

A Kingdom to Win

The 21st century may be the century of change. Many think more things will change in more places in the next 10 years than in the previous 100. And Nepal is certainly poised for a change. The maoist swing in Nepal's April polls was not unexpected. Insurgency is closely followed by parliamentary triumph. Communists of Telengana fame in India won in the first general election with record margins, even over-shadowing Nehru's charismatic presence. But their euphoria did not last long as they soon went into oblivion paving the way for a rightist backlash, only to remain satisfied with their symbolic parliamentary existence. Former rebels as they are usually dubbed in official parlance, are being praised by their former enemies for eschewing violence. For all practical purposes, the 240-year-old monarchy in the himalayan kingdom of Nepal is gone. The transition process from monarchy to multi-party parliamentary system was virtually managed by America right from the beginning. And ex-US president Jimmy Carter who was in charge of monitoring the landmark constituent assembly polls in Nepal was not unhappy in announcing the demise of old order.

True, the maoist movement of Nepal has not gone the Latin American way. The 10-year-old civil war has definitely created a wide social base for the maoists. Whether switch over from guerilla campaign to peaceful parliamentary exercise is a manifestation, as claimed by some Nepalese maoists, of concrete application of maoism in the changed Nepalese context, is open to question.

The maoists of Nepal did not really begin their movement with the sole objective of overthrowing the monarchy. Their programme envisaged a revolution with the land question as the pivot. Also, their stance against Indian expansionism had populist appeal. With the possibility of a radical government to be led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), party's supreme leader Prachanda already began to send conciliatory signals to India. For one thing Prachanda cannot be ideological when confronted with globalisation. His pragmatism may soon see a sea-change in the Nepalese maoist approach to India and America. Also, China's capitalist roaders are unlikely to figure on the new government's agenda. Also, their relationship with the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), the nascent international centre of some marxist-leninist-maoist parties and organisations, is at a crossroads. It remains to be seen how RIM theorises the Nepalese change. RIM, being a loose federation till date, is unlikely to interfere in CPN(M)'s internal affairs.

CPN(M) was formed mainly out of the Mashal Party—the Communist Party of Nepal (*Mashal* or 'Torch')—and party ideologues had to wage a bitter struggle against M B Singh line that advocated the impossibility of revolution in Nepal in isolation. So the old debate returns. And maoists have no option but to nurse the notion that maintaining the status quo in a republic is the best choice before them at the moment.

Americans do not bother about monarchy or military dictatorship. What matters in their calculation is how better third world elites serve their interests. If a maoist dispensation in Nepal allows American and western multinationals with their local agents to flourish, Washington has every reason to forecast a better

tomorrow for the Nepalese people under a maoist umbrella. American strategic equation in South Asia has witnessed a radical shift after the collapse of Soviet Union and rise of islamic insurgency. And a 'radical' Nepal in their South Asian drama does hardly make any difference.

Through the crisis managers of New Delhi got initially panicky with the decline of their traditional ally—the Nepali Congress—they soon discovered a beautiful opportunity to contain their own maoist problem, in the maoist march in Nepal. The much publicised threat of red corridor extending from Nepal to central India may be a thing of the past as it happened earlier in the North-East, with the withdrawal of support to separatist insurgency, by China.

For the people of Nepal, the emerging situation means 'a new day', no doubt but it may be a new face on the same set-up. Now the compulsion of CPN(M) to continue the peace process, at any cost, coupled with parliamentary niceties, may also turn into a big pressure to say 'goodbye' to revolution. □□□