



A second chance for Nepal's young democracy

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(mains GS 2: India and its neighborhood- relations & Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.)

Context:

- It can be said that the only constant in Nepali politics is 'unpredictability'.
- Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli briskly dissolved the Lower House of the federal Parliament on December 20, 2020.
- The Supreme Court reinstated the dissolved Parliament on February 23, 2021 and disputed the legal status of Nepal Communist Party (a merged entity of Communist Party of Nepal-ML and Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre).

Nepal's young democracy:

- Nepal's democratic transition has been shaped through the efforts and sacrifices of common citizens and leaders.
- The expectation was that the forgotten Nepali would soon get something better than the discriminatory political culture that started way back in 2015 with the new Constitution and selective political manoeuvrings.

The problem of undermining democracy:

- While it was time to deepen the footprints of the key institutions of democracy, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli tried to make himself a bigger institution than the Constitution and Parliament.
- To grow beyond a permissible stature in a functional democracy without misinterpreted nationalism, vulnerable Presidential, federal system and flawed decision-making processes, is almost impossible.
- The recent episode of dissolving the Parliament only undermined the democratic spirit and dampened the prospects of stability and equitable growth in the country even further.

Misguided political culture:

- The obsession with the positioning of India and China, more so with the abolition of the monarchy, has been a survival game in Nepali politics.
- The tendency to raise the bogey of the “hostile” neighbour has weakened politics and has failed the idea of representing constituent interests.
- It would be helpful to reckon the present round of serious institutional crisis as the culmination of an accountability-free political culture.
- Nepal’s leadership also misunderstood institutional processes where the successes or failures of decisions are attributed to outsiders, instead of opting for probity in public life and owning the outcomes.

Constitutional provisions:

- Among the key factors of the ongoing political stalemate in Nepal are certain rigid constitutional provisions that have made it possible for Mr. Oli to take cover behind a shield and continue.
- Instead of incorporating the provision of a no-confidence motion in its true spirit as a multi-party democracy, Nepal gets an unusual clause (Article 100(4)) in its new Constitution.
- Article 100(4) allows a no-confidence motion only two years after the formation of the government and even this can happen only when one fourth of the total number of existing members of the House of Representatives may table a motion of no-confidence in writing that the House has no confidence in the Prime Minister.
- Article 100(5) is even more perplexing which necessitates the motion of no-confidence shall also indicate the name of a member proposed for the Prime Minister.

Overcoming the challenge is not easy:

- Overcoming such constitutional challenges is surely very tough for the three leading parties (Nepali Congress, Maoist Centre and Janata Samajbadi Party) seen in the race to bring the current government down.
- Even to exercise the choice of a no-confidence motion, two parties of these three have to be on the same front for getting the magical number of 68 Parliamentarians.
- With no consensus or ethical obligations among the wary political parties, the hiatus is likely to sustain itself.
- The three major parties opposing Oli have 142 seats in Parliament, a number that is well sufficient to end the deadlock, enter into a post-Oli era and form a new government.

The way out:

- The political muddle apart, this is no time for elections, especially with a second wave of COVID-19 infections.
- Nepal also stares at a lack of sufficient numbers of vaccines which has left the population vulnerable.

- Also, good governance cannot be ensured by a government that is caught up in survivalist compulsions.
- The best way forward would be in giving democracy a good chance.
- For now, this can be made possible by the political parties alone.
- They have to aspire to ensure peace, progress and stability; the easiest option would be to work towards a consensus government with all the major parties joining hands and running it collectively.