

Constituent Assembly is the Only Way out **Devendra Raj Panday**

In the past, that is until the February 1 Action by King Gyanendra, like many others I too was for seeing the House revival as the most constructive way of getting back to representative and accountable governance in our country. February One has changed all that, for two reasons.

One, it is now clearer than ever before that the King wants to isolate and marginalize the established political parties, and that he has nothing but contempt for those who see a role for multiparty democracy based on the principle of people's sovereignty. Under these conditions, if he agrees to revive the House, he will do so at his will and for his convenience. Such a course of action will not guarantee the outcomes we would seek from the revived House. One such outcome we seek is the decision by the revived House to have an election for the Constituent Assembly, the idea of which has gained ground in the country like never before for various reasons. The most important reason is that election for the Constituent Assembly seems to be the only way out to attract the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) to give up insurgency and join political mainstream. It seems to be the only way to move the country towards a condition of permanent peace. It will also help resolve other conflicts in the society through political means.

Another reason for me to be skeptical about the utility of House revival in present conditions is that people are not fully convinced that political parties will remain faithful to their promises, which, in any case, are not always clearly stated. People are not fully convinced that the revived House will declare the election for the Constituent Assembly. Even if we accept that the present leadership in the political parties wishes to do so, there is no guarantee that the King will cooperate. The revived House will be governed by the same old rules and procedures that existed in the past. The King and the political leadership may use these rules to dilly dally the process to accommodate each other and rule collectively, for their mutual benefit at the cost of the people.

The peaceful movement for democracy currently underway is expected to produce an outcome not only about the future of monarchy but also about the future of current political leadership of political parties. We need reforms all around, and we need to achieve them peacefully through non-violent means, through a long struggle if necessary. If we destabilize the current movement under one pretext or another, we may have to be ready for yet another violent struggle or more struggles. We must avoid this possibility for the very survival of our nation.