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“QUALITY AND DIVERSITY”

Title of the Book: Fatalism and Development, Nepal's Struggle for Modernization

Author of the Book	Dor Bahadur Bista
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The book *Fatalism and Development, Nepal's Struggle for Modernization* is an intellectual effort, a contributive by anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista, who attempts to reveal the actual context of the Nepalese society through the book. The author claims to examine the influence of cultural and social organizations of Nepalese society in the country's development. As an author, Dor Bahadur Bista, is a prominent figure and institutionalized Anthropology in Nepal, for which he has also widely been referred as the 'father of Nepalese Anthropology'. He is proclaimed to be one of the members of the first generation of self-trained Nepalese anthropologists.

Back in 1957, he was introduced to Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, an Austrian Anthropologist from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, during his field research in Nepal. Bista's inclination towards study of Anthropology started when he offered himself as an informant to Haimendorf, who was specializing in south Asian cultures. Bista has remained the professor of Anthropology, the chairperson of Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the founder of Sociological and Anthropological Society of Nepal.

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Fatalism and Development, Nepal's Struggle for Modernization is based on the theme picked out from the ongoing struggles, conflicts and contradictions of social process in Nepalese society. It covers the diverse life experiences of over thirty years. The author, using those experiences, has made an attempt towards critical observation of Nepalese perception towards various social factors and the Nepalese society's effort to change and develop. As a whole, the book is an attempt to identify the key factors that are inhibiting the Nepalese society from progress.

The concept of fatalism versus the concept of productivity has been rightly analyzed in the book. The author points out the culture of believing in fatalism among the Nepalese people as the key factor behind devaluation of productivity in Nepal. The current tendency in Nepalese society is to have absolute belief in fatalism, due to which a person's attitude is dependent on and influenced by the power of divinity. In the author's view, dependency and fatalism have combined to cause retardation in development. In this context, the book is a collection of thought-provoking ideas on the impact of social values, cultures and religious beliefs on the process of social change in Nepal.

The book is divided into nine chapters, including introduction and conclusion. The introductory part of the book broadly discusses how factors such as social status, caste, class, religion, culture, attitude and educational background has the development of Nepalese society. People of Nepalese society are being guided by the traditional predominant value system which discourages the progressive change in the lives of people.

It is factual that some positive elements of the Nepalese value system are currently in the phase of being replaced by values which are contradictory to development by nature. For instance, Nepalese people are usually found eager to raise the standard of their lives, without any initiation or effort of their own, and benefit without much labor. This has led to the increasing trend of discouragement in the productive sector, whereas rise in people's inclination towards a fatalistic attitude, which has further led to the tendency of people to depend on foreign aid, which the people believe can be easily exploited without any action from their side.

These all dynamics has been linked up to highlight the critical fact that Nepalese society has now rejected to acknowledge the genuine developmental ideas or any initiation to be made to create a far-reaching transformation in the society. To justify these realities, the author also marks the trend of people such as misinterpreted collectivism (favoring only those groups of people who

are close to them), *chakari* (leaning to fulfill the desires of elites being under them), undermining the value of education (taking education as a matter to get privilege of higher caste not as a means of acquiring skills) and so on.

The first chapter after the introduction provides a general scenario of Nepal, its geo-political situation, social realities, cultural practices, religious traditions, early inhabitants and rulers from the period of ancient history. It further includes the regional description of Nepal along with the overview of Nepalese history and the emergence of the feudal system. The second chapter is an in-depth analysis of the differentiated roles of caste and class, religion, ethnicity, hierarchical structure, kinship and gender relations of the Nepalese society. As the author underlines in this chapter, it was Brahmanism which heavily emphasized the fatalism through its stress on karmic determination, giving birth to the caste system. The third chapter proceeds to present an overview of various processes of socialization in diverse family structures, ethnic groups and religious organizations. In this part, the author has made an attempt to distinguish the differentiated trend of socialization among male and female, even within the same social and family background.

The motivation, cognitive abilities, interpersonal skills and adaptation abilities of the people along with the changing environment are also important factors to determine the pace of integration of Nepalese society into the phase of development. The fourth chapter brings this observation of the author into light. It scrutinizes the role of fatalism and achievement motivation in shaping the Nepalese attitude towards the need of development and transformation. The author observes that the fatalistic attitude has also been over influential in generating the sense of responsibility among the people. As a result of such influence, the people consider themselves unlucky or having bad fortune if they have to put some effort and hard work to attain get bliss in their lives. The fatalistic attitude has given birth to a dominant value system which instigates the people to deny introspection of their person responsibilities. The capabilities of the people in handling the responsibility, success and progressive change in their life has also been compromised by the fatalism, as noted by the author. This has further led to the dawn of serious concerns such as dependency of people, tendency of doing *chakari* (serving of elites according to their favor), believing in destiny, ignorance of the importance of human efforts in bringing social change and individualizing relations in a disregard to the social context. High inclination towards fatalism has also made people prioritize the practice of enticing someone through favored activities and taking benefits from them while compromise one's own dignity.

Chapter five revolves around the issues of politics and governance in Nepal since the period of unification, accommodating issues from the Rana bureaucracy to monarchy and democracy. This chapter presents how the political culture of taking things for granted as in fatalism developed since the time of the Ranas. The author asserts that nowhere did he find the political culture favoring the promotion of feeling of patriotism and development of the country. Similarly, the administrating department could not remain without influencing the planning process of the government. In the author's view, the political and the government authority are major instruments that should guide the first move towards making the citizen responsible, in order to create an impact on the overall development. Thus, the effectiveness of the political system and values were also limited by the culture of dependency and fatalism as observed by the author in this chapter.

A major instrument which had an effect on change in the fatalistic attitude is the educational system, which has been discussed in chapter six. The development of the educational system since the period of early Ranas till the initiation of National Educational System Plan has been described in detail. It is revealed that even the administration of education was deplorable and responsible in injecting the sense of inferiority complex among people, thereby feeding them with the belief of fatalism. It is sequentially stated that the historical development of education characterizes the loop holes in this system, which has hindered development.

Chapter seven particularizes the Nepalese perspective on the issues related to foreign aid, its uses, and distribution and planning. The expectation of receiving more foreign aid and exploiting it to its maximum limit has also been characterized as a heavy influence of dependency and fatalism. The attitude of Nepalese society, in author's point of view, is greatly misrepresented by the idea of begging, charity and paternal dependency. Moreover, the proportion of the development and foreign aid received has also been found to be uneven. In this context, neither have the people making effort towards contribution in social progress been benefitted, nor has foreign aid achieved its desired end in Nepalese scenario, according to the author's observation.

The concluding chapter summarizes the ideas on the prospective roles of different ethnic, caste and religious groups in generating the thoughts towards development, progress and transformation. As author opines, though the various ethnic groups differ from one another in many grounds, they always share a significant values and social institutions in common which binds them together. The author also focuses briefly on the issue of creating a national

identity even in the situation of complex cultural practices and heterogeneity. He also claims that positive social qualities of the diverse ethnic groups can be valued to generate and sustain the progress of society. However, Bista's attempt to justify that values of every religion, culture and ethnicity influence to promote fatalism does not seem convincing enough due to lack of factual support. This idea, therefore, fails to stand on scientific basis.

The book can be of most help to the sociologists, law students, professionals and anthropologists. Since the book is an outgrowth of previous ethnographic work of the author, its resources are definitely rich and diversely collected. As it tries to include all those elements of a society which interlinks each other in forming a social order, it provides the overview of all those key factors that affect a society's position towards development. In addition, the book attempts to interpret the situation of Nepalese history from every possible dimension linking it with the caste, culture, religion, ethnicity, planning and governance process of Nepalese society. Moreover, the book offers 'food for thought' to all the legal scholars as regards the need to generate realistic ideas for development that are devoid of fatalistic sense. The reviewer would like to make a note of gratitude towards the author for gathering his entire thirty years of research findings into a thought provoking and obviously important book.

Upon the study of this book, the reviewer has indentified the main premise being that of constant struggles Nepal has endured for its development and modernization. The slow pace of adapting changes and developmental activities in Nepal as highlighted in the book has largely been caused by the culture of fatalism, according to author's hypothesis. The book also specifically tries to examine the contradictions between the fatalism and various factors like social values, culture, religion, ethnicity, education, politics and foreign aid. As asserted by the author, the critical examination of his own society from the perspective of the cultural values was not an easy task. Perhaps this is the reason why most of the parts of the book suffer from blunt generalization, rather than finding basis on critical observation. In every attempt, it seems that the author coercively tries to relate the influence of fatalistic attitude of the people in holding back the ideas of development. Facts have been examined from other dimensions.

The reviewer believes that the facts explored and findings made by the authors in the course of thirty years could have been better justified had various methods of analysis been employed, rather than speculation and application of vague ideas. For example, the discouraging and de-motivating attitude of

people towards better educational facilities, effective planning, good governance and proper distribution of the foreign aid may be because of the State's lack of initiatives or inefficiency in providing an environment where people can make themselves resourceful and be productive. There could be more explanations if various contexts and situations are taken into account. However, the author makes a tedious effort to justify his entire hypothesis that came off as repetitive and not as certain and persuasive as the author had intended.

Hence, the author's views are found to be more controversial in comparison to other existing ideas that have tried to explore the actual circumstances behind the occurrences in Nepalese society. The claims that the author is making are not justified if studied from the particular examples. Not every failures and obstacles to development and change of Nepalese society are result of fatalistic attitude. Not every institution suffers from the culture of fatalism and dependency at all times. To be critical enough, the book seems to make every kind of tireless effort to conclude that all the problems of Nepalese society are due to none other than fatalism but fails to explore why the culture of fatalism has been so ubiquitous in every sector. Even if we are to believe that fatalism is the underlying reason, or at least be convinced that fatalism has been a dominant reason, the book is silent on the part of the origin of fatalism. Unfortunately, Bista's failure to depict the nexus between fatalism, development and modernization gives an impression of his work being not more than his mere intuition. Hence, his justifications situate themselves far off from a plausible explanation of what could be the way out from the predicament in the upcoming epoch.

Hence, the reviewer concludes that while reflecting the book attempts to reveal the actual picture of Nepalese society, its justifications would have been less speculative and more scientific if they were equipped with necessary statistics, contextual pictures, evidences and detailed analyses from every dimension before coming to a conclusion.