We wish to Learn the Paradigm Change that Korea has Pursued

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An Interview with Ek Nath Dhakal, Nepal Minister for the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction



n Nepal has created living foundations for various people along the Himalaya Mountains, also called the 'roof of the world.' Last year on the 25th of April, a powerful earthquake with the magnitude of 7.8 hit the surrounding area of the capital Kathmandu, causing 9,000 people to die and 170,000 people to lose their homes. Since then, ten months have gone by, but scars of the big earthquake still remain here and there. Nepal is currently very busy in restoring the damage from the earthquake.

Ek Nath Dhakal (42), the Nepal Minister for the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, revealed, "We are staging mega-campaigns on a governmental level, devoting ourselves to restoring the damage. Seven world heritage sites designated by UNESCO and the pride of Nepal, including the 9-Story Dharahara Tower, were destroyed; but are in the process of being restored to their original state. Our goal is to finish by the year 2018."

Minister Dhakal, who visited Korea and attended the International Leadership Conference held at the Lotte Hotel World in Jamsil, Seoul, from the 12th of February to the 16th, passed on the earthquake restoration initiatives through his interview with the Current Event Journal. He said, "Many people are still staying in temporary shelters. Schools have collapsed, so students study in tents." Minister Dhakal expressed his gratitude by saying, "Korea is sending very much aid. Volunteers including university students and medical teams are helping us," and revealed, "This time I visited Korea, and met four congressmen asking for support for Nepal."

Reelected as congressman and positioned as youngest minister twice

Minister Dhakal is a famous politician in Nepal. He was elected as a congressman in 2008 in his mid-thirties, and succeeded in being reelected in 2013. During his days as a newly-elected member, on the 16th of May, 2012, he

participated in the cabinet, serving as an invited Minister of the Poverty Relief and Support Department. Last year on the 24th of December, he was appointed as the Minister of the Peace Revival Group by Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, thus expanding his political influence. The fact that he has served twice as the youngest Minister of the Peace Revival Group explains his current status very well.

Minister Dhakal is called "Korean expert" in the political world of Nepal. After his first visit in 1999, he has visited 100 times over 17 years. During his days of attending the university, he met the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, and thus interacted with Korea. From the year of 2004, he also served as the Nepal President of the Family Federation. He said, "I have visited on personal occasions and even on governmental levels. After inviting 500 VIPs, including four former prime ministers, as well as the current prime minister, I introduced Korea to them. I believe that through such events, the relationship between Korea and Nepal has grown closer."

Then what does the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction do, exactly? Minister Dhakal explained his role in three parts. He first revealed, "Nepal went through a civil war for ten years, from 1996 to 2006. Many people lost their lives. In Nepal, there are many groups that have been made public, but there still remain certain underground organizations. We must meet all such organizations to hold peace talks."

He also said, "Three months ago, a new constitution was announced officially. We have to make an effort so that this constitution can be applied in real life." Finally, he emphasized, "For the realistic development of Nepal, infrastructures, such as airports, highways and hospitals, must be established."

"To realize economic growth by following the Korean development model"

It is said that Nepal is taking even more interest in Korea as time goes by. One of many reasons is that Korea was looked upon as a model of development before Nepal, a country with future development ahead. Minister Dhakal explained, "Korea is the only country that went from a nation receiving help to a nation giving help within half of a century. It is not a big country, but has become a great economic power, ranking 14th in the world. Also, just as Korea is located between China and Japan, Nepal is located between China and India. Nepal wishes to learn the paradigm change that Korea has pursued so far."

The wish for Korea to invest more in Nepal was also expressed. Minister Dhakal revealed, "Many markets have opened, such as automobiles, mobile phones and hotels. The newly-established constitution can help

Korean companies do business in Nepal." He also showed a high interest in Nepalese youths coming to Korea. He said, "For the reconstruction of our country, we wish to learn the construction and civil engineering technology of Korea."

After pointing out the existing circumstances where some Nepalese people do not receive fair treatment, he made his position clear by saying, "The rights of laborers must be respected." In Korea, an unwelcoming gaze often greets foreign laborers.

He further requested, "Do not look at it only from an economic view. People from Nepal are making money and receiving economic help in Korea, and Korea is receiving help from the labor of the Nepalese people. It is a win-win situation. I wish for the government and companies in Korea to understand that the Nepalese people come to Korea to help in the development of Korea."

Surprisingly, the current presidents of Korea and Nepal are both women. Last year in Nepal, the inauguration of President Bidhya Devi Bhandari took place on the 29th of October. Just like President Park Geun-Hye, she is the first female president of Nepal. Of course the political structures are different, and the parameters of authority differ. In Nepal, the Prime Minister executes most authority as the head of the government. Be that as it may, it's now being evaluated that the inauguration of a prominent feminist of Nepal as the president in such a male-centered society bears a great significance.

About the election of the first female president, Minister Dhakal said, "I am greatly proud." He explained, "In Nepal, not only the first female president has taken office, but also the first female Chairman of the National Assembly, as well. This is due to the new constitution. It clearly states that 33% of the Assembly must consist of women. Many more female leaders are to appear. If the power of women increases, the whole country shall also gain power." Minister Dhakal took one step further and predicted, "It may be possible for a president from another race to be elected in the future."

In Nepal, there are 123 languages and 126 ethnic groups. Minister Dhakal revealed, "To gather all of these people and create a peaceful Nepal is my mission." He also emphasized, "As the Minister responsible of reviving Nepal, I am going to make Nepal able to march on all by itself. By doing my utmost, I will help so that Nepal can set the development in Korea as its model, and accomplish economic growth, overcoming the damage of the earthquakes.