

People's Multiparty Democracy: Marxist Foundation of Democracy and Human Rights

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ABSTRACT

Madan Bhandari's People's Multiparty Democracy (PMPD), adopted by the Fifth General Convention of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN [UML]), constitutes the programmatic framework of the Nepali revolution. It may be regarded as the culmination of four decades of the party's accumulated experience since its establishment in 1949, and as the result of the creative application of Marxism within the specific conditions of Nepal. PMPD seeks to integrate socio-economic transformation with the principles of multiparty competitive democracy, civil liberties, human rights, and socialism. While classical Marxist-Leninist state theory prioritizes class power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, PMPD recognizes democracy and human rights as integral components of the socialist project. This article critically examines capitalist democracy on the theoretical basis of Marxist state theory, and analyzes the dimensions of socialist democracy, human liberation, human rights, and multiparty competition from a historical-materialist perspective. In addition, it discusses the democratic and human rights-oriented character of PMPD. The study draws upon the works of various Marxist scholars from around the world, the writings, reports, and proposals of Bhandari, as well as the author's published and unpublished articles and writings. It also considers the efforts and experiences undertaken to establish democracy and human rights as the principal pillars of multiparty democracy. This article seeks to situate PMPD as a significant Marxist concept developed through the practical application of Marxism in Nepal, and to present it as a distinctive Marxist model of socialist transformation grounded in a competitive multiparty system.

Introduction

The various strategies employed within the Nepali communist movement have informed the theoretical development of People's Multiparty Democracy (PMPD), a concept shaped by the country's political-economic conditions, the contemporary global political landscape, the expansion of constitutional multiparty democracy, and the evolving character of the class struggle.

This concept was propounded by Bhandari and subsequently established as the guiding principle of the party at the Eighth General Convention of the CPN (UML), held from 17–26 February 2009.

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) adopted multiparty system and human rights based on the document titled "People's Multiparty Democracy: A Program of the Nepali Revolution" presented by Bhandari at the Fifth National General Convention

of the CPN (UML), held from 27 January to 2 February 1993. The principal pillars of PMPD include multiparty competition, periodic elections, civil liberties, human rights, and socialist-oriented economic transformation (Bhandari, 1993b). At times, people consider an ideology that does not accommodate multiparty democracy or human rights, a perception that leads to the conflation of the Marxist governance with the Soviet model. However, Karl Marx himself engaged critically with the concept of “human rights”—encompassing freedom, property, religion, and equality—as articulated through the French Revolution (Marx, 1844:13). In this line of thought, Marx seemed to have understood these rights as characteristic of liberal-bourgeois society: formal and legal freedoms are granted, yet genuine socio-economic liberation is withheld.

If “human rights” are understood in terms of human dignity, freedom, equality, and freedom from exploitation, such concerns are in fact present throughout much of Marx’s body of work, even if the term itself rarely appears in explicit directions.

Marx does not prescribe a single model of revolution or form of state power. He maintained that the basis of his analysis was the development of capitalism in Europe, and that his theorization of revolution was correspondingly grounded in that context. This is illustrated vividly in his correspondence with the Russian revolutionary and socialist thinker Vera Zasulich in 1881. In response to her question: “Does capitalism have to come first to bring socialism to Russia, or can the traditional rural communities of Russia transition directly to socialism?”—Marx replied: “This is not a rule that applies all over the world, a *Mir* [Russian traditional village commune] can become the ‘fulcrum’ of socialism” (Marx, 1881). At this juncture, Marx’s response makes it evident that the path of social development is not uniform, but contingent upon the specific conditions of any society in the course of history of human civilization.

Prior to the socialist revolution in Russia, insights of *Das Kapital* held that a capitalist phase was a necessary precondition for socialism. Explicating this precedence of capitalism in the process of historical development of human history, Marx asserted that his letter to Zasulich that the developmental trajectory outlined in *Das Kapital* was based on the experience of Western Europe (Marx, 1881). The eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution in Europe immensely transformed agrarian societies into urban-centric power centers, bringing in people from rural to urban areas for jobs, saving their time for household chores, and creating modern middle class with control over resources.

In this context, Bhandari (1991) asserted that the “creative and dynamic aspect of Marxism and emphasized a strictly exact and objectively verifiable analysis of the relations of classes and the concrete features peculiar to each historical situation” (174). Marx held that the form and path of social revolution in any country must accord with objective reality. According to Marx and Engels (1848), the development of European society is traced through the stages of primitive communism, feudalism, and capitalism. They contended that the capitalist system negates humanity. Drawing on a comprehensive study of Marx’s unpublished works, Saito (2024) observed ‘In my research into the vast corpus of his (Marx’s) unpublished writing, I was able to uncover an entirely new aspect of his vision of the past capitalist world one that was perfectly adapted to the Anthropocene’ (10). Saito (2024) presents Marx as a humanist thinker who offers a path toward rescuing humanity—and the natural world—from the deleterious effects of the capitalist mode of production. Rather than engaging with Marxism in its broader philosophical and historical context, capitalist powers have sought to portray Marxism as inherently antithetical to human rights and multiparty politics, drawing on the specific revolutionary forms and state structures developed by socialist states in response to their own objective conditions (Ishay, 2008:9). This amounts

to a tendency to conflate particular historical practices with universal theoretical principles. In this context, Bhandari (1993a) asserted:

The victory of the Soviet Socialist Revolution in 1917 extended the influence of Marxism-Leninism across the world. The forces of justice and socialism secured a great victory in World War II. Thereafter, the great waves of movements concerning social liberation, democracy, and national independence also came into existence in the world. In the meantime, the Nepali people also started to rise in the democratic movement against the hereditary Rana regime. The objective necessity to eliminate the exploitation of feudalism and imperialism had been felt. To carry out this, the first necessity was to eliminate the hereditary Rana regime. [...] In such a situation, there was a necessity for a political party capable of providing the correct direction to the emerging democratic movement and leading the struggle of achieving authentic democracy. A party adopting a political work direction of eradicating the hereditary Rana regime and eliminating feudalism, imperialism was needed. The CPN was set up with the determination to fulfill this historical necessity. (251)

In this context—marked by a rising anti-Rana movement—class polarization intensified among organized political forces. As a consequence of this heightened political consciousness, a founding manifesto for the CPN was issued from the industrial city of Calcutta, India, on September 15, 1949.

The *Nabayug* fortnightly magazine described the conditions prevailing at the time of the CPN's founding as follows: The international situation was developing with great upheaval, which was providing important inspiration to the people of every country to move towards freedom, democracy, peace, and socialism. Within the country, the dissatisfaction, opposition, and anger

of the general public against the autocratic Rana regime were gradually taking the form of a people's movement.

In discussions regarding the political order to be established following the end of the Rana regime, party documents reflect a preference for working-class leadership along Soviet lines; however, in terms of social and political structure, a democratic orientation is affirmed. In a report delivered following the end of the Rana regime in 1951, the then General Secretary the CPN, Pushpalal Shrestha, stated:

The upcoming elections are a strong weapon to expose the excesses of this interim government. For this, we should organize a people's movement in the upcoming elections to increase the basis of adult suffrage for those above the age of 16 and full democracy (as cited in KC, 2008:47–48).

The CPN's democratic orientation is evidenced by its participation in elections. In the elections held on 2 September 1953, Janak Man Singh of the CPN was elected as the first president of Kathmandu Municipality (KC, 2008:97). The CPN had made the restoration of civil rights and democracy a central political demand. In the party's election manifesto for the first parliamentary general election of 1959, the preceding eight years since the end of the Rana regime were evaluated as a period in which the Nepali people, having secured political freedom, had come to realize the end of dictatorial rule as a primary duty, and had risked their lives in pursuit of economic, social, and cultural progress (Upadhyay & Timilsina, 2015:27). The formation of the Communist Party in Nepal may, thus, be understood as fundamentally oriented toward the struggle for a multiparty democratic system.

The application of Marxism has varied across societies and nations in accordance with their particular historical and social realities. PMPD is likewise rooted in four decades of political experimentation by the Nepali communist movement, as well as the lessons learned from the

experiences since the CPN's inception in 1949. The CPN aimed to dismantle the existing feudal regime and the state apparatus it had produced, and at instituting a democratic political order. Simultaneously, its objective was to advance toward socialism through the democratic path recognized in the contemporary world.

Following the 1951 People's Revolution, a multiparty democratic system was established. However, King Mahendra dissolved the democratically elected government through a royal coup and introduced the Panchayat system in 1960, thereby terminating multiparty democratic practice and bringing the country under direct royal control. During this period, Nepal's communist parties concentrated on adopting either the Russian or the Chinese revolutionary model promoted by the international communist movement. As a result, the movement gradually weakened. The Nepali communist movement was further affected by alignment with either the Chinese or Soviet bloc, and repeated internal divisions led to considerable fragmentation, producing dozens of separate communist splinter groups.

From the outset, Bhandari argued that revolutions could not simply be transplanted from one national context to another. Since every nation possesses distinct social and cultural conditions, Marxism must be applied in accordance with the specific realities of society. Bhandari maintained that neither the 1917 Soviet Revolution nor the 1949 Chinese Revolution could be mechanically replicated in Nepal. He strongly emphasized that the path of revolution must be determined on the basis of changing global circumstances, established democratic values, socio-economic conditions, and the geographical distinctiveness of individual country.

Methodology

Drawing on qualitative research design and auto-ethnographic method, this article advances the proposition that Bhandari's PMPD represents the application of Marxist principles within the specific

historical and social conditions of Nepal. Over the course of its since its inception in 1949, the Nepali communist movement undertook diverse experiments and accumulated a wide range of political experiences. The international communist movement, operating across different historical and national contexts, similarly produced distinct experiences in resonance with the specific realities of individual countries. Drawing upon these experiences, the article first analyzes Marxism as a theoretical framework that establishes and safeguards rights. It further argues that the substantive values embedded in contemporary democracy and human rights are compatible with Marxist principles, thereby challenging the narrative advanced by capitalist scholars that Marxists categorically reject the principles of democracy and human rights in relation to state power. The article also seeks to demonstrate that PMPD, while firmly grounded in the essence of Marxism, constitutes a socialist path adapted to Nepal's specific conditions.

This article draws primarily on Bhandari's reports, essays, and writings, as well as on the author's experience of nearly a decade of collaboration, discussion, and political engagement with him, including his views on the practical implementation of Marxism during that period. Additional source materials include Bhandari's political writings, reports, interviews, speeches, and records of both private and collective discussions, together with the author's personal conversations with him. Further references include books written about Bhandari; interviews with politicians and journalists who worked closely with him; documents of the CPN (ML) and the CPN (UML); commentaries, critiques, and analyses of PMPD produced by various institutions, scholars, and researchers; and the writings of major Marxist thinkers, including Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, and other Marxist scholars. These materials have been utilized as key reference sources throughout the article which at times substantiate Bhandari's arguments and other

times present logical development in his critical thinking of objective realities of Nepali society.

Results and Discussion

Origin and context of PMPD

Some of the capitalist scholars have argued that Marxism affords no legitimate space for multiparty competition or human rights. Even within Nepal, certain communist groups regarded contemporary concepts such as multiparty competition and human rights as inherently capitalist in character. It was in this context that I personally received Bhandari's support and encouragement in my own struggles for human rights and democratic rights.

Despite the conventional perception that communists are opposed to democracy and human rights, the communist party led by Bhandari pioneered the establishment of Nepal's first human rights organization, the Forum for Protection of Human Rights (FOPHUR). This initiative, along with related institutions, successfully laid the groundwork for the historic United People's Movement.

Prior to Bhandari's rise to party leadership, I met him in 1982 at Mohan Gurju's house in Hetauda. The principal focus of our discussions was the unstable policy of the CPN (ML) during the referendum (held to choose the reformed Panchayat system or multiparty democracy), and the underlying reasons for the defeat of the multiparty system. During our conversation, he expressed the view that the party's shifting positions—at times calling for a boycott of the referendum, other times advocating its utilization for political purpose, and then reverting to a boycott policy—had generated confusion and distanced the party from the people.

During the same discussion, I recounted an incident that occurred when I attempted to promote the party's policy boycotting the referendum from a platform where Ganesh Man Singh was campaigning in favor of the multiparty system. Panchayat supporters (*mandales*, a student group named Rastrabadi Bidhyarthi Mandal allied with

the Panchayat) intervened, mistreated Singh, and the blame for the incident was also directed toward us. I also described my efforts in Hetauda to unite teachers through the Teachers' Welfare Club, chaired by Omu Tempa Lama, a Panchayat activist and private school operator. Following the 1979 Student Movement, I played a crucial role in organizing a teachers' procession demanding the right to form an organization. Our discussion of how a gathering of teachers from various districts in Hetauda subsequently led to the formation of the Nepal National Teachers' Association (NNTA) through demands for a national-level organization prompted me to argue that the party should become more actively engaged in mass mobilization.

At a subsequent meeting, Prakash Kafle and I proposed the establishment of a human rights organization capable of operating openly. Bhandari responded that communists must demonstrate that they are the genuine defenders of human rights, and that communist must claim ownership of all the rights that have been established through the struggles of people around the world. In 1984, we established Nepal's first human rights organization, the FOPHUR, at the house of journalist Gopal Gotame in Birgunj. Badri Prasad Khatriwada (a local teacher at Bhutandevi High School) was elected president, and Prakash Kafle was elected general secretary. At that time, Bhandari remarked, "You should lead an open political organization," and accordingly, I did not assume leadership of the human rights organization but remained a member (Pyakurel, 2026). In the same year, the FOPHUR was also established in Kathmandu under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Mathura Prasad Shrestha at an underground convention, which was raided by the police and consequently the documents related to the convention handed to Agni Bes, an Indian activist against bonded labor and a guest at the convention. After the CPN (ML), which had boycotted the 1980 referendum, adopted a strategy of participating in the 1986 Panchayat elections, public interest in the policy of utilizing

elections steadily increased. In that context, Madan Bhandari, Madhav Nepal, and others were consulted regarding the likelihood of electoral fraud being committed against candidates supporting the multiparty system in the forthcoming election to the National Panchayat (the legislature), which was to be held on the basis of adult suffrage.

On the understanding that grassroots observation was necessary to expose electoral rigging, the Election Observation Citizens' Committee (EOCC) was formed. Its coordinator was Basudev Dhungana, its secretary general was Prakash Kafle, and several independent individuals—including myself and Raghujee Pant—were included as members. I had joined on behalf of the party in a coordinating capacity (Pyakurel, 2026).

The National Election Observation Committee (NEOC), formed to observe the 2048 BS general election, was an offshoot of the EOCC. The NEOC was similarly formed under the chairmanship of Basudev Dhungana, with Prakash Kafle as general secretary. The CPN (ML) has thus maintained an active tradition of election observation in Nepal. Bhandari consistently emphasized the importance of civil society activism, in accordance with his conviction that active and capable organizations are indispensable for advancing peaceful people's movements.

Following the formation of the FOPHUR and the Forum for Democracy and National Unity (FODENU), Prakash Kafle and Sushil Pyakurel became general secretaries of the two organizations, respectively. Through these developments, the issues of human rights and democracy formally entered the agenda of the CPN (ML). Regarding these organizations, Bhandari stated in the document "Current Situation and Responsibility of the Party" that "The party made the best attempts to secure international support and connections established through the establishments like students' organizations, Forum for Democracy and National Unity, and the Forum for Protecting Human Rights" (67). This affirms that democracy

and human rights constitute foundational pillars of the multiparty democratic framework.

The history of the struggle for democracy in Nepal is longstanding. From the moment Jung Bahadur Kunwar established the autocratic regime in 1846, there were unorganized and individual acts of resistance against the Rana rule, ranging from Lakhan Thapa's armed rebellion in 1877 to publication of Krishnalal's book *Makaiko Kheti* [*Maize Farming*] in 1920 and Prachanda Gorkha formed in 1927, among others. Organized political struggle in Nepal is generally dated to the establishment of the Praja Parishad in 1936. In 1940, following the distribution of pamphlets against the Rana regime by the Praja Parishad, the Rana ruler executed four Prajaparisad activists and imprisoned thousands others. Within two years, both the Nepali Congress (NC) and the CPN had been formed (Shrestha, 2023). In 1951, an armed revolution against the Rana regime, led by the NC in collaboration with the CPN, brought the 104-year-long autocratic Rana regime to an end and established a multiparty democracy. Although the multiparty system was thus established, general elections were delayed until 1959. The Nepali Congress (NC) won the general election with a two-thirds majority, while the CPN entered parliament with four seats (Gorkhapatra, 1961, January 6).

However, King Mahendra's hostility toward the multiparty system led him to dissolve the elected parliament on December 15, 1960. On January 7, 1961 a royal proclamation banned all political and party-oriented organizations, arguing that party politics had undermined national interests, and a partyless autocratic Panchayat system was instituted (Gorkhapatra, 1961, January 6). In opposition to the king's action, the CPN declared:

If national democracy or democratic rule is to be established in the country, the goal of national democracy can be achieved only by eliminating all its weaknesses, developing parliamentary democracy more strongly, and ensuring the representation of as many

revolutionary classes in parliament as possible. (Upadhyay & Timilsina, 2015:45)

It is evident that Nepal's communist movement had, from its inception, regarded the multiparty parliamentary system as a means through which the people could pursue their political, economic, and social rights. The ideological dispute between the Soviet Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party, which erupted in 1960's, also reverberated within the Nepali communist movement, precipitating a split within the CPN. Those who aligned with Soviet party policies became increasingly lax, while various groups were drawn toward the Chinese model of armed struggle and remained active along those lines. Although these groups shared a belief in the necessity of armed struggle, there was no uniformity in their approaches. From 2028 BS to 2032 BS, a group in Jhapa, influenced by the Naxalite movement in India, initiated a peasant struggle (Pokhrel, 2023). Acting on the policy of the Indian communist leader Charu Majumdar to "Eliminate the Class Enemy," several individuals, including Dharma Prasad Dhakal, were killed in Jhapa in the course of attacks on feudal landlords. In the wake of this incident, many communist cadres were killed in the repression launched by the Panchayat government, and many others were imprisoned. Nevertheless, this failed to suppress the campaign of the revolutionary communists of Jhapa. While consolidating with groups active in various parts of the country, the All Nepal Communist Revolutionary Coordination Committee (ML) was founded in April 1975 (Misra, 2001). On August 30, 1977, several individuals affiliated with the Mukti Morcha group (a cultural front of CPN [Puspallal group]), including Bhandari, united within the All Nepal Communist Revolutionary Coordination Committee (Marxist–Leninist), known as ANCRCC or "COC" (Rawal, 1991). By that time, the Naxalite policy of eliminating class enemies had been weakening under the pressure of government repression, and following the entry

of Mukti Morcha, the policy review that COC had been undertaking began to intensify.

In 1978, the third convention of the COC formally abandoned Charu Majumdar's line of "eliminating class enemies" (Misra, 2001:65–66). With the entry of Bhandari and others, a substantive debate about the strategic course of action based on the country's specific situation gained traction within the Coordination Center (COC), which had been founded on the legacy of the Jhapa rebellion. On 26 December 1978, a meeting organized by COC gave rise to the CPN (ML) (Misra, 150). Following this new development in the left party dynamics, constructive debate within the CPN (ML) on issues of mass movements and mass organizations received a momentum. The seventh meeting of the Central Committee, held in October 1980, concluded that, given the insufficiency of ideological and organizational preparations, priority should be assigned to the construction of mass movements and mass organizations.

Accepting the political changes brought about by the 1979 Student Movement, the CPN (ML) began to revise its policies. After the Panchayat system prevailed in the referendum, arrangements were made to hold general elections based on adult suffrage under the revised Panchayat Constitution (Misra, 2001:78). The CPN (ML), which had previously boycotted the Panchayat system and maintained armed struggle as its primary strategy, now resolved to prioritize mass struggles and mass consciousness-raising through open mass organizations, and to discontinue armed movement as its operative policy. In the National Panchayat elections held on the basis of adult suffrage on 12 May 1986, the CPN (ML) participated in accordance with the policy of "people's intervention." Five of its representatives were elected to the National Panchayat. Opposition to the partyless system and demands for multiparty system began to be raised in sessions of the National Panchayat (Misra, 2001). In the election for the legislative body, five of the candidates from the CPN (ML) who had won include Padma Ratna

Tuladhar, Somnath Adhikary 'Pyasi', Rup Chandra Bista, Drona Prasad Acharya, and Bhim Bahadur Shrestha. Similarly, the left party leaders and cadres ran for different local elections, including Village Panchayat, Municipality, and District for some of the major positions. Approximately 12,000 cadres were elected across various tiers, including ward members of the National Panchayat and village and city panchayats. Thus, the people's movement accelerated in different local and national levels gained momentum. Through this policy of people's intervention in the Panchayat elections, the party extended its influence to a national scale.

The Fourth General Convention of the CPN (ML), held in August 1989, elected Madan Bhandari the General Secretary. Among the vital decisions adopted by the Fourth National Convention was the removal of Mao Zedong Thought from the party's guiding principles. The Convention advanced the position that a multiparty system should be maintained even under communist governance. Bhandari's conception—that the party's role should be established based on competition and initiative through the democratization of the communist movement—received formal recognition.

Bhandari formally introduced PMPD at the Fifth General Convention (1993b), following the merger of the CPN (ML) and the CPN (Marxist) led by Manmohan Adhikari to form the CPN (UML). Following the merger of the two left parties, CPN (UML) became a strong opposition party with 69 seats in the parliament election in 1991. Eventually, the party formed the first-ever democratically elected government with 88 seats in the mid-term election in 1995, larger than the Nepali Congress which had won two-third seats in the 1959 general election. It was the same left party which had won only 4 seats in the parliament election that gives Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, the first ever democratically elected Prime Minister of Nepal. The Eighth National Convention of the CPN (UML), held in 2009, formally established PMPD as an organizational principle.

An analysis of the fourteen principal characteristics of people's multiparty democracy as propounded by Bhandari reveals it to be a comprehensive conceptual framework encompassing civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and developmental rights as recognized in the contemporary world. This concept represents a theoretical synthesis of Marxism with multiparty democratic practice. When examined through the lens of human rights principles, people's multiparty democracy must be understood from the perspective of democratic rights, political pluralism, social justice, and participatory governance. It incorporates the transition to socialism, the rule of law, fundamental rights, and social justice as its central elements. Regarding the character of people's multiparty democracy, Bhandari (1993c) stated:

We believe that only the people's multiparty democracy based on the principle of the rule of law can inspire us to correct our mistakes and improve the image of the party among the people. I would like to emphasize that the people's multiparty democracy is not the multiparty system prevalent in the world today. The specialty of the people's multiparty democracy is that it establishes a multiparty system that is anti-imperialism and feudalism in terms of governance. (360)

Marxism, PMPD, and human rights

In Eastern thought, Gautam Buddha articulated a moral path toward liberation from suffering, injustice, and inequality, while Confucius propounded the concepts of moral governance, social harmony, and responsible leadership. These thinkers gave ideological expression to the social contradictions of their era and to the struggles against injustice and oppression. Many of the theories of social development that have emerged throughout history arose from sustained efforts to find freedom from the conflict, exploitation, and inequality endemic to human societies. The diverse political ideas and systems of governance characteristic of the contemporary world are,

in this sense, the cumulative achievements of a long historical process of institutionalizing rights, justice, and equality.

The Soviet Socialist Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin not only galvanized Marxists across the world but also fostered a tendency within revolutionary and socialist movements to treat the Soviet model as universally applicable. The situation in Western Europe, however, was markedly different. In the aftermath of World War II, the reconstruction and industrial development of Europe from 1945 onward prepared a social formation whose internal contradictions differed substantially from those of the Tsarist Russia, and it was in this context that the ideas of Eurocommunism emerged. The Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci, during his imprisonment, conducted a systematic inquiry into the mechanisms through which the ruling class exercises and maintains power. He expanded Marxism beyond the analysis of economic structure and class struggle to encompass culture, ideology, and political leadership. According to his theory, genuine transformation of power entails not merely a change of government but a fundamental shift in the prevailing forms of social consciousness, culture, and common sense.

Marxist thinkers Ellen Meiksins Wood and Ralph Miliband (1995) have analyzed democratic institutions as sites of class struggle, thereby demonstrating the theoretical compatibility between Marxism and democracy. In *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx identified the development of the free individual as the foundation of collective freedom (Marx, 1875). Within the Marxist framework, rights are understood at both the civil-political and the socio-economic levels. Based on these theoretical coordinates, PMPD as a Marxist concept developed in response to Nepal's specific objective conditions.

Bhandari considered the ideas of Edward Bernstein, Rosa Luxemburg, and Gramsci as well as the broader tradition of Eurocommunism, as worthy of serious and constructive study. When examining

his conception of PMPD, Bhandari can be linked to certain aspects of the thinking of each of these three theorists, though he cannot be straightforwardly identified with any one of them. PMPD may be taken for a method of *creative experimentation* with Marxism within Nepal's objective conditions—a synthesis that incorporates elements drawn from all three intellectual traditions.

Bhandari moved beyond these three and succeeded in elaborating a new model of what might be termed *competition-based creative Marxism*—a form of *democratic Marxism* that derives the foundational elements of Marxism from the parliamentary arena.

In the course of his struggles against hardliners within the movement, Bhandari stated:

The reasons for the division and certain thoughts can be found in the world communist movement. However, the main issue is that the communist movement should be carried forward based on national characteristics. Between Western Europe and the communist movement was based on the Leninist organizational theory and the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as explained by Lenin. However, that is also a trend of the world communist movement. This theory can be applied more democratically in the context of Western Europe, and it was due to issues such as whether or not it should be allowed to have a dynamic thought that it can be applied more democratically, and whether or not it should be allowed to have its national characteristics by giving autonomy to the national communist movement of the country in the new situation. Regarding the incident in Czechoslovakia, there was a time when the world believed that the Soviet model was the only way to communism. The Soviet Union did not tolerate the communists' attempts to walk in a new way. But in fact, that was right. The principle applied in the Soviet Union had a characteristic that could not be copied 100% elsewhere. (Bhandari, [n.d.]:58)

This recognition has only gradually been internalized by communist movements in other countries. Since the Communist movements in different countries have their distinctive characteristics, respective countries definitely have specific models of implementation of the Marxist theory.

Following the rise of industrialization in the nineteenth century, the exploitation of workers in Europe intensified considerably. Workers resisting these conditions were subsequently inspired by the Russian Revolution and advanced their struggles accordingly. The expanding capitalist order gradually came to recognize that workers' demands could not be indefinitely ignored. Even capitalists who had been indifferent to workers' rights were compelled to support the establishment of an international body formally representing labor—a development that culminated in the founding of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919, in which the labor movements of France and Britain played a significant role. Notably, the ILO was established prior to the formation of the United Nations (UN).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, represents the outcome of this continuous historical journey toward the recognition of human rights. The UN Charter, adopted and promulgated in 1945 following the formation of the UN, is similarly regarded as a foundational guide to the international order.

The rise of Marxism produced a qualitative transformation in the scope and conception of human rights. The central message of Marxism was the resistance of workers against labor exploitation. In *Das Kapital*, Marx demonstrated that the exploitation of workers constitutes the source of capitalists' profit. Popular struggles for equality were profoundly influenced by Marxism (*New-York Daily Tribune*, 1859, March 17). Marx argued that the system of adult suffrage introduced in Britain should be understood by workers as

an instrument of socialist revolution—a political weapon through which to challenge the economic exploitation perpetrated by the capitalist class and to exert pressure on the ruling order. Labor movements in Western countries accordingly came to struggle for universal suffrage, with the aim of deploying the right to vote as a means of political contestation against economic exploitation.

The rights enumerated in the thirty articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represent the historical achievements of the long-term struggles of oppressed and disenfranchised peoples, and they enshrine the universal recognition of human dignity, freedom, and equality. The various theories and philosophies that have developed alongside the development of human society are, at their core, intellectual expressions of the popular struggle for rights, justice, and equality (Ishay, 2008). The concept of human rights is therefore not an accidental product but the collective outcome of political, social, and economic movements that have unfolded throughout history.

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, advancing a concept of social security and a powerful state, held that the establishment of a state through a social contract was necessary to escape from the condition of anarchy. John Locke put forward the principle of limited government by positing natural rights—to life, liberty, and property—as superior to state authority. Jean-Jacques Rousseau deepened the concept of popular sovereignty through the notion of the general will, while Talcott Parsons analyzed society as an interdependent system and emphasized the importance of institutional balance and shared value systems.

Given that the development of human civilization rests fundamentally on the development of collective consciousness, human beings have continuously established societies and systems of governance. However, the historical record may be characterized—in terms of victory and defeat, or of oppression and exploitation—rights have been

affirmed through the consciousness of resistance, and the foundations of equal rights and democratic governance have been progressively developed.

When PMPD is interpreted through the lens of human rights principles, it must be understood from the perspective of rights, political pluralism, social justice, and participatory governance. It sought to combine Marxism with parliamentary multiparty democracy, incorporating multiparty competition, the rule of law, fundamental rights, and social justice as key elements of the transition to socialism.

Three foundations of the human rights principle: Freedom, equality, and dignity

Bhandari's PMPD must be understood within the broader context of human rights as a whole. In terms of guaranteeing human rights, PMPD identifies *social justice* as its primary foundation. Unless the general public is able to enjoy economic, social, and cultural rights without restriction, they cannot freely exercise political and civil rights. Political rights divorced from economic and cultural rights are merely formal. The property right protects the wealthy individual while making no material difference to the livelihood of the working person. Formal equality of freedom may be guaranteed for the impoverished and the affluent alike, but the effective capacity to exercise freedom of expression differs markedly between the two. In sum, freedom, equality, and human dignity are indispensable elements of human rights; in the absence of these elements, *rights* cannot be meaningfully guaranteed for all.

Bhandari addressed the interrelationship between democracy and human rights in PMPD across numerous contexts, including views expressed in various settings and documents presented at seminars. Bhandari (1991) clarified the fundamental distinction between the capitalist multiparty system prevalent in the world and the people's multiparty system:

We oppose monopoly capitalism and imperialism with hatred. We condemn and

oppose capitalist dictatorship. We do not want to establish such an old capitalist democracy, where the broad masses are oppressed in the interests of a handful of elements. We do not want to establish the old capitalist democracy, based on the belief that social liberation is not possible by replacing feudal exploitation with capitalist exploitation and only changing the forms and methods of exploitation. (166)

Bhandari argues that the existing multiparty system is essentially a form of bourgeois democracy that was established through a capitalist-led revolution against feudalism. That revolution either abolished or subordinated feudal structures, with the capitalist class providing the leadership throughout. As a result, capitalism was installed in place of feudalism, subsequently evolving into monopoly capitalism and gradually transitioning into imperialism. It follows that, without bringing imperialism to an end, the establishment of genuine people's democracy is not possible.

In Bhandari's (1993a) elaboration of PMPD, it is stated with respect to human rights that "The central task of the present revolution is to eliminate feudal and imperialist exploitation and establish a people's democratic system" (312). He further asserts: "Without concentrating all state power in the hands of the people, it is impossible to carry out fundamental democratic reforms and transformations in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres" (392).

According to Bhandari, the political system established in a country determines the economic system of the state. It is not sufficient for a political system merely to be multiparty in form; its policy orientation and class character must also be clearly defined. In this regard, Bhandari (1993a) states:

The fundamental character of our democratic economy is a mixed economy, in which the state will play a leading role in uplifting working people, the poor with low incomes, and marginalized castes, communities, and regions based on equality and social justice. (315)

The totality of people's multiparty democracy is, in effect, the totality of democracy and human rights. It situates the people as the primary and essential beneficiaries of democracy and human rights—that is, it is fundamentally a people-centered political system. Bhandari's (1993a) PMPD encompasses all of the aforementioned elements. The document presented by Bhandari states that “the evil practices of casteism and untouchability prevalent in society will be effectively ended” (324) and that the inhuman practice of physically and mentally torturing the accused will be ended. (324)

Regarding the central responsibility of PMPD for the protection of human rights, Bhandari (1993a) states:

There is widespread propaganda by capitalists in the world that communists are not in favor of human rights. Some communists also think that protecting human rights is not our job or field of work. We are in favor of human rights and have been fighting for them in an organized manner for a long time. In the true sense, communists are and can be the most determined warriors of human rights. Therefore, we have included the protection of human rights as an important element in the program. (329)

PMPD guarantees the foundations of civil and political rights—including the right to choose one's rulers through general elections and the fundamental freedoms of expression and the press. Beyond these, it incorporates the minimum basic conditions necessary for human development—education, health, labor rights, social security, equitable distribution of national resources, and public access—with the aim of reducing inequality and building an egalitarian society. The strategy embedded in PMPD is to construct the foundations of a socialist society through the comprehensive implementation of all the human rights dimensions it articulates.

PMPD may therefore be interpreted as an expansion of the institutional scope of human rights and democracy. From this perspective, PMPD is not merely a project of economic restructuring but an institutional guarantee of civil liberties, political participation, social justice, and equal opportunity. Its essential intention is to render human rights secure and practically realizable within a functional system of governance, rather than confining them to the status of formal declarations.

The Relationship between human rights and PMPD

Although the people's multiparty system, as propounded by Bhandari, and the capitalist multiparty system may appear formally similar, they differ fundamentally in substance. In the prevailing capitalist multiparty system, priority is assigned to only one dimension of human rights—political rights—while rights are largely confined to the private sphere. PMPD, by contrast, treats human rights as a central element of social development. Article 1 of the 1948 UN Declaration states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). All the conditions necessary for genuine equality in dignity and rights must accordingly be present in equal measure. Nearly eight decades after the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the gap between the wealthy and the poor continues to widen among UN member states. The divide between the “haves” and the “have-nots” has deepened, and nations are confronting conditions of social conflict. The world has witnessed how discrimination generates oppression, and how oppression in turn generates conflict. Although discrimination and oppression may appear on the surface to be individual problems, they are fundamentally social in character. Poverty, too, is not merely an individual condition but a social issue—a reality that has been widely recognized internationally and substantiated within Nepal itself

by official multidimensional poverty assessments (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Viewed in their totality, the foundational pillars of human rights are equality, freedom, and dignity—three principles that are both comprehensive and mutually constitutive. Where inequality exists among citizens in terms of social freedom and economic conditions, their dignity is correspondingly undermined. In Nepali society, substantial communities remain marginalized as a consequence of the practice of untouchability. Equality cannot be conceived in the absence of dignity, and the freedom of a person deprived of dignity is of little substantive meaning. This principle is reflected throughout the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Articles 1–21 guarantee citizens’ civil and political freedoms, including freedom of association, expression, and the press. Articles 22–27 establish the necessity of economic and social rights as essential conditions for a life of dignity, while Articles 28–30 address the implementation of these rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

Viewed as a whole, PMPD may be said to incorporate all of these elements. Bhandari (1993a) states that “the social evils prevalent in society, including caste discrimination and the practice of untouchability, will be effectively eliminated” (324), and further asserts that “the inhuman practice of subjecting accused persons to physical and mental torture will be abolished” (324).

PMPD and the implementation of human rights and democracy

As Bhandari’s influence within the CPN(ML) grew, the party’s engagement with issues of democracy and human rights correspondingly expanded. As noted above, Nepal’s first human rights organization was founded under the leadership of the CPN(ML). At its Fifth General Convention, the CPN(ML) adopted a policy of contesting the Panchayat system in unity with other democratic and leftist forces. In pursuance of this policy, a Left Front was formed among seven left groups in Nepal,

and the Left Front and the Nepali Congress (NC) established a working unity against the Panchayat system. The present author was himself a member of the Left Front. On 1 February 1990, an appeal was issued jointly by the NC and the Left Front to launch a people’s movement against the Panchayat system. The appeal, signed by NC President Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Left Front President Sahana Pradhan, declared that “the Nepali people are deprived of the human rights declared by the United Nations” (Forum for Protection of Human Rights, 1990:4–5). While earlier pamphlets and demands had employed the language of democratic rights, this was the first occasion on which the human rights standards proclaimed by the UN were invoked as an institutional reference point—marking a significant step in affirming the place of multiparty democracy and human rights within the PMPD framework.

The CPN (ML) participated in the interim government constituted following the successful peaceful people’s movement of 1990. The interim government subsequently acceded to the core UN human rights treaties—the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In accordance with the newly established multiparty system, Madhav Kumar Nepal, senior leader of CPN (ML), joined the constitution-drafting committee on behalf of the party. Concurrently, the “Commission on the Loss of Life and Property in the 1990 People’s Movement” and the “Commission on the Investigation of Persons Disappeared during the Thirty Years of the Panchayat System” were established.

The preamble to the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal, 2047 BS—adopted following the end of the non-party Panchayat system—includes the provision “It is expedient to promulgate and enforce this Constitution, made with the widest possible participation of the Nepalese people, to guarantee basic human rights to every citizen of Nepal,” thereby according human rights a constitutional commitment as a foundational element of multiparty democracy (3).

PMPD has also made a significant contribution to the establishment of Nepal's first people-level human rights institution, as well as to the creation of an official state body for human rights. In 1991, a resolution proposed in the upper house of parliament—the National Assembly—by CPN (UML) member Subash Chandra Nembang, directing the then government to immediately establish a national commission on human rights, was put to a vote in March 1991. The resolution did not pass, receiving 16 votes out of a total of 27. However, in the CPN (UML)'s mid-term election manifesto of 1994 BS, the party committed to establishing “a National Commission on Human Rights to continuously observe and evaluate the human rights situation in the country and provide legitimacy to the government” (Pyakurel, 2010:19). In the 1994 parliamentary elections, the CPN (UML) emerged as the largest party and formed the first communist-led government in Nepal under the chairmanship of Manmohan Adhikari. The Law Commission subsequently undertook the drafting of a National Human Rights Commission Act, after the downfall of CPN (UML) government, and a private bill registered by NC law maker, Mahesh Acharya was eventually passed in the lower house.

In Nepal, PMPD has played a decisive role in institutionalizing human rights and in establishing the state's responsibility for their protection. To ensure women's political participation, CPN (UML) leader and then parliamentarian Bidya Devi Bhandari tabled a resolution in parliament, which was passed on May 30, 2006, committing to 33 percent women's representation across all structures of the state. Constitutional provisions for women's reservation have since been established. Provisions for the representation of Dalits and indigenous nationalities in local bodies were similarly introduced. The CPN (UML) government of 2051 BS initiated the social security allowance for senior citizens (Pandey, 2023).

Critical reflection

PMPD has been criticized as a concept that merely repackages the capitalist multiparty system in

a new ideological form. Such criticism comes predominantly from those who hold that the working class must seize power through the direct path of Marxist revolution to enter socialism. At the Fifth General Convention of the CPN (UML), Dahal (Prachanda) (2063 BS) of CPN (Maoist) contended that “the state of mind of the CPN (UML) leadership faction is well reflected in the document presented for the General Convention” (81). From this perspective, the document's invocation of features such as “multiparty competition,” “legal rule,” “majority government and minority opposition,” “periodic elections,” “protection of human rights,” “separation of power,” “multiparty open society,” and “supremacy of the constitution” were characterized as concessions to imperialists and reactionaries rather than genuinely revolutionary programmatic commitments.

Regarding the CPN (UML)'s policy of peaceful struggle, the Maoists argued that talking about radical change without a clear view of the inevitability of armed struggle is a rejection of class struggle and Marxism. They held that the destruction of feudalism and imperialism was impossible without adopting the path of a long-term people's war based on the strategy of encircling cities from the countryside, and that the dismantling of parliamentarism was an indispensable precondition for a new democratic revolution in Nepal. In their assessment, a party that sought to form a government by winning a parliamentary majority was serving the interests of the reactionary class rather than those of the people—a conviction that drove them to embark on the path of armed struggle, ostensibly to demonstrate that the parliamentary path would fail.

The multiparty system restored by the 1990 people's movement led the CPN (Maoist) to launch an armed insurgency under the banner of “People's War” less than five years later. According to INSEC, a leading human rights organization in Nepal, 13,246 people were killed and 931 disappeared during the ten-year armed conflict (Informal Sector Service Centre, 2023, March 30). Thousands were forcibly

disappeared, and millions were displaced. The then King Gyanendra exploited the resulting instability to seize power and unleash a cycle of repression against all parties. In response to the royal move, a joint people's movement of seven political parties—including the CPN (UML), NC, and CPN (Maoist) and other small parties in parliament—ultimately ended the monarchy and established a republic in Nepal. The Maoists subsequently accepted the multiparty parliamentary system and entered peaceful politics. This political outcome may be regarded as a inevitability of PMPD.

Nevertheless, following Bhandari's death, successive party leaderships have failed to give adequate attention to the implementation of PMPD, and a range of problems have emerged. Most notably, there is a growing tendency to prioritize power politics over politics of principle, and to abandon ideological commitments in the pursuit of power. In the context of the CPN (UML)–CPN (Maoist) unification, PMPD was effectively deferred. Seven general elections have been held in Nepal since 1991. Although the CPN (UML), which holds PMPD as a guiding principle, has consistently performed strongly in popular vote share, it has failed to produce any material improvement in the living standards of ordinary people, particularly the large agrarian communities that constitute the majority. Multiparty elections have increasingly become not a form of struggle but merely a mechanism through which PMPD's leadership seeks access to power. Despite PMPD's commitment to increasing the political participation of workers, workers have not been seen in the parliament in significant numbers. Although structural transformation is rhetorically emphasized, the influence of neoliberalism continues to grow.

While the transformation of social consciousness into socialist consciousness is proclaimed as a goal, socialist consciousness is currently at its weakest. The core leadership responsible for implementing PMPD has become increasingly drawn toward reformism. The working class communities

have been progressively marginalized, and class consciousness is weakening—including among those bearing the potential for *hegemonic* leadership, such as young students, teachers, legal professionals, laborers, farmers, and women. The cumulative effect is that PMPD risks being absorbed into liberal democracy. The underlying reasons are clear. In particular, following Bhandari's death in 1993, there has been a marked indifference on the part of the leadership toward the ideological and theoretical objectives advanced by PMPD.

The CPN (UML) has itself been unable to become sufficiently democratic to implement PMPD. Steering the parliamentary system toward peaceful socialism on the basis of public opinion is an inherently demanding task. Yet the CPN (UML) that propagates the principle of an open society, nominally guided by Leninist organizational theory, has become intolerant of its own cadres. The CPN (UML) that aspires to democratize society has grown indifferent to internal democracy, to the point that criticism of the leadership's working style has become grounds for expulsion. Consequently, bureaucratic and feudal structures have taken hold within the party. The CPN (UML) that adopted PMPD through the unity and struggle of lifelong revolutionaries now faces the danger of abandoning that principle.

For the implementation of PMPD following its adoption as a principle at the Eighth National Convention, a multi-position system was established to ensure collective leadership guided by the CPN (UML)'s democratization policy. An internal electoral system was also introduced, providing a structure through which cadres could reach leadership positions through votes and distinguish themselves through activism. However, anticipating the risk that those who reached leadership positions might become autocratic through the exercise of power, CPN (UML) leader KP Sharma Oli proposed two-term limits and a seventy-year age ceiling for executive positions. Having risen to the leadership himself, Oli subsequently abolished these provisions and

transformed himself into an indefinite leader, reinstating the tradition of the party's principal figure remaining in leadership for life. This produced a progressive estrangement of the party from the people and of the leadership from the cadres, replicating patterns seen in the international communist movement. Despite internal democratic practices being identified as a core element of transformation, un-Marxist tendencies took hold. The veneration of the leadership elected after the Tenth Congress has given rise to a feudal political culture within the party itself.

The gradual development of PMPD was Bhandari's attempt to advance Nepal's leftist movement in alignment with both the changing global situation and the specific objective conditions of Nepal. The removal of Mao Zedong Thought from the party's guiding principles was itself a significant theoretical leap. It dismantled the prevailing narrative—deeply embedded within the leftist parties of the time—that communists were opposed to human rights and democracy. PMPD also engaged seriously with the geopolitical realities that Nepal was confronted with. The international recognition framework established after World War II, through the UN and other multilateral bodies, was incorporated into the political framework adopted by PMPD across a range of dimensions. As a result, the left's political base in Nepal expanded substantially over three decades, establishing a position of primacy—in both organizational strength and political quality—relative to all other political tendencies.

The destruction that occurred on September 8 and 9, 2025, under the guise of a youth movement, exposed deep structural failings in Nepal's state system. The principal cause was the disregard shown by the CPN (UML) leadership for the guidance of PMPD. The disposition that policy exists to serve the interests of the CPN (UML) Chairperson and that the Chairperson is synonymous with the party, had become dominant, with the result that CPN (UML) bodies began to await the Chairperson's directives rather than acting in accordance with principles.

KP Oli had previously commanded an image as an active, visionary, development-oriented, and nationalist leader—arguably the most consequential Prime Minister of his generation. However, his popularity among the public declined steadily as a result of unprincipled political alliances. Those within Oli's generation who had struggled consistently for the democratization of the party—and who had carried through the multi-position system and term and age limits at the CPN (UML) conventions—reversed their own positions when they reached the Tenth General Convention. The victory of KP Oli at the Ninth General Convention of the CPN (UML), which had remained theoretically and practically static since the Sixth General Convention, resulted in cadres being led by a disposition of ideological inferiority and by the notion that the Chairperson is the party. Staunch former monarchists, individuals lacking the most rudimentary knowledge of Marxism, and adherents of religious fanaticism were brought into the party leadership. Since those who had been staunch opponents of the ruling party and individuals who had served under Maoist leadership were incorporated into the CPN (UML) leadership without restriction, the party's cadres became progressively frustrated, demoralized, and disengaged. The distinctions between the CPN (UML) and other parties began to dissolve.

The accusations leveled by critics of PMPD—that the theoretical deployment of Marxism was merely a means of acquiring power and dissolving the movement—have, in this context, been borne out.

The demonstrations of youth on September 8, 2025, and the arson and vandalism of September 9 precipitated the collapse of the KP Oli-led coalition government, which had long been riven by ideological contradictions. Subsequently, in the name of party consensus, Nepal repeated the political pattern of 2069 BS, with an interim government formed under the leadership of former Supreme Court Justice Sushila Karki. In his analytical commentary on the youth movement, Tim Casement offers an assessment of the Gen Z movement and its implications for the leftist

movement that illuminates both the potential of communist governance and its current limitations:

According to Casement (2025), Gen-Z Protests demonstrate the possibilities of a youth-led revolutionary movement and the perils of ossified nominally leftist politics. If the left as a whole is to coherently respond to the demands of the current moment, the growing strength of global fascism, it must understand the revolutions of the current moment. This is not the place for the history of Nepali politics. What is immediately relevant to the events leading up to the September revolution is the government of KP Oli, the CPN (UML), and what Oli's fourth term quickly came to represent. The Oli government was formed in 2024 amid a profound electoral and social crisis. Since 2008, Nepal has cycled through 14 governments, 10 of which claimed to be communist and none of which were able to make any lasting economic change stick. To characterize with some degree of brutal simplicity, leftist parties have cyclically gained power and squandered their opportunity to restructure the conditions on the ground for the Nepali working class through economic revolution instead personally enriching themselves while engaging in the most cynical impulses of electoral system.

Speaking at an international symposium in 1993 in Calcutta of India on the contemporary world situation and the relevance of Marxism, Bhandari (1993c) reflected on the collapse of the Soviet Union:

Since Marxism is a scientific theory, it should be able to provide a comprehensive analysis of the reasons responsible for the collapse of the socialist management in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Although the state in those countries had implemented a national distribution program for the broad social rights of the common people, we should be able to answer why there was widespread public discontent there. In my opinion, such a political and economic system, where freedom of expression, proper mobilization of democratic productive forces, creation of a

favorable environment for productive forces through technological development, increase in productivity, and testing of public support, etc., has certain weaknesses in the question of assimilating such things. This naturally demands a new direction in Marxist thought. (28–29)

No matter what problems are seen under the leadership of the CPN (UML), people's multiparty democracy is a solid theoretical development of the establishment of Marxism. Its main essence is the establishment of a socialist system through the creative application of Marxism and the practical implementation and guarantee of modern multiparty democracy and human rights. People's multiparty democracy may accordingly be understood as an anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-hegemonistic multiparty socialist model that integrates the goals of Marxism—social and class liberation and equality—with the institutions and norms of multiparty democracy.

Conclusion

PMPD represents one of the most significant theoretical contributions to emerge from the creative application of Marxism beyond its European origins. Developed through decades of political struggle since the founding of the CPN in 1949, and shaped by Nepal's distinctive political, geographical, and socio-economic conditions, PMPD demonstrates that Marxism is not a rigid ideological doctrine but a dynamic analytical framework capable of creative adaptation to diverse historical and national contexts.

Bhandari's central insight—that the path to socialism need not replicate the Soviet or Chinese models, and that multiparty competition, civil liberties, and human rights are not concessions to bourgeois ideology but genuine instruments of popular emancipation—remains theoretically sound. By grounding socialist transformation in competitive electoral politics, rule of law, and comprehensive human rights guarantees, PMPD offered a distinctively Nepali resolution to the tension between revolutionary aspiration and

democratic practice that has long divided the global left.

In this context, the expansion of Nepal's left political base, the institutionalization of human rights bodies, constitutional provisions for marginalized communities, and the eventual peaceful integration of the Maoist movement into parliamentary politics all testify to PMPD's practical validity. These achievements would have been inconceivable under a strictly insurrectionary or vanguardist framework.

Yet, the experience ever since Bhandari's death in 1993 equally reposes that a sound theoretical framework is insufficient without disciplined, principled leadership committed to its implementation. The subordination of principle to personal power, the erosion of internal democracy, and the drift toward reformism have progressively hollowed out PMPD's transformative content.

The lesson is ultimately dual: PMPD as theory offers a credible, humane, and contextually grounded model of socialist transformation. PMPD as practice remains an unfinished and contested project. Realizing its promise requires renewed fidelity to its foundational commitments—democratic competition, human dignity, social justice, and socialist economic transformation—not merely as programmatic declarations, but as lived political responsibilities.

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