

A silent revolution in the offing

by Anupa Shrestha*

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Time when once sweeps away will never come back, many says. But, if we go through the history there are so many events which recurred almost in the same fashion as it had happened years ago.

Yes, the history seems to repeat this time also. This is the running year 1999. But, in Nepal, 1960s of the Philippines seems to come back. The then transgressing Philippines immediately after the independence had seen corruption, political instability, rise of the armed militant group called Hook of Guerrilla and power-hungry politicians who were busy and blind, by hook or by crook, in licking the pillars of the nation and biting the heart of people. People at large were at the great disadvantage. It almost resembles with current scenario of Nepal.

However, the circumstances did not remain the same in the island nation after the birth of a messiah who left the job of a clerk and started campaigning against social evils on the streets of Manila.

As always, the sun shines and sets in Manila, but the messiah wanted the sun to shine in such a way that it brightens all the darkness of the country.

Therefore, he worked so hard campaigning and convincing people of the current deteriorating state of his country. It is natural that people had paid no attention to him in the beginning, but gradually his short speeches had won the hearts of the people. Then people started supporting in his selfless mission. As a result, he turned out to be the person who heal the pain of people and the nation.

Today his contributions have put the Philippines in the bright picture in the world map. The messiah was none other than Ramon Magsaysay.

Certainly, a kind of same movement is ongoing in Nepal, and some of us may not be aware of. The revolution started with a single man from the mountain with a Himalayan heart, and is running currently with zero budget, bringing about radical changes in people's lives and lifestyles through its multisectoral pro-public campaigns, sincerely intended for the betterment of human, environmental, economic and spiritual health of the world.

Without any external funding and financial hardships, the selfless revolution which believes in doing rather than talking has so far ensured safe water to more than 300,000 people under its Safe Water for the Poor campaign; helped indirectly save and conserve the precious resources (in the forms of imported fossil fuel and locally-available firewood) worth some Rs. 57.5 million plus around 2.7 million days of man-hours annually which otherwise would have been spent only on boiling water for disinfection purpose in some 50 thousand households; changed the way more than 16 thousand children think, create, act and work by implementing indigenously-developed Active Childhood Philosophy, and many more accomplishments to mention.

To quote Dr. Hemanta Mishra who is holding the position of Biodiversity Specialist in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Secretariat in Washington DC, "Obviously, the movement is impressive and is in the right

direction and facing the underlining issues head-on.”

The revolution was known to me when I was asked last July by my senior Mr. Mohan Chandra Singh, handing over a faxed invitation to take part in a workshop for the mediapeople on the drinking water contamination, the hidden cost and the role of media in its abatement.

As a producer of Image Channel, it was just another routine job for me to cover the event and eventually air. Initially, I thought that out of 30 thousand burgeoning NGOs it was just another one which boasts and pretends of serving the people in order to digest foreign money. Therefore, I was having a psyche of critical resentment until I participated in the workshop.

I was skeptical about the genuineness of the claims a lean and skinny man made during his presentation, and enjoyed haunting him even after the workshop during tea. To my astonishment, he was calm enough to respond me without any feeling of deterrence despite my tough behavior.

Until I made several rounds of field visits for the in-depth coverage of the activities he has been carrying out for public welfare, however, I was not convinced of his explanations and claims. Reason: I am a radical fellow.

The conviction Ms. Sita Devi Shrestha who is the vice principal of the Kumudini high school and a beneficiary of one of the activities of the movement expressed during an in-front-of-the-camera interview not only stunned me, but also made clear that how practical and down-to-earth is the movement.

Pointing tiny children rushing and drinking water in her school premises, Ms. Shrestha said, “Now, my kids are not only accessed to safe water, but my medical and administrative costs also plummeted as there was no incidence of water-related diseases last monsoon, and therefore I have no need of two extra janitors to employ.”

It reminded me of a published article by a fellow journalist Mr. Basant Maharjan who wrote in a vernacular daily, “The legendary man behind the revolution spontaneously pops up novel thinking and development innovations which are always down-to-earth, realistic and pragmatic.”

Of course, in the beginning as I doubt the movement, others may do so. But, to believe in the movement, you have to know it, and to know it you have to taste it as the proverbial saying goes—the taste of pudding lies in eating.

Like myself, thousands of people tasted the pudding of the universal movement including Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki—Maldivian Minister for Planning and National Development and former SAARC Secretary-General who did not hesitate last April to publicly announce and express his “pride that a selfless, but private, movement is spending enough time and energy for the sake of humanity, and it is my pleasure and privilege to be of service to such a distinguished movement.”

There are many like Mr. Zaki who have strong conviction in this movement which is the modern incarnation of guthi—the selfless tradition of the community management and development widely popular in the Nepalese society since 247 B.C., but in the brim of extinction in sheer lack of efficient management.

The rapid extension of the movement in a short span of time to win the hearts of more than 16 thousand volunteers is attributed to its selfless nature, transparency, commitment towards aid de-addiction and also because it is a tribute to the dying guthi model in a bid towards spiritual and ethical revival at a time when the imported development models from the West badly failed to cater the needs of the disadvantaged people in the developing world like Nepal.

“A big change will take place through the movement which is better than borrowed development models, and

no such initiative had been carried out in any other part of the world.”

The afore-stated expression of Dr. S. Mizan Siddiqui who is a consultant with World Health Organization (WHO) and a child specialist with BASICS in Bangladesh sounds appropriate here to substantiate the relevance of the movement as an alternative development model.

The activities under the movement revolves around the ten hallmarks of New Environmentalism with an adherence to the promotion of universal peace and spirituality.

To regain public awareness about universal peace through indigenous, fine and performing arts and crafts forms, and literature in the face of growing violence in the materialist world, the movement organizes an impromptu camp, Atelier for Peace, in the sacred garden of Lumbini—the birthplace of the apostle of peace, Gautam the Buddha—on an annual basis in helping create a composite cultural ethos for the whole human kind.

“A wonderful world peace project,” lauded Ms. Caroline McCarthy of the US, and “Very good work for humanity,” remarked Ms. Juliet Regan of the Netherlands who were two among more than 3,000 visitors from 20 countries who had witnessed the outcomes of the Atelier last year.

It is noteworthy that I have also produced and aired a report last September on the irreparable artifacts (paintings, sculptures, photographs and origami works) which were created last April by an international group of artists, using only those sacred objects, collected in the sacred garden of Lumbini.

Certainly, it was not without significance Dr. Jack Marrkand—Executive Director of Partnership for Development, USA—“saluted the very commendable efforts” of the movement.

I also salute the indefatigable man and an organizing guru with multifarious experiences who conceived the idea of this silent revolution while leaving the burgeoning “chattering” class to dedicate himself to grassroots activism.

It all began silently and single-handedly as a distant dream. And the path is, certainly, not easy. It takes the utmost conviction and unstinting commitment of every member of the human society to make this dream of holistic human development into a reality.

Before I conclude, let me disclose about the universal movement and the man behind it. The movement is [Global Initiatives for Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Action](#) (acronymed GI) and the man who is responsible for leading and organizing the movement while endeavoring to be useful to the people is Mr. [Sichendra Bista](#)—a communicator by profession, an environmental specialist by training, and a magician, mountaineer and photographer by hobby.

If you are still skeptical of what I’ve put in black and white, [join](#) the silent revolution to believe it as I did.

**** The author is an executive producer with the Image Channel and a presenter at K.A.T.H. 97.9 FM. She could be [contacted](#) at Image Channel.***