

Role of the CA Members in Constitution-drafting

Dhurba Simkhada

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In the Constituent Assembly, the 601 members are not from same background, experiences and schooling. Their background is varied, and their identities are also constructed on that basis. CA members' contribution on the constitution-building has been based on their background; therefore, while a number of the CA members are more active on constitution-drafting process, no one is aware about few CA members' activities. It is about time to ask how successful our CA members have been on the issue of constitution-drafting.

The one-hundredth meeting of the CA was held on 2nd April 2010. The Committee for Studying Draft Reports and Concepts Papers under the CA member Agni Kharel had submitted the report of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights and Minorities and Marginalised Communities in the meeting with necessary amendments, and the decision was made to submit this report to the Constitutional Committee. Political parties' president and other senior political leaders of major political parties, such as UCPN(M), Nepali Congress, CPN(UML), and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum are not found serious till the hundred meetings. As a result, these leaders rarely attend the CA meetings.

The CA Regulation has a provision that if any CA member is absent from ten meetings in a row without information the CA secretariat, the post of the CA member will automatically become vacant. Therefore, the CA had to approve leave of some the CA members for the preservation of their seats. The meetings of March 2010 were only conducted by approving leave of absence of Girija Prasad Koirala, Puspa Kamal Dahal 'Prachand', Jhalanath Khanal, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Sher Bahadur Deuba, Upendra Yadav, etc.

Other CA members hastily reach the CA building at Baneswor to be present and for continuation of CA meetings. They usually spend a few minutes in the canteen, and talk inside the tent setup nearby in small groups. When the bell rings, CA members just enter the meeting hall. The meeting is then usually postponed for an indefinite period due to lack of business. Thus, the CA has been inactive in the last few months.

With disagreements on fundamental issues and lack of political consensus, a number of CA members are worried regarding the political consensus between the parties and whether and when there will be a consensus among the parties, and when the constitution-drafting process will gather momentum. To find out information about CA members, it is being difficult not only for the people, even for the CA secretariat, because there is no information in the secretariat regarding the CA members of all political parties in terms of where they are and what they are doing. Therefore, some of them are in foreign visit and a number of others are being busy in political activities at their districts, and several others are busy engaged with the people in the ministries and departments.

Some of the CA members are found busy in project works rather than the constitution-drafting process. A group of CA members are extremely busy to attend the NGO meetings not only in the capital but outside in the districts. The presence of CA members can be seen in seminars, regarding the discussions of inclusion, state restructuring, ethnicity, women, and Madhes-related issues in various hotels. Therefore, constitution-drafting is the last priority for our CA members not unlike the political leaders.

There is no doubt that the CA is inclusive, although it is another matter whether it fulfilled its responsibility. It has to be asked by the people now as to who is responsible for the constitution not being drafted on time. This should be asked of the leaders and political parties and those who were elected in the direct election from particular district, because they are getting facilities from taxes paid by the common people. A CA member gets around Rs 50 thousand amount on a monthly basis but, in the constitution-drafting process their role, except for a few, has been nothing more than to blindly support their own party's top leaders' statements.