

SASNET/UPF Seminar

Where is the revolution? Towards a Post-National Politics of Social Justice

– a seminar on the political development in Nepal

Professor David Ludden

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Department of History at New York University, USA

Dr. Katak Malla

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Mr. Vijaykant Lal Karna

Ambassador of Nepal to Denmark
(with a coming side accreditation to Sweden)

Moderator: Professor Staffan Lindberg

Department of Sociology, Lund University

Thursday 23 October 2008, 19.30–21.00

Venue: Auditorium (Hörsalen), Lund University's
Centre for Languages and Literature (SOL-Centrum)
Helgonabacken 14, Lund

Organised by:

Association of Foreign Affairs at Lund University (UPF)
Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET)



Prof. **David Ludden** will talk about "Where is the Revolution? Towards a Post-National Politics of Social Justice".

Abstract: How should we think about today's political transition in Nepal? To address this critical question, we need a conceptual framework, and our most popular choice would be to think inside national history, thus to consider the nation from a perspective anchored in the capital. I want to describe another perspective: it is a post-national framework for thinking about the politics of social justice. National thinking appears in rather different light when we step outside, and my work has for some years now focused on mapping analytical spaces that include the nation without being defined by national territorialism. Nepal's transition is unfolding inside (1) South Asian regionalism, (2) a growing collection of modern states transformed by rustic revolutions, and (3) contemporary globalization. These three contexts highlight the role of urban-rural and inter-regional inequity in generating radical politics. Struggles for social justice that originate in deprived places can successfully transmit their energies to the capital—which they do in various ways – but distances remain profound which separate 'the nation' defined in the capital from 'the local' defined in rustic towns, villages, slums, swamps, mountains, and forests. Local struggles for social justice remain local even when they provide a political basis for radical change in national state regimes. This defines the basic challenge for urbane politicians.

Prof. Ludden received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 1978 and was Professor of History there from 1999-2008. His research concentrates on South Asia and on histories of development in very long-term perspective, focusing on economic development, agrarian conditions, health environments, empire, inequality, and social conflict. His monographs are *India and South Asia: A Short History* (2002), *An Agrarian History of South Asia* (1999), and *Peasant History in South India* (1985). His major edited volumes are *Capitalism in Asia: Readings from the Journal of Asian Studies* (2004) and *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical Histories, Contested Meanings, and the Globalisation of South Asia* (2002). He has served as President of the Association for Asian Studies and has received research awards from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2003), American Council of Learned Societies (2002), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (1990).



Dr. **Katak Malla** will talk about "Nepal from monarchy to republic: the ongoing political process".

Abstract: Nepal's changing political order since the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections in April 2008 will be the focus of my presentation. This will include the basic platforms of the major parties, election model and standard. In addition, political parties' position in the CA, making and breaking of alliances by the parties for the purpose of political appointments and/or forming the government will be addressed. The role of the President and Prime Minister under the emerging model for the governance of Nepal will be also highlighted, including the most contentious issues ahead for the republic (e.g., constitution building, restructuring Nepal into a federal state, establishing an inclusive form of democracy) or issues in the political spotlight. Any questions from the participants relating to the issues mentioned here will be dealt with.

Dr. Katak Malla comes from the Department of Law at Stockholm University. He defended his doctoral dissertation on "The Legal Regime of International Watercourses: Progress and Paradigms Regarding Uses and Environmental Protection" in 2005. The thesis deals with the law of international watercourses that are shared by two or more States, the legal regimes of which have evolved significantly, especially in the past two centuries. Dr. Malla also teaches on International Watercourse Law, and has been engaged with the Masters Course on International Environmental Law at Stockholm University since 1998. Besides this he is the Vice President of the Sweden Nepal Society (Sverige Nepal-föreningen).

HE the Ambassador of Nepal, Mr. **Vijaykant Lal Karna** will present his views on the political development in his home country.

Mr. Vijaykant Lal Karna has a solid academic background. Before becoming Ambassador, he was working for 20 years as Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Tribhuvan University in Kirtipur.

He has been teaching Political Development, and Ethnic and Conflict studies to post graduate students. During the same time, he has also been the Editor for a number of magazines such as Young Herald, The Independent, and Everest Herald. Besides, he has been working for many years as a devoted rights activist for minority rights, especially for Madhesis, Dalits, Janjatis and religious minorities.

During the period 1979 to 1990, he was imprisoned several times and spent all together two and half years in various jails and police detention centers. Again in the beginning of the April movement in 2006, he was imprisoned for 17 days.

In 2007, he was engaged in a number of peace initiatives. On behalf of the World Bank/DFID, he was Team Leader for a group preparing a Madhesi chapter in the Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment Report. He was also a team member of a group writing on Post Conflict Recovery and Reconstruction in Nepal, for the UNDP Human development report 2007, and Facilitator for a US AID/OTI sponsored project for promoting communal harmony through local level dialogue between Madhesis and hill groups living in the Terai.

Other activities have included being Executive Member for the Nepal Election Observation committee; Executive Member of the National Coalition against Corruption; Executive Member of the Friends for Peace; Ex-President for the human rights organization JAGHRIT Nepal; Ex-Coordinator for the Madhesi Human Rights alliance; and Member of Nepal University Teachers Association (NUTA).