have not tasted mainstream growth, most of us are for it and political parties don't have really any plan of growth". Citing this year's Kosi disaster as a great example he argued that they needed to learn from this. He also felt that this was the right time to chart out roadmap about development model. Referring to the Finance Minister Mr. Babu Ram Bhattarai, was

boasting about his great relationship with World Bank the other day, he said that all parties in Nepal are for two digit economic growth and for mega projects which would be actually suicidal in the future. Even the Maoist cadres are not aware of the fact that there is a strong debate about alternative or another model of development than the model offered by World Bank, IMF etc. “Yes, Nepal is late by 60 years to have democracy, but the fortunate part is we can still learn from the experiences from our neighbors i.e. in the issue of reservation, model of development etc.,” he said. He gave example of India that claims 9% growth rate and has 21% middle class with 23% growth per year, but Dalit atrocity is still there and hardly 17% Dalit children are going to the primary school. He referred a case study of Surkhet district and mentioned that one may not change his/her behavior even if he/she get inter caste marriage.

Vagish said that just as Modernity and Industrialism was a package, its response also has to be total & integrated. Thus, piece meal approach may not work and learning the way to look for an integral relationship between say Health, education, livelihood and environment has to be appreciated. Secondly, he cautioned about understanding the difference between Constitution as statutory means and its faulty implementation and not achieving the goal. You could not throw baby with the bath tub, he said.

Damodar Bhusal pointed out that the real issue was how people were involvement in the process of making constitution. “Nepali congress ruled for 10years, but their own people were not heard. Now CPM (Maoist) is trying to derail the country from the main issue i.e., drafting the constitution. How good would it be was not the issue but how they went about it was, he said. **Hari** started his observation by saying that it was not possible to have roadmap in this time; it would be just a wish list. He felt that the concept of sustainability needed to be re- defined. Issue brought to the floor were only effect not the causes, he felt and added, “we can't understand continuity of content without understanding the cause” He said that politics was the sub set of culture so they should only be concerned about culture, politics would be taken care of.

Mamta also flagged the issue that Constitution be looked as means and not the end. “We have to create appropriate machinery. We need to make internal churning. We use words in a very loose sense”, she said. Citing the example of Community Forest Management in India, which was changing to community Forest Governance now, she stressed the need to understand why people were putting up resistance? Indigenous people have symbiotic relationship with nature and they are enmeshed in their Socio-political, cultural ethos, she said. She also cautioned to maintain difference between belief system and Religious Fundamentalism and clarified that resistance was to protect belief system. She felt, “we need to move away from prescribing mode to practicing mode”.

She put forth another suggestion to decentralize this process of dialogue. “Let's consider it as a beginning of a thought process rather than an end”. How do we reach to non- convert was a major issue. She suggested to document as many economic & cultural practices of people, so that they could be nurtured further.

Vijay Pratap came in with certain clarifications. He said, as pointed out earlier though it was a life-long project, as a study project this process was going to be concluded in March.

Coming to the deliberations he expressed his disappointment that in the Nepali friend presentations or tone there was no reflection of the great event that has set the great democratic process on rail. “You all were part of this movement and you contributed in whatever way you could, but this energy did not get reflected in your views” he said. In the house of 601 you have 197 women then how could you say that women were unrepresented?, he demanded an explanation, as it were. Within 18 year such an achievement was great, he said. In India, any dalit is socially conscious today and is dreaming of becoming MLA/MP, which certainly is considered empowerment, he asserted.

Hari responded to Vijay by saying that since the title kept us focused on culture so politics did not come in for debate much. **Ganga** supporting Vijay Pratap’s view on women termed it as golden era and pointed out that even the Politburo of Maoist had two women and women were becoming active in politics. **Hari** again tried to reinforce his point by adding, “We did not know we had to deal with superficial things like politics. The title was so deep like culture. Culture is beyond politics. I need not even refer to politics when discussing culture. My culture is my life, saves me from crisis, what our mind contained- that we inherit from our forefathers etc. that is culture” he tried to theorize his point. **Indra** also came up to revise her position by saying that only a handful of women were in politics and that also recently. However, she reiterated, “in my involvement with parliamentary committee, my experience was that they never raised the issue of women anywhere. Woman getting representations are only 'Yes Man' of the politicians.”

At the end, **Vijay Pratap**, by way of summarizing the meet said that the project came as a part of working together and they thought they would be able to build a collective resilience by studying the nature of corporate driven democracy and collect right questions about their destructive politics/ activities. At the end Marko proposed the vote of thanks to all who contributed in making the meet successful.

Report by Vagish K. Jha

Annexure I

List of the participants

S. N.	Name	Association with
1	Suresh Dhakal	TU
2	Sunita Acharya	INFO
3	Maya Chhetri	Pro Nepal
4	Deo K Gurung	TU
5	Prabha Kaini	NCCR
6	Shanta Rai	
7	Bina Rai	
8	Rajan BK	NDWUC
9	Heini Salmineu	Emb. of Fin
10	Krishna Bhattachan	Lecture
11	Shova Gautam	IHRICON
12	Prakash Adhikari	Rajdhani
13	Ganga Sharma	
14	Hannu Virtanen	CED, TEP
15	Vijay Pratap	SADED/VK
16	Mamta Dash	
17	Marko Ulvila	CED
18	Indra Adhikari	VK
19	Hari Prasad	INFO/
20	Sarada Sharma	
21	Shanti Bajracharya	TU
22	Narendra Gurung	
23	Savitree Thapa	Lecture
24	Ila sharma	Lawyer
25	Jyoti Baniya	Lawyer
26	Prahalad Pant	IOG
27	Manoj Sinal	SADED
28	Sita Mijar	Dalit Activist
29	Vagish K Jha	
30	Uddhab Pykurel	VK
31	Tek Nath Dhakal	Lecture, TU
32	Savyasaachi	Jamia Milia University
33	Beena Mahat	
34	Dr. Narayani Tiwari	
35	Leena Rikkila	IDEA
36	Sanjeeb Ghimire	Freedom Forum
37	Dr. PS Mahat	CA member
38	Bhuwan Pathak	SADED
39	Damodhar Bhusal	
40	Chandra Kulung	