People suffering from anarchy, as illustrated by the proverbial tendency of the big fish devouring the smaller ones, first elected Manu, the vaivasvata, to be their king, and allotted one-sixth of grains grown and one-tenth of merchandise as sovereign due. Satisfied by this payment, the kings took upon themselves the responsibility of assuring and maintaining the safety and security of their subjects and of being answerable for the sins of their subjects when the principles of levying just punishment and taxes was violated.

Kautilya

This philosophy underlying the Raj Dharma (religion of the rulers) has been the basis of statecraft in Nepal. A monarchical state since its inception, the governance of the Nepali state is organised around the concept of the monarch as saviour both of the state and its citizens. Monarchy as an institution has been cast in the role of a stabilising force and as a key factor in the emotional integration of the people of Nepal. This concept, however, has increasingly being scrutinised and criticised of late as a consequence of the reconstruction of a national history based on facts rather than fiction.

The monarchy in Nepal has been found to be an institution of misgovernance as far as national polity and economic development is concerned. It has become a factor for destabilisation rather than stabilisation in political development and is now seen as an institution insensitive to the welfare, safety and security of the people. The 1st February 2005 Royal coup proves this contention conclusively. Politics in Nepal today as a consequence has been reduced to the sum and substance of the policy of patrimonialism and discretionary rule. The judiciary has been made compliant to the monarchical decree with religious overtones (Kantipur, 22 November 2005:1). Economic development, on the other hand, has become a narrative of the rhetoric of poverty alleviation and has been left to the responsibility of donors. The excessive centralisation of power by the monarchy has left no room for complacency in the people. And the economic downturn has alarmed the masses for their livelihood and survival is at stake since the state
has declined to take responsibility for them. Political instability and continued violence have been presented as causes of economic disruption and have indeed "increased the powerlessness, isolation and vulnerability of the poor," hastening rural-urban disparities (HMGN/UN, 2005:4).

Indeed, governance has been stifled by traditional discriminatory practices entrenched in statecraft and general indifference as well as resistance by agencies of the state that go against the aspirations of the people. Although it was expected that "Corrupt individuals and convicted criminals should have no place in the His Majesty's Government" (Daschle, 2005:4), King Gyanendra is feeding parasites rather than protecting the interests of the people by "hiring date-expired, apolitical and mafia type" persons, an allegation made even by Royalists (Kathmandu Post, 23 August 2005; Himal Khabarpatrika, 17 September–1 October 2005:38–45). The monarchy is bent on to consolidating its power with the aid of the security forces, neglecting all possible avenues of mediation and reconciliation. It has not reciprocated to the call of the political parties for the reinstatement of the parliament; nor has it responded to the truce declared by the Maoists. Despite increasing popular antipathy towards the monarchy, King Gyanendra is depending on the support of the military. It has ignored the 12-point understanding reached between mainstream political parties and Maoists announced on 22 November (Kathmandu Post, 23 November 2005) for a peaceful political movement as well as the extension of the truce for one another month that was due to expire on 2nd January 2006. This arrangement, in reality, caught the political parties unaware. If and when the Maoists return to violence, the political parties in alliance with the Maoists will be in an uncomfortable position, as the latter do not endorse violence. If the Maoists continue to maintain their commitment to the 12-point understanding and refrain from violence, despite the government's provocation, then there will be little need for King Gyanendra, who rules by decree, to respond to the deepening grievances.

Perhaps this is one of the crucial reasons singled out by the Human Development Report 2004 for the cause of violent insurgency. The Report suggests that the violence "may be attributed to deep grievances steaming from the systematic marginalisation and exclusion of certain ethnic groups, castes and women" from the national mainstream. Ranking Nepal at 140th out of 177 countries covered in the study, the report has revealed the poor state of human development placing at Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.504 for 2004 (UNDP, 2004). The
Nepal specific human development report released on 15 December 2004 estimated the HDI value at an even lower level at 0.471. It puts the HDI in urban areas at 0.581 and rural areas at 0.452 for the year 2001 where some 86 per cent of the people live (UNDP/N, 2004:17). The report has estimated the Human Empowerment Index (HEI) value at 0.463, which is comparable to the HDI and the level of economic empowerment merely at 0.337 reflecting on the dismal opportunities for people to sustain themselves. This situation has been caused by the deliberate state policy of social exclusion and of violation of the human rights of the citizens of the state. The report thus concludes: “exclusion therefore works against the norms of civilised order, damaging both individuals and society as a whole—often irreparably” (UNDP/N 2004:21, 29).

The implication of this situation in the study of human security in Nepal is that it is conspicuous by its absence. This is the case as narrated in the Human Rights Status Report (NHRC, 2003) and several other documents. The underlying theme of this study is the failure of the Nepali state to create a condition for institutionalising democratic space for governance, notwithstanding the fact that the country has undergone cataclysmic changes through mass uprisings in the past. Even during the decade of the post-Jana Andolan in Nepal, the most cherished hope of the people for democratic consolidation with the establishment of pro-poor governance and lawful society was belied as political leadership was transformed to gangestrism, albeit legitimised by electoral processes.

Human security is a concept intricately tied to human rights and human development and cannot be thought about in the absence of the latter two. In a poor and underdeveloped country like Nepal human security can be understood as a situation that can be attained through human development for which democratic governance is an imperative to facilitate the human rights of the citizenry. This study examines certain critical aspects of human development and human rights in Nepali society, as they affect and influence human security in Nepal. In contextualising human security in Nepal, leadership has been taken as central to governance, which is a reflection of the role of the state both in its institutional and functional parameters. This work also examines the functional aspects of the role of the state in providing security and welfare and in overseeing the state of human security in Nepal. This approach suggests the importance of leadership in the conduct of the state since the administration’s attitude and behaviour influence and
shape policymaking that impacts on society. The focus therefore will be on leadership as policymaking authority and its functions in directing governance through state apparatuses by examining legislative measures taken in relations to human security and its impact on people.

Human security is increasingly becoming a key in understanding the state of development of a state. It is now measured through the existence or absence of different roles and functions of the state in relations to ensuring freedoms of choices to a citizenry. The case for human security has been sensitised and made relevant for academic and policy perusal as societal tensions in several countries of the world have erupted into violent conflicts making the lives of people miserable both in terms of physical and material safety. This has fundamentally reversed attention from the state-centric security paradigm of numerous territorial states to emphasis on the safety, security and well-being of the people. For a country in the midst of a militarised domestic conflict, an inquiry into the state of human security has obvious importance. However, the pursuit of such an endeavour is blurred by the conceptual anomaly of the term “human security,” which is ever-expansive and wide-ranging. For the purpose of this study, the leadership function is therefore taken as an instrument in shaping the state of human security in Nepal. Leadership is pivotal in directing the process of governance and implementation of policies a government undertakes.

The socio-political circumstances in which the state and leadership have evolved in Nepal have made them responsible for making the life of the people governed palatable. The role of the people governing the state is examined to determine whether its policymaking processes are sensibly derived from the aspirations and needs of the people or from a makeshift arrangement. The mode of this inquiry therefore will be subjective as well as reflective in character.

This study draws on a range of primary as well as secondary source materials. It is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 looks at the challenges in contextualising human security in a situation of burgeoning conflict and the crisis of state policies that have heightened the insecurities of the people in physical as well as material terms. After a review of some discourses on human security, this chapter attempts to locate their relevance to the Nepali situation by reflecting on the role of the state, leadership and the process of governance as crucial to policymaking for human security in Nepal. Concluding that the state is an imperative to human security, this chapter argues that a prerequisite to human security
remains democracy, with the rule of law becoming instrumental for governance. Reflecting on the Nepali experience, it argues that democracy should be entrusted a leadership committed to the law of the land and answerable to the people.

Chapter 2 assesses critically the constitutive principles of the Nepali state in both theory and practice. An analysis of these constitutive principles on the basis of which the role of the state is cast with the evolution of patrimonial leadership of the dominant group and its hegemony in the realm of the state explains how these inherently exclusivist policies taken by the unitary state impinge on the state of human security in Nepal. When the theological project of governance conversant with the notion of unity and security is posited against democratic principles, the obvious contradictions reveal the contending discourses on human security caused by social exclusion in Nepal.

Chapter 3 discusses the denial of democracy leading to misgovernance with consequent repercussion on the socio-economic situation, making the state virtually dependent on external sources for survival. It examines the affects of poverty and dependency on human security-related issues such as food, health and education, relating this aspect to the growing awareness among people about economic deprivation and marginalisation and the increasing inequality and rural-urban gap. This chapter reviews government policies, plans and programmes regarding poverty alleviation underlined in the Tenth Plan document, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and concludes that the war on poverty is too self-defeating a concept, and has already been overtaken by the war on terrorism in government eyes. This is because not only is the poverty reduction programme wholly and solely funded by external sources, an assembly of donors is also financing counter-insurgency programmes in Nepal. Nepal has thus graduated from the class of dependent development to dependent militarisation.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of the compendium of violence leading to denial of democracy and human rights thereby severely affecting the context of human security in Nepal. It examines the context of insurgency and counter-insurgency following the declaration of national emergency, suspension of the fundamental rights of the people, adoption of an anti-terrorist act providing immunity to the security forces and the militarisation of the social sphere. By empirically analysing the social costs of conflict, this chapter concludes that the policy choices made by the state in the sphere of the protection of the human rights of the
people has been thoroughly dismantled with a series of violations by the security forces in the process of the intensification of counter-insurgency. The consequence of this overriding security sensitivity of the state is discussed against a background of the brutal negligence of universal human rights.

The impact of the brutalisation of the social sphere comprises the burden of the analysis of Chapter 5, which show that human security is not possible without security sector reform in Nepal that has been instrumentalised by the state to advance its narrow interests of regime security. In the course of the counter-insurgency mobilisation, security forces provided with immunity have inculcated the view that they are above the rule of law and have thus become the grossest violator of the fundamental human rights of the people. Security sector reform is indispensable to preserving human rights and promoting human security. And, reform in the security sector can be achieved only in the presence of democracy and a leadership committed to reform with transparency and responsibility to oversight agencies and the development of consensual civil-military relations.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter and attempts to synthesise policies and practices undertaken by the government and to interpret their impact on human security concerns in Nepal. The chapter will recapitulate the trends discernible in Nepal and discuss the measures needed for mainstreaming discourses on human security on the basis of the perception of the people. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the implications of the neglect of democracy and the impact of its denial on elements of human security in Nepal.

References

