Let it be beautiful

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With new constitution comes resurgence in the hopes and dreams of our people, once unsure of the future but now captivated with dreams of easy, peaceful and simple life

"The constitution would be beautiful only if we succeed in uniting people from all communities," Hari Bhatta, 55, from Dadeldhura, told our reporter on the feedback trail this week.

Not every country on the brink of a new constitution would insist on something beautiful, but as Nepalis we understand that togetherness is our birthright and beauty our destiny. The earth beneath us, once cracked, failed to shatter the brilliance all around us as day by day we rebuild in the shadow of mountains and plains that have inspired poets, sages and honest people for millennia. As Nepalis, we
juncture, bring forward a constitution that captures our collective imagination and inspires us to create the kind of equitable and graceful society we long for and indeed deserve?

Doubt if you will, but after sixty-plus years of struggle, including a tragic war and a devastating earthquake, we arrive on this day with the possibility of a full-fledged constitution, written by the people ourselves as a stunning statement of the "can do" attitude that has been submerged for so long in Nepal, but now emerges to carry us into a new era.

With this new constitution comes a resurgence in the hopes and dreams of our people, once unsure of the future but now captivated with dreams of an easier, peaceful and a simpler life. We owe it to ourselves, as ordinary citizens holding in our hearts the most human and noble of longings to ask: How do we define this new Nepali dream?

BP Koirala eloquently said, some fifty years ago: I wish to see every Nepali own a house, a milking-cow, and means to send their children to school. While this still echoes powerfully in some corners of our land, it is time for us to call upon our powers of imagination. The tranquility of village life and the mandate of education must be held side by side with our current reality: rebuilding in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and bringing well-being to all of our citizens. How do we move forward and integrate our Nepali dream with the challenges we now face while bringing our communities together into a robust economy? It is time to ask these questions and bring forward our shared ideas to form a collective dream.

At the beginning of our struggle for a new constitution, we thought the answer for creating peace and prosperity was some version of democracy and elected forms of government. While fair and free elections are critical to a sound government, we cannot ignore that an insidious capitalism and quest for status and acquisition has caught us in its bitter grasp. This subtle thirst for economic dominance and power runs the risk of robbing us of the spirit of inclusion that our new forms of governance seek to foster. After 240-plus years of monarchical patrimony, where the rule of the land rested in the hands of a closed circle, we have now chosen to elect people at the highest levels of our government. And while anyone can dream of being elected one day, we have work to do to ensure that the most disadvantaged cannot only be brought into mainstream but are also able to fight with us side by side, so that we can champion the values of equality, equity and freedom together.

This is critical to our success as a country as our national identity is shaped and refined by our micro identities. Not only must we continue to celebrate each other’s diversity and culture, we need these differences to deepen our appreciation for how rich we are as a people.

As a child from Gorkha who had limited exposure to the diversity of our country and that of the modern world, I was fortunate to attend a school that had students from every single district. Growing up with them helped us learn to share and understand our country better. We began to appreciate the amazing diversity of opinion, language, custom, and tradition from far-flung Darchula's hills to Jhapa's plains. In the school, we all saw each other not as aliens but as representations of micro identities who shared a similar future. We valued each other. We approached one another's values and culture with curiosity and respect. Our dream, despite our immense difference, was the same: to shape ourselves into young men and women who would become better citizens devoted to helping those in need. This was something that we practiced through the creation of nationwide campaigns, projects and experiences on the ground where our efforts could make a difference.

Sadly, however, so many of us are now aggressively pursuing a very different
A manic scramble to get ahead of our neighbors with more and more acquisition. From the highest echelons in Kathmandu to the poorest farmers in Rautahat, an insane fervor to build a house in the city, own a car and send kids to fancy private schools has gripped our nation. This has robbed us from our organic evolution into the modern world where we value and respect Nature, people and culture and learn to grow with it in a sane and sustainable way.

How did we end up to a point where everyone wants to migrate to Kathmandu and build a house? What inspired that dream? These are hard questions. A country that boasts that over 80 percent of its people are farmers is driving people off farms and to urban areas. We cannot ignore the global craze to move to cities, but we have to also make our villages livable. The cost of not wrestling with these questions is astronomical. Without reflecting on these dilemmas, we will continue to accept our life as it is, and lose the impetus to think and work towards a better, a more equal society.

People aspire for good health services, good schools, electricity, internet and roads. These basic amenities can create economic cycles all around us. Why not design our future to inspire people to make the best of their land and geographic locations? What is holding us back from building our own destiny, not dictated by English-speaking bikas-badis and INGOs, but by the people who are rich in the wisdom and knowledge of the places they live and the resources available? Our villages are the incubators of innovation and a source of eternal optimism and hope. We will have to work hard to bring those ideas to the national scene but in doing so we create the possibility that all of our developments will be rooted in history and culture that makes us truly great. All it requires is that we respect and value the kind of homespun expertise and knowledge that makes our villages as peaceful as they are efficient.

At the end of this great struggle for a beautiful constitution, we want to be able to say that everyone deserves a chance here, that everyone has the chance to seek the highest office in the land, and that we provide our children with the kind of brilliant education that is rooted in our culture, tradition and custom. We want to be able to say that we treat Mother Earth with utmost respect.

We want to say to our children and grandchildren someday that we didn’t run after modern cars and big buildings, but that we saw them only as means to a greater end. We want to be able to say that we helped our people to have access to everything that the rest of the world does, but that we sought a more filling and meaningful life rooted in Buddha’s, Ram’s and Janak’s teaching of love, respect, and a less materialistic life. That we see ourselves as a part of Nature and that we have found ways to learn to live with it, and not destroy our exquisite land for short-term gains.

The new constitution is the finale of the struggles of the past six decades. It has to inspire all of us to do grander things, to help us imagine big and bold, to treat all of our people with respect, and to respect the law of the land. A nation rarely gets an opportunity to write a constitution that helps the country unshackle from her past and begin anew. So let ours help us define a new Nepali dream. Let this document bring us together, and let this constitution inspire all of us to defeat long-held cynicism and ignite hope for the kind of dreams and limitless imagination that will put Nepal back on the map.

Let it be beautiful.

And let it unite us all.

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atulya · 5 days ago
This sounds like an 8th grade essay written to the prompt "Please explain how you want to change Nepal (in 800 words or less)"

Nitesh Kumar Jha · 5 days ago
His piece of shit stands on illusion that whatever constitution comes it will bring peace forgetting abt other side of coin that it may lead to violence and division if fails guarantee equal rights to all

Tulasi Acharya · 5 days ago
An eloquent article filled with peace, optimism, and beauty!!!

Ashok Thapa · 5 days ago
I wish we had more positive oriented editors in Nepal. They can really help drive the whole nation towards doing good. Kudos to this young and dynamic editor. I look forward to his write ups more often. Today, all our class read this piece twice! Soothing, hopeful and forward looking. Love it! Thank you!

Kamala Adhikari · 6 days ago
wow. moving and powerful piece. I salute his vision and optimism. Why dont we have leaders like him in this country? He reminds me of BP Koirala and Madan Bhandari. Eloquent, brilliant and honest.

Nitesh Kumar Jha · 5 days ago
what They gave to the country is also memorable 50 years of political unrest and 10 years of Maoist insurgency.
Two failed Constitutions that can’t even last for ten years .
Ofcourse they must be rembered by roval family bcz they r the one who