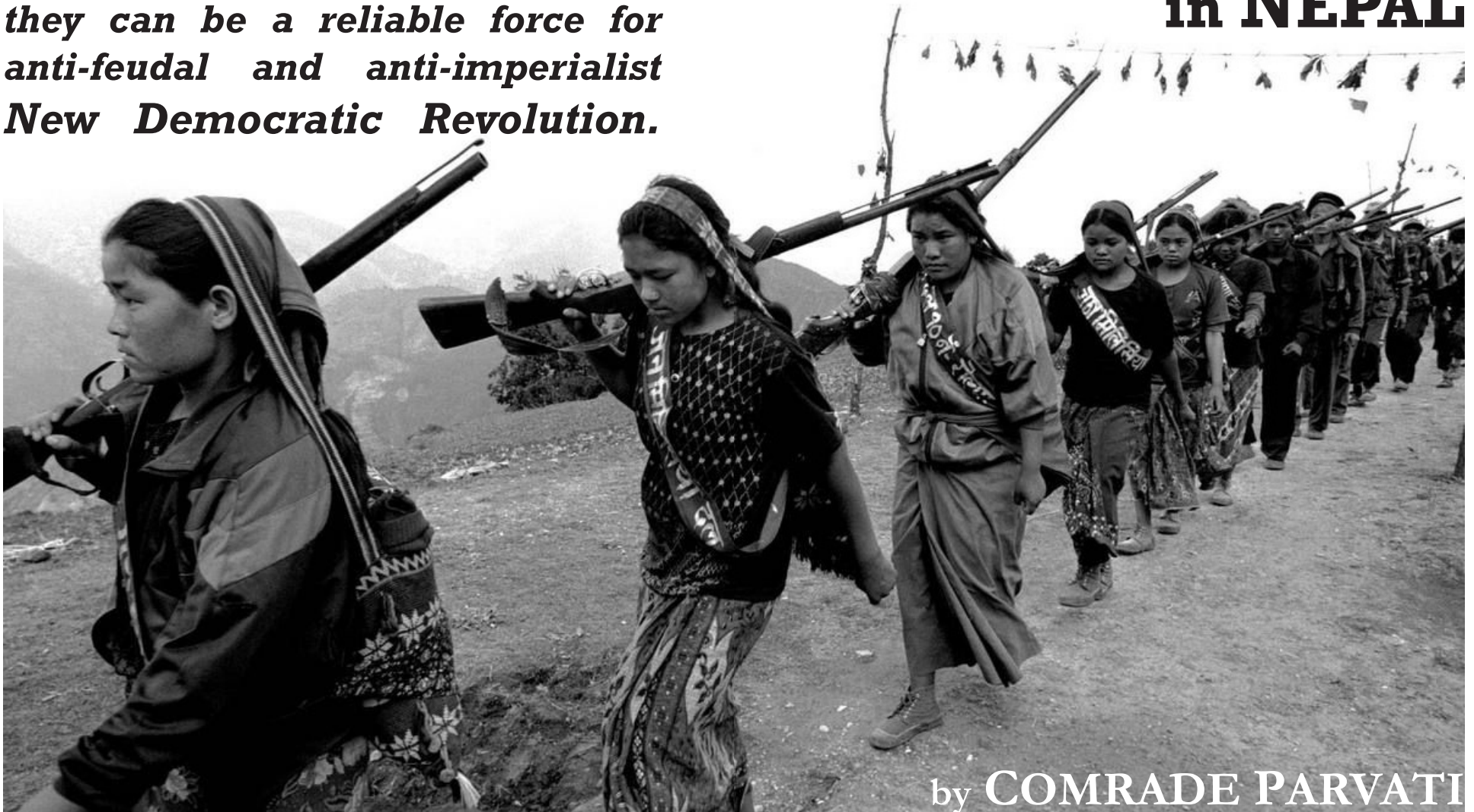


*Since women suffer most due to feudal economic relations, backward and oppressive feudal culture (and perverted imperialist culture in urban areas), and patriarchal state machinery, they can be a reliable force for anti-feudal and anti-imperialist New Democratic Revolution.*

# **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION in PEOPLE'S WAR in NEPAL**



by **COMRADE PARVATI**



Since women suffer most due to feudal economic relations, backward and oppressive feudal culture (and perverted imperialist culture in urban areas) and patriarchal state machinery, they can be a reliable force for anti-feudal and anti-imperialist New Democratic Revolution. Women are also the most reliable force to push New Democratic Revolution up to Communism as their total emancipation can be realised only after abolishing private property which is possible only under Communism.

The women's question has become an important question for all the classes. In today's class war, imperialists are trying to use women as peace-makers to maintain their status-quo while MLM forces are steeling women to violently hit against the system which has been responsible for their double exploitation.

Let us therefore hail, "Working Women of all Countries, Unite. You have Nothing to Lose but Your Double Chains!!"

*"Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment"*

—Karl Marx

## INTRODUCTION

Ever since an armed People's War was initiated in Nepal from February 13, 1996 under the leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) about 800 people have been martyred amongst whom nearly 100 are women. Along with hundreds of men, women are also undergoing rigorous imprisonment terms, many have gone missing, and many have been raped and tortured. The spark of fire which started from Rukum, Rolpa districts in Western Nepal has now spread to all parts of Nepal. Today even the government and foreign medias are forced to acknowledge this. But what has baffled them is the degree of participation of women in People's War in Nepal. This should be understood under the background that Nepal, although a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country, is predominantly a feudal economy with 88% of the total population living in rural areas and 81% of the population engaged in agriculture sector, with agriculture holding 42% of the total GNP of the country. The feudal land relation can be judged by the fact that 65% of poor peasants own only 10% of land while 10% of rich peasants and landlords own 65% of land. This is reinforced with gender-biasness in the production relations between men and women as women are barred from inheriting their parental property.

## SOURCES OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

### *Women's Economic Oppression*

Women's economic oppression is firmly rooted in the present

feudal and semi-feudal mode of production which is dominated by petty-peasant production. Land being the chief means of production, women's economic oppression is firmly rooted in the present land-ownership relation which is patrilinear and patrifocal in nature. Women's chief sources of contradiction, hence alienation within the present production relation, lies in the fact that despite bearing double workloads at household level and farm level they cannot legally own them in equal terms with their male counterparts. Also they cannot inherit tenancy right on land on equal par with men. As a result they have no access to banking transactions, thus further limiting their scope for economic upliftment. This puts them strategically at a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis the men. On top of this the remnant of medieval relations such as serfdom in Terai region, debt slavery in Terai and hill region makes women's position most vulnerable as they have to often provide 'voluntary' sex and labor services to landlord's households in addition to labor in their farmland. Women's economic oppression is further reinforced by the low level of productive forces in Nepalese agriculture which is extremely backward with hardly any modern inputs. Labour in agriculture is thus predominantly dominated by human labor supplemented by animal labor with the help of most primitive equipment like sickle, hoe, shovel etc. On top of this, absence of basic infrastructure within the household (such as absence of fuel, water sources and dependence on manual processing of agricultural products) makes household work tiresome and time-consuming. It is a well known fact that in unequal society, the more labour intensive the work is the more the work burden falls upon women. On top of this due to subsistence nature of agriculture and the semi-unemployment state generated by the rain-fed cultivation, there is mass-migration of able male members to urban areas of Nepal and India, thus leaving women and children to toil in both land and the household. One can easily infer from this that women are the backbone of subsistence rural agriculture economy. Because women are marginalised at

predominantly feudal one must be aware that conservatism may often prevail in the name of restraining sexual freedom. The Party has thus issued certain rules and regulations to handle such situations. In fact new cultural values and norms are being promoted to break away from feudal decadent culture.

Today PW has entered into the stage of preparing base areas. Hence today the challenge lies in making women's power not only for destroying the old society but also for constructing a new progressive society. This can be done by enabling them to participate in productive activities and in decision-making body of the embryonic local anti-feudal, anti-imperialist New Democratic state in the prospective Base Areas. One should bear in mind that not solving or postponing women's issues at the Party level will hamper proletarian cause in a long run as women are the most oppressed force among the oppressed classes and groups. Such shortcomings will ultimately affect the Party's political line in terms of becoming either rightist or ultra-leftist. This is where the spirit of Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution must be inculcated into the party life right from the beginning. Namely the slogan "It is right to rebel" is an apt action oriented slogan which arms women to rebel against feudalism in the society and to fight against right and left tendencies in the Party.

## CONCLUSION

War, particularly class war, is by itself a great educator for the masses in the sense that it exposes the class character of the state. Particularly for women it also exposes the patriarchal nature of the feudal-bourgeois state. This is no less true in Nepal where women are being triply punished for challenging class structure and the patriarchal structure of the existing state by being tortured, raped and killed.

is danger for women to be swayed towards sectarian feminist influence. This is specially true for well-to-do educated women who have joined the movement revolting against the feudal domination at home. Because of their class background they may be more sensitive to gender issues than class issues. This if not checked may lead to reformism or right deviation within the Party. Hence the Party should counter this danger by bringing class element to play the leading role in women's movement. This can be only achieved if the Party genuinely follows 'mass line' as advocated by Chairman Mao whereby Party is deeply rooted within the downtrodden mass while at the same time not antagonizing anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces. However one must also be careful that gender issues does not get postponed due to over-zealousness of applying class consciousness. This may lead to adventurism and "left" sectarianism in the Party. Hence both these extreme tendencies must be checked by making well-to-do educated women more class conscious and poor women, (men in particular), to be more gender sensitive. Also one must be theoretically clear that the aim of exclusive women's organisation in MLM organisation is mainly to prepare women activists who are mainly class conscious and are also gender sensitive so that they can effectively represent themselves in other mass organisations and local United Fronts.

Objectively there are many grounds for women's participation in PW. However, subjectively they still lag behind men because of their long history of subjugation, their poor literacy level, their lesser exposure to outside world etc. Hence subjective input by CPN (Maoist) on its women's members is very crucial.

Today PW faces a new situation where young men and women are fighting together in war front, in underground organizational works. In such a situation the question of sexual morality must be faced in such a way that one should not fall into anarchism in the name of sexual freedom. Also, because the culture is

household level, they are paid less; sometimes it is as low as half the amount paid to men for the same job and same amount of farm-work.

Position of women in urban areas are no better. If women in rural areas are suffering because of backward medieval feudal oppression then women in urban areas are suffering under modern imperialist oppression. They are underpaid and are often sexually exploited in sweat shops run by bureaucratic capitalists backed by imperialist and expansionist forces such as in garment and carpet factories etc.

### ***Women's Social Oppression***

Roots of women's oppression must not only be sought in economic structure but also in social, cultural structure. Similarly source of women's exploitation must not only be sought in her productive life but also in her reproductive life. Women's social oppression is firmly rooted in state-sponsored Hindu religion which upholds feudal Brahminical rule based on caste system, which disparages women in relation to men. Thus women are looked upon as mere 'daughters' before they become 'wives' until they die as 'mothers' of children (particularly sons). Because of patrilinear inheritance law, Nepal has one of the highest indices of son preferences in the world. This makes women face discrimination from womb to tomb. This can be seen manifested in their high mortality rate. They die younger than men (52 years for women and 55 years for men). Also Nepal has one of the highest maternal mortality rate in the world (875 per 100,000). It has also one of the highest child mortality rate, nearly one child in every 10 die before reaching the age of one. All this is accompanied with early marriage, early pregnancy, multiple pregnancies making much demand on mental and physical health of women. Because women are seen as a means to beget sons to inherit the private property hence

women are forced to go to any extent for begetting sons even at the cost of their own health, in order to secure their marital life and to ensure their share of land via their sons. Thus women without their sons are mostly abandoned or socially ostracized or co-wived.

The caste system makes women belonging to the scheduled (or untouchable) caste even more vulnerable economically, socially and sexually. In fact the imposition of Hindu culture on the society is so strong that it has even affected the women who belong to less feudal non-Hindu groups.

### ***Women's Political Oppression***

Women's political oppression is rooted in patriarchal economic and social relations which are upheld by the present monarchical parliamentary system. The heir to the royal throne through male lineage, together with personification of king as a living god makes male members politically more powerful than female members in society. Thus men are the rulers, and women the ruled even within the household. The king thus represents a patriarch in body and spirit. Hence, unlike in other bourgeois republican countries where women have at least legal access to parental property, women in Nepal do not even have this legal provision, putting them strategically at a disadvantaged position in entering the political life within the present political system. Thus in parliamentary politics women are eventually used as ready-made source of vote bank through their male linkages. The present parliamentary system which requires money and capital to win in the election becomes a big hindrance to women. Those limited women who have managed to enter into politics are either widows, wives, or daughters of the already known politicians.

on the masses, etc. are being focused along with other feminist issues. Rampant mass rape on rural women perpetuated by the state are seen to affect urban feminist activists as well. They are now increasingly being involved in Human Rights organisations to show their concern for human rights abuse of women and children. Such atrocities perpetuated by the state in revolutionary stronghold areas has resulted in the sending of a team of exclusive six women journalists to probe women's condition in Rolpa, Rukum and other districts. They have exposed the atrocities let loose by the government in both national and international media.

PW has also forced different women's organisations (which was rarely possible before PW started) to come under the same platform to organise protest rallies or joint press conference against state repression, to rally against beauty contests etc. The coming together of seven women's organisations owing allegiance to different political parties to organise protest rally against brutal rape and torture of Devi Khadka in police custody is one such example.

### **ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN MOBILISING THE WOMEN**

In an over all context of Nepal, feudalism is the principle contradiction women have to face. As a result remnants of feudal values tend to seep into even Party organisational structure. This affect women in particular as they have to fight at two fronts, from class perspective and gender perspective. This becomes particularly challenging for women and Party organisation when women in leadership in various committees and guerrilla units are not easily accepted because of feudal prejudices. This is where the policy of CPN (Maoist) towards encouraging women's participating in PW at every level becomes important. Similarly with the increasing influence of imperialism in urban areas, there

Women and men who have lost their spouses in war have remarried. Such cases, although limited are being encouraged by the Party.

PW has also ushered in creative literacy environment for women. As a result many new women are coming forward to share their experiences of PW, police atrocities etc. by writing their memoirs, poems, feature articles and theoretical articles in newspapers and journals.

PW has thoroughly exposed sham activities of NGOs/INGOs like Ama-Milan-Kendra (Mothers get-together centres) that construct temples and spread religion in the name of organising women, which have been exposed and discredited.

Nepal being a country of diversities, PW has affected women of different nationalities like Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman and others in different ways. PW has helped Indo-Aryan women to break the feudal restrictive life imposed by the puritan Hindu religion by unleashing their repressed energy. It has given meaningful lives to Tibeto-Burman and other women who are relatively free and have greater decision-making rights by giving them challenging works. PW has not only unshackled their class and gender oppression but also their nationality oppression. PW has particularly affected scheduled caste society, whose women are economically, socially, politically and sexually exploited by unleashing their hatred against the state.

PW has qualitatively and quantitatively changed women's movement in Nepal. While it has shifted the geography of women's movement from urban centers to rural areas, within urban areas, it has qualitatively changed women's movement from a feminist movement to a broad-based women's movement with class perspective as the key link. Today wider issues such as state repression on women, human rights of women, state repression

## WOMEN AND THE NEW DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

*“Without revolutionary ideology there cannot be revolutionary movement”*

—*Lenin*

Women in Nepal have reasons to fight for New Democratic Revolution as it addresses their economic, social and political oppression in totality. As mentioned earlier the source of women's economic oppression is primarily their inaccess to land-ownership in equal par with men. This is directly addressed in New Democratic Revolution where the central economic feature is the agrarian revolution. Under this system a revolutionary land reform is carried out under the slogan of 'Land to the tillers.' Along with this, revolutionary land relationship between men and women are carried out under the slogan of 'Women's equal right to property.' Thus in rural areas women's access to land property will be able to make them important part of rural agriculture economy. In urban areas this right will allow them to inherit urban land, other means of production such as industry, business enterprises etc., thus making them part of urban economic system. This prepares the first foundation for her economic emancipation which will have important bearing on other socio-political arenas.

Since New Democratic system is anti-feudal, it will at once remove any religious tint given to the state thus making it a secular state. With the end of feudal Brahminical Hindu rule women become culturally independent from men. This will gradually remove biasness against daughters making them as important as sons within the household.

Under the New Democratic system there is no question of accommodating feudal monarchy which is the symbol of

patriarchal rule over women. Hence politically New Democratic system prepares ground for removing patriarchal rule and in its place women will constitute one of the important groups along with other oppressed groups in the anti-feudal and anti-colonial united front government. Hence women in Nepal have reasons for fighting tooth and nail for establishing the New Democratic system.

The anti-imperialist nature of New Democratic revolution will abolish unequal relations with imperialist, expansionist countries thus saving women from sweat shops where they are exploited sexually and economically. This prepares ground for removing prostitution, consumerisation and commoditisation of women in Nepal.

## **REVOLUTIONARY TREND IN WOMEN'S MASS ORGANISATION**

Having grasped the essence of New Democratic Revolution and its relevance to women's emancipation, women's organisations, particularly All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary) [ANWA (Revolutionary)] has set a revolutionary trend in women's movement in Nepal. This should be understood under the background that women's movement in Nepal can be broadly categorized into three distinct trends. The rightist and reactionary trend openly serve the interest of feudal and bureaucratic capitalist forces. They talk of women's emancipation but support constitutional monarchy system, uphold state-sponsored Hindu religion and are openly engaged in imperialist-sponsored NGO/INGO activities. They grumble against commoditisation of women but dare not protest against beauty pageants etc. They condemn revolutionary violence but condone state violence. They are closer to ruling parties such as Nepali Congress, 'United Marxist-Leninist' (UML) and 'Marxist-Leninist' Parties.

PW has given a revolutionary alternative life to young aspiring men and women. Women's lives, particularly in rural areas, are so monotonous, set in a repeated pattern of reproductive activities. The marriage being arranged at much younger age, they have no way of escaping from this beaten track life cycle. For aspiring women to venture out of village means almost getting trapped into prostitution or being trafficked to India (it is estimated that about 150,000 women from Nepal are trafficked to urban centres of India) or are trapped to low-paid sweat shops where sexual harassment is rampant. Thus for such aspiring women, the PW offers them challenging opportunity to work side by side with men on equal terms and to prove their worth mentally and physically.

PW has also given alternative dignified life to many socially abandoned women, women abandoned by their husbands, women who have been left in lurch after losing virginity by cheaters, women who could not afford to get married, are found helping PW in various capacities. For them heroic death in the course of PW is more attractive than every death imposed on them by the society.

PW has helped in instilling progressive norms in people's lives. Today the new generation of women activists are defying traditional arranged marriage system and opting more and more for love marriages on ideological grounds. They no longer fall head over heels for begetting sons; in fact they are limiting the number of children to bare minimum so as to continue their revolutionary activities. Men are found to be more sympathetic and cooperative in running the family life. Today strict monogamy has been enforced on men by the Party. Thus married men found indulging in illicit relationships are severely punished. Similarly married women found indulging in illicit relationships are also not spared. Those who have reasons to divorce are encouraged to divorce and remarry. There have been cases of remarriages.

the Party has launched campaigns for community-based market system, cooperative labour such as 'parma' system (a traditional labor-exchange practiced within few farm households) at larger scale, building new and maintaining old roads, installing community water sources, community based fodder or fuel collection, installing new 'Chautara' (public rest places) etc. Take the instance of one such 'Chautara' constructed at the border of Rolpa and Salyan districts which was constructed by local villagers in remembrance of local women martyrs Kumari Budha, Sunsara Budha, and Lali Rokka.

Collective farming has particularly helped those de-facto single parent households where husbands are either away to serve PW or have gone away to work in remote urban centres. In some places it has even managed to win the heart of such families whose male members are serving the reactionary military and police forces.

With the provisions of people's trials women now feel more secure at their own home and outside as defaulting husbands and roving men are duly punished. Also the women have become more aware of their legal rights and their oppressive state. On the other hand repeated rape, molestation by police force and the protection given by the state to goons and rapists have exposed the class character and gender biasness of the state. This has enhanced political consciousness of the masses.

Earlier rape victims were stigmatised, but today with the institutionalisation of rape and murder perpetuated by the state, the earlier sense of shame has now given to a sense of class hatred, and rebellion against the state machinery. At one end, indiscriminate sexual harassment by the police has alienated even the ruling class women from the existing state, at the other end, it has strengthened cooperation among the oppressed masses against the state.

The second is the revisionist trend. In words they sound revolutionary but in action they practice reformism. They say they are republican but are engaged in monarchical parliamentary system. They condemn the activities of NGOs and INGOs theoretically but in practice many of them are engaged in such activities. They are closer to groups like 'Masal,' 'Unity Centre' etc. The third category belongs to the revolutionary trend. This is represented by ANWA(R). It is closer to CPN (Maoist). It has taken a clear stand regarding male supremacy as the product of private property. Hence, it is very clear about the class nature of the present state which is maintaining class oppression and gender oppression. Similarly it has taken a clear stand against NGO/INGO activities in both words and in deeds as they consider these organisations as extensions of imperialist and expansionist forces whose ultimate aim is to prepare ground for expanding their market, while at the same time checking the growth of genuine revolutionary movement of the people. Pursuing the policy of unity and struggle it has been forging broad alliances with other forces, particularly with anti-feudal and anti-colonial forces to protest against beauty contests, pornographic literature, sale of liquor etc. They have formed broad alliance to protest against state repression on women, particularly rape and torture perpetuated on sympathizers of People's War. While other organisations condemn revolutionary violence, this organisation considers it as a legitimate defensive measure of the masses against the present state, based on armed might.

## **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEOPLE'S WAR IN NEPAL**

***"Women hold up half the sky"***  
***—Mao Zedong***

In Nepal, women's active participation in war can be traced to

the days of centralized feudal state expansion campaign in the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, particularly to 1815 in the battle of Nalapani in Deharadun (at present in Northern India) where Nepalese women and children together with their menfolk offered a heroic resistance against the British army who not only outnumbered them but also had better equipment and despite all these they (the British) could not seize on Kalanga fort only on their third attempt after incurring heavy losses on the British side.

Similarly women were mobilised during anti-Rana movement by various anti-Rana political parties during 1947–50, culminating in the overthrow of the Rana regime in the year 1950. Similarly women took active participation in the democracy movement of 1990 which ended 30 years of one-party rule of the autocratic monarchy, 'Panchayat,' replacing it with monarchical parliamentary system. However, in all such movements, women were mainly drawn from the known political families or from urban educated women and were mainly based in urban areas.

It was only after CPN (Maoist) started the People's War that women from grassroots, mainly rural women, started getting mobilised. Today they are professional fighters in guerrilla war. The traditional weapons such as stones, sickles and sticks which women hurled on enemies in earlier movements have now been upgraded to holding guns, rifles and gun powder. Earlier they were looked upon as mere helpers or as reserve force for political movements, but today they are leaders, commanders of guerrilla squads constituting of men and women. This development should be understood under the background that the Section 10 of Army Act 1960 of the Nepalese Government bans the recruitment of women into the Royal Nepal Army. Realising the double exploitative state of women, CPN (Maoist) has rightly targeted them for unleashing their doubly repressed energy to attack the system which has been responsible for their present

overall political atmosphere created by PW. Repeated search operations, warrants, warning and torture, sometimes even rape, have made them even more defiant and aggressive against the state machinery. Even children have not been spared from such attacks, thus politicizing them at an earlier age. They are found actively assisting village defense committees, taking part in cultural activities, helping in propaganda works, espionage works, etc.

Since most of the able-bodied males are forced to go underground in the revolutionary stronghold areas, women and children are left to fend their property and to face police force. Absence of men in household has reversed earlier gender roles. For example, today women are found ploughing agricultural fields, which is not religiously permitted. They are found roofing their houses, something which is not culturally accepted. Today women in revolutionary areas are defying widowhood ceremony when their husbands are killed by police force. On the other hand the Party is consciously trying to transform their bereavement into a source of strength, to avenge the killed. These days newspapers carry such resolutions from these women.

Take the case of Sangeeta Budha, a resident of Rolpa. Her husband was killed by police force in the year 1997. According to her it was she who worked in her father's house when her father was arrested. Today after the killing of her husband she has taken to jungle to join guerrilla warfare to avenge her husband. Also, PW has effectively transformed otherwise a reactionary Hindu celebration "Teej"\* into a revolutionary platform for propagating in support of PW and exposing state repression in Nepal.

Absence of men, together with police atrocities, have made women more cooperative amongst each other. On top of this, \* "Teej" is a day-long fast imposed on women in order to pray for longevity of their husbands or for those unmarried they keep fast to pray for eligible husbands. Women in their bridal dresses and make-up and sing on this day in public areas.

Apart from the above instances, mass rape of women and incidents of airlifting women in helicopters to be raped elsewhere and killed have been reported in the revolutionary stronghold areas. In the initial stages women were tortured and raped, but now the recent trend is to kill them as well. This signifies that even the reactionary armed forces have now acknowledged women as invincible fighting force. The mass scale of state repression on women also acknowledges participation of women in various capacities in the People's War.

## **ROLE OF PEOPLE'S WAR IN WOMEN'S TRANSFORMATION**

***“People's War is a total war”***  
**—Mao Zedong**

People's War has affected women in different ways. First of all, PW has brought fundamental changes in the Party activist's family life. Earlier before the party launched the PW, there were many contradictions in theory and practice in relating to gender issues within the household and the outer social life. For example, the strong preference for sons, early arranged marriages for daughters, practicing polygamy while advocating strict monogamy to women, practicing feudal cultural customs such as fasting on auspicious dates, practicing untouchability to menstruating women and lower caste people, strong attachments to private property, relegating women to household activities while men engaging in active politics, etc. prevailed. But today with the launching of PW many wives have left home with their husbands to join the movement leaving children to alternative support system. Those wives who have decided to stay back at home have become more economically independent and are more politicalised because of the compulsions of circumstances, the subjective efforts of the Party to politicize them and the

pathetic state. In each guerrilla squad it has made the policy of recruiting at least two women guerrillas (in each guerrilla squad there are about 9–11 members). Women guerrillas work as combatants at night and do propaganda and production work during day time. Where circumstances demand, exclusive women's guerrilla squads have been constituted, but this is more of an exception than the rule. One incident in Rolpa is worth mentioning where an exclusive women's guerrilla squad was responsible in annihilating a feudal tyrant who was also known to exploit women sexually. At every village, area and district levels women have been mobilised under women's mass organisation. In revolutionary stronghold areas people's courts have been established where along with other cases, cases against women's exploitation have been brought to book with the combined effect of Village Defense Committee, women's mass organization and the people. Many cases of land usurpation of widows or single women have been restored to them through such courts. Many defaulting husbands who have taken to drinking and beating of their wives or practicing polygamy, sexually exploiting women have been disciplined through such courts. One such interesting case in Parvat district is worth mentioning. A school teacher was known to exploit women sexually while promising them to help find matches for their marriages. He was brought to people's court and was made to stand up and down, holding his ears for several minutes and was made to apologise for his crime and was let off after warning him of greater consequences, should he continue with his crime.

Where women are not directly involved in fighting guerrilla warfare they are working as support force for the People's War. They function as organisers, as propagandists, as cultural activists, as logistics suppliers, as nurses for the wounded fighters and cadres, as espionage workers, as cover for the party cadres or combatants, as visitors and source of inspirations in jails and in martyr's family households. They are also trained to prepare

locally made gun-powder.

Because culturally women have been associated with household work, women activists have been most effective in mobilising masses in new areas as they are easily accepted at household level. This has facilitated male cadres to gain access to households in new areas. It has been generally observed that in places where local women were mobilised, such places eventually became stable bases for sustaining the movement. Also because of women's multiple role inside and outside the house she provides a good cover for many logistic and espionage works for party cadres or guerrillas.

In regards to women's firm commitment to People's War it has been generally found that they often take time to decide to join the movement, but once they are into it they stick to it much firmer than the male cadres. There have been fewer cases of surrender or running away from war fields. They are also found least liable to disclose party related secrets. They are thus found to have greater perseverance and patience than men (although they lag behind men in their theoretical knowledge). This may be due to the fact that women have more to gain from this movement than men, i.e. for them it is not only the question of escaping away from class oppression but also gender oppression. After all, breaking off double chains requires greater strength and strong will power!

Following heroic instances of women exemplify the different roles women have been playing in People's War in Nepal:

***Dilmaya Yonjan:*** She was the first woman combatant who heroically gave her life in the successful Bethan armed raid. She was killed while she was igniting a bomb. What makes her martyrdom even more meaningful is that she belongs to an oppressed nationality of the Tamangs.

***Lali Rokka:*** She was a social activist and health assistant in a remote Rolpa district. She was picked up from the health post and shot dead. Her 'fault' was that she actively exposed the reactionary role of a local NGO in her area.

***Bindia Chaulagai:*** A young woman in advanced stage of pregnancy was tortured in police custody for providing food for guerrillas in the jungles. The torture resulted in pre-mature delivery of the baby, which ultimately led to its death, followed by her own death few days later.

***Sunsara Budha:*** Wife of a Party activist was tortured before her two-year-old child, when she did not reveal whereabouts of her husband, her child was tortured but she still did not buckle. The police then brutally killed her, leaving behind the injured child.

***Kamala Bhatta:*** A teacher and President of ANWA(R) Gorkha district was raped and killed by the special commando force of the armed police while she was returning from mass work amongst women in the village.

***Devi Khadka:*** She represents a living symbol of barbaric state repression. She was repeatedly raped in police custody leading to laceration of her womb. She was raped because she did not yield to police pressure in signing death certificate of her brother who was languishing in jail. Today she is alive and actively engaged in the People's War.

***Chiniya Lama, Nirmala Deykota, Manju Kuwar, and Suvadra Sapkota:*** They along with three other male cultural activists were killed by police under the direct instigation of the reactionary revisionist UML local leaders. Their "fault" was that they had been mobilising and organising villagers with progressive culture.