

# MARCHING | अगाडि

A H E A D | बढ्दै



A Profile Book of Women CA Members

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# Foreword



The women of Nepal are strong, articulate and capable leaders. The Constituent Assembly members selected and profiled in this book demonstrate to all women and men that leadership arises in all segments of society, all backgrounds, regions, ethnicities, castes and political parties. Leadership and potential knows no one area or one particular type of woman.

The women interviewed in the pages that follow were selected to serve as an inspiration to all women and as examples of the different paths each of them took to become a member of the Constituent Assembly. These women exemplify all women in Nepal and their individual struggles to contribute to their families and their nation. Many of the stories are of historic struggle, often against unbelievable odds. They should serve as an example to all that each person can become involved in government and politics in order to help all women and the people of Nepal, because that is what each of these women is now doing - helping the people of Nepal.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a non-governmental organization that is working in numerous countries throughout the world helping women achieve their potential. NDI has been involved here in Nepal since 1994, and a great deal of that time has been in assisting women leaders, political party and parliamentary members and civil society activists. I have proudly worked for NDI in many countries and specifically in Nepal with women in the Constituent Assembly and political parties. The women highlighted here are proud examples of the type of women that can be expected to help lead Nepal into a great example of democracy, equal rights and opportunities for all. I am pleased to be able to present this work as a demonstration of women's contribution to the future of Nepal.

Unfortunately the limitations in space did not allow us to feature all the capable women leaders in the Constituent Assembly. However, that can not undermine their contributions in Nepali politics and I respect all of them equally. The names in this publication appear alphabetically and no other order or hierarchy is intended.

Sherrie M. Wolff, Ph.D.  
NDI Country Director, Nepal



# Summary

The April 2008 elections in Nepal marked an historic and unprecedented step forward for women in politics, who won one third of the 601 seats in the Constituent Assembly, a remarkable achievement and turnaround from previous elections, and a huge leap forward on the world stage, where women still account for only 19.2% of parliamentarians.

In addition to their role in the Legislature-Parliament - as members of the Constituent Assembly - for the first time, this group of women has the unique opportunity to participate in constitution building process in Nepal.

In the Spring of 2010, as the Constituent Assembly's first two year mandate was drawing to a close, we approached 24 women lawmakers to ask them to participate in interviews aimed at providing a portrait of their trajectories into the political process, as seen through their own eyes.

The women political leaders chosen in this publication represent a diverse group: ranging in age from 30 to 69, from 8 different political parties, and all parts of Nepal, and from very different religious, family and socio-economic backgrounds.

Despite their many differences, they share many common experiences, particularly when it comes to overcoming discrimination against women as activists and leaders in their communities. Their stories serve as important reminders of the importance of the need to remove systemic barriers such as poverty, discrimination and to achieve women's full participation in politics.

This group of parliamentarians also share a common goal: a commitment to achieve gender equality through democratic means and constitutional reform, to create opportunities for women in all areas of social, political and economic life.

The purpose of this collection of short profiles is to highlight the contributions made by women political leaders, at this unique juncture in the development of democracy in Nepal. There is still much work to be done to ensure that women are able to participate fully in political life, but as we contemplate the challenges ahead, it is important to highlight the political transformation women have already won.

The Institute formed an Advisory Board comprising prominent individuals and institutions that have considerable knowledge and experience regarding the status of women in Nepali politics. The Advisory Board contributed to identify the women leaders featured in this publication and provided valuable suggestions for the design, layout and printing. NDI expresses sincere gratitude to the Advisory Board members for their significant contributions.



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# Constituent Assembly in Nepal

A constitution is the fundamental law of the land. It provides for division of powers, determines the state structure, defines the balance of power between the different organs of the state, establishes the form of governance, and delimits the role, functions and powers of the rulers and guarantees rights and liberties of the people. It also prescribes procedures for government functioning in order to make it accountable to the people. As such, a constitution is the document that validates the legitimacy of the system of government in the country.

A constitution is also viewed as a grand charter that defines and limits political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people and state and other institutions. Citizens and the government must uphold and honor the constitution and abide by the laws made under it. As the constitution is adopted with the consent of stakeholders, it is also viewed as the document of national consensus. Democracy cannot survive without a constitution.

Political scientists point out that a democratic constitution honors the majority and protects the rights and interests of the minority. The constitution reflects the aspirations of both the majority and minority sides. It addresses issues ranging from proper representation to setting up a governing system that is politically accountable.

The procedure of formally adopting the constitution by the Constituent Assembly (CA) after it has been duly deliberated and approved by the people's representatives is regarded as the most fundamental process to democracy in the world. All the constitutions in Nepal to date were prepared by teams of experts following discussion among themselves and selected members of the public, rather than by the people's elected representatives. For the first time in the history of Nepal, the people's representatives are currently engaged in preparing a constitution for the country. In 1990 too, a democratic constitution was introduced against the backdrop of the people's movement of 1989-90. However, problems appeared in its successful implementation.

The intrinsic value of democracy lies in people being conscious of their rights. Against the backdrop of a long-standing restrictive regime, people become less committed to asserting their rights, and politicians and bureaucrats deviate from upholding constitutional norms and provisions. The 1990 statute turned out to be an inflexible document as it lacked provisions to introduce amendments to respond to changed circumstances or to allow the public to initiate referenda in order to propose revisions to the statute. Moreover, a lack of provisions for making the governance structure more inclusive undermined people's participation that they enjoyed full democratic opportunities to participate politically.

Notwithstanding the democratic features of the 1990 constitution, the governments of the period, political parties, the then royals and other stakeholders were prone to subverting it rather than working in tune with its spirit. This frustrated the people in no small measure. In the light of such failures, it is expected that important lessons have been learned and the constitution will be drawn up in tune with a more inclusive new federal democratic republic.

The need for a "constituent assembly" had been a subject of long-standing debate in Nepal that began in the 1950s and came to a conclusion with the election of the CA in 2008. During the 1950s, the political aspiration of having the constitution formulated by the CA could not be achieved due to political instability, partisan conflict and a series of conspiratorial political incidents after the restoration of democracy.

During the dying days of the Rana rule, the Rana Prime Minister Padma Shamsher had proclaimed the *Constitutional Act of Nepal -2004* in 1946. Though this Act was formulated with a view to introducing a

constitutional system of government in response to the emerging movement against the Rana family rule, the internal wrangling among the ruling family members prevented its implementation.

Eventually, the movement culminating in the February 1951 declaration marked the end of the Rana rule. King Tribhuvan promised a republican constitution to be drawn up by an elected constituent assembly. However on going political strife and conflict raged in the country making it impossible to hold elections for a constituent assembly. Eight years later, King Mahendra proclaimed the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal -2015* in February 1958. Parliamentary elections were held under its provisions and the ground was laid to conduct the governance of the state by elected representatives of the people. But before the elected government could complete 18 months in office, King Mahendra abrogated the constitutional provisions and dissolved the multiparty system. In 1962, the King introduced the *Panchayati* Constitution with features of the one party rule. The system was maintained for nearly three decades with three different amendments to this constitution.

The 1990 people's movement brought the *Panchayat* era to an end. Based on the principles in use in democratic countries, the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal -2047* was declared in 1990. The 1990 Constitution also stumbled as it lacked outlets to permit power sharing by the centre, decentralization of authority an evolution of state institutions into inclusive organisms, as well as a lack of provisions allowing adequate constitutional amendment. Then the political parties finally reached a consensus to adopt a new constitution to reflect the aspirations of the people. Following a series of agreements and understandings among the political parties, elections for the CA were held in April 2008. According to the provisions of the *Interim Constitution*, the CA would be comprised of 601 members, of whom 335 were to be chosen from a system of proportional representation, 240 were elected through direct polling and 26 were to be nominated by the cabinet. In the 2008 elections, altogether 74 political parties were registered at the Election Commission (EC) for the purpose of contesting seats for the CA. During this election, electronic voting machine was used for the first time in Nepal at the constituency number one in Kathmandu.

Nation-wide, the total number of eligible (adult) voters was 17,609,895 of whom 8,729,290 were female, and 8,880,143 were males. These included 250,000 voters with temporary registration. Of the total 11,146,560 votes cast, 407,462 votes were declared invalid. A total of 4,031 candidates had filed for nomination to contest seats for CA elections of whom 189 had withdrawn their nomination. In the end 3,947 candidates were left in the electoral battlefield of whom 816 were independent candidates.

For the PR system of election, 54 parties submitted a closed list of candidates before the EC. In the closed list, the total number of candidates proposed was 5,701. The EC cancelled the candidacy in 299 cases, for not meeting the prescribed standards. A total of 20,888 polling booths were set up for the CA election. Similarly, 234,000 polling officials were mobilized to conduct the election.

Thus the elected CA was constituted. It held its first meeting on May 28, 2008, which can be regarded as the most important session in the whole history of Nepal. The very first CA session declared Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic thereby formally ending the centuries old monarchical system of government.

To expedite the constitution making process, ten thematic committees, one constitutional committee and three procedural committees were formed. The Constitutional Committee has the responsibility of preparing the draft of the new constitution. This Committee comprises 63 members with representation from all political parties. The Committee bears the responsibility of drafting the constitution after a detailed study of the concept papers received from the thematic committees.

As the framework of the new constitution could not be drawn up in the stipulated time period of two years, the term of the CA has been extended for one more year from May 28, 2010. The new schedule has been reached by the political parties with the understanding that the new constitution shall be presented to the CA for a vote and proclaimed by the middle of April 2011.

The ultimate objective of the CA is to institutionalize the democratic republic through proclaiming the new constitution. This includes an end to the centralized governing system paving the way for a governance system conducted on an inclusive basis, incorporating members of oppressed groups, castes, gender and regions, as well as elections based on proportional representation. The constitution is a legitimate medium to transfer the power and authority of the government to the people, which traditionally was being exercised by a certain class or group. People have high expectations from the CA. Therefore the political parties in the CA must be seriously committed to the constitution drafting process in order to meet the huge responsibilities bestowed upon them.

# Women in Parliament

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, more than 95 percent countries in the world have granted women two fundamental democratic rights: the right to vote and to contest elections as candidates for public office. New Zealand was the first country in the world to grant women voting rights as early as 1893. In 1906, New Zealand also became the first country to formalize these two rights as fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution of the state. However, there are still some nations that have not introduced measures to grant women both the right to vote and to contest elections as candidates for public office.

The constitutional provisions of the right to vote, to contest elections for public office and to be elected are integral parts of the fundamental rights of the citizens of a country. In reality though, as most of the candidates for public office happen to be men, such rights of women are exercised only in casting their votes. This fact is starkly evident not only in some of the new democracies and emerging democracies but also in the long-standing democracies as well. The very slight representation of women in parliament of some European countries is viewed now as an infringement of fundamental democratic rights and the human rights of women in their respective countries.

Women's participation in parliament is viewed as a necessary prerequisite of national political life the world over, which has clear impacts on social, political and economic sectors of the nation. Women's presence in the vitally important legislative structure, their exposure to the legislative processes and their experience with parliamentary procedure and the impact they have in the legislature are some of the serious issues and challenges currently.

Concrete efforts are needed to ensure that women have access to means and resources from the moment they decide to seek the public office until they reach the position, and thereafter focusing on every step of women's participation in politics; in order to ensure a constructive and creative contribution by women politicians as members of parliament.

In terms of women's political, economic and social rights, these rights never work equally in every sense with respect to men and women. Though women account for more than one half of the world's population, and comprise 50 percent of the world's labour force, more than 1 billion women continue to live their lives below the poverty line. Keeping the gender dimension in sight, it is imperative for every democratic structure to be guided by the principle of equal access and inclusion of women and men in decision making processes.

## **Women in Parliament: the World Scene**

The unique features of any democratic system are political freedom in equal measure, openness and pluralism. However, global statistics reveal a vast chasm of inequality on the question of women's representation that still remains to be bridged.

According to the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), there were 11.3 percent women represented in the national parliaments of the world in 1995. Ten years later in 2005, this figure touched the 16 percent mark. Since 1995, more than 30 women have held the position of head of government or head of state. In 2005, 27 women were the presiding officers of 27 parliaments. The record as of July 2010 that of a

total of 44,649 parliamentarians in the world, the number of women parliamentarians stood at 19.2 percent. The records reveal that 18.4 percent of the upper house were women and 19.3 percent of the lower house of parliament. Globally, women now hold a greater number of elected positions and this trend is on the upswing.

## **Women's Participation in Constitution Making in Nepal**

Women figure very little in the history of constitution making in Nepal. The absence of women in the process of crafting a vital document such as the constitution which forms the fundamental law of the land is ironic. The presence of one third women members at the Constituent Assembly (CA) represents a remarkable turnaround and transformation in Nepali politics and constitution making.

Framed at the end of the Rana regime in 1946, the *Constitutional Law of Nepal Government* represents the first written constitution of Nepal. This was promulgated in 1947 by the Rana Prime Minister with input from experts. No woman was included in the drafting committee of this constitution. In 1951, King Tribhuvan proclaimed the *Interim Charter of Governance for Nepal -1951* as the second constitution. Similarly, in the framing of this constitution no woman was involved. In February 1958, a third constitution was adopted and no woman found a place in the process of its formulation. Only in December 1962 when King Mahendra proclaimed the fourth constitution following the dismantling of democracy two years earlier was a woman -Angur Baba Joshi--inducted in the constitution drafting committee. After nearly three decades of a party-less system, and the legalisation of political parties marking the restoration of democracy, a fifth constitution came into force in November 1990 but women found no representation in its drafting process either.

Following the new restoration of democracy as *loktantra* (government of the free people instead of *prajatantra*, government by the subject people, as it had been dubbed), an Interim Constitution Drafting Commission was formed in 2006 in which there was remarkable participation by women. Nepal was declared a democratic republic as the climax of decade-long armed rebellion and 19-day long People's Movement and as a mark of honor to women's contribution to the democratic struggles, the four major political parties nominated four women to the constitution drafting committee. They were Sushila Karki, Pushpa Bhusal, Chhatra Kumari Gurung and Shanta Rai.

The Interim Constitution promulgated in 2006 marks a positive transformation in favor of women. It has underlined the necessity of women's participation in every level and structure of the state including right to citizenship, representation of women at every level of inclusive state and its institutional structures. Moreover, it also laid the foundation for women to hold a minimum of one-third of the seats in the Constituent Assembly (CA). As such it is evident that as the country is working through its sixth constitution, political development has been more supportive for women since the day democracy was first installed in 1951.

In the past, participation of Nepali women in politics was very limited. Nevertheless women in Nepal have played a remarkable role in the political transformation of the country. Since the end of the Rana rule in 1951, women's participation in politics has been increasing steadily. Whether it was in the course of fighting against the party-less *Panchayat* regime after 1960 or in supporting the people's movement for restoration of democracy in 1990 or in the struggle of the people's movement II in 2005-06, women have participated actively along with other sectors of Nepali society. In this way, with the restoration of democracy, women are becoming increasingly active in strengthening the peace process, in developing the constitutional structure, and in expediting the constitution writing process.

As Nepal engages in deliberating on and drafting a new constitution through the CA, women's participation and activism have been remarkable in all 10 thematic committees. Women are actively engaged in raising issues and proposing drafts before the CA committees on various concerns affecting women that must be incorporated in the constitution ranging from matters of citizenship, right to parental property, preventing domestic violence along with ensuring basic human rights and constitutional protections. When the constitution could not be drawn up within the stipulated two-year period of the CA, the women CA members' caucus submitted a memorandum to the CA Chair suggesting an extension of the CA tenure. On May 28, five minutes before midnight, the CA deadline, women CA members also resorted to slogan shouting and picketing at the rostrum of CA to press their demand for an extension of the CA term.

## **Women in Nepal's Parliament and Government**

Following a series of complaints regarding the lack of opportunities for women to make use of their competence in national politics in the 1990s, some special measures have been introduced after the second restoration of democracy in 2006. The success in having women form one-third of the CA must be counted as a historic achievement. It contrasts sharply with the conditions of the post-1990 democratic changes when there was very little increase, even in the candidacy of women in the general elections after the restoration of democracy. During the earlier period, there was no discussion in public forums regarding the presence of women in public life.

During the three previous parliamentary elections women's representation stood at 2.15 percent (1991), 3.45 percent (1994) and 5.85 percent (1999). Political parties seemed to field women candidates only to meet the formal constitutional requirements regarding the number of women to be listed among the candidates. The 1990 Constitution required political parties to field a minimum of 5 percent of women among their candidates for parliamentary election. Though the number of women candidates did not exceed 7 percent in the elections of 1991 and 1994, the elections of 1999 witnessed a considerable presence of women candidates.

The elections of 1991 and 1994 each saw 7 women members elected to the House of Representatives while 12 women candidates were successful in the hustling in 1999. In 1998, Shailaja Acharya became the first woman Deputy Prime Minister, the highest political office held by a woman in Nepal.

From 1959 onwards, women's participation in national political life has increased steadily. Historically, the first woman was elected to parliament in the 1958 general election. Nepali Congress candidate Mrs. Dwarikadevi Thakurani was elected from constituency No.66 of Dandeldhura. She also became the assistant Minister for health and local self-government in the first elected council of ministers formed in 1958. She is remembered as the first woman minister in the history of Nepal.

A few women also made their appearance in politics during the *Panchayat* period also. However no woman was included in the council of ministers formed towards the end of the Panchayat rule. Kamal Shah was appointed as assistant Health Minister in the council of ministers formed in April 1962. In the following year Sushila Thapa became assistant Health Minister and was later promoted to minister of state level. Subsequently, other women who became ministers during the Panchayat era were: Saraswati Rai, Kalpana Bista, Bhadrakumari Ghale, Bidyadevi Devkota and Chanda Shah. Apart from Sushila Thapa, all these women politicians held the positions of minister of state or assistant minister.

By 2008, however, the political scene, in terms of the number of women participating in politics had changed considerably, when the CA was comprised of approximately 33 percent women members.



*"Deep-seated conservative thinking that dominates party and politics makes it difficult for women to rise in leadership positions", avers Amrita Thapa Magar who heads the CA Committee on the Division of Natural Resources, Financial Rights and Revenues. But she also believes, with the rise in general consciousness, conditions are bound to improve for women. Currently she is also a central committee member of the UCPN-M. She is the CA member from the proportional representation list of her party.*

***"It is imperative for women to enter into politics to end exploitation of humans by fellow humans."***



## Amrita Thapa Magar

CA Member, UCPN-M

District : Syangja  
Husband : Hitman Shakya  
Mother : Shobhakumari Thapa  
Father : Lokbahadur Thapa  
Date of Birth : April 1972  
Place of Birth : Syangja  
Mother Tongue : Nepali



Influenced by the communist political philosophy, Ms. Thapa Magar, 38, who entered politics at an early age, hails from Biruwa, Archa-lay of Syangja district. She has championed the causes of the oppressed and exploited since she chose active politics as her life goal in 1989. She debuted in her political role as a student activist of the student wing of the Unity Center. While actively engaged in the Maoist people's war, she remained underground for a long time. In the course of the people's war, while leading an underground life, she appeared in the open to successfully carry out missions assigned by the party organization.

She has witnessed at first hand many scenes of armed conflict. She is among those who have chosen to enter into inter-caste marriage. She married Hitman Shakya of Baglung while they were in the battlefield of the people's war.

Politics is never an easy option, and it is especially difficult for women. She observes, "To become recognized in politics, one has to have a sound party policy and one's perseverance. In every field, to engage in struggle is a daunting task. It is particularly difficult for women in a patriarchal society to enter into politics and continue to carve out their role within it. If women in leadership positions gain a high level of consciousness, the external environment will also ease up gradually."

Lawmaker Thapa Magar, in the course of her political and practical experience of 20-years standing, has grown in stature and maturity. She says, "When women are actively engaged in politics, they gain courage, develop women-friendly political strategies, as well as acquiring capabilities to carry out both public and household work simultaneously. But some problems continue to persist, such as women still lack confidence that they can work as well as men in society and women candidates are quite often dumped into difficult constituencies where it becomes very tough to come out a winner."

Ms. Thapa Magar strived to combine her studies and political activities. When the Maoists launched the people's war, she was a second year Bachelor's Management student and she joined underground cadres. All through the people's war period, she remained underground and actively engaged in the battle front. At present as a CA member and a central committee member of UCPN-M, she is devoting her time to party work and constitution drafting. She has always placed serving people first before attending to her personal wishes and ambitions. In her view, the greatest contribution one can make is to devote oneself to public work, keeping one's mind away from the negativism prevailing in the society.

Coming from a lower middle class family background, her main political goal is to bring an end to the oppression of the common people. She observes, "It is imperative for

women to enter into politics to fight against poverty, discrimination based on caste, region, gender, language and religion, in other words --to end exploitation of humans by fellow humans."

Why should women be in politics?

Her answer is: "Politics is in command of all other policies. It is at the center of making decisions affecting all the sectors. As it impacts on all aspects of society, joining politics means understanding the master policies and becoming engaged in mobilizing them as necessary. Unless women are actively engaged in politics, they cannot expect opportunities to open for them in other areas."

In her experience, some of the greatest highlights of her political life have been becoming a member of the CA and participating in the constitution making process and being able to raise in the CA vital women's issues such as the equal right of women to parental property, issues of citizenship and political rights. She carries a great sense of responsibility on her shoulders.

She is the chairperson of the important CA thematic Committee on the Division of Natural Resource, Financial Rights and Revenues. This committee has prepared a concept paper ensuring equal access to natural resources to all levels of users. She says, "One section of the committee stood for the status quo, while the other sought to break away from all unequal provisions. The concept paper was finalized after much discussion and debate."

She feels proud of her political achievement. She believes in the equitable use of natural resources and emphasizes that if the revenue resources are allocated in a fair manner, the needs of all sectors can be addressed to the satisfaction of all. To be able to contribute at the policy level to the constitution making process is another facet of her political achievement.

Ms. Thapa Magar, who used to devote her time to reading, writing, public speaking, and training party workers at village levels, has a great sense of responsibility after being inducted into the CA. This lawmaker, who gives much of her time to CA meetings, internal party work and programs of various social organizations, believes that to attain stable peace and positive political changes there must be a transformation in the political, economic and social life of the nation. Federal democratic Nepal must provide for the basic needs of people such as food, shelter, clothing, education, health and jobs.

She reflects that the greatest achievement of her political life is the country being declared the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.





**Basantidevi Jha**  
CA Member,  
Tarai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP)

District : Mahottari  
Husband : Madhukant Jha  
Mother : Parbati Thakur  
Father : Rajeshwar Thakur  
Date of Birth : August 1954  
Place of Birth : Dharaharawa,  
Sitamarhi, India  
Mother Tongue : Maithili

*"Asking for an end to impunity and to effectively raise the concerns of Madhesi women are my priority issues."*

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*Basantidevi Jha believes that she has been inducted to the membership of the CA for successfully carrying out the responsibilities assigned by her party for the uplifting of Madhesi women during the Madhes movements.*

*Mrs. Jha, 56, represents the TMLP in the CA from its PR list. Born in Dharaharawa Sitamarhi of Bihar state in India, she obtained Nepali citizenship after she married Madhukant Jha of Mahottari. She became engaged in political activities with the encouragement of family members, particularly her children, and she is the district committee member of TMLP. She feels a great responsibility on her shoulders since the party nominated her for CA membership following the CA election of 2008.*

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She has been engaged in social service, particularly in the women's movement, since 1971. Now she feels her long-standing social work has been amply rewarded. She observes, "If one makes outstanding contribution to society, recognition for illustrious work will come on our way. The party leadership would notice those workers sooner who carry out exemplary work for the party and the people. But to be exemplary, it requires much effort on our part."

There was a time when she felt sad that women members could not be found for the active membership in the party in the village development committees. In her opinion, all women should realize that they can make important contributions to society by entering politics. Her stint in social service during her leisure time facilitated her entry into politics. She strongly believes that more women should join politics in Terai region because of the prevailing very low level of consciousness there in order to encourage them to move ahead. She feels satisfied that her activism in politics has brought her success within a short period of time.

Mrs. Jha reflects that the rise of many Madhesi women, like herself, in politics in such a short period of time has helped in raising the consciousness level of many Madhesi women and the legal provisions have proved immensely helpful in this regard. She adds that the provision of proportional representation of women in the CA has inspired many women to join politics. The presence of 33 percent women members in CA has greatly enhanced the confidence level of many women to consider politics as a feasible career option. As a member of the capacity building committee of the CA, she realized that she too could make a contribution for the country.

She clearly states, "Madhesi women have a big role to play to plead for the rights of marginalized women and strive to secure the constitutional rights for all women. Women in politics have to face the challenge of fighting for social justice with exemplary disposition and if they realize such challenges to move ahead the success will be theirs."

In her opinion, "The challenge before all women in the CA was to fight for the basic rights of the people such as health and education and strive for the end of feudal customs in society. For me, asking for an end to impunity and to effectively raise the concerns of Madhesi women are other priority issues. Moreover, I foresee the challenges ahead are to carry out the party platform effectively and prepare the democratic constitution in order to have equal representation of women at all institutions of the state."





**Binda Pandey**  
CA Member, CPN-UML

District : Nuwakot  
Mother : Bishnumaya Pandey  
Father : Fattabahadur Pandey  
Date of Birth : December 1966  
Place of Birth : Khanigaun, Nuwakot  
Mother Tongue : Nepali

*"Every individual must seek to put into actual practice what they propagate."*



*With a Master's degree in botany, Binda Pandey belongs to the group of educated CA members. She also obtained a postgraduate degree in gender and development studies from Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand. Ms. Pandey, who joined politics from the left of the political spectrum, is a CA member from the PR list of the third largest party in the CA, CPN-UML. Ms. Pandey, 44, hails from Khanigaun of Nuwakot district. At present she is also a central committee member of CPN-UML and chairperson of CA Committee on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. She believes in secularism.*

The student movement of 1978-79 impressed her so much that she decided to enter into politics. Her political journey formally began in 1980 when she became a member of the All Nepal National Free Students Union, the student wing of the CPN-ML. Before giving her full time to politics as well as after becoming full time political activist, she became involved in trade union activities through GEFONT. She served for a long time as program coordinator in the Committee for Asian Women, based in Hongkong. She also served as a member of the National Women Commission at its inception.

Drawn to politics from her student days, Ms. Pandey believes women have to be active themselves in order to win any success for their advancement. She observes, "Change cannot be brought as a gift from outside. Moreover politics remains very difficult and full of challenge for women. In such circumstances, unless women themselves become actively involved in policy formulation and its implementation to bring about the transformation of the whole society, the results will elude us. Women's participation is also imperative to present women's problems and needs in actual form at the policy making level."

She affirms that from her experience it is difficult for women to join and continue in politics. Speaking from first hand experience, she says, when assigning responsibility for party work few political parties reach for women activists as their first choice. When a woman political activist seeks to chart new approaches with a different perspective, attempts are made to tarnish her image and scare her away from her path, or in the end, the ultimate tool of character assassination is applied to remove her from the scene. It is indeed a painful fact of life that different standards of morals and manners are applied for men and women even in political fields.

Women face discrimination at every turn in Nepali society. She believes in order for women to enjoy equal social status, additional structures, policies and programs have to be introduced. Speaking of social challenges faced by Nepali women, she commented figuratively that "Women here share the fate of auxiliary verbs in English. Sentences are not completed without auxiliary verbs, but they alone cannot convey the meaning."

When she decided to make politics her career goal, the

general atmosphere was not congenial for women in public life. Society in those days would not even appreciate female family members making speeches at public forums. Moreover, few families would encourage their wards- sons or daughters- to choose politics as a career goal as it meant standing up to the policies of the repressive Panchayat regime. She explains, "Every moment of political life becomes challenging and unless one is mentally able to deal with challenges it remains difficult to advance in a political career irrespective of the nature of the political system. Being in politics means always being the target of public criticism. There is no escape from it; therefore it has to be faced boldly."

As the CA chairperson of the Committee on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, she was responsible for encouraging deliberations on diverse facets of fundamental rights and freedoms and to formalizing the recommendation of the whole committee. She had the unenviable task of coordinating the conflicting standpoints of the CA members representing opposite political philosophies and selecting suitable input from the vast number of overly optimistic suggestions received by the Committee from outside the CA. Preparing a detailed list of fundamental rights of the people for the new constitution after careful discussion in the CA was not an easy task, to say the least.

The Committee she led has successfully resolved the issue of discrimination against women on citizenship. The concept paper of the Committee has also incorporated equal inheritance rights (*Banshiya Adhikar*) in terms of counting genetic continuation and the fundamental trade union rights as per the Convention of ILO for all workers. She has expressed satisfaction over the fact that the concept paper has been able to reflect some novel concepts of rights for the Nepali people.

In her considered opinion, every issue of contention must be dealt with in an institutionalized manner. Every individual must seek to put into actual practice what they propagate. She is committed to ensuring easy access to basic needs for all the people; equality, social justice and human dignity for every citizen; and believes that every citizen should also develop healthy attitude to observing one's rights and duties. Such achievements would prove a great contribution to the nation.

A portrait of Damakumari Sharma, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a dark blue blazer over a light orange scarf. She is standing outdoors with a green field and a utility pole in the background. Her hands are clasped in front of her.

**Damakumari Sharma**

CA Member, UCPN-M

District : Dang  
Husband : Yagyeshwar Sharma (Baruj)  
Mother : Kuntadevi Sharma  
Father : Dilliraj Sharma  
Date of Birth : April 1971  
Place of Birth : Gobardiha-7, Dang  
Mother Tongue : Nepali

*"Peace, the new constitution and guaranteeing people's rights are the demands of the present time."*

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*Political parties must overcome their narrow partisan interests and must devote themselves, using all means, to finalize the constitution, so believes the UCPN-M CA member Damakumari Sharma. She entered politics after the restoration of democracy in 1990. During the Maoist armed conflict, she was the very spirit of struggle "to capture power" and engaged in risky political exercises. At present she is convinced that the people's empowerment lies in the successful realization of the constitution.*

*She confirmed her place in mainstream politics when she beat her nearest rival by three-times as many votes in Dang constituency No.2 during the CA polls. Born and brought up in an ordinary farming household, Mrs. Sharma, 40, besides being CA member is a member of the Maoist affiliated Tharuwan State Committee and central secretariat member of All Nepal Women's Organization.*

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She began her political career through student politics by joining the protest movement of 1990. Initially, she worked as a political activist in the woman's organization of the communist splinter group CPN-Masal. When she chose to join politics, entry of women in the political field was not a smooth affair. The country was slowly finding its way toward an open political climate after the restoration of democracy. Naturally, women would have to cross many hurdles to move ahead in a patriarchal society. But she was inspired by the thought that those women who met challenges successfully would advance in society. She observes, "To move ahead in such a way, women must have courage, patience and perseverance. Women would also need favorable economic conditions for them to enter into politics."

When her husband was martyred in the course of the Maoist armed conflict, her family faced a precarious situation. She confides that because of the miserable economic conditions, she had found it very difficult to continue in politics. When the country was on the lookout for new faces during the CA elections, big positive support came in the form of the constitutional provision that required one-third of CA members to be women. She regards this as an example of major boost for women's participation in politics. She opines, "Increased participation of women in politics is definitely a positive sign. Moreover, the constitutional guarantee of 33 percent participation of women marks a major achievement."

In course of her political life, she lived underground for seven years and she was imprisoned for two years.

She observes, "Peace, the new constitution and guaranteeing people's rights are the demands of the

present time. To fulfil these demands, it is essential to develop understanding, coordination and joint action. Women too need to articulate such ideas as they already live in changed circumstances and still envision the new society to come."

The lawmaker Sharma was greatly excited following the successful completion of the CA election. As the constitution making process encountered delays and obstruction, she is concerned about keeping promises made to the people. She concedes that political leadership has missed its cues.

The most remarkable achievement of her life was to be able to engage and move ahead in politics continually. She regards her success in bringing other women into politics with herself a significant achievement. Mrs Sharma affirms, "To make the political change take stable roots, we must draw up a common agenda of ending class inequality, safeguarding our nationality and promoting economic prosperity and providing equal access to all in all sectors of life."

In her view, "The main work I have been trying to accomplish for the country amounts to - to ensure easy access of the public in the matters of state governance, and to work towards a system that makes the state answerable for the basic needs of the people including food, shelter, education, health and employment."

She is convinced that there will be no peace in the country until the constitution is formally adopted. She exhorts to people, "Let's get united for peace and the constitution. This will be the greatest contribution for the country."



**Hisila Yami**

CA Member, United CPN-Maoist (UCPN-M)

District : Kathmandu  
Husband : Dr. Baburam Bhattarai  
Mother : Hiradevi Yami  
Father : Dharmaratna Yami  
Date of Birth : July 1959  
Place of Birth : Lalitpur  
Mother Tongue : Newari

*"I have dedicated myself for the liberation of people trapped in the stranglehold of class and ethnic division."*

*Born and brought up in a well-to-do family, Hisila Yami found herself working in a revolutionary political party. Along with her comfortable family background, she too received an education that would be a rare opening for many women: she holds a post-graduate degree in engineering. Yami, 51, is a CA member for the United Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN-M). She was elected to CA with a substantial vote difference over her rivals from Kathmandu constituency No. 7.*



Though she grew up in a political family, she found her own political moorings after her marriage to Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, a Brahmin from Gorkha district. Dr. Bhattarai is a frontline communist leader, particularly within the revolutionary communist movement. She believes all religious faiths should be treated equally and inter-caste marriage should be encouraged.

Her family joined actively in the revolution against the autocratic Rana rule. Her father Dharmaratna became a government minister after the overthrow of the Rana regime. But Hisila Yami came to politics only after 1981. She was imprisoned on various occasions during the later phase of the *Panchayat* rule. Currently she is also a politburo member of the UCPN-M.

She taught at Tribhuvan University Engineering Campus until the Maoist-launched "people's war". Committed to teaching and conducting the people's war simultaneously, she went underground along with her husband Dr. Bhattarai. In addition to politics, she has also produced serious writing. Some of her published works include *Aadha Aakash Aadha Dharti* (Half the Sky Half the Earth), *Adhikar* (Rights), *Samyabad ra Mahila Mukti* (Communism and Women's Liberation) and in addition, "People's War and Women's Liberation in Nepal" from India.

During the Maoist "people's war", she often put herself in risky political situations. The government of the day had offered rewards for information leading to the arrest of political leaders like her. She observes, "I've offered all my life for political and social works. I view all my life as a continuing struggle. I have dedicated myself for the liberation of people trapped in the stranglehold of class and ethnic division. I view the alterations of revolution and peaceful engagement, marching on the street, and debates in the house as regular features of political life."

Various upheavals also became unavoidable as she is constantly engaged in dealing with the government front as well. She remarks, "Whatever the role, I feel I have

been largely vindicated." She has served as the Minister for physical planning and construction for nine months in the government led by the Maoist chairman Puspakamal Dahal Prachanda, formed after the CA election.

In her considered opinion, "The issues of class liberation and women's liberation in politics are directly related to the world revolution. Looking at the world as a whole, women remain behind men according to most measures. Women are not able even to exercise the rights that have been made available to them because they are unable to remove the backwardness encircling around them. Women are not in the reckoning for their own rights."

She believes women first need to realize how deprived their condition has been and only this realization will propel them to meaningful political action. She opines, "There are scores of positive reasons why women should join politics. When women remain bound within the four walls of the home, they cannot be aware of world conditions. Women must keep thinking in order to broaden their capability. Only then they will be empowered to fight against caste, gender and religious oppression."

She is concerned about the lack of dynamic progression in the functioning of the CA. As a member of the Constitutional Committee which is entrusted with preparing the draft constitution, she feels pain and frustration at the lack of progress in the working of this committee. She remarks, "We went for the CA with the expectation that much would be achieved there. But as the CA could not move in a dynamic fashion, the expected outcome has not materialized yet. Erosion of momentum and the divergent preference of various parties have dented the effectiveness of the CA."

She has not yet given up on the CA. She further adds, "The stable polity would require a complete transformation. I entered into politics to become actively engaged to resolve the ideological, organizational and practical problems of the people. I will only claim some credit if such problems can be addressed effectively."





**Janak Kumari Chalise**  
CA Member, CPN-ML

District : Lalitpur  
Husband : Dr. Mukesh Kumar Chalise  
Mother : Hemkumari Gajurel  
Father : Balkrishna Gajurel  
Date of Birth : April 14, 1960  
Place of Birth : Sindhulimadhi, Rammadhi  
Mother Tongue : Nepali

*"Women need to enhance their capability to bring to an end and fight against discrimination and exploitation."*

*Janak Kumari Chalise, representing the CPN-ML at the CA, plunged into political activism influenced by communist philosophy. Chalise, now 50, has been in the political field for over 32 years. While a student, she opted for communist politics, deeply touched by the revolutionary élan of ML organizers. Born of the Jhapa rebellion, a section of communist activists was evolving into the CPN-ML and Mrs Chalise came into contact with this group at its early stage. As this group propagated elimination of class enemies for the revolution, it was quite risky to stand close to this group in the heyday of the Panchayat period. Hence she moved underground to nurture her political goals.*



As a young woman growing up in a traditional Hindu society, there was little she could expect from her family by way of encouragement or support to do her political work. However things changed after she married Dr. Mukesh Kumar Chalise who extended his support and encouragement for her active politics. She had also begun teaching when she completed her master's degree in sociology. Later she quit teaching with a view to focusing on her political mission. Recalling the financial burden borne by her husband while she engaged in active politics, she says, "My husband proved a source of rock solid support."

Along with being a CA member, she serves as the central committee member of CPN-ML and general secretary of All Nepal Progressive Women's Organization. She believes in continuously updating oneself with the changing tune of the times. Mrs. Chalise opines, "Yes, politics is tough going for women. We should adopt a positive attitude and move ahead and only then success can follow."

She considers her participation at the policy-making level and work in the constitution-making process as the greatest moments of triumph in her life. Of course she also recalls the dark days of struggle before she landed in this position. In her own words, police came to arrest her even while she was confined to the labor room. That was a shocking experience.

She regards politics as the mother of all policies. When women join in politics, they become empowered. Women need to enhance their capability to bring to an end and fight against discrimination and exploitation. There is plenty of scope to further strengthen democracy and the rule of law. This will help ensure peace and constitution making. Overall, this will help formulate laws and policies supportive of women's interests.

Because of the prevailing traditional mindset in society, she foresees more challenges ahead for women both within the party and in parliamentary forums. She further adds, "If we are not prepared to face them, we shall be left behind in developing decision making power and in creating constitutional political culture."

At the CA she also serves on the Committee on Preservation of the National Interest. For her, the central objective of political action should be institutionalization of the Federal Democratic Republic, strengthening of peace, upholding of the constitution in letter and spirit, honoring judicial independence and ending corruption.

In her considered opinion, political parties need to make changes in their style of functioning in the light of the changed world situation. She believes that such a change could help end the current political deadlock. Only the changed political culture can assure lasting peace, creation of the new constitution, good governance and the long cherished Federal Democratic Republic. To institutionalize the changed political order in the country, discrimination based on gender, caste, ethnicity, class and region must be brought to end. When we are able to eliminate corruption, ensure an independent judiciary and maintain the rule of law, only then will people get a taste of real political transformation.

She points out the need for institutionalizing the political change that has been barely achieved so far. She observes, "The urgent work to be done on behalf of the Nepali people has hardly been touched. To bring about direct positive change in the quality of life of common people, arrangement has to be made for food, shelter, clothing, education, health and job opportunities. Then steps must be taken to institutionalize the political gains made possible by the advent of democracy."



**Jayapuri Gharti**  
CA Member, UCPN-M

District : Rolpa  
Husband : late Kabiram KC  
Mother : Dhansari Ghartimagar  
Father : Krishnabhadur Gharti  
Date of Birth : November 1971  
Place of Birth : Rangsi-7, Rolpa  
Mother Tongue : Magar

*"If success depended on the blessings of the people,  
it would be much easier to obtain state leadership."*

*Jayapuri Gharti is a CA member for the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Lawmaker Gharti was elected to the CA from Rolpa constituency No. 1 with a big majority over her rivals. Apart from being CA member, she concurrently holds the position of the whip of the UCPN-M parliamentary party, central president of Nepal Women's Organization (Revolutionary) and member of the CA Constitutional Committee. She was born in Rangsi-7, of remote Rolpa district in 1971, in a farming household as the daughter of farmers Krishnabhadur Gharti and Dhansari Ghartimagar. She had schooling up to grade 10 and she plunged into politics during her student days. She believes in secularism.*



She found herself in active political life as she took up the cause of exploited and suppressed people. Her main reason in joining active politics was to seek an end to exploitation in society and violence against women. Her sense of determination in freeing people from social evil propelled her to active politics. She believes as religion has badly affected the Nepali society, we need to work for a secular society. Though she identifies herself as belonging to an ethnic community, she married Kabiram KC, who belongs to the Khas family group, during the Maoist armed conflict.

During the Maoist armed conflict, she suffered the loss of her husband. She carries the painful and unforgettable experience of losing her husband and at the same time carrying on the war with a baby in her womb. She also carries first hand experience of the raw deal society offers to single women. She believes a strong determination enables oneself to overcome any kind of obstacle that may come our way. In her view, the most successful and memorable moments after the underground period were the signing of the peace agreement and the 22 point consensus document.

Despite so many changes taking place in the country, her considered opinion is that women and politics do not seem to make good partners. In her experience, "In the past women were inducted into politics only to fill up the prescribed quota. In recent times women are seeking entry in politics to secure their rights as well. If women were to join hands together to secure their rights, they could secure their full rights in every sense. Women too must be able to show leadership qualities in society. Instead of only talking about rights, they should work to have the rights recognized in practice as well. However it will never be easy for women to be in active politics. The challenge before women remains how to keep the home, family, society and colleagues in good cheer."

She believes that although some changes in the level of political consciousness can be seen in society in recent years, the social consciousness is still not sufficiently advanced to view women in politics positively. In her own observation, "The latest achievements regarding

the presence of women in politics are: women's property rights, provision of citizenship for children in the name of mother and 33 percent seat for women in CA."

Many obstacles and roadblocks appear on the path of women in reaching leadership positions in party politics. She observes party discipline and decisions being made on party lines force women to keep silent even when they would like to speak up. She speaks of nepotism prevailing in the party that has caused hardship to many women activists within the party despite having long years of struggle and a proven track record. Intra-party wrangling too, makes women lose opportunities to attain leadership positions. Of course, such obstructions could be overcome with a sound blending of ideology and political strategies. If success depended on the blessings of the people, it would be much easier to obtain state leadership. Any women reaching the decisive position in a party would reflect the people's love and one's commitment.

Having reached the CA, her prime concern has been to raise women's issues powerfully in CA proceedings. In the longer term, she would like to focus on ending inequalities based on class, region, caste origin and gender and create a peaceful and equitable Nepal. In her considered opinion, fighting for the rights and freedom of single women and securing a distinct social status for them would mark a special contribution to the nation.





**Laxmi Pariyar**

CA Member, Nepali Congress(NC)

District : Udaypur  
Husband : Tirth Bahadur Pariyar Sewa  
Mother : Bachchimaya Tailor  
Father : Daibingshingsingh Tailor  
Date of Birth : July 1977  
Place of Birth : Chorambu Khotang  
Mother Tongue : Nepali

*"When women participate in politics, their chances of occupying leadership positions and thereby ensuring women's rights become more realistic."*



*Laxmi Pariyar is a Nepali Congress CA member who plunged into political activities during her school days when she joined the Nepal Students Union. When still an eighth grader in school in 1991, she was drawn to NC politics. Pariyar, 33, is also a central committee member of the NC youth organization - Tarun Dal. She is Christian by faith. Her husband runs a family business where she is used to assisting him. Outside of politics, she spends much of her time in social service. During her political career, she spent three months in prison. In the course of her social and political engagement, she has so far travelled to 13 countries. At the CA, she is a member of the committee on Public Opinion Collection and Coordination.*

As a dalit woman, she faced many hurdles to find her place in active politics. Behind her gentle personality lurks a vehement rebel activist. She studied to the PCL level of education. She has fought against the social evil of untouchability and one of her goals in politics is to seek an end to all forms of discrimination. She points out the fact that though the state has declared an end to untouchability, its enforcement is not effective.

She considers it natural for women to face challenges before and after they enter politics. She observes, "I would expect that women leaders from other parties too faced difficulties in entering politics if they came from deprived sectors of society. Those from middle-class families find financial constraints too severe when they marry and seek to join politics. For my part, I lost no faith in political activism and continued my struggle. Of course, oftentimes I had great difficulties in balancing family life and party assignments. I have been fighting valiantly to secure justice for people of different castes, ethnicity, and gender and minority groups and to promote national development and dignity."

Her goals in joining politics were to work towards ending these evils and anomalies prevailing in society. Initially she was more fired by the concern "how to end untouchability, rather than how to achieve women's liberation" because of the miserable plight of the *dalit* community. She organized NGOs along with actively pursuing a political campaign against the social evil of untouchability. She also took part in the human rights field.

In her considered opinion, "In the changed political circumstances, social beliefs, general laws and political groups have all spelled out the need for women's participation in politics, and women are given tremendous support to join in active politics from all levels and sectors of society. The presence of 33 percent women members in CA is a shining example of this support. Women of course will have to keep struggling to balance their schedule for the family and political activities, but to succeed women as well as men will have to mould themselves to the globalized world and move accordingly. Everyone in the political arena must learn to manage

their time and only careful planning of time can ensure any success in politics."

She observes, "At the initial glow of political life, we all tend to project big ambitions. We tell family, society and fellow political workers all about our fanciful plans. But once we begin to carry out the task assigned by the party, reality turns out different than what we imagine. Talking of overall change and development, politics is the sole route to effect total transformation. The central message of the NC also reflects this conclusion."

She says education should be the first step for women. In her considered opinion, "To engage women in development, education is the first requirement. We need to expand the light of education throughout the country. When women participate in politics, their chances of occupying leadership positions and thereby ensuring women's rights become more realistic." She is driven by the goal of trying to secure women's rights in all institutions of the country.

Though there is a significant presence of women in CA, the tendency to bypass women for positions in parliamentary bodies and at leadership levels has riled her up as well as other women CA members. In her own words, "It has been noted that there is a tendency not to let women take leadership roles within the party organization and parliamentary bodies. It is always very hard to find the opportunity to present women's concerns and viewpoints. However, having reached the CA, I have been inspired with the confidence that I will be able to make my contribution to preparing the new constitution and enshrining special provisions to address women's issues."

As a representative of the people, her goals remain to work towards securing peace, writing a new constitution, and ensuring employment opportunities and a society free from discrimination. She observes, "The new constitution must herald a new peaceful era. This will mark the success stories of the politicians involved. The story of a new Nepal could only take shape if we are able to ensure peace, economic development and open an inclusive way for every woman to reach for decisive positions. Every politician would wish to work actively toward these goals."



*"Lasting peace, a constitution on time and a stable government are the needs of today."*



## Lila Nyaichyai

CA Member,  
Nepal Workers and Peasants Party  
(NWPP)

District : Bhaktapur  
Mother : Krishnamaya Nyaichyai  
Father : Badri Nyaichyai  
Date of Birth : July 1980  
Place of Birth : Bhaktapur  
Mother Tongue : Newari

*CA Member Lila Nyaichyai attained political fame at a very tender age. Born and brought up among the Newar community of Bhaktapur, 30 year old Nyaichyai is in active politics from the NWPP. She is a CA member from the PR list, an early recognition for her activism. She has a Master's degree in library and information sciences. She is well-versed in both Nepali and Newari languages. She believes all religions should be viewed as equal. She came to politics as a member in the Revolutionary Students Union in 1993. Currently she is also an alternative central committee member of the NWPP.*

She observes because social conditions directly impact on women's lives, women should be involved in politics in big numbers. In her opinion, as working women are far behind in educational, cultural and economic spheres, they find it difficult to enter politics. But society needs more women to be actively involved in all political parties and forums. She adds, "My objective in joining politics was to fight for the rights and privileges of the workers and laboring people and to make democracy responsive to their aspirations. I've been actively engaged in this and I mean to continue doing the same in the days ahead."

In her considered opinion, politics is the key means to terminate all kinds of exploitation. Politics that is responsive to people's aspirations is currently needed. In parliamentary politics, the number of votes counts more than reason and logic. Even now, parliamentary procedures seem to harbour blind spots with regard to women's rights.

For her the most memorable political event was the road march from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu in 1996 held to protest against the Mahakali treaty. She remarks, "The country awaits the complete overhaul of politics. Every party faces the challenge of revamping its ideology and political action. There will be some room for satisfaction if we could assure a minimum level of compulsory education, basic health and employment opportunities for Nepali people. Needless to say this presupposes lasting peace, a constitution on time and a stable government. The political parties owe these things to the Nepalese people to realize their vision of a peaceful Nepal."

After joining in CA, she has gained confidence to feel that she too would be able to do something for the people. She concedes that she now has the opportunity to do what she would like to do. She feels particularly proud that in spite of being from a small party in the CA, she was in the lead role in opinion sampling for the constitution drafting and also she could make important contributions to the Women's Caucus. She views these events as the CA's major accomplishments.

She has served on the CA Committee on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. She feels great sense of triumph in being able to incorporate women's concerns as fundamental civil rights issues in the final proposal of the committee. She further adds, "Whether it is the constitution making process or the policy making level, there is an urgent need for women's presence at the decisive levels of the state."





**Lucky Sherpa**  
CA Member, CPN-ML

District : Sankhuwasabha  
Husband : Sonam Sherpa  
Mother : Kamu Sherpa  
Father : Prof. Shyamsunder Sherpa  
Date of Birth : February, 1975  
Place of Birth : Sankhuwasabha  
Mother Tongue : Sherpa

*"Women's development requires transparency, equal participation and inclusive policies."*



*From an early age, CA member Lucky Sherpa displayed different interests and entertained ambitions to "do something." She is the first Sherpa woman gold medallist from the Master's degree program in economics. A resident of Sankhuwasabha, 35 year old Ms. Sherpa followed her father's inspiration to pursue education and a life in politics. Her father Shyamsunder Sherpa is a university professor. Coming from a community on the margins, she is proud of her educational accomplishments and post-graduate degree. As an activist within the CPN-UML, she represents her party at the CA from the list of ethnic PR list. At the CA, she is a member of the State Restructuring and Distribution of State Power Committee.*

Before she became a CA member, Ms. Sherpa worked for various NGOs seeking to promote social service. She is the recipient of the Young Women Human Rights International Award and Youth Ambassador for Peace Award. As a CA member, she believes women's rights and human rights must be stressed together because women have been oppressed in all areas of society.

Along with being a CA member, she serves as advisor to the Nepal Federation of Nationalities and Chairperson of the National Network of Indigenous Ethnic Women. In her student days, influenced by leftist thought, she joined the UML affiliated student union. She is the chief of the social service department of the democratic national youth organization, a UML affiliated youth body. She has gained considerable experience in blending social work and political activism successfully. She believes that the constitution making process reflects the long-felt needs of women. That the CA has seriously taken up issues concerning indigenous and ethnic groups and women must be regarded as a matter of major achievement.

She observes, "The call for women's development encompasses all the concerns touching on the issues of women's rights. These rights will be guaranteed for women only when the constitution enshrines these

provisions including the right to property, right to citizenship and the entire range of basic fundamental rights."

She holds the view that unless the top leaders of the major parties become honest and accountable, the constitution will not be prepared on time. She says, "Today the country's development calls for lasting peace, guaranteeing human rights for the people, and proclamation of the constitution to reflect the people's aspirations. For this, all political parties must rise above party interests. On the other hand, stable government and positive initiative are essential for appropriate policy formulation. Policy formulation and project planning must address the requirements of the rural and urban population. Centralized policies and decision making cannot deliver much for people who live below the poverty line."

She is of the view that because of the united efforts of all women, women's participation is being ensured in the state and party institutions. She remarks, "Women still have to struggle to secure their rights. Women's development requires transparency, equal participation and inclusive policies which are already introduced in the country. This outcome is reflected in the 33 percent participation of women in all state institutions."

*"The new constitution will fully reflect the Madhesi concerns of identity, existence and representation."*



## Minakshi Jha

CA Member, Nepali Congress (NC)

District : Dhanusa  
Husband : Bijayendra Jha  
Mother : Pabitri Thakur  
Father : Harinarayan Thakur  
Date of Birth : May 1959  
Place of Birth : Sikyahi, Mahottari  
Mother Tongue : Maithili



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*After 38 long years in political life, Minakshi Jha has become a CA member. She entered into Nepali Congress politics through the student movement in 1972 during her student days in the Panchayat era when political parties were banned. During this time, the mere mention of Congress activity spelled political repression as the Panchayat rulers regarded the NC as enemy number one. Having entered politics at a tender age, she has remained active in her chosen field. She was propelled to political action after two youths Kameshwar and Kusheshwar were unjustly put to death by the then regime. They were martyred in a Congress sponsored agitation for democratic reforms.*

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Jha prefers to use Maithili language and she adheres to Hinduism. This 51 year old lawmaker has been imprisoned several times in the course of the political movement for democracy. She is married to Bijayendra Jha of Dhanusa, where her politics is based. A graduate of political science and sociology, she is an executive member of NC Dhanusa district committee. She has also been active in women's organizations and mobilized Madhesi women on behalf of the NC. In the Legislature-Parliament, she serves as a member in the Special Hearings Committee and in the CA, she is a member of the Capacity Building and Resource Management Committee.

She represents a region where dowry and demand for bride money is rampant as social evil. She wants to bring Madhesi women out of their veiled life. She finds it ironic that debates and discussions on women's rights and freedom are being held only in the capital city. Madhesi village women are victims of various evil customs, they never get to attend such discussions and debates, nor does anyone champion their cause.

Lawmaker Jha gets irritated by talk of women's liberation when it is confined to the capital. Therefore she blends her political activities with social service measures as well. She observes, "The reason for me being active in social service along with political activities is to bring deprived Madhesi women to social field from the confines of their homes and help them rise to the task of nation building and take up leadership positions."

She appreciates the support and encouragement she received from her family for her engagement in political activities. Currently in the Madhes region, women in politics are a rarity and still the exception. In this society, for a woman to enter politics is seen as hugely radical. With the CA elections, the debates on rights and freedoms are being heard in rural areas as well. When a significant number of

women reached the CA through the direct and PR electoral system, many have revived their hopes for better days to come.

Ms. Jha regards as her most important success being able to raise the issues of Madhesi women at the CA. She remarks, "In Madhes, women still remain under the veil and to be able to represent them at the policy-making body in the CA is certainly a success story." She feels a separate "package" should come from the state to liberate Madhesi women. There seems to be no other way to rid Madhesi society of social evils such as dowry, bride money and social discrimination.

She believes Nepali society does not regard women and men with the same attitude. Women too must join their men folk in transforming their society and nation building. Keeping women at home and not engaged in socially productive work would be like having a two-wheeler cart with one wheel going flat. Such conditions will hold back the whole society. If women remain backward, the society cannot move ahead. It is best for women to enter politics based on these understandings.

She is of the conviction that the new constitution will fully reflect the Madhesi concerns of identity, existence and representation. The Congress was a predominant force in Madhes in the past. During the CA elections it suffered defeats in many regions. She believes as a democratic party, the NC should take the lead to address the demands of the Madhes region in course of writing of the constitution.

In her considered opinion, "The need of the day is preparing the constitution to reflect the people's wishes and maintain a lasting peace. To achieve this goal, all political parties, CA members and indeed everyone must contribute something on their behalf. To fulfil this would be the greatest contribution a politician can make to his/her nation and society."



**Mohammadi Siddiqui**  
CA Member, Nepali Congress (NC)

District : Banke  
Husband : late Mohammad Suleman Siddiqui  
Mother : Habibun Misa  
Father : Noor Mohammad Siddiqui  
Date of Birth : March 1958  
Place of Birth : Gorakhpur, India  
Mother Tongue : Urdu

*"It is a remarkable opportunity for a Moslem woman to speak of women's rights and propose provisions in the new constitution."*

*Having begun her political journey from the ward chair, Mohammadi Siddiqui has reached the position of CA member. She was elected to one of ward chairs of Nepalgunj Municipality in the local body elections of 1991. She formally began her political career in 1978 by taking membership of the NC. Now she represents the NC at the CA as its PR nominee. 52 year old Siddiqui was born in Gorakhpur of India and married Mohammad Suleman of Nepalgunj, Banke where she began her social and political life in Nepal. She speaks Urdu, Nepali, Hindi, Awadhi and English. When her husband died, she faced severe hardship raising her 11 member family. An adherent of Islam, Siddiqui has a profound grasp of both politics and social service.*



She received a formal education up to the graduate level. As a Moslem woman, she finds political work extremely challenging. Of course, it is not easy to deal with every day real life under the veil and being told to suppress every desire and ambition. Of course, as a committed social and political worker, she has found ways to get the better of social restrictions and obstacles in order to uphold human rights and women's freedom

In her opinion, women must participate in politics actively so that women's presence in political life can be asserted and to prove that women too can serve the nation and fulfil their aspiration of having equal participation of women in all decision making bodies of the nation. She firmly believes that if women take up challenge and persevere, they will reap success handsomely. Of course, for this to happen, women must have the courage to break social barriers and the determination to move ahead.

Her husband Suleman Siddiqui made notable contributions to democracy and the country prior to 1990. Following his death, she entered politics to carry forward his unfinished wishes. Then she redoubled her efforts in social work with increased zeal. She feels great satisfaction in working for human rights, including women's and children's rights. Few women get such a sense of fulfillment in their life. She says as a CA member she now has to bear an added responsibility to have women's issues reflected in the new constitution so that policies and legislation can be made accordingly. She feels proud to present herself as a role model for other women, who can then move forward with their causes.

She observes, "Though politics has its challenges, it presents both positive and negative encounters. Women's voices are less audible because their presence at the decision making level is so limited. If we persist logically in political forums and insist on securing our rights others will find it difficult to ignore our positions. To address the current extremely low level of women's presence in every state institution, they must be offered every possible support."

She considers herself to be fortunate to have been able to join active politics through the democratic Nepali Congress party. She declares, "The recent revision of the party charter adopted by the party's general body has made the party even more democratic as it requires inclusive representation of all sectors of society at all levels of the party organization."

As a Moslem woman she experienced certain difficulties at the CA during the initial period that has now been resolved. She feels a sense of pride in having obtained support from her community, encouragement from other women and her colleagues in raising her voice strongly in her chosen areas of concern. She believes it is a remarkable opportunity for a Moslem woman to speak of women's rights and propose new provisions in this regard. To make the right use of such opportunity in order to take the country to a new destination and ensure a lasting peace in the country has been her primary challenge. Moreover, she points out that every CA member must focus on charting the new path for transformation of the country by drawing up a new constitution that ensures a full range of rights to all people.

She feels strongly the need to work towards improving the conditions of women from the deprived classes. As the coordinator of the parliamentary women's caucus, she has initiated discussions and trainings regarding prevention of violence against women and enforcing UN provisions contained in documents 1325 and 1820. She has obtained some success in formulating a bi-annual program for the women's caucus and pushing forward a women's empowerment program to some extent. She also feels that she has made some important headway working as coordinator in the CA Committee on minorities and marginalized groups in preparing a concept paper to improve their conditions. Working on this issue made her realize that she too could contribute something to society and the nation.

She always feels herself a fully dedicated worker for the cause of democracy. She is convinced that we can achieve all kinds of objectives in a democracy.

**Nilam KC (Sita Khadka)**  
CA Member, CPN-ML

District : Jhapa  
Husband : CP Mainali  
Mother : Lachhumaya Khadka  
Father : Bhim Bahadur Khadka  
Date of Birth : December 1958  
Place of Birth : Jhapa  
Mother Tongue : Nepali



*"Until women themselves come forward to create a society free from discrimination, women's liberation will remain a dream."*



*Deeply impressed by the armed movement to eliminate "the class enemies" of the 1970s, Nilam KC used to be known by the name Sita Khadka. Also inspired by the Naxalite armed revolt, she plunged into politics at an early age with a sense of excitement. She was a well known woman revolutionary by the middle of the Panchayat era. However, she did not play much of an active role in politics following the restoration of democracy in 1990. In the CA constituted after the People's Movement II, she was inducted as a CA member from the PR list of the Communist Party of Nepal -Marxist Leninist (CPN-ML).*

Around 1971, "a campaign to eliminate the class enemies" known as the "Jhappali Movement" erupted in south-eastern Nepal under the influence of the Maoist philosophy. KC joined this movement wholeheartedly. As this movement turned violent, the *Panchayat* regime took action to suppress them. Thus, she began her underground political activities. It was during this period that she entered into what is called a "proletarian love marriage" with CP Mainali, one of the founders of CPN-ML. When she joined in active politics in 1971, she was an impressionable young girl of barely 14 years of age. Now at 52, Ms. KC fondly remembers the significance of the political grounding she acquired during her underground political life.

She views her activism in communist politics of the 1970s and her one year imprisonment during the Jhapa rebellion, as an important learning period in her political life. She affirms, "In a backward society like ours, it is extremely difficult for women to become established in politics. Moreover having to balance family and political responsibilities proves extremely challenging for a person of ordinary middle family."

She observes that her political mission is to work for the transformation of the feudal structure of society, thereby contributing to the liberation of the oppressed classes, caste groups, gender and communities. As a CA member, she takes her responsibilities seriously and devotes her time to important party assignments as well. As chairperson of the Inter Party Women's Alliance, she opines, rather than reservation, women's interests would be better served by improved opportunities. She is convinced that given suitable opportunities, women could play a decisive role in the parliamentary field as well.

In her view, "Women are the single largest group that bear the most severe forms of discrimination. Therefore women are desperately seeking liberation. Until women

themselves come forward to create a society free from discrimination, women's liberation will remain a dream. An equitable society can be created only when women equally participate in formulating policies, making decisions and controlling the implementation of programs for women. This can be realized only when women join politics in a big way.

She feels that being a member of the CA Committee on State Restructuring and Distribution of State Powers was a tremendous responsibility in her political career. She observes a great sense of fulfillment as she was able to drive home the point that the state should look into women's issues and see that the committee report included proposals for ending gender discrimination in the draft of the constitution.

However, regarding the proposal for the 14 provinces on the issue of state restructuring, she expressed her dissenting opinion. She believes that state restructuring on ethnic lines poses a danger of fragmentation and to communalism and it would not be conducive to change and lasting peace in the country.

She observes, "The country has gone through a tremendous transformation and the need at the present time is to ensure stable peace in tune with changed circumstances. Lasting peace and real political change can be ensured only when we create a system of new parliamentary structures on the basis of federalism, stable democracy, integrity of the sovereign nation and an inclusive social order."

She also underlines the need for ensuring rights and freedoms for women in the new constitution. She observes, "The new constitution must ensure the full range of rights of women along with provisions for proportional representation of women at all levels of decision making under the newly restructured state."





*"The political parties should set aside 50 percent of the positions at every level of the party organization to women."*

**Nilam Verma**

CA Member,  
Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Nepal-Democratic (MJFN-D)

District : Rauthat  
Husband : Birendrakumar Verma  
Mother : Prabha Sinha  
Father : Dineshprasad Sinha  
Date of Birth : 1958  
Place of Birth : Brahmapuri, India  
Mother Tongue : Maithili

*Following the 1990 restoration of democracy, Nilam Verma joined the Sadbhavana party. She took on many responsibilities, from party district committee member to the chair of the party's central women's forum. With the disintegration of the party, she subsequently left. She was elected as a CA member from the MJFN party that emerged with the creation of the CA. When the MJFN split up, she joined the MJFN-D. Concurrently she holds membership in the central committee and is chief of the women's department in this new party.*

Born in Bihar, India, 52 year old Verma has emerged as a successful player in Nepali politics. At the CA, she represents the PR slot of MJFN-D. Having married Birendrakumar Verma of Rauthat, she acquired Nepali citizenship. Lawmaker Verma is well versed in Hindi, Nepali and Maithili languages. She graduated in history and developed a strong interest in politics from her student days. Before devoting her full time to politics, she took to teaching for a number of years. Lawmaker Verma has a six-member family and she follows Hinduism.

She considers a political career for women a very difficult proposition in a patriarchal society. Moreover, social barriers, economic constraints and lack of education make political life even more strenuous for women. She plunged into active politics despite her own weak economic base and quit her teaching job with the conviction that politics alone can secure the wellbeing of the nation and society. She has learned from her own experience that a careful blend of family life and political activities lead one to success.

A tough political activist in her student days, her political activism waned after marriage. But her strong conviction that politics alone is the fountain of social transformation drew her back to this successful career track. Her political activism persuaded her party to induct her in the party central committee and the CA from the PR quota. She also serves in the CA Constitutional Committee and the State Affairs Committee of the Legislature-Parliament.

In her considered opinion, "Women are astute observers of diverse aspects of social life. Politics would be immensely enriched if those voices were incorporated at the policy level. In recent years, as the participation of women in politics has increased, women are also showing a greater degree of competence and leadership qualities. Overall, women have had limited access to educational opportunities in the past and this is particularly true with regard to Madhesi women. So education should remain in high priority."

She is not completely satisfied with the policy of 33 percent provision for women's participation. She remarks, "Because fewer women have reached the leadership level, the presence of women in party organizations to state institutions has remained low. If more women reach the decision-making levels, the number of women at every level of public life will rise significantly. For this, the political parties should set aside 50 percent of the positions at every level of the party organization to women."

She points out the fact that speaking one's mind, including proposals for women's rights and freedoms, within the party forum, still evokes opposition from many. She notes, "As a woman political worker I have witnessed the raw deal given to women party members at the time the party split-up. I have no regrets that I survived the ordeal and have been able to serve the interests of the people and the nation. When I was imprisoned for opposing the provisions of the Citizenship Act, I gained courage to take up the bigger fight for women's rights."

In her opinion, voices should be raised strongly for the fulfillment of food, shelter and clothing and youth employment based on skills and competence. It will mark a political triumph for all CA members to proclaim the constitution on time and ensure a sense of peaceful conditions for the people. Of course,




the hope for lasting peace in the country entirely depends on political stability, the new constitution and sustained economic development. A truly committed Nepali politician must pursue these goals actively.

She insists every CA member, not just women members, must make whole-hearted efforts to prepare a constitution that reflects the people's aspirations. She expects other forces seeking positive changes for the country from outside the CA will also join hands if we work sincerely to reach for this common goal. She opines, "The prime challenge today is to resume consensual politics and ensure a full range of rights to the people so that faith in the nation and democratic system can be firmly established.

## Pratibha Rana

CA Member, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP)

District : Bardiya  
Husband : Binod Shamsher JBR  
Mother : late Yubarajeshwari Malla  
Father : late Gen. Sherbahadur Malla  
Date of Birth : 1948  
Place of Birth : Kathmandu  
Mother Tongue : Nepali



*"I wish to introduce the world myself as a dignified citizen of a dignified nation."*

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*Pratibha Rana happens to be the daughter-in-law of the old ruling Rana family. She is the youngest daughter-in-law of Juddha Shamsher who was the autocratic Rana ruler in early 20th century Nepal. She is married to Binodshamsher, the youngest son of Juddhashamsher. She is a CA member from the PR list of the RPP. She easily belongs to the privileged class by virtue of being a member of the old ruling family.*

*She has a graduate degree in economics from Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus with early schooling at St. Mary's. She did social service for 20 years before entering politics. Following the 1990 restoration of democracy, she contested the parliamentary election unsuccessfully from Bardiya. The same year she became president of the RPP-affiliated Democratic Women's Association and ever since she has been engaged in RPP politics. Currently, she is also the Chief Whip of her party.*

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In 2004, she became state Minister for Science and Technology. Other positions she has held include: vice president, National Women's Commission 2001; founder member and past vice-chair, Inter-Party Women's Alliance 2001; member International Women Parliamentarians' Forum 2007; and advisor of various UN bodies.

She has received various honors and awards for her social work including: Birendra-Aishwarya Service Medal 2002; King Birendra Royal Ascension Silver Medal 1996; Aishwarya Medal III 1988; SAARC Conference Medal 1988 and Coronation Medal 1975.

As a founder of the Inter-Party Women's Alliance, she has made significant contributions to strengthening women's political capacity. In her opinion, "Women are still not able to obtain higher positions and postings in decision making bodies despite having made as many contributions as men and possessing a high degree of competence, skills and experience. Women face stiff hurdles and challenges to find a foothold in any party organization. In a society like ours which is rife with nepotism and favoritism, women will have to struggle very hard to rise on the strength of their work and contributions. However, women who persist in politics and cultivate their vision will gain success in the long run."

She feels as an active party member she has worked consistently and responsibly in her party over a long period of time. She asserts as the central party member she has contributed as much to the party as her male colleagues. She believes women are showing skills and competence to carry out responsibilities assigned to them and a new trend is emerging in which men are also

extending their full cooperation to women in their work.

In her considered opinion, she has been in politics with the objective of working to uplift women and various other groups who remain backward politically and socially and to develop the nation into a prosperous society. She envisions a developed Nepal which has been her cherished dream of her life.

She points out that politics has empowered women and brought them to leadership positions. She adds, "In the course of her long innings in social service, she got the opportunity to learn about the real conditions of the nation and the people. We all should be aware of the level of poverty, ignorance and backwardness that haunts our society and what could be done to overcome these unwelcome conditions. Women are on the march with increased confidence and greater sense of their identity. Recent political achievements have given them an equal status as enjoyed by the male members."

She observes, "The country now has taken the concept of the rule of law to heart. We all are looking forward to lasting peace, democratic order, well conceived laws and regulations and their effective enforcement. Of course the country is desperate to embrace the stable and sustainable political order."

She wishes to follow even more progressive measures. She avers, "I want to work in such a way that it be feasible to ensure peace, good governance, social justice and provision of basic needs and employment for all people. I wish to introduce the world myself as a dignified citizen of a dignified nation."





**Purna Kumari Subedi**  
United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M)

District : Banke  
Husband : Prakash Subedi  
Mother : Dewaki Paudel  
Father : Hari Prasad Paudel  
Date of Birth : B.S. 2015 -2 -23  
Place of Birth : Lamachaur, Kaski  
Mother Tongue : Nepali

*"The state must promote decentralization at every step and stage of national life."*

*After a long spell of underground political activity, Purna Kumari Subedi is shouldering the responsibility of deputy chairperson of the CA. She holds the distinction of being the first deputy chairperson of the CA, and the third woman deputy speaker in the parliamentary history of Nepal. Subedi, 52, represents Banke constituency No. 4. Born in Lamachaur, Kaski, she is married to Prakash Subedi of Banke district.*



From an early age, she was motivated by the desire "to do something for society." She joined politics in 1979 as party activist of CPN-4th convention. She attended formal schooling up to grade 10. In the course of party organizational work, she served in village, district and central party executive committees as well as women's organizations and completed her party's assignment as the in-charge for the regional bureau. Currently she is also central advisor to UCPN-M. She remained underground throughout the period of the Maoist "people's war" and appeared in open politics only after the restoration of democracy. In between, she spent considerable time on many occasions in prison and in police custody.

Having married into a joint or extended family, she was spared the time-consuming chore of attending to young children; this afforded her more time for active politics. However, the poor financial condition of the family caused financial strains to meet the family expenses. She continued getting encouragement and support from her husband and family members even in the face of dire financial constraints. As a farming family, they always were short of money but food and shelter were not a pressing concern.

Having worked from the village level to deputy chairperson of the CA, she has observed many changes from the past to the present. She believes, "The country is heading towards polarization and it is a duty of us all Nepalese to prevent this from happening. The state must promote decentralization at every step and stage of national life. Political stability is extremely necessary for this, and the parties must work towards this."

Her remarkable political career, from a village level activist to the deputy chair of the CA has made her

confident that women too can play an effective role in crucial decision-making bodies. Regarding obstacles on the path of women political activists, she holds a somewhat different view and observes, "It's not always true to say that only males obstruct women's progress, women too can obstruct other women. We need to look at this issue afresh."

In her considered opinion, "The country needs more women political workers and to meet this need, women must come forward in a big way. The changed circumstances have shown that wherever women have reached the decision making level, sustainable development and honest politics have taken roots there. Every political party in Nepal needs to reflect upon this fact. In Nepal too women have played exemplary role and one of its examples lies in the provision of one-third representation of women at all levels of society."

She notes with satisfaction that important discussions regarding women's issues have taken place in various thematic committees of the CA and women have successfully put forward important draft proposals for deliberations. She further adds, "Under the constitution making process, women's issues have been thoroughly discussed in every thematic committee. Every thematic committee has clearly incorporated women's issues, rights and freedoms in its reports to the constitutional committee."

She believes sensitive issues such as women's reproductive rights, fundamental rights, citizenship rights, prevention of domestic violence and others have been clearly addressed in the final reports of the thematic committees. It must now ensure a 33 percent participation of women at local levels and institutions.



## **Pushpa Bhusal**

**CA Member, Nepali Congress (NC)**

District : Arghakhanchi  
Husband : Dr. Choplal Bhusal  
Mother : Sharada Gautam  
Father : Kashinath Gautam  
Date of Birth : February 12, 1961  
Place of Birth : Pokharachok, Arghakhanchi  
Mother Tongue : Nepali

*Pushpa Bhusal, Nepali Congress lawmaker, grew up in the political ambience of her family. She got elected to the CA by defeating the then influential CPN-UML leader Dr. Dilliraj Khanal from constituency No. 2 of Arghakhanchi district. Previously she had lost in the parliamentary polls of 1999 by a thin margin. She also holds concurrently the position of general secretary of Nepal Women's Organization. She is the daughter of old time NC leader Kashinath Gautam who was active in the anti-Rana movement of the 1947. Exiled in India in course of the democracy movement, Mr. Gautam was an active force in the NC and Pushpa Bhusal imbibed political ideas from her early childhood.*

***"The main goal of joining in politics is to dedicate oneself as the strong bearer of political change."***

Bhusal got an actual taste of politics in her student days when she became an activist of the Nepal Students Union and she has never turned back from politics. Various active in women's organizations and the trade union movement, she has been able to create a unique role for herself in the NC party. Going strong at 49, she holds higher degrees in political science and law. An adherent of Hinduism, she has experience in college teaching and the practice of law.

She holds the view that for women to remain active in politics there is more a need for opportunities for participation rather than reservation. Women also need to strive for positions at every level and sector of society. Moreover, as the twenty-first century advances, women should keep engaging in political activities, strengthening themselves economically and availing themselves of the powers endowed by the democratic constitutional order.

She regards being elected to the CA from the direct election system and finding a place in the CA committee on formulating the governance system, as triumphal moments of her political career. At the same time, she believes that the challenge of the present time is to create a constitution according to people's wishes in order to create lasting conditions in the country. She observes, "In a democracy, the role of women is always conceded, and women are potent change makers. Of course, activism, participation and direct involvement of women themselves are very crucial."

Speaking of the longer term goals, she believes it is necessary to launch a campaign to promote culture based on democratic values and norms at the widest possible level. She stands for creating opportunities for competitive participation at every level and she envisages plans in which youths will share 40 percent and women 50 percent role to reflect the people's aspiration. She remarks, "Success in politics in a country like Nepal should represent creating avenues of development that make people feel

the positive change taking place in their lives and launch special programs to uplift the condition of the marginalized, neglected and oppressed sectors of society. This will lead to the end of class division and internal conflict."

She is enthused with courage and confidence by the movement for democracy and its achievement. She believes, "The main goal of joining in politics is to dedicate oneself as the strong bearer of political change. Nepalese women always favor positive changes, therefore to bring about positive changes and to assert one's role and identity; they should be active in politics." Of course, coming from middle class family background, balancing time for home and political activities causes problems. She believes with positive support from her husband and family members, she has been able to manage her time effectively in walking this tightrope.

Legal advocacy and college teaching have enhanced her intellectual profile and she is regarded as a feisty debater. She also got inspiration in the value of persistent struggle by the story of her parent's exile. With her genial and accessible style, she is deeply committed to carrying the highest democratic ideals, about which she feels so strongly, to the grassroots level. She has displayed abundant qualities in mobilizing the community, listening to diverse opinions and focusing on her work effectively and skillfully.

She recalls the promises she made during the election campaign to the voters that she would work to deliver the democratic constitution on time. She says, "Democratic constitution and lasting peace: these were the promises we made to the people at the time of election. Working to promote health, education and economic development with the active involvement of youth, women and men of all sections of society were other aims. I will consider myself as a successful politician only when these promises are delivered."





## Sandhyadevi Dev

CA Member,  
Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Nepal (MJFN)

District : Banke  
Husband : Ranadhir Kumar Dev  
Mother : Pushpadevi Gupta  
Father : Ramvilas Gupta  
Date of Birth : April 1965  
Place of Birth : Nepalgunj, Banke  
Mother Tongue : Awadhi



*Within a short time period after entering into politics, Sandhyadevi Dev became a CA member. Mrs. Dev, 44, came to active politics in 2005 when she became a member of MJFN. Prior to that, she was active in trade and industrial activities and had some interest in political events since 1986. A resident of Nepalgunj in Banke, Sandhyadevi has at present immersed herself completely in political affairs leaving aside her family business activities. Having married Ranadhir Kumar Dev of Nepalgunj, she was actively engaged in family-run trade and business enterprises.*

She has completed a PCL level of education. She is in the CA from the PR list of MJFN. She is actively engaged in writing the new constitution. She chairs the Legislature-Parliament Committee on Women, Children and Social Welfare. Having played an active role in the democracy movement, she finds it congenial as a CA member to engage in political activities.

Of course she had to struggle to find her place in politics as is the case with other women. Her experience has shown her that women find it very difficult to participate in politics because of negative attitudes towards women prevailing in a patriarchal society. She observes, "Internal wrangling and unhealthy competition among women also make it difficult for women to establish themselves in politics."

*"All Nepali women, not just the Madhesi women should join hands to raise consciousness and to uplift the material conditions of the Madhesi women."*



In her considered opinion, it would not take a long time for women to find their place in politics if they internalize the political changes and if they are driven by a desire to accomplish something in society as a woman politician. She urges on all others to honor the role played by women for the restoration of democracy.

She is aware of the conditions in her society from where she came to CA; women in her constituency areas suffer from many kinds of social evils and deprivations. She observes, "Women had fought with tooth and nail against the excesses and repression unleashed by the security forces against them during the democracy movement and Madhes movement. But to fight against the stereotypical view of women in Madhesi society is particularly difficult. Few opportunities come our way to leave the house. Most Madhesi women suffer from domestic violence because of dowry demands. Women's entry in politics will help transform such society."

She points out the need for stringent legislation to end domestic violence against Madhesi women. She feels proud to have been in active politics as a member of MJFN. She remarks, "All Nepali women, not just the Madhesi women should join hands to raise consciousness and to uplift the material conditions of the Madhesi women. Political parties too must run campaigns to remove old obscurantist ideas. If the old-style political parties do not shed their antiquated ideologies, people will have no faith in them and society cannot march ahead in line with the changing world. If the

political parties remain stuck with barren ideology, neither society nor people can advance ahead."

In her opinion, political stability is extremely important for the development of the nation. Political stability requires continuous evolution in political thought and strategies. Women's participation in politics helps bring about such changes. With women in politics, we now have been able to ensure 33 percent women's presence in the CA. In addition to this, to ensure lasting peace and stability in the nation, women's leadership is required at the decisive level of national politics.

Within a short time frame, she has noted the deeply diverse elements of political scheming. She says, "It is a matter of great pride to be able to ensure the rights of Madhesi women in taking an active position on the floor of the CA. The idea of lasting peace for the masses of people means guaranteeing fundamental rights and the right to life as symbolized by access to sources of livelihood."

In her considered opinion, "Fair politics means fulfilling the promises made to the electorate. If politicians are responsive to the people, women politicians will win the trust of the masses very quickly and it will open leadership roles to other women. The CA should be made into a real forum for writing the constitution as wished by the people, not just a symbol of political triumph. If all the CA members stand for lasting peace and preparing a new constitution, no power can prevent us from producing a democratic constitution."



**Sapana Pradhan Malla**  
CA Member, CPN-UML

District : Kathmandu  
Husband : Ashok Bahadur Malla  
Mother : Radha Pradhan  
Father : Govinda Bahadur Pradhan  
Date of Birth : November 1963  
Place of Birth : Nawalparasi

*"Until women enjoy full extent  
of citizenship rights, they will  
remain victims of violence."*

*Sapana Pradhan Malla is a celebrity name from politics to the law chambers. She has established herself both nationally and internationally. She has made important contributions as an advocate for a long time in the field of women's legal rights. Born in Ramgram of Nawalparasi, 47 year old Malla has a Master's degree in law from Delhi University. She began her legal professional practice in 1981. She also lectured on law courses at Tribhuvan University for several years.*



She represents the CPN-UML at the CA from its PR list. Though she was better known for her social and legal professional work, as CA member she has created strong ripples in the political field as well. She has made a name for herself as a legal luminary specializing in the fight for women's legal rights both in Nepal and abroad. She is a highly honored woman lawyer and human rights activist. She has been closely involved from the Nepal side on country reviews under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), Action Plan on Human Rights and Nepal's Tenth National Plan. She also has authored books on subjects like special provisions for women and their impact and women's rights to paternal property.

She has taken up many court cases concerning women's legal rights and carried them through successfully. She also served in an executive capacity as a member of the coordinating committee to implement legislation on women's reproductive rights, sexual harassment, domestic violence, human trafficking and protection of HIV/AIDS victims. At the CA, she is a member of the Constitutional Committee as well as the constitution drafting sub-committee. In the Legislature-Parliament, she also serves in the legislative committee and the main committee to formulate laws on domestic violence.

She has already built up a remarkable professional standing because of her tireless efforts. She has offered her professional services to diverse international bodies like UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNDP and the European Union. She received the Durga Award in 2003 for her work in the field of women's rights in South Asia in recognition of her contributions to empowering women. Other honors include the Krishnamohan-Nudup Peace Award 2005 for promoting peace and an inclusive society and the Youth Ambassador for Peace Award 2007 for leadership in the cause of peace and youth affairs. In 2008, she became the first South

Asian woman to receive the prestigious Gruber International Women's Rights Award for long-standing work in gender and development.

She calls for more efforts to establish the full range of legal rights for women on paternal property and issues of citizenship. Malla opines, "It is necessary to fully empower women on property related matters. Similarly, until women enjoy full extent of citizenship rights, they will remain victims of violence. Though in recent years, the state has enacted various laws in favor of women's rights, most of them remain in limbo for want of their effective enforcement. Urgent steps are needed to correct this anomaly."

In her considered opinion, in light of changed political circumstances, the youth community must be guided to work together in the spirit of inclusive participation. We are in need of policy and political level initiatives based on consensual thought, shared ideas and shared values. She suggests that an all-party committee needs to be formed to formulate policies and determine the course of action for increased participation of women in politics.

She believes that if Nepal were to sincerely follow the CEDAW provisions, all kinds of discrimination against women will subside gradually. Similarly, we need to do more pursuant to UN proposals 1325 and 1820 to ensure reproductive rights, citizenship rights and to end domestic violence.

Her future goals include incorporating a greater range of rights for women in the new constitution and ensuring their effective enforcement. She observes, "Having entered the CA, I have moved to active politics from social service and I'm seeking to adopt a different approach with regard to women's rights. Greater priority now will go to policy making and their enforcement. I'm confident the new constitution will have many new



*"If one goes on fighting against exploitation and oppression and overcomes these obstacles, success will come their way."*

## Shanta Chaudhary

CA Member, CPN-UML

District : Dang  
Husband : Harilal Chaudhary  
Mother : Kunchi Chaudhary  
Father : Hasulal Chaudhary  
Date of Birth : 1980  
Place of Birth : Dang  
Mother Tongue : Tharu



*Rebelling from the torturous position of a bonded laborer (kamlari) for a landlord for 18 years and having joined active politics in 2003, Shanta Chaudhary is a CA member for CPN-UML. Also a central member of the Democratic Tharuhat Organization, Chaudhary says she joined politics to fight against social discrimination, exploitation and oppression. As she was forced to become a kamlari at school age, she did not benefit from formal schooling. She is literate but often regrets the lack of educational exposure she suffered due to this social deprivation.*

As a kamlari, she suffered untold miseries at the hand of her landlord. She was not alone to suffer these miseries; many young women like her suffered the fate of the bonded laborer and many are still waiting to be freed. Her plunge into politics marked the ultimate step of a bonded laborer who had suffered too much and for too long. As a CA member, she has immersed herself in the campaign towards formulating a constitution that will safeguard the interests of all exploited and oppressed people.

The lesson she has taken to heart in her life is: "No success without struggle." As she spent her tender years laboring for a landlord, she has steeled herself for many other struggles to follow in life and she is determined to march on. She observes, during her early days in politics, she was frustrated by the landlord's continuing threats and a lack of support from her family. She also noticed the tendency to treat women as second class citizens, even within political parties. Moreover, for a woman with little formal education, entering a political career was particularly problematic.

In her experience, women from deprived communities who enter into politics find it very difficult to find a foothold in the party organization. But if one goes on fighting against exploitation and oppression and overcomes these obstacles, success will come their way. Of course, one must possess determination, competence and perseverance to deal with obstacles on our path.

She points out the need to take a comparative view of the changed political situations of today with the conditions that prevailed only five years ago. She observes that Nepali women were able to secure 33 percent representation in the CA, through self-conviction, courage and patience.

She is grateful to her party, the CPN-UML, for not only inducting her into the CA but also making it possible for her to be the chairperson of the Legislature-Parliament Committee on Natural Resources and Means. She now has gained confidence "to do something" for the nation and the people. She takes great pride in being able to raise issues on behalf of the people at CA proceedings. She would consider herself as a successful CA member if she were able to use the right forum of the CA, and to represent the people's aspirations and secure relief for them.

She too feels concerned about the widespread apprehension whether the constitution will actually be prepared. She observes, "There is nothing more urgent for the country than securing lasting peace and the new constitution. For this, the political leaders must prove themselves by concrete action rather than mere lip service. Let them work to produce a constitution that reflects the people's aspirations and guarantees a peaceful Nepal."

She firmly believes all CA members must rise above party and personal interests and work for this shared goal. Moreover, as an active woman politician, she reiterates "we should be guided by the urgent task of assuring people what they have been craving for so long: lasting peace, secured provision for basic necessities including food, shelter and clothing."

The day we get a constitution that reflects the people's aspirations will mark a day of triumph. She further adds, "The CA members must work diligently to ensure provisions in the new constitution that contribute to lasting peace, guarantees of livelihood opportunities for people and provides a full range of women's rights and freedoms. This responsibility must be shared by all CA members."



**Sharadadevi Kumal**

CA Member, CPN-UML

District : Chitwan  
Husband : Purusottam Neupane  
Mother : Dayali Kumal  
Father : Sher Bahadur Kumal  
Date of Birth : May 1966  
Place of Birth : Chitwan  
Mother Tongue : Kumal

*"Women's concerns should be made state responsibilities and gender discrimination must end through constitutional provisions."*

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*Following 24 years in teaching, Sharadadevi Kumal suddenly plunged into politics to become CA member. Kumal, 44, represents CPN-UML at CA from its PR slot. She has blended teaching and political activities since 1983. She holds a master's degree in economics. Concurrently she also serves as party deputy secretary at the CPN-UML Chitwan district committee. Though she speaks Kumal as her mother tongue, she uses Nepali in public forums. She has visited Japan, Philippines and Switzerland to study political, social and economic conditions of those countries. At the CA she is a member of the committee on Public Opinion Collection and Coordination. In her leisure time, she composes lyrics and writes articles concerning economic, ethnic and women's issues.*

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On many occasions she was seriously frustrated in her political activities by the patriarchal mindset of the nation, its society and family system as well as by economic hardship, insecurity and pervasive negative comments on women. However her faith in the motto that self-confidence leads you to success saved her from despair. Her marriage to Purusottam Neupane of Chitwan contributed to making her political work easier. Support and encouragement from her husband has boosted her political standing.

She believes middle-class people who choose political work inevitably face economic problems. Simultaneously juggling party work, family responsibilities and maintaining a livelihood is difficult. Of course one has to overcome such challenges to gain success in public life.

Recounting the benefits of joining politics for women, Kumal says it enhances self-confidence, boosts mental power to face challenges, strengthens independent thinking, and invigorates leadership qualities as one comes to acquire a lot of information from various sources. She observes, "While being organized in politics, women should pay special attention to acquaint themselves with party political theories. They will be required to put party principles into practice. Party leadership must be able to take a broad perspective while making crucial decisions."

She attributes her achievements in politics so far to perseverance, diligence and commitment to serve the nation. She further adds, "Every political party leader must adhere to the belief that we are going to work with the people for a sustainable political transformation. For

this, the needs of the present time are to formulate the constitution as expected by the people and the country and secure lasting peace and economic development."


She felt that a serious responsibility has fallen on her shoulders as a CA member. She felt particularly delighted when her committee was able to include in the draft proposal that women's concerns should be made state responsibilities and gender discrimination must end through constitutional provisions.

However she holds a different opinion on the issue of state restructuring regarding the proposal for 14 provinces. She believes that creation of states on the basis of ethnicity can pose a danger for disintegration and communal strife in the country which will not be favorable to stabilizing the new changes and lasting peace in the country.

She firmly believes, "The country has witnessed a drastic change in the political landscape and the need of the day is to strengthen peace on the basis of this change that has been achieved. Ensuring a lasting peace and sustaining the political transformation can take place only when we successfully establish a federal democratic system of government and lay the foundation for a sovereign and inclusive state."

She underlines the need for ensuring women's rights and freedoms in the new constitution. She further adds, "The new constitution must ensure a full range of rights for women and women's proportional representation at all policy making levels."



A portrait of an elderly woman with short, dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue blazer and a blue patterned scarf. She is seated in a wicker chair. The background shows an indoor setting with a window, a potted plant, and a hallway.

**Suprabha Ghimire**

CA Member, Nepali Congress (NC)

District : Kathmandu  
Husband : Late Shankar Ghimire  
Mother : Subhadra Gautam  
Father : Laxminath Gautam  
Date of Birth : March 1941  
Place of Birth : Kathmandu  
Mother Tongue : Nepali

*"Along with the new constitution,  
the state should rededicate itself  
to economic and educational  
development."*



*Having kept herself busy for almost three decades in university teaching contributing to the creation of a vast pool of educated Nepalese, Suprabha Ghimire is at present at the centre of Nepali Congress politics. At the mature age of 69, Mrs. Ghimire is waging a campaign to establish a system of politics based on democratic norms and values in the oldest political party, the Nepali Congress. Her candidacy for the top position in the Congress parliamentary party in 2009 not only heralded the debate on normative politics but also contributed to the creation of the third pole in the Congress politics.*

She grew up in a family of strong political leanings. Her family was closely involved in the political struggle of the 1940s to oust the autocratic Rana regime and usher in a democratic system in the country. This upbringing persuaded her to take keen interest in political affairs. She is now in active Congress politics convinced that with her family background, deep-seated faith in democratic ideology and educational accomplishment, she must do something for the country. She adheres to Hinduism.

She contested the Kathmandu CA constituency No. 4 with the call that the CA must have educated representatives in it and voters returned her with a big majority over her competitors. She has master's degree in English literature and advanced training in English language teaching from Britain and she is counted among the rare breed of conscientious political leaders. In her view, education is a vital resource that helps propel women into decision making levels. She sees many women in Nepal today rising to leadership positions. To make further gains in society, women need good quality education and economic development.

The saddest moment of her life was the demise of her husband in 1983 who died in an accident on the way to Rajbiraj to defend a political activist accused of treason during the *Panchayat* period. She pulled herself together and continued her social and professional life.

In 1986, she was the lone woman candidate to be elected as treasurer of the Nepal University Teachers' Association. She also actively served as the elected national president of the same Association. She plunged into active politics in 1990 as general secretary of Nepal Women's Association. She took full membership in the Nepali Congress party in 1986. During the 11th national convention of Nepali Congress, she was elected to the party central committee. She observes that her work experience in the party organization has given her the confidence to serve the country.

She expresses her happiness as there is a big presence of women in the CA in terms of numbers. She further adds, "All political parties, policy makers and concerned agencies must give serious attention on the issues of women's political participation, educational policies affecting women and women's capacity building."

Though she did not personally encounter obstacles as a woman engaged in political activities, she believes there are challenges for women within and outside the party. She feels women's voices are not heard so much within the party and parliamentary party caucus. In her view, women have not been given any prominent positions, from the period of negotiation for the 12 point agreement between the Maoists and government, to the formation of the High Level Political Mechanism. Not only that, no woman has served on the National Planning Commission, a national body that formulates developmental policies and monitors progress in the national economy.



She believes politics must focus on creating stable peace in the country and delivering the constitution on time, according to the wishes of the people. Along with the new constitution, the state should rededicate itself to economic and educational development. She observes, "It's no time for contentious debate among the political parties, it is necessary to create consensus, united voice among the political parties and collective action by all the parties concerned. To carry out these tasks successfully would be the great service for the people and the country."

She believes NC is among the parties that give priority to women's issues. In her considered opinion, "The NC has always given priority to fair representation of women at all levels of organization." She regards the 33 percent representation of women in politics as an encouraging development. She adds, this was achieved because everybody felt women's participation was necessary and the 33 percent participation did not result from the effort of any single party alone.



**Thammaya Thapa Magar**  
CA Member, CPN-UML

District : Myagdi  
Husband : Reshman Rai  
Mother : Gajamati Thapa  
Father : Narabhadur Thapa  
Date of Birth : March 1958  
Mother Tongue : Magar

*"Meaningful involvement of women in politics is the only means to liberate them and transform the society."*

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*For Thammaya Thapa Magar, long and persistent struggle has been a close companion in her political career. She first got elected to the House of Representatives in 1991 following the restoration of democracy a year earlier. She has remained active in politics since 1983. The CPN-UML nominated her to the CA from its PR list, honouring her continued high profile political engagement.*

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A resident of Chimarkhola in Myagdi, 52 year old Thapa Magar plunged into political activism from her student days. She faced charges of treason while she was a young elected treasurer of the Prithvinarayan Campus Free Students Union of Pokhara in 1987. She completed the PCL level of education. Thereafter she had to organize her studies, political activities and teaching career simultaneously. She was also forced to lead an underground life as the oppression of the *Panchayat* regime intensified in its dying days.

Besides being a CA member, some other positions she holds at present are alternative member in CPN-UML politburo committee; organizing committee member for the sixth convention of the All Nepal Women's Organization; central vice president of the Democratic Federation of Indigenous people; and central vice president of the Nepal Democratic Magar Organization. She believes in secularism.

In her opinion, it is extremely difficult for women to work in politics. The old mindset that believes women are good for house work, raising children and looking after the family business still prevents women from joining the social and political fields. Also common is the practice of questioning the personal behavioral style of women, rather than giving support and encouragement for them to join and continue working in politics.

Of course she believes there are many positive reasons why women should be in politics in a big way. If women, who

comprise one half of the total population, can participate in all decision making levels, strong and fruitful results could be gained in all areas of development. The main reason she has remained active in politics is to expose all kinds of social restraints acting against women and to fight them in order to liberate women. She is fully convinced that politics is the only means to achieve these goals.

The main work she wants to accomplish for the country is to end all kinds of discrimination prevalent in society, and remain alert and active to secure lasting peace in the country. She also would like to initiate measures to lay the foundation for a prosperous society.

The most important achievement of her political career was to witness the successful conclusion of the second people's movement of 2005-06 and to have the CA declare the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in its first meeting. In her view, the most important work to be done for people right now is to conclude the constitution writing faithfully and contribute to the lasting peace from our respective positions.

Her ambition is to continue to struggle for the nation and the people during the rest of her life after the constitution is duly proclaimed. She is a member of the CA Committee for Determining the Structure of the Constitutional Bodies. Her conviction on the long political journey so far is: democracy is essential to conduct state affairs under the rule of law; without this the state cannot function normally.



**Usha Gurung**  
CA Member, Nepali Congress (NC)

District : Jhapa  
Husband : Single  
Mother : Chandra Kumari Gurung  
Father : Ganesh Bahadur Gurung  
Date of Birth : February 1969  
Place of Birth : Dhankuta  
Mother Tongue : Gurung

**अध्यक्ष**

*"The novel thing to share with the people is the new constitution that guarantees democratic foundation and people's rights."*

*Usha Gurung is a rare political player who has successfully combined political activism and an entrepreneurial flair. She was among those, who still in school uniform, waved party flags and shouted slogans "long live democracy" in cheering the demonstrators of the democracy movement of 1990. She represents the Nepali Congress (NC) ethnic PR seat in the CA. Having studied up to the Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL) of education, she has been active in hotel and tourism enterprises.*

*Born in Dhankuta in February 1969, CA member Gurung is advisor to Nepal Women's Organization, Jhapa, and a central member of the NC youth wing Tarun Dal. A follower of the Buddhist faith, Ms. Gurung has a small two person family. She has travelled widely in Asia as well as USA, France, Germany and many other European countries. Currently in the CA, she chairs the Government Arrears Recovery Sub-committee and serves as a member in the Cultural and Social Solidarity Committee.*



With the political change of 1990, she embarked upon the challenging task of hotel and tourism enterprise, as well as active politics. Coming from an economically well-off family though, she did not have to worry about family responsibilities. This also facilitated her smooth participation in political activities. Also helpful was the family tradition of Congress affiliation which made her doubly welcome in the Congress political circle.

What motivated her to join in politics? She observes, "My mission is to work towards ending the prevailing discrimination in society, strengthen democratic values and norms, and create a peaceful and prosperous Nepal. For this, I believe I would have to shoulder the party assignment conscientiously. Though some achievements have been made towards the goal, much remains to be done to reach the main goal in the future."

In her political experience, to engage in fighting against social distortions and anomalies and advocating the cause of innocent people was by no means an easy task for a single woman. Her memorable moments in life were the sympathy and support she received from her young friends during the painful period of the people's war. She regards overcoming those challenges as defining her political success.

She encountered numerous threats from the Maoists during her campaign against extortion imposed upon the hoteliers and their rights to conduct their businesses in a free and fair manner. This is one of the reasons why she is such an outspoken critic of the Maoists. Moreover, she led the discussion and upheld a principled stand against the inclusion of the term "people's war" in the new constitution, in the CA Committee for Social and Cultural Solidarity. Voting was forced on the choice of terms "armed conflict" and "people's war" at the early draft of the committee and the term "armed conflict" was favored by a big majority for inclusion in the committee report. She regards this as a memorable landmark in Nepalese politics. The motion was supported by all parties other than the Maoists.

In her considered opinion, she has straddled many levels of success on being selected to represent the ethnic segment on behalf of a major political party during the CA election. She

feels it her duty to stand up to the challenges of the historic task that have come her way. She credits her success to her party and society in general. She considers it as her first duty to work to ensure the rights of indigenous people, ethnic groups and women in the new constitution. This will make a contribution to the country, she avers.

She is critical of tendencies that deny positions for women at decision making levels. She opines, "It is a painful fact of life that women are not seen in any of the policy level decision making bodies of the party organization or parliamentary fields. The dark side of political life remains for women always to be clapping while the decisions are made by males in our male-centric society." Of course ups and downs are an integral part of political life. Her experience has convinced her that success follows you if you continue to work for the common people without misusing your position. Along with being a CA member, she also chairs the Sub-committee on Government Arrears that looks into financial irregularities. This Committee is trying to put the government accounts book in good order, including during many past years.

She feels that the increased responsibility that she has been carrying out in the CA and party forums has greatly enhanced her personal political profile. She adds, "There is of course much more to do. It is necessary to share the success gained by virtue of perseverance, hard work and honesty with the people I am working for. The novel thing to share with the people is the new constitution that guarantees democratic foundation and people's rights. Until such constitution is formalized, I would not regard my mission to have been achieved."

Along with the CA activities, she is also devoted to strengthening the NC, her political party. She declares, "The NC is a dynamic democratic party and it is geared up to the reality of the twenty-first century. For this party, there is no alternative to democracy. The NC is strongly committed to make the country and people prosperous through democratic socialism. The NC is the only party that stands against party-sponsored youth bands. It aims to energize the youth with ideas, not through militant bands."





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