

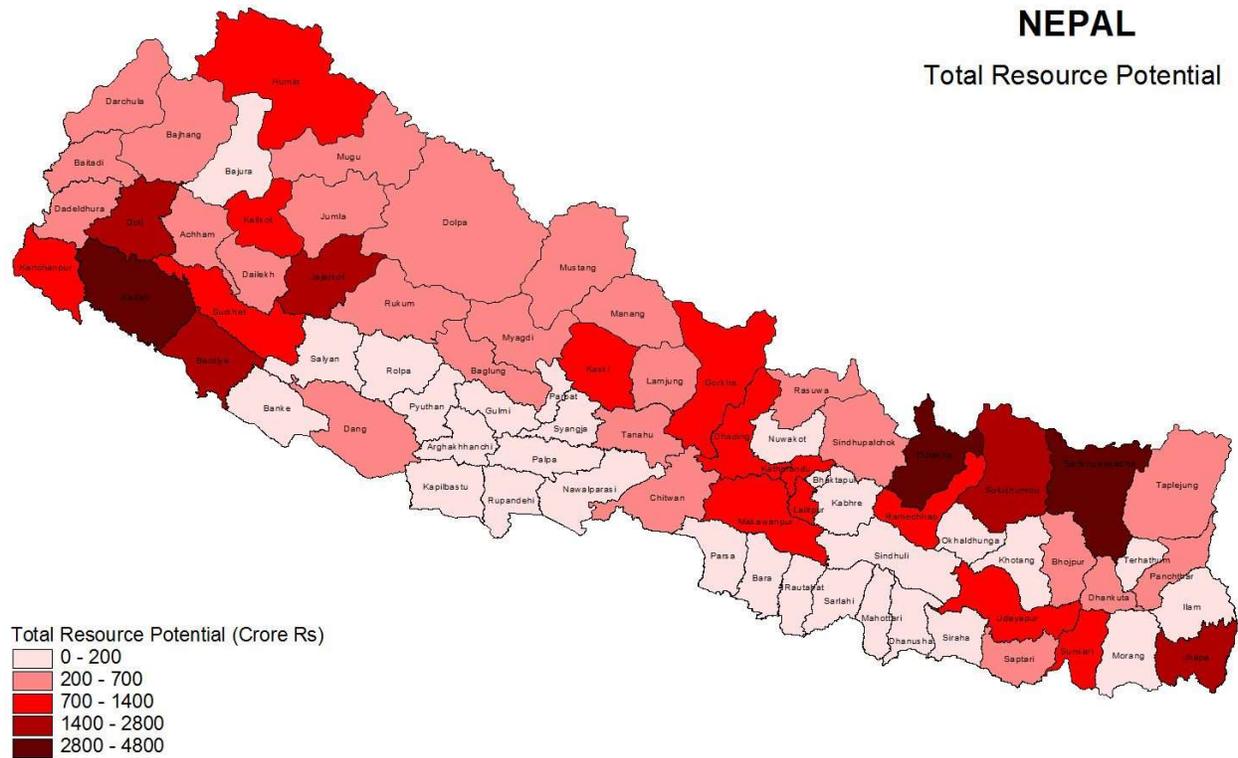
Caste based or Natural Resources Prosperous State

(Photo of Author)

Sunil Pokhrel

The Constitutional Assembly in Nepal is working on the transformation of state from unitary to federal system. The Nepalese people are showing the concerns that the CA should focus on: Why and what for the restructuring of state? Mainly, people are more concerned about the inclusion of all Dalit and downtrodden peoples that should be given priority in the restructuring of state. However, the state restructuring committee has announced the major agendas of restructuring focused on caste and language identity giving less priority to the poverty, Dalit, and/or resources. If major priority has been given to caste/language identity then the issue of downtrodden and Dalit issue may suffer more. Therefore, policymakers should be more sensitive on selecting the priority of the agendas. Generally speaking, the special rights if provided to caste and cultural identity based groups then the majority of benefits will be taken by the rich and powerful individuals/families within that cultural group leaving the poor and Dalit into the same vulnerable situation. The restructuring based on the caste/cultural identity will create new power centers from one to fourteen leaving poor and Dalit more defenseless position. In many countries the cultural identity issues are the starting point of the conflicts in the society.

Later, these conflicts used to transfer into the rights, ownerships, and fair distribution of the natural resources.



Natural Resource Potential Map developed by: Sunil Kumar Pokhrel

Social developments in under developing countries are very slow. Because of the low level of education, believing in rebirth, and untouchability practices; caste and religion are major yardsticks in the decision making process rather than rules or logics. Many studies indicate that the organizing people based on the caste and culture or spreading religious provocation is easier than political ideology or intellectual philosophy. Currently in Nepal, the caste and cultural identity issues are emerged as a number one subject in state restructuring process. Because of this poverty and Dalit issues are getting less priority. The issues of identity with special rights are growing because of the interest groups within that community. Is it a democratic to make

reservation of certain political posts to some specific caste? Freedom of speech and thought, Multicultural society, Positive inter linkage among castes, Multiparty system, Judicial supremacy, and Special rights and protection for left out people are major basic requirements of the democratic system. Thus, in democratic system, any political or bureaucratic post should not reserve or assign to certain caste or cultural person. Therefore, the benefits of natural resources should be linked to the peoples' employment and development giving proper respect and dignity to their caste and culture.

The under developing country like Nepal has comparative advantages in agriculture and natural resources. It is extremely difficult for Nepal to compete with industrialized countries such as India or China. Similarly, we may dream but practically impossible to compete with technology giant developed countries like Japan or USA. Therefore, the extractions of the natural resources are the only option left for Nepal for her development. The caste and cultural identity issues are important in restructuring of the state for their promotion and protection but the real concern of people in restructuring is their welfare, employment, and development. Naming the new province based on cast or culture or rights of self determination may provide self respect to their caste or culture but in long run peoples' development and happiness can only be found on the proper extraction, distribution, and use of the natural resources with equitable access to the poor and Dalit. Likewise, the proper and scientific cooperation and distribution of benefits between federal and province can make the positive change in the society.

The map shown above indicates the natural resource income in each district. Based on this analysis and above resource map, Kailali is the richest district in the natural resource potential followed by Sankhuwasabha, Solukhumbu, Dolakha, Kaski, Manang, Mustang etc. In contradictory, Terai districts from Banke to Saptari (except Dang and Chitwan) are poorest in the

natural resource income. In conclusion, Sunsari to Jhapa and Kanchanpur to Bardia as well as most of the mountain and hill districts are rich in the natural resources potential.

However, the population pressure is in Kathmandu and all Terai districts which are most important for the extraction for the natural resources.

This shows that the center of the natural resources and the center of the population density are in different points and without making good coordination the state restructuring will not be successful.

The major issue in state restructuring is to address all peoples who lie under the poverty line.

The settlements of extremely poor people are in the Terai districts. However, the eight districts (Kanchanpur, Kailali, Bardia, Dang, Rupendehi, Chitwan, Sunsari, and Jhapa) have abundant amount of the natural resources and the rest Terai districts have very scarce quantity. The second important issue is to address the Dalit who are settled in all over the country.

There should be positive inter linkage among the natural resource potential, population density, population of poor people settlement, and population of Dalit settlement for the peaceful transformation. These positives inter linkage leads to the prosperity and development of people.

The settlement of language and caste do not attract the natural resources potential. Similarly, river or mountain does not recognize the birthplace of any specific caste or culture. These are just a natural happening process. For example, the Machhapuchhre Himal cannot be relocated in the Terai Sirah. These are the natural god gift. Likewise, the benefits of the natural resources can be distributed but it cannot be relocated. Therefore, in making decision on the restructuring, we should try to build each province resourceful.

Armed Conflict affected countries due to the natural resources	
Country	Cause of Conflict
Afghanistan	Diamond, Opium
Angola	Oil, Diamond
Burma (Myanmar)	Timber, Tin, Opium
Cambodia	Timber, Gems
Columbia	Oil, Gold
Congo (People's republic)	Oil
Congo	Copper, Gold, Diamond
Indonesia (Ache)	Natural Gas
Indonesia (West Papua)	Copper, Gold
Liberia	Timber, Diamond, Iron, Coffee, Rubber, Gold
Morocco	Oil

There will be high possibility of emergence of conflict if we could not make proper balance between the resource and new province. Because in most of the conflict affected countries, the major issue of conflicts is in the ownership and use of natural resources which are more severe than the other conflicts shown in **Table above**. The caste and cultural identity demand is only the elephant teeth.

Each democratic and progressive party should cross the line of caste for peoples' interest. All people have same red blood and one caste i.e. humanity. People should not limit their thought and act within their limited circle of caste. People's happiness and their development are the

most concern for each human being. If not, people start to reemerge as the purity in caste and culture to get the special reservation for each caste. If this happen, then our society will return back to hundreds of year back in terms of human development. If the natural resources are not made the basis in restructuring then many provinces, due to the lack of resources, could not fulfill their administrative cost and therefore, the province could not address the problem of poor, Dalit, and infrastructure development which leads to new round of conflicts in the country. In past we had already suffered from the Maoist armed conflicts and lost more than 15,000 lives. If the natural resources issues are not addressed properly in restructuring, then there will be a high probability of the emergence of new round of resource conflict that may be more severe than earlier.

References: Department of Energy, Department of Mines, Department of Forrest, Central bureau of Statistics Government of Nepal

Website: www.nrpnepal.com