

**Speech for Skivehus Rotary Club about Nepal**  
**on July 26, 2000**  
**by Kaji Sherpa , Nepal**

Dear Mr. President

Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all I would like to thank a lot to Rotary Club for giving me the opportunity to introduce something about Nepal. Nepal is a landlocked country which is situated between China and India. Physically Nepal is four times bigger than Danmark and five times bigger population but our average capital income per person is only 1,000 Danish Kroner. I think the Danish average per capital income is 180,000 Danish Kroner.

Here I am going to tell you something about the political matters from past to the present. Also I want to present the opinion about our government and constitution from public view.

Around 400 years ago, there were many small kingdoms in Nepal. The kingdom called Liglig is one of them where the king used to be chosen from running race competition. The quickest runner used to become the king of that kingdom for a year and then there would hold running race competition next year again for the next king.

During that period, there was a war between Muslim and Hindus in Northern India. Many Brahmins and Chhetris from the northern India fled into Nepal as an exile. Some of them reached in Liglig. Those Brahmins and Chhetris were also allowed to participate into the running race. The original people believed that the strongest and heaviest man would win the race so they used to eat good food to be strong but the clever Brahmin practices a lot and won the race. After that Indian Brahmins stopped the system of running race to choose the king and began to rule for ever. Then they began to extend their kingdom thinking that Nepal should be one kingdom and strong enough to defend the country against Tibet, China and India. But the most dangerous was the British who was ruling in India.

Then around 250 years ago, a king of Gorkha called Prithvi Narayan Shah began to unify the small kingdoms into one Kingdom and he succeeded. So still there is Shah family as the king in Nepal today. Around one hundred years ago, the prime minister took all the power from the king and began to practice the political powers and the king were not allowed to contact with the people. King had no power at all. The Prime minister was practicing the absolute powers. There was only one school in Kathmandu where only the prime minister's family (Rana) can get education. If some people tried to read, then their fingers would be cut off. They were very afraid that if people became educated, then they cannot enjoy the absolute powers.

My grandfather used to tell me the story of his life and the leader of the village. It is said that there was no rule at all that time. Might was right that time in Nepal. If the village leader called the people to work in his farm, then the villagers had to leave their work and had to go to work for this leader without payment. If they did not come to work, then the leader would send his people to spoil their property.

Many Nepalese used to go for Indian army and British army as Gorkha soldiers. When those soldiers came back to their home, they would bring lots of money and gold. The bigger leader of the town would send his people to rob those soldiers. They even would kill the soldiers and take their property.

The leaders could do whatever they wanted. If there were quarrel or fighting between the people, they would go to the leader for the justice. The leader would then punish those whom he found guilty so badly that they would die soon after the punishment.

Political parties were strictly prohibited. Many people who were fighting for democracy were executed. But some Nepalese established political parties in India. The king secretly contacted those political parties and supported them. 50 years ago, the king and the political parties jointly revolted against the Rana reign and fought for democracy. And they succeeded to overthrow the Rana Reign.

The king Tribhuvan who fought for the democracy passed away on 1954 and his son King Mahendra became the king of Nepal. But even though he didn't like democracy so much in 1959, there was an election for government and it was formed by a political party. They established parliamentary system. In 1960, King Mahendra took all the powers from the people's elected government and banned the political parties. He abolished the parliamentary system and established the system called Panchayat where the king practiced absolute powers.

In 1989, the people fought for Democracy again and many people had to lose their life. Police gave unbearable tortures to the democracy fighters but they continued fighting for Democracy. Finally the present king, King Birendra accepted the parliamentary multiparty system in 1990. We have new constitution which is composed jointly by two political parties and the king's representatives.

Here I would like to introduce the silent features of Constitution of The Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 very briefly.

1. Nepal as a Hindu Kingdom
2. Multiparty system
3. Parliamentary system
4. Constitutional Monarchy
5. Independent judiciary
6. Fundamental rights

Those are the main features of our newly composed constitution. It is said that the constitution is democratic and there is democracy in Nepal.

But if I want to say about our present constitution from the view of general people, it is not democratic. When composing the constitution, they collected some suggestions from People but the political party and the king's representatives ignoring the suggestion declared the country as a Hindu Kingdom which is not digestable in this 21st century. The country should be secular and democratic. After the declaration of the democracy, there should be held election for composing the constitution so that people can send their representatives there to compose democratic constitution. Or they should have asked the people if the constitution is Ok or not. They neither let the people's representatives join in composing the constitution or not taken the approval of the people for implementation of the present constitution.

Also there are many different ethnic groups and people following different religions. There are many ethnic groups like Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Sherpa, Newars, Thakali, Kami, Domai, Sarki, Gaini, Thami etc who were deprived from the employment and other opportunity of the previous government. Those people had no chance to develop their individuality. During the Panchayat reign 10 years ago, they were forced to follow Hindu religion to get government employment. The previous government never tried to build schools in those regions where there are not Hindus. So now there should be some special provisions so that they can get opportunity to come at the same level as the Hindus. But still there is no chance provided to them to develop their life. The powerful Hindus still do not want the development of others in Nepal.

The Nepalese government did not build schools in remote areas where there are no Hindus.

But then Sir Edmund Hillary started to build schools in my district which is one of the remote areas of Nepal. After him other foreign organizations started to build schools in remote areas over the whole of Nepal. And now Skivehus Rotary Club has also build a school in my area where it is very necessary. Without you foreigners help there would be o schools in my area so thank you very much for that. Your help will bring the future for the next generations. To educate is the best way to develop democracy and we are surly in need for such a help.

The government forced all the students to study Hindus´ ancient language called Sanskrit in School which is very hard for non Hindus to study. When I was studying in school, we had to study that language up to class seven. This language is not useful at all for any other purpose than Hindu religion. Many of non Hindus students failed in that subject in exams and had to repeat the same class again. But when they failed in the exams, then their parents would not send them to school thinking that their children are not good in study. And the parents think that it is better to let their children work. Now the government forces all the students to study their ancient language Sanskrit even in High School. This is a obstacle put before non Hindu students in gaining education. So people are not satisfied with this policy of the government. In some places of Nepal ,students did not participate in attending Sanskrit Exams. Students are revolting against this policy.

I think you might have heard about the Maoist problem in Nepal. The Moist is a political party which does not accept the present constitution. They want to establish communist system in Nepal. And they do not accept constitutional monarchy. They want Nepal as secular country instead of Hindu Kingdom. They asked the government to change some articles of the present constitution which are about constitutional monarchy and Hindu state. They also wanted to make a law about the labourers right to the income of the company or factory. But the government ignored the Maoists demand.

Then the Maoist asked the people not to stand as a candidate in election so that government can see that people are not supporting to the government. Some people did not listen to the Maoist and stood as candidates in election. Some of them were even elected for District and Village Development Committee. Then Maoist began to kill those representatives of the Committees and the maoist party were taken as illegal party. Then the police began to put the maoist leaders in prison and many of them were killed at the spot. In some places police became more violent and public people are forced to tell about the maoist. But the maoist threatened them not to tell the police about them. If the people tell about the maoist to the police, then maoist will kill them. If the people do not tell about the maoist, then police will torture them and taken them as supporters of Maoist. The people became the victim of both maoist and the police.

A month ago, 25 people from the west of Nepal left their home and came to Kathmandu. They were making a hungerstrike in Kathmandu asking the government to maintain peace in their place. One of my journalist friend met those people and asked them whether they were fleeing from Maoist or from police. They said that the police were more dangerous than the maoist. In some place ,some people who were not friendly to each other blamed the other as a Maoist and misinformed the police. The police killed the innocent people without proof. Then the relatives and friends of those innocent people joint the Maoist to kill the police. Thus the war between the maoist and police increased. Upto now around 2000 people lost their lives including police. Among them 150 police, 300 suspected Maoist and 1500 probably innocent people.

The Maoist are mainly focused on west of Nepal but before I was leaving for Europe, 3 policeman were killed and 2 were badly wounded at my homeplace Junbesi in the east of Nepal. They are not local people. They came to Junbesi from other district and disappeared after killing the policeman. The government have now sent 28 policeman at Junbesi. Though,

the Maoists are so violent against the police, they have not attacked on the tourist. They are friendly to the tourists.

A group of Maoists came and had spent a night in my friend's house. This friend is also the chairman of the village committee. He told me that the Maoists prepared the food and served to themselves and also served to his family. The Maoists did not allow any member of the family to go out. Next morning when the Maoists were leaving the house, they gave to my friend 200 Rs for using his house. The Maoists also asked this friend not to stand as a candidate in election again.

About 20 Km north west of my home, there is a village called Kyamo. A group of Maoists visited a richman's house and they saw that the rich man has many cows and two of them had recently given birth to calves. The Maoists gave one of them to a next poor man who had no cow. The Maoists are asking donation from rich people and they also give something to the poor people.

Once the prime minister decided to use army force against the Maoists. But all the political parties and the public revolted against this idea thinking that this is too cruel and dangerous. The political parties and the people are also afraid that the army may then overpower the government and may rule the country if they are used against the Maoists.

All political parties take Maoists as a terrorist. They hate Maoist violent action and people do not like them as they are violent. Although a large number of people in Nepal are poor they do not like Communist system. So I do not think they can be successful in getting their aim.

Now I would like to tell you about our social system which is very different from yours. On last Saturday, we went to the open museum near here. There I saw the exhibition of the stone age. This is very similar to many parts of Nepal still now. People are very poor. And there are many places where there is no school for the children. There is no use of any machine at all. The children have to work for their living. Sometimes the parent give the children big responsibility which they cannot handle. There are no hospital in many places so when tourists come, people will ask them medicine for their children or for themselves. Many mothers die when they give birth to a child.

We have parental heritage system. The parents would provide house and land to the sons so that the sons can make livings on it. If parents have a lot of properties, then their sons will get them after the death of the parent. Parent will find out girls for their son so there is arranged marriage system. When the girl is going to live with her husband, then parents, her relatives and villager will give her some money, and some property as much as they can. There is a law mentioning that the son must get the property of the parents, but nothing are said about the women. So Nepalese women are raising voice against this law. They are claiming that they should also get land and property after their parents.

When people die there has to be feast for all the villagers and relatives. And they also have to invite lama for funeral ceremony. This is very expensive so if a member of a family die, then they have to suffer from economic crisis.

Few years ago people used to send only their sons to school thinking that the housewife did not need education to look after their children and to work in their house. They use to think that their daughters would get married and go away with her husband, so why to spend money for their education. Therefore the women are still under their husbands domination. And many husbands are bad and drunkards and then the women has to bear beating of their husband and also to bear alone the responsibilities of their children.

Dear president and you who will go to Nepal in the autumn I will bid you very welcome and I will join you on the trek and I promise that I will show you my country and the people of my homeplace. I will show you our culture and our social system. I am sure that you will be very proud to see your school in Chhumbu and you will also enjoy to see that your contribution is put on a proper place where the children need it.

This is all what I could tell you about Nepal now. If there is a chance, then I will come with more information next time. I hope you enjoyed and understood my speech. Thank you very much again to Rotary for giving me the opportunity to speak somethings about Nepal, and thank you all for listening me patiently. And again thank you very very much for helping my country.

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Here I want to tell you something about my childhood which give you some hints about the children of Nepal. My parents were farmer 24 years ago and they also had yaks. My mother used to graze yaks in high mountain and father used to work in farm in village. She gave birth to me at the elevation of around 3000meter in autumn. After she gave birth to me she was sick but still she had to stay at yak hut. When she was critically sick, she was brought down in the village and she died 45 days after my birth. My grandparents felt pity on me and decided to adopt me. My grandparent used to tell me that nobody had a hope that I could be brought up as I was very weak and small. But they did not ignore me and tried their best for my life. My grandmother even fed me with her own breast-milk as I had not drunken enough from my mother. Finally they could save my life. Then they sent me to school which is half an hour's walk from my home. When I was studying in class five my grandfather felt sick. As there is not good hospital nearby and we could not afford to take him to Phaplu hospital which is four hours's walk from my village, he had to lie down in bed. He was so sick for about 5 months that he could not even go to toilet. He had a bad wound on his back when he died because of long sleep. My father who had been to find a work in big city came home when my grandfather was sick and stayed at home after my grandfather's dead. Then my grandmother left the home and shifted in a nunnery in Thuptenchoiling Monastery. When she was in Thuptenchoiling, I used to go to her very often and sometime I used to stay there too. I used to help her to cut firewood. My father, brother and I used to go to others to work but people used to give me only 15 rupees per day at that time it means seven cups of tea. We used to carry the wood and stone.

But I and my brother continued going to school. We used to work very hard on holiday and in the morning and in the evening. Then we finished our school on 1993 and went to Kathmandu.

At the beginning, I worked as a porter and kitchen boy for trekking groups. Then in 1993, I went to trek with Papa Kurt and Mummy Anne Marie for 53 days. I had a great wish to continue my study and very much liked to do some favor for the poor people for their better life. Papa Kurt and Mummy Anne Marie helped me with money for my study and I also got scholarship from Edmund Hillary's Himalayan Trust. I had to hire an apartment in Kathmandu to study but I had no kitchen equipments or bed clothes. Also I had no money to buy all those things .Some money I got from my scholarship I spent on books and college admission. Then I went to Annapurna trek with four German who also helped me financially in my education. During my study, I had to help my grandmother too financially as my parent and uncle were not taking care of her. She was my very oldmother whom I should help while she is living. I knew she would live for only few years and then I would miss her for ever. She had loved me so much and brought me up. Then I used to save some money from the scholarship and used to send her. And sometime I used to work when there is no class in College to help her.