

Interview with Nepal Vice President Parmanand Jha about the effect of UPF's programs

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“Nepal and Korea resemble each other. We will use Korea’s economic growth as a model to perfect a democratic society.”

Conflict still continues despite the cessation of 239 years of monarchy...

Need for continuous “Peace Movements” in Nepal, a family-centered culture

The Nepali government was nothing but supportive of the Multicultural Family Educational Peace Festival, which drew a crowd of about 70,000 Nepali citizens. Nepal’s official name is the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. In 2007, Nepal ceased to be a monarchy and on May 28th, 2008, the nation claimed a new start as a republic state. A constitution is being written in order to solidify the nation as a democracy, constant conflict with the opposing party, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal’s (Maoist) (CPN-M), has brought about political chaos. Nepal, which is currently one of the world’s poorest nations, is home to about 120 races and languages, which are constantly in conflict. This year’s peace festival shone a bright light on Nepali society. On February 20th, the day before the festival, we met with Vice President Parmanand Jha Nepal in his office to discuss the political climate of Nepal and the meaning of the peace festival.

Question: You are giving the keynote address at the Multicultural Peace Festival, the largest scale event this country has ever seen, with a crowd of 70,000 Nepal citizens. What does this Peace Festival mean to you?

“With 70,000 attendees, this is the largest scale event ever to be held in Nepal. Nepal has already established the culture of the mass marriage ceremony. We held one just last month in Kathmandu for about 100 to 150 couples. In traditional Nepali culture, we have what is known as the ‘God of Marriage.’ The culture of the mass marriage ceremony is a way of inheriting and continuing that culture. The mass marriage ceremony of the Multicultural Peace Festival is very similar to traditional Nepali culture, so I am greatly looking forward to it. I hope that through this event, many more Nepali citizens can participate and help to continue to make it bigger and bigger.”

Question: You refer to Rev. Sun Myung Moon as “Father Moon,” and say that he left a deep impression

on you. Can you tell us more about your relationship with him?

“A long time ago, I visited Korea and had lunch with Rev. Moon at the Cheon Jung Goong in Cheong Pyeong, Gyeonggi-do. Out of all of the people attending, Rev. Moon embraced me the most warmly. He kept repeating to me, ‘We must achieve world peace.’ That moment, when our hearts became one, is carved deeply into my memory, and is a moment that I will never forget. Rev. Moon’s ideas and concerns about world peace and harmony left a deep impression on me. Ever since then, I began to refer to Rev. Moon as ‘Father Moon.’ I feel that his peace philosophy continues to spread throughout the world, even now.”

Question: One of the many political parties of Nepal, the Family Party, stresses the ideals of peace and harmony in the family. I have heard that problems in Nepali families have become a social issue. What is your opinion on the work of the Family Party?

“Nepal is home to a staggering 31 political parties. The Family Party currently occupies two seats and will continue to grow in the future. The Family Party practices good teamwork and works well with the other parties. As far as Nepal’s family structure concerns, many husbands often go abroad to work for two or three years, leaving their wives behind, which sometimes results in family breakdown. However, I believe that Nepal will overcome this issue, as the Nepali wives are very monogamous and are of deep religious faith.”

Question: It has already been seven years since Nepal ceased to be a monarchy and established a democratic government. What political and economic changes have taken place since then? What sort of work have you been doing, and what has your role as the Vice President been like?

“Until very recently, Nepal was a monarchist nation. Our tourism industry began growing about 40 years ago, when people started to hear about our lovely natural landscapes and beautiful heritage. Our citizens followed suit and began to visit other countries as well. Thanks to this cultural exchange, our collective knowledge on democracy and human rights began to change. When we compared ourselves to first world countries, we came to understand that our nation was very underdeveloped in regards to human rights and other issues. As our citizens worked to improve the protection of human rights in our nation, it became possible to abolish the monarchy and establish a democracy. However, we have still been unable to put down the roots of democracy, and we are still working hard to establish a constitution.”

We Must Prioritize Political Stability and Economic Development

Question: Nepal currently has an illiteracy rate of 40%. According to a recent (January 22nd) study, the establishment of the democratic constitution has been put on hold once again (Several items on the agenda have still not been introduced, and the Nepalese Constituent Assembly is in danger of dissolving by 2017). It seems that a decrease in illiteracy would help to settle a democracy. What is your opinion on this from a governmental standpoint?

“It is true that Nepal has a high illiteracy rate, especially in the rural areas and the Himalayan zone. In order to resolve this issue, we need to prioritize political stability and economic development. I believe that the establishment of a constitution will become the backdrop for democratic economic growth. When our political status is stabilized, foreign investors will be able to invest in our nation without fear. Thus, we plan to focus on the establishment of our constitution. Our Constituent Assembly is made up of 601 selected officials. We have decided on the first item, and are currently compiling the necessary articles and divisions, and plan to edit it from there. Each political party has its own opinions, making the process quite difficult, but we plan to do our best to reflect on and adjust the constitution as best as we can.”

Question: It has been 41 years since Korea and Nepal established diplomatic ties. What is the relationship between the Korean and Nepali governments?

“Nepal believes in democracy, and is working hard to establish a constitution. We are putting in a lot of effort into bringing about economic development, but it is still not enough. Korea is a wonderful model of rapid economic growth. Korea began garnering foreign interest and tourists from about 10 years ago. Many Nepali citizens have shown a strong interest in Korea as well. As a fellow democratic nation, I look forward to the continuation of our diplomatic friendship with Korea. I hope that Korea and Nepal can form a contentious friendship. Like Korea, Nepal is also striving to cement good relationships with other nations. (Nepal is located between India and China). In particular, I believe that the bi-weekly direct flights between Korea and Kathmandu are a great change. I believe that it is proof of the close relationship our nations have developed.”

Question: We heard that you said that the Family Federation and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) played important roles in trade between Korea and Nepal. What sort of role do you believe the Family Federation and UPF will play in the relationship between the two nations?

“I visited Korea on an invitation from UPF by Rev. Moon in 2010. At the time, a mass marriage ceremony was being held for 15,000 couples at Sun Moon University. I remember Rev. Moon’s keynote address about the role of world peace. Korea and Nepal are continuing to grow closer together as friends, as the number of Nepali citizens working in Korea continues to grow. The number of Nepali citizens living in Korea will continue to increase, and the relationship between our nations will continue to improve.”

Question: Last year, the Korean government began investment in the “New Village Project” in Nepal. What is the result of that investment?

“Up to about 40 years ago, Korea and Nepal were in similar economic circumstances, until Korea experienced rapid economic growth. I believe that the key to Korea’s economic growth bears a significant meaning for Nepal. In order to understand the secret of Korea’s growth, the people of Nepal were able to meet with and listen to Korean ambassadors, and we were able to invite Korean people from UPF to our offices to hear their advice. In particular, the Korean government has supported Nepal in many ways, and I believe that they will continue to help our economic growth for a long time to come.”