

Basanta Speech in Chennai, India

Basanta, Politburo member of United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), gave an interview to Puthiya Jananayagam, during his recent visit to Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He delivered a lecture titled "Nepal's New Democratic Revolution: Opportunities and Challenges" in a hall meeting organized by Indo-Nepal People's Solidarity Forum, on September 19, 2009. The abridged version of the interview published in Puthiya Jananayagam(PUJA), Oct 2009 issue in Tamil is produced here.

PUJA: Your party headed government has resigned citing the breach of civilian supremacy. Apart from resignation, is there any other alternative options discussed in your party? How do you justify the resignation as the only right option?

Basanta: First of all the question of civilian supremacy – I think it is a very important issue in Nepal. Because, in the history of our country, the army was under the monarchy, which was the enemy of our country. Even after monarchy was [over]thrown, the Nepalese army has not come under the control of the elected government. The Nepalese democracy, which it says, was achieved at 1950 movement. Nepali congress got elected securing two third majority in the parliament. But later on king dissolved the parliament, sacked the government with the might of the army. If the army was under the control of the government, the army could not have been used to dissolve the parliament and sack the cabinet. For the second time it happened during the course of intensive people's war. There was a parliamentary body in the country. There was a people elected government. But, Gyanendra, the then king, who is deposed now, took help from the army, dissolved the parliament, and also sacked the elected government. Hence, just to ensure the democratic right of the Nepali people, the first and the foremost important thing has been to establish civilian supremacy in our country. There remains the importance of the question we had been raising.

We were an elected government and we were the largest party. We took the decision not to extend tenure of the existing military chief and to deploy another army chief in that place. But there were severe pressures from the external world, mainly from India – Indian ruling classes and U.S. imperialism, and the reactionaries all over the world. They were opposing this move. They did not want to bring about civilian supremacy in Nepal. Rather they propagated against us that Maoists are trying to impose their ideology in Nepal army. In this way they tried to provoke the masses while it was not the reality. We wanted at least to establish civilian supremacy in Nepal. But when there was a massive pressure on us, either we had to submit to the dictates or we had to resign. There was pressure from all over. We guess it's because we are fighting for the people, to establish for civilian supremacy and to establish democratic rights in the Nepalese society. Hence, we did not surrender to the external pressure. We thought, we should fight to establish this by remaining outside of the government. So we think it is a correct stand of our party to fight for the democratic rights.

PUJA: When your party signed Peace agreement and participated in C.A. Elections, the right wing opportunists like C.P.I., C.P.I (M) of India praised your turn saying that you realized armed struggle won't pay and so joined in the 'democratic' mainstream. At the same time, Indian Maoists criticized you that Nepal Maoists had betrayed revolution. What is your reaction to these two views?

Basanta: Actually how we understand is, that C.P.I., C.P.I(M) in India and even the C.P.I(Maoist) have not understood the whole procedure of revolutionary course in Nepal. We are not practicing the

revolutionary course just in traditional fashion. We don't think that, the traditional way of struggle alone will sharpen the revolution or make the revolution happen in the present context. Because, the objective situation in the world has been changing. We have to address the ongoing contradictions and conditions of the country and of the world. Hence, we have to develop our tactics accordingly, to accomplish the revolution in the present context.

What CPI and CPI(M) say is very much wrong. Whatever they may say, the reality is we have not abandoned revolution. We don't think that only armed way of struggle is the sole aspect of the revolution. Because, in a revolutionary process, armed struggle and other political struggles, various forms of struggles, should be integrated together. Overall, it makes a revolutionary line.

But our going into this process, might be helpful for them. That's why they say that Maoists in Nepal are tired of armed struggle, and thought armed struggle is not relevant and came to this type of politics. It is being propagated to the benefit of their own interest.

On the other side, the C.P.I.(Maoist) comrades also have criticized us in these issues. But, we think that in the different stages we have to adopt different forms of struggle to lead the revolutionary war. When our people's war reached a certain stage, we saw a possibility that we could develop our revolution in a peaceful way to a certain extent. We try to utilize this situation to the need of our revolution. Hence, I think, C.P.I.(Maoist) comrades didn't go to the depth of the tactics we have adopted and they criticize our way, in a kind of traditional manner.

PUJA: What are UCPN (M)'s plans and actions to break this current impasse and elevate the revolution to the next stage?

Basanta: Now we are in a peace process and we are trying to utilize this peace process to accomplish our revolution by writing the revolutionary, pro-people constitution in the constituent assembly. We are trying very much hard to write the constitution, so that the constitution can resolve the problems of the people and defend the sovereignty of our country. But fearing of increasing Maoist influence and our resolve for the revolutionary, pro-people constitution, reactionaries all over the world are trying to disrupt the process. Reactionaries all over the world are trying to dissolve the constituent assembly, to impose presidential rule and to revive the whole constitution. In this way they are trying to reverse this process. But we are very much struggling to establish the pro-people constitution in the constituent assembly and to lead the country forward.

If there is obstruction on the part of the reactionaries (domestic and foreign) in this peaceful attempt of our party, then there is always the right on the part of the people to rebel against the enemies. So, if this peace process is disrupted on enemy side, then people will have every right to rebel against their disruption and the imposition of the presidential rule. In that case, our party will lead the Nepalese masses towards victory. Hence, in the first attempt we will try on our part, to write the constitution in the constituent assembly, but if there is obstruction, if they don't allow us to do that, then people will rise up and we will lead the people's uprising.

PUJA: Nepal is declared as a Federal Republic. But, UCPN (M) resolutely wants Nepal to be declared as people's Federal Democratic National Republic. Is it an addition of few words to Federal Republic or something more important in class perspective?

Basanta: Republic and People's Federal Republic...there is qualitative difference in class content. The Federal Republic achieved in Nepal now, is the Republic under the present context, or the present system, the same socio-economic condition. Feudalism still exists. Our country is still semi feudal and

semi colonial. We want to transform this country from semi colonial to a sovereign country, from semi feudal to a democratic country. Hence, the present setup means the federal democratic setup is a reactionary setup. We want to go forward to change this democratic federal setup to a people's democratic setup. There is a qualitative difference between these two things and we want to establish a people's democratic, people's federal republic which will be an anti feudal and anti imperialist structure.

PUJA: The class character of the state has changed by overthrowing monarchy. But at the same time the fundamentals of the Nepalese society, i.e. the production relations has not changed. Can you explain this irony?

Basanta: The class struggle has changed by throwing out the monarchy? We don't agree with this. The same class composition is there. Feudalism is there, comprador bourgeoisie is there, bureaucratic capitalism is there; there has been no change in the class composition. But one thing is that, previously the king who was the main representative of feudalism, had been overthrown. The feudalism has become weak. This is true. Previously feudalism was in the whole of the state power, now the comprador bourgeoisie has come to the lead. That is the only change that has taken place through this process. This much of change alone cannot and will not bring about changes in the socio-economic relations in the country. No class has been overthrown. No class has taken power instead of others. Over all state structure and class setup has not yet changed. Hence, there is no question of the class relations being changed.

PUJA: The UCPN(M) insists for integrating red army with Royal Nepal army without any further delay. Your party has incorporated this condition in peace agreement also. What kind of integration is this? What are the benefits for your party and what the revolutionary masses are going to get through this integration?

Basanta: It is very much clear the whole setup, whole reactionary setup has been unable to address the interest of the masses, to resolve the problems of the country. That is, the revolutionary transformation of the society, new restructuring of the society including the whole bureaucracy, is required in our context. We want to restructure the whole state, the whole army, the bureaucracy and everything. Restructure to suit the need of the day. In the interim constitution, it has been agreed that the two armies, will be integrated to make a new army. We think that a new army should be built up from these two armies. They should be integrated, and it should be a national army which must be under the civilian control.

Other thing, we say that, huge number of army is not required in our context. We cannot fight any of the other countries around us with military. Neither we can have that military strength nor we will compete with their strength. Hence, how can we defend our sovereignty? In this situation, we have to train our people to defend our sovereignty by ourselves. In order to train the masses, we may agree for a small army, nearly some twenty thousands. Hence we say that let this army, this Nepal army, and the P.L.A., should not remain like this, but a separate army should be made by integrating the two armies to suit the exact number of our needs.

PUJA: Do Nepalese people (especially oppressed caste) see the Pashupathinath temple imbroglio as an important issue of national significance and a symbol of Indian Expansionism?

Basanta: First of all, Pashupathinath temple is a symbol of Hindu hegemony in Nepal. The oppressed caste people of Hinduism also get oppressed by the religious politics of Pashupathinath Temple. The

oppressed caste people see how religion is being used for domination. At the same time, since Pasupathinath temple is in Nepal, why should an outsider be a priest? If Nepalese people want to appoint a Nepalese priest in a Nepalese temple, then it is the right of the Nepalese people to do that. Why should there be intervention from outside? Nepalese people including the oppressed castes, although they are oppressed by the same religion, think that it is our internal issue and there should be no outside intervention. Nepalese people should decide on who will be the priest. Hence, the kind of intervention that came from India was raised as a very big issue in Nepal. Nepalese people don't like this intervention and they oppose it.

PUJA: Indian media paint Nepal Maoists as India-baiters and pro-china. Does your party think 'communist' china as a lesser evil than Indian Expansionism?

Basanta: We are an independent nation and we want to be independent. But India has been, Indian ruling classes – I mean – have been accusing Nepalese people as India-baiters and pro china. It is because Nepali people want to stand on their own feet which Indian ruling classes won't accept.

The Indian ruling classes want our Nepalese people to play in Indian hands. When they want to be independent from the Indian hands, then they blame us as sometimes pro-china, or sometimes pro I.S.I. or sometimes some other pros. They charge us, accuse us if we want to stand on our feet. It is their excuse to bring the Nepalese people under their control. We request the Indian masses not to get confused with this ill intended propaganda on the part of the Indian ruling classes. What we will strive for is that, we want to stand on our feet, and we want to maintain equal relation with India or china, or Pakistan or America.

PUJA: Why do India and U.S. give so much importance to Nepal's internal politics? What are their strategic plans with regard to Nepal?

Basanta: First of all, there is a question of ideology. In the present situation, ours is a party which is very much strong, leading a revolutionary war and showing an alternative for the oppressed people of the whole world. Hence, Indian and the American reactionaries, anti-people elements want to obstruct this revolutionary idea which is spreading from Nepal. This is one aspect.

The other aspect is, they want to keep Nepal under their control to play a game encircling mainly China. Since China is a competitive force, America is watching China very closely and wants to establish a base in Nepal to encircle China. Nepal is their strategic point from where they can control China's activities. That's why they pay very much important attention to this question.