

OPINION

Nepal Between Reform and Recklessness

Nepal’s political rupture may have been necessary, but genuine democratic reform requires accountability, humility, due process and the courage to confront the damage left behind.

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important truth. Nepal's old political order had become so tired, corrupt, and self-protective that a rupture was almost inevitable. He is right that many people in the traditional intellectual circle have struggled to adjust to a leader like Balen Shah. He is also right that a lot of the old elite still reads every break from political ritual as if it were a threat to democracy itself. But that is only one side of the picture. The other side is the cost of the rupture, the unanswered questions it leaves behind, and the danger of turning political excitement into a moral excuse.

That is where Dr. Sanjeev Uprety's view becomes especially valuable. Uprety is not simply cheering the new government or repeating the usual excitement around Gen Z politics. He recognizes that the old parties failed badly and that the new leadership has shown some encouraging signs. But he also warns that Balen's silence, his distance from parliament, and his refusal to explain himself in public may not be signs of discipline at all. They may be signs of arrogance. That is a warning worth taking seriously. A leader cannot endlessly claim that silence is wisdom. Sometimes silence is just silence, and in politics silence can also look like contempt.

My own position has remained simple. I have never said Nepal is gone. I do not believe in that language. Whatever was destroyed was destroyed, and that is tragic. But the country is not gone. What I have argued is that reform must be real, not theatrical. Politics is more than performance (my own Op-Ed in Nepal Touch Canada). If the guilty are to be punished, it must be through due process. If settlements are to be removed, it must be done with planning, dignity, and humanity. That is why I criticized the sukumbasi eviction (I wrote so many social media posts on this relating to Op-Ed in Nepal Touch). I was not opposing reform. I was opposing careless reform.

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destruction of public and private property, including heritage sites and state buildings. Those losses cannot simply be absorbed into a heroic story and then forgotten. We need to ask the hard questions. Who organized the arson? Who benefited from the chaos? Why were children in school uniforms brought to the streets? These are not side questions. They are central questions if we are serious about democratic responsibility.

This is where I think Sapkota's argument becomes too rosy. He is useful when he explains why the old intellectual class is so uncomfortable with Balen's style. That part makes sense. But the problem is that he seems to treat the new political moment mainly as a liberation from stale habits, as though that alone is enough. It is not. Yes, the old guard deserves criticism. Yes, a younger leader with an unconventional style can shake up a stagnant system. But that does not mean every criticism of Balen is just reactionary nostalgia. Some criticism is democratic. Some criticism comes from concern, not resentment. Some of it is simply the refusal to forget accountability.

Dr. Uprety's point about Balen's silence is important precisely because it leaves two possibilities open. Maybe Balen is silent because he is arrogant and feels that no MP, minister, journalist, or citizen really deserves a reply. Or maybe he is silent because he does not feel confident in public speaking and wants to preserve his mystique. The difference matters. If it is the second, the problem can be fixed. Public speaking is a skill. A leader does not need to become a great orator to govern well. He can speak less and still speak clearly. But if it is the first, then the problem is much more dangerous. An arrogant leader eventually creates his own downfall. History has never been kind to that kind of pride.

That is why I think the debate should not be reduced to whether one is for or against Balen. The real issue is whether the new leadership can be bold without becoming dismissive, fast without becoming careless, and strong without becoming authoritarian. It is possible to support the new government and still insist that it behave like a democratic government. It is possible to reject the old parties and still demand accountability from the new leadership. It is possible to want a rupture and still refuse to accept impunity.

That is where Bishnu Sapkota, Dr. Sanjeev Uprety, and I meet. We do not meet in tone, but in concern. Sapkota reminds us that the old political order cannot simply be



some people ask whether anything is left in Nepal after the fires and destruction. I do not accept the idea that Nepal is gone. The destruction was real, and the pain is real, but the country is still here. What matters now is whether we can move toward reform without erasing memory and without pretending that violence somehow becomes noble just because it is attached to political change. We cannot build a better future by refusing to ask who burned what, who organized what, and who should answer for it.

Nepal does need a rupture. But rupture is not enough. What the country needs now is reform with responsibility, energy with humility, and leadership that can speak when necessary, listen when required, and act without turning politics into spectacle or self-worship. If the new government can do that, it may still justify the hope placed in it. If it cannot, then the crisis will not have ended. It will only have changed its form.

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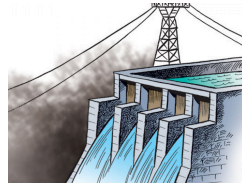
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