

IN THE WORLD today, we are witnessing the un-raveling of society, the breakdown of families, and the increasing contempt for parents. This social breakdown was played out in the tragic massacre of the royal family of Nepal in early June.

The Holy Scripture tells of the very types of family feuds that we are witnessing in our times.

“For a son treats *his* father with contempt ... A man’s enemies are those of his *own* household ... Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.” “They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” (Micah 7:6. Matthew 10:36, 21. Luke 12:53)

God’s universal command is that children respect their parents. This “law,” in fact, is inherent in the thinking of most peoples of the world. In any culture, contempt for parents is a despicable evil.

Let us recall what the Word of God says:

“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which YHWH your God is giving you.”

“HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” (Exodus 20:12) (Ephesians 6:2-3)

Striking or cursing a parent is so grievous in the mind of God, that he said to ancient Israel:

“He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. *And* he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” (Exodus 21:15,17)

A MOST HEINOUS CRIME

The brutal massacre of the royal family of Nepal has shocked the whole wide world. Even now it is hard to believe that is actually happened. In this time of tragedy and crisis, our hearts go out to the friendly people of this lovely country.

King Birendra, the beloved monarch of Nepal, was highly regarded as a reincarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu.

On the evening of 1 June, according to explanations, after family arguments, Crown Prince Dipendra, aged 29, shot his father, King Birendra, his mother, Queen Aiswarya, his young brother, Nirajan, and his sister Shruti, and some 10 others. Dipendra, then shot himself. He went into a coma and died after two days. Birendra’s brother, Prince Gyanendra, then became the king.

The mass assassination immediately plunged the Himalayan kingdom into another crisis it did not need. Already the nation was facing a severe political, economic and insurgency crisis.

THE BATTLE FOR NEPAL

Nepal is a beautiful land with towering Himalayan peaks. Sadly, though, it is a land with few natural resources; it is one of the world’s poorest nations. 88% of its population is dependent on agriculture and related activities, and 40% of the people live in a state of absolute poverty.

With a population of 23 million, Nepal has some of the lowest human development indicators in South Asia, and those indicators are even worse as they relate to women. Only 14% of women are literate (1995), and the maternal mortality rate of 830/100,000 live births is by far the highest in the region.

Socially the country is gripped by feudalism. King Birendra ruled Nepal as an absolute monarch until 1990 when an uprising pressured him into sharing power with a prime minister and parliament. A multi-party democracy ensued.

Economically, the nation is heavily dependent on its neighbors, and on tourism.

The environment is being seriously damaged by the high dependency on wood fuel, leading to deforestation and soil erosion.

Politically, Nepal is in crisis, as communism, democracy and insurgency vie for the minds of a population held captive by incompetence, corruption, and poverty.

On top of all this, in the early 90's Nepal had to cope with a large influx of refugees from Southern Bhutan. For the past five years, 100,000 Nepali-Bhutanese have been given refuge in UNHCR camps in eastern Nepal.

THE GOVERNMENT

Since 1990, democratic Nepal has had ten prime ministers. The eleventh prime minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, was sworn in after No 10, Girija Koirala, resigned this month. Both are from the Nepali Congress. Mr Deuba was a prime minister back in 1995-97.

Mr Koirala's government was widely accused of failing to maintain law and order, of widespread corruption, and of inability to govern.

The main opposition is the Nepal Communist Party (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

Since it became a constitutional monarchy, Nepal's real policies have been a result of compromise between the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party.

A bitter rivalry and feuding within the Nepali Congress, as well as poor governance by the government, and an increasingly successful Maoist insurgency throughout the districts, has created a serious political, economic and security crisis.

THE MAOISTS

Nepal's Maoist insurgents, according to reports, control about one third of the country, and operate in about 70 of the 75 administrative districts. The government effectively controls only one-fourth of the country.

The Maoists are rebels who model themselves on the Shining Path guerrillas of Peru, and who specialise in night-time hit-and-run attacks on police posts. They have announced the creation of a provisional government that aims to take over the country.

The Maoists began their rebellion in February 1996, with a goal of toppling the Nepal's constitutional monarchy, and establishing a communist republic. In the past, to end the violence, they have demanded an all-party conference and an interim government to prepare a new constitution.

Reports say there are 1,500 to 2,000 full-time guerrillas, plus another 10,000 irregulars in the Maoist force.

85% of the civilian population live in rural areas, and much of it supports or is sympathetic to the Maoists because of their poverty, and because of government discrimination, or disregard of the people's needs.

The rebels take advantage of the rugged mountains running the length of the country, and are now gaining momentum, and moving their operations into Nepal's more populated areas.

CONFUSION AFTER THE MASSACRE

The rebels have capitalised on the confusion following the massacre of the royal family, and have stepped up their violent campaign against the government.

According to the South Asia Analysis Group, in five different cases since February, 300 to 500 rebels have coordinated to simultaneously attack police posts.

Maoists shot dead 41 policemen in attacks across Nepal on the eve of King Gyanendra's 55th birthday (7 July). A week later insurgents struck again, capturing 70 policemen - and a big cache of arms.

More than 1,700 people have been killed across Nepal since the rebellion began. So far the Maoists have not targeted tourism, but foreign tourism revenues are reported to be in decline.

General strikes, called by either the government's political opposition, or by the Maoists, are all too common in Nepal. These strikes bring great hardship to the common people - many who depend on meagre daily wages for survival. The strikes also drastically reduce tax revenues.

POLICE ON THE DEFENSIVE

There are 40,000 police and security personnel, but they are poorly trained, poorly equipped and too thinly deployed to effectively contain the Maoists.

The *Kathmandu Post* reported that whole units of Nepalese police have abandoned their posts, and fled from the line of confrontation with rebels.

The late King Birendra insisted the insurgency was a police problem, and he refused to commit the 45,000-man Nepalese army to this battle. But with the deteriorating situation, there is increasing pressure on the king and the government, to throw the armed forces into the battle.

While the king has final authority over the army, which is loyal to the crown, operational decisions for running the country are left to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

Agence France-Presse has reported that the Nepal government plans to import \$50 million worth of weapons within the next 12 months.

DANGERS AHEAD

After the capture of the seventy policemen earlier this month, the government mobilised a large army contingent to rescue the kidnapped policemen.

The Maoists stood their ground, and demanded the resignation of Koirala as a prerequisite for any negotiations. After Koirala stepped down, the rebels released 30 of the captive policemen. This was followed by the government and the Maoists both declaring a temporary truce. This gave rise to a hope that negotiations might start.

At the same time, 15 more police were killed, and the Maoist leader, Prachanda, was uncompromising on his long-term goal of overthrowing parliamentary democracy.

Nepal is heading towards very difficult times. As neither the military nor the rebels are likely to completely wipe the other out, a prolonged battle is ahead.

While the military has greater numbers and resources, the Maoists, with much of the rural population on their side, are able to retreat to the mountains whenever threatened. From there, they will be able to continue their guerilla warfare.

If current trends become so grave that King Gyanendra proclaims a state of emergency and suspends the constitution, the country could be plunged into a deeper crisis.

The rebels expect the subsequent chaos will lead to a Maoist victory and a revolutionary government.

Another danger is that China and India could be drawn into the conflict. Nepal is hedged in between these two populous nations who keep keen eyes on the geo-strategic value of the Himalayan kingdom. Other major powers also have their eyes on that strategic territory.

A communist or Maoist victory in Nepal would have widespread repercussions for the whole of the south Asian region. A communist government would undoubtedly lean toward Beijing, and allow Chinese surveillance and listening posts in the Himalayas. Beijing would gain leverage over much of Asia, and this would cause major problems for India. New Delhi would not be happy with a revolutionary government on its northern border.

THE RACES AND RELIGIONS OF NEPAL

Nepal is home to numerous races, tribes, languages and customs. The Sherpas inhabit the northern and eastern regions, and are carriers of Tibetan culture. They are known worldwide as the guides to conquering Mt Everest. The midland hills and valleys belong to various Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan groups. Nepalese of Indian descent live in the Terai lowlands.

This tribal diversity has created a nation with intricately woven cultures and religions. Nepal is predominantly a Hindu nation, but it is also the birthplace of Buddhism. The two religions have been fused with the ancient beliefs of Bonpo shamanism. This religious mixture allows all kinds of occult practices.

Religion plays a very important part of the lives of the Nepalese. There's a saying that goes like this: "Nepal has more deities than people, and more festivals than there are days in the calendar."

4-YEAR-OLD CHOSEN AS NEPAL'S NEW KUMARI

In July, a 4-year-old girl was chosen to be Nepal's new 'living goddess.' The child, Preeti Shakya, will now be known as "the Kumari." The new goddess comes from the Kathmandu valley, and her family is part of the Sakya clan, from which candidates for Kumari are chosen.

The Kumari will live a life of seclusion at her official temple-residence, the Kumari Ghar, and will be seen only rarely in public. But in October, she will appear at the annual Dasain festival, when Hindus and Buddhists, including the king, will receive blessings from her.

The Hindu goddess is seen as the patron deity of the Himalayan kingdom, but she must retire before puberty. The former goddess has been the Kumari since 1995. Now, at 12 years, she joins eight other retired Kumaris.

CHRISTIANITY IN NEPAL

In the 19th century, the king of Nepal banished European missionaries from the country, fearing an invasion of the British. For over 100 years, Nepal closed its door to the outside world.

In the 1960s there was a mere handful of 25 baptised Nepali believers in the country. Over the next 30 years the number of believers increased, but many were thrown into prison.

After democracy came to Nepal in 1990, the people had freedom to live and witness as Christians, if they so chose. Since then the number of Christians has grown to an estimated half million.

Why have so many embraced Christ within a few decades? Have they been forced or coerced into becoming Christians? Not at all! No one can become a true believer by force or coercion. Y'shua Himself said:

“No-one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” (John 6:44)

There's nothing a missionary, a pastor or evangelist can do to draw a person to the Saviour, except to present the Gospel message. It is the Master Himself who draws people to Himself. Jesus the Messiah said:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” (John 12:32)

There has been a sovereign movement of God in Nepal, drawing many to Christ. These folk have experienced the mighty, life-changing power of the Messiah and the Gospel working in their lives.

Is it necessary for the Gospel to reach all of Nepal?

Yes! And the uttermost parts of the earth!

“Y'shua said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all Creation’.” (Mark 16:15)

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Mathew 24:14)

The Great Commission of Jesus Christ was given, not to the twelve disciples only; it has been given to all who belong to Christ. The apostle Paul wrote:

“For if I preach the Good News, it is not *a matter of* boasting for me, for necessity is laid on me; and it is woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16)

“God ... reconciled us to Himself through Y'shua the Messiah, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was *personally present* in the Messiah reconciling the world to Himself, not counting *men's* trespasses against them; and *He* has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore we are ambassadors for the Messiah, as though God were entreating through us. We implore you on behalf of the Messiah; be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

Believer, Nepal needs our fervent prayers these days!



NEPAL **HISTORIC PEACE** **ACCORD SIGNED**

After 25 years of underground activity and 11 years of armed struggle across Nepal's jungles and mountains, and the loss of 13,000 lives, the notorious Maoist leader finally declared an end to his armed insurgency.

In a historic ceremony on Nov 21, PM Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda signed the 'Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) 2006,' bringing the decade-long armed insurgency to an end and promising to chart a new destiny for "a peaceful and democratic" new Nepal.



KOIRALA AND PRACHANDA SIGNING THE ACCORD

The front page of the largest selling English daily in Kathmandu read:

**THE END OF THE WAR: GOVERNMENT
AND MAOISTS SIGN PEACE AGREEMENT
"NATION ENTERS INTO NEW ERA."**

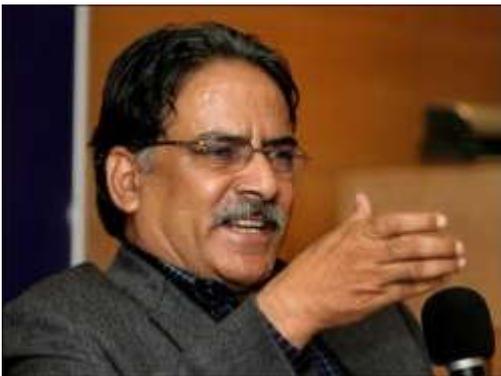
The government declared a public holiday to celebrate the breakthrough.

The 10-point CPA which included provisions on human rights, civil and political rights, arms and army management, socio-economic transformation, among others, was signed in the presence of ministers, political party leaders, Maoist leaders, foreign diplomats, MPs, government officials and media representatives.

"Beginning today, the politics of killing, violence and terror will be replaced by the politics of reconciliation," declared the 85-year-old PM Koirala who said he had put his entire political career at risk by venturing on this path of peace and democracy.

"Being a democrat, I wanted to bring non-democrats into the framework of democracy. I was warned by many friends about the hazards of dealing with terrorists but I thought that bringing all under democratic framework was the duty of a democrat. We all are entering into a new era from today. All of us Nepalis must come together to build a new Nepal."

He added that Nepal will, henceforth, be regarded as a model in conflict resolution by other conflict-torn countries around the world.



PRACHANDA

Prachanda stated that with the signing of the CPA, people of Nepal were in a position to give a message to the entire world. "The continuity of 238-year-old tradition has been broken now. This is the victory of Nepalese people and the loss of regressive elements."

He said that like in the war, his party would work with equal zeal to implement the peace accord. "We have no prejudices against anyone. We want to make it clear to everyone that we are neither conservative nor dogmatic in our thinking," and the people of Nepal will "perform another miracle" by working on a war-footing to develop their nation after the elections of a Constituent Assembly (CA).

He termed the successful struggle of the people of Nepal as the first miracle of the 21st century.

Effective immediately, the CPA states that illegal carrying of weapons, their display and any kind of attack, threat or intimidation would, henceforth, be punishable by law.

Reiterating the commitment to hold the elections of CA by mid-June, 2007, the CPA prohibits all kinds of illegal use of weapons, raid, ambush, mining, aerial attack, abduction, etc. Within 30 days both the sides will share information regarding the placement of mines and within 60 days they all would be disabled.

The CPA also talks about rehabilitation of conflict victims. It vows to form a high-level Truth and Recon-ciliation Commission to investigate about human rights abuses. It has a provision guaranteeing free passage of civil servants, UN, I/NGO workers across the country. it also has separate provisions dealing with civil and political rights and rights of women and children.

On the issue of implementation and monitoring, the accord states that the UN will be allowed to continue its monitoring of human rights. Likewise, the UN team will be asked to verify and monitor arms and army management, which will be as per the November 8 agreement. It also states that the UN will be asked to observe the CA polls as well.

The CPA also declares that henceforth no parallel institution will exist in the country – which means the Maoists' People's Court, People's Government, parallel tax collection and similar other parallel outfits will cease to function. This effectively ends the existence of two regimes – which the Maoist leaders have often used to justify their extortion, justice dispensation and similar other activities - within the country.

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