

Municipality Leadership and Governance A Case Study of Bhaktapur

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Located just 13 KM. East from the capital (Kathmandu), Bhaktapur is a puzzle city for many people in many respects. Inhabited by Hindu Newar with more social stratification than Vedic's prescription of four *varna* (Brahmin, Chhetri, Baishya and Sudra), caste is central to the lives of city dwellers. Some anthropologists¹ have taken interest in exploring hierarchical cast based society of Bhaktapu's Newar and complementary relations among the Newar communities of different strata. Bhaktapur is much more than caste. Its inclusion in World Heritage list shows the status of city as "living heritage" or "living museum" representing the medieval characteristics such as cultural events, festivals, *bhajan* (hymns), *dafas* (prayers group) dramas, folk dances and *guthis*. A few native and foreign cultural historians² in their research of Kathmandu valley find Bhaktapur as a unique city for its historical monuments (temples, palace, and mathas), rich architectural heritage, and retention of centuries old tradition of art, culture and craftsmanship. For economists and developmentalist,³ renovation of historical monuments such as temples, shrines, building etc. and preservation and conservation of medieval art, culture and tradition have become their priority for making Bhaktapur a true cultural capital of Nepal. City's infrastructure building seems to be the second priority area. Bhaktapur's economy featured by agrarian society and pre-industrial position, and lack of migration from outside are some of the uncommon characteristics of general urban life. The most striking thing is that Bhaktapur city has not yet been studied from political perspective.

Politics in Bhaktapur has its own distinct character. Nepal Worker and Peasant Party (NWPP), a communist party, has constantly dominated in bringing the elections result of Bhaktapur Municipality (BM) in its favour for the last twenty years. This is uncommon to general pattern as the Nepali Congress (NC), which captured more than 50 percent seats of the local government all over the country in 1992 local elections, was reduced to the size of 30 percent in 1997 local elections. The strength of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist or UML) in local government increased from 29 percent in 1992 to over 50 percent after the 1997 local elections. Unlike the change of power equation and parties' position in local governments in corresponding periods, the NWPP has continued to retain its predominant position in BM. What are the reasons behind this success: leadership and or governance?

This paper deals with urban politics of Bhaktapur from two major perspectives: leadership and governance. For the last twenty years, leaders of BM have mostly been constituted by *Jyapu*- a low caste group and previously excluded community- suggesting the emergence of new group in political leadership of Bhaktapur city. Why is it so? Is it mainly because of the NWPP's conscious effort in bringing the downtrodden section of society to the helm of city affairs? How far socio-economic changes have contributed to caste and class consciousness of the *Jyapu* community? To what extent the introduction of plebiscite system of representation and restoration of multiparty democracy has

opened and expanded political opportunities to citizens in general and disadvantaged group in particular irrespective of their position in social and economic set up. Under leadership section, the paper covers many contents such as social setting, elections, parties and candidate selection, social, economic and political backgrounds of BM leaders. Another aspect is leadership capacity in providing good governance to Bhaktapur city. Governance in essence is delivery of state services to the society and citizens. A lot of questions related to local governance of BM such as leadership's vision, decentralization and devolution, generation of financial resources, mobilization of capital and human resources, people's participation, development plan and projects etc. need to be addressed to assess the performance of elected representatives of Bhaktapur.

Leadership

Bhaktapur district is divided into two parliamentary constituencies, sixteen Village Development Committees (VDC) and two municipalities. BM, one of the two municipalities of Bhaktapur district, consists of 17 wards. One Ward Chairman and four Ward Members, including one women ward member, are elected from each ward in addition to the election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Bhaktapur Municipal Council has, therefore, 87 elected representatives and 18 nominated members. BM Board consists of 19 elected members (Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Ward Chairman from each of 17 wards) and two nominated members. The major contesting parties in Bhaktapur are the NWPP, the NC, the UML and the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP).

Bhaktapur is stronghold of the NWPP. From the time of its participation in electoral politics since 1981 during the partyless panchayat period, the NWPP has constantly gained the legislative seat except for the lost of one from two parliamentary constituencies of Bhaktapur district in 1991 and 1999 general elections. It has limited influence in rural areas but has managed to gain the top post (Chairman) of DDC through electoral alliance with other parties. Numerically, the NC and the RPP have greater representation, four from each party, in 13 members DDC. The NWPP and the UML has two seats each in the DDC. But the NWPP's dominance in Bhaktapur city could not yet be challenged by other parties despite an alliance made among the NC, the UML and the RPP against the NWPP in the 1997 elections for BM. The NC appeared once as the most popular party in rural areas of Bhaktapur and had gained many seats including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor posts of the newly formed Thimi-Madhepur Municipality in the 1997 local elections. The party won one of the two parliamentary constituencies in the 1991 and the 1999 general elections but lost in the 1994 mid-term elections. The RPP is the third force in Bhaktapur district but gained more seats than its size in both the 1992 and the 1997 DDC elections through alliance with other parties. Relatively, the UML is less influential, though it won half of the total 16 VDCs of Bhaktapur district in the 1997 local elections.

Table 1.
Parties' Position in Local and General Elections

Parties	House of Representatives			DDC		Municipality Bkt. Thimi			VDC*	
	1991	1994	1999	1992	1997	1992	1997		1992	1997
NWPP	1	2	1	3	2	18	17	2	5	2
NC	1	-	1	4	4	1	1	10	12	3
UML	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	3	2	8
RPP	-	-	-	4	4	-	1	2	2	3
Others	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-
Total	2	2	2	13	13	19	19	19	21	16

* The figure counts only the Chairman of VDC. The number of VDCs was reduced from 21 to 16 because of the establishment of a new municipality (Thimi-Bhaktapur municipality) consisting of previous 5 VDCs.

Source: Election Commission.

Social Cleavages and Leadership Building

Before entering into the main subject— leadership structure of BM— it makes an overview on general pattern of leadership structure in Nepal in order to trace the picture of Bhaktapur city in comparative perspective. Nepal shares the experience of other South Asian countries that leaders are generally drawn disproportionately from the people of higher socio-economic background. Education, wealth and social status are 'political resources' behind the formation of leadership.⁴ Nepal and other South Asian countries have common patterns with high caste groups and big land holding class dominating political leadership.

The hill high caste Brahmin and Chhetri have dominated social, economic, administrative and political structure of Nepal. The reason behind it roots back to social stratification of the people of the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal into four groups- Brahmin, Chhetri, Vaishya and Sudra- as prescribed by the Hindu Vedic ethos. In the ascendant order, Brahmin and Chhetri are placed at the top with their high ritual position: Chhetri was the ruling class and Brahmins worked as priests and advisors to the ruler. Such a hierarchical social structure was legally reinforced and strictly practiced as the state protected ideology with the enactment of the Civil Code 1854 that further classified several caste and ethnic groups into three broader categories- *Tagadhari* (saree-thread wearing caste) at the top, *Matwalis* (alcohol drinking ethnic groups) in the middle, and *Asuddha* and *Achhut* (impure and untouchable) at the lowest layer. Though the New Civil Code of 1963 legally abolished the system of caste domination and discrimination, the hill high castes have continued to retain their domination over political power structure even today.

The domination of hill high castes in Nepali politics is witnessed by a previous study. Brahmin and Chhetri— with their size of 30 percent (Brahmin 13 percent and Chhetri 17 percent) in the total population of Nepal— constituted 70.5 percent among the central leaders of three major parties: the NC, the UML and the RPP. And they constitute two

thirds of total 205 members of the House of Representatives.⁵ This shows a correlation between social status and political power. But other groups that considered as “unprivileged communities” such as hill ethnic groups, the plain caste and tribal groups have relatively greater representation in constituting political leadership at the local level.⁶ Because political parties usually recruit their local leaders from the locally dominated caste/ethnic population irrespective of their social status vis-a-vis- Brahmin and Chhetri. The general picture of political leadership at the central and local levels reveals that the leadership at the apex level is more elitist, and, the leadership at the bottom is relatively accommodative to the unprivileged groups. It needs to stress again—to observe the political leadership of Bhaktapur city in comparative perspective with macro level leadership structure of Nepal—that local leadership are relatively more mass-based, because parties generally recruit local leaders from locally dominated population.

Bhaktapur is almost entirely a Newar city and 92 percent of them are Hindu⁷ where social life is shaped by the values of caste system such as hierarchy and inequality. The main source of their livelihood is farming. Two distinct socio-economic characteristics of Bhaktapur city are: it is an agrarian society, and its social order is based on caste system.

Let me first deal with caste-based social characteristic and its implication for politics of Bhaktapur city. “A caste system is one that divides society into a large number of hereditary groups, distinguished from one another and connected together by three characteristics: *separation* in matters of marriage and contact; *division* of labour; and *hierarchy*, which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another”.⁸ The division of Newars to several social rankings dates back to medieval period when king Jayasthiti Malla divided his *Praja* into 64 castes on the basis of their occupation. Before the unification of Nepal in 1769 by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Malla dynasty ruled over the small principalities of Kathmandu valley including Bhaktapur. Levy finds 350 *thars* (last name of city’ Newar population) and arranged them in twenty distinct levels (ranked from Brahmin to untouchable) in Bhaktapur’s urban macrostatus system.⁹ For convenience of this paper, Bhaktapur Newars are regrouped into five categories in hierarchical order: upper caste (Brahmin, *Chha-thari* and *panch-thari*) at the top, Buddhist Newars (without ranking in Hindu hierarchical order), *Jyapu* in the middle, low caste groups in the lower middle, and untouchable at the lowest position.

Two dominant groups are upper caste Newars enjoying superior status in social ranking, and *Jyapu*, a majority community comprising around 60 percent of Bhaktapur city’s population.¹⁰ The upper caste Newar has a collective identity— *Syasya* (superior), *sahu* (merchant shopkeeper), *madhyambarga* (middle class)— that distinguishes them from other groups. It refers to their caste status, class position and occupation. They include the descendants of the Malla kings and families of their advisors and administrators. They were traditionally landowners. They are involved in trade, business, bureaucracy, teaching and other learned professions. *Jyapu*, a Newari word, means peasant. Peasant in Nepal refers to the occupation of farming across the caste hierarchy. Peasant as an occupational group includes Brahmin as well as untouchables. However, the meaning of *Jyapu* in Bhaktapur is not only confined to the agricultural occupational

group. A person to be *Jyapu* refers to his/her social and economic position in the society. *Jyapu*'s social status is lower than that of the upper caste Newars and also conveys the state of poor economy. Narayan Man Bijukchhe or Rohit, a local inhabitant and Chairman of NWPP, interprets the caste based society of Bhaktapur through the angle of class ideology that *Jyapus* are working class, and others, particularly upper caste Newars, belong to bourgeois.¹¹ But caste system dominates the city life. An anthropologist observes "Newar Bhaktapur, even today, is a city of castes, of culturally valued inequalities, the social and symbolic life of the city is organized in terms of these inequalities".¹² The system of hierarchy and inequalities can be observed in social practices, settlement pattern and cultural symbols of Bhaktapur city. Some instances are:

- High caste Newars do not accept boiled rice and certain other food items from individuals of any caste lower than them. Low caste people are barred from entering the upper floors of a high caste house.
- The high castes live in the centre of town and Bazar areas, along the main tourist and trade route, and around the three major squares. Towards the edge of town, status decreases and poverty increases. The *Jyapus* live in *galis* (lanes), between the centre and the outer fringes. The people considered impure and untouchable live outside the traditional boundaries of city.
- In a chariot during Bisket festival, the Brahmin representing the king and royal priest take seat on the right and left of the god Bhairab. Astrologer and non-Brahmin priests (high-ranking Newar) are seated behind the Brahmin. A *Jyapu* takes a seat behind the high-ranking Newar. Four carpenters stand at the four corners of chariot.

The division of Bhaktapur city's society into superior and inferior groups places the upper caste Newars in advantage position. The political history of Bhaktapur shows a correlation between social status and political power. In social setting of Bhaktapur, the upper caste Newars enjoy the same status as the hill high caste Brahmin and Chhetri in national context. Being the vanquished to the Shah ruler they lost political power after the unification of Nepal in 1769, but the social custom of Newar, set from the medieval period, remained unchanged and has placed the upper caste Newars in elite positions. In the post-unification period, they were accommodated in the court of Shah and Rana palace. One way or other, they had always been in proximity to political power. Their proximity to power centre complemented for retaining their dominant position in social and economic life of Bhaktapur city.

The change of political regime from Rana oligarchy to democratic set up in 1951 did not impact much on the privileged position of the upper caste Newars. Instead, they worked as instruments in bringing popular politics under the new political dispensation. Popular politics in Nepal appeared first in the form of opposition to the Rana regime. Parallel to the national context that the hill high caste group and educated middle class were backbone of democratic movement in Nepal, the local upper caste Newars led anti-Rana movements in Bhaktapur. Most Congress and Communist parties' leaders of

Bhaktapur city in those days belonged to the upper caste Newars. The new values of liberty and equality accompanied by democratic set up affected less to the traditional caste society of Bhaktapur. The prevalence of caste system over the modern value of democracy and party was revealed by the result of the 1957 elections of BM. Parties' candidates were defeated from all seven wards except for one candidate of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN). The elected municipality members were independents and from the upper caste Newars. One candidate from the hill high caste group, not from *Jyapu* community, despite this group being the majority population of Bhaktapur, won the election.

The change of political system from multiparty democracy to partyless panchayat system in 1960 also favoured the upper caste Newar in local politics of Bhaktapur. The selection of political leaders under panchayat system could be divided into the pre-1980 and the post-1980 referendum periods. Before the 1980 referendum, panchayat leaders were largely co-opted by the centre. Out of five persons, who held the post of National Panchayat member from Bhaktapur district in different periods (1960-1980), two were Chhetris and three came from the upper caste Newars. Of five persons holding the post of *Pradhan Pancha* of Bhaktapur Nagar Panchayat in the same period, three belonged to the upper caste Newars and two from *Jyapu* community. The political history of Bhaktapur has shown that the upper castes Newars had long been in proximity to power in the Shah and Rana court, in parties' local leadership during 1950-1960, and in panchayat's local leadership after 1960.

But the domination of the upper caste Newars in local politics of Bhaktapur ended suddenly in the post-1980 referendum. The introduction of plebiscite for the selection of leadership has made a breakthrough for the emergence of new leadership from the majority community of Bhaktapur city. The prevalence of the *Jyapu* community in local politics of Bhaktapur is further ensured after the restoration of democracy in 1990. For the last twenty years the leadership of BM has been mostly constituted by the activists of the NWPP and from the members of the *Jyapu* community.

Table 2.
Caste Composition of Bhaktapur Municipality Leaders

Castes	1982	1987	1992	1999	% in total population*
Upper Castes	15.78	15.78	15.78	15.78	27.2
<i>Jyapu</i>	68.42	68.42	73.68	78.94	59.3
Low Castes	10.52	10.52	5.26	-	7.7
Untouchable	-	-	-	-	3.2
Buddhist Newar	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	2.2
Non-Newar	-	-	-	-	0.4
Total No.	19	19	19	19	100

* Bhaktapur Development Project, 1977.

Source: Election Commission of Nepal.

The overwhelming representation of the *Jyapu* community in elected bodies of BM shows the transformation of leadership from the traditional elite to the previously excluded group. It could be an exceptional case since the hill high caste Brahmins and Chhetris have retained their dominant positions in the elite structure of Nepal irrespective of change of electoral and political system. It is indeed amazing that the caste-based social customs and practices of Bhaktapur city, in which the upper caste Newars place themselves in the high ranking status, remain unchanged, but the political leadership is transferred to the unprivileged community, *Jyapu*. Of several factors contributing to the transformation of political leadership in Bhaktapur city, peasant movement is in the top.

Peasant Movements and Land Reforms

Inter-caste relations among the Bhaktapur Newars, traditionally shaped by a system of hierarchical interdependence, got a new content of class conflict owing to land reform question. Most upper caste Newars are landowners while the *Jyapus* are tenants. They came to direct conflict on several contents of land reform programme as the interest of one group clashed with the interest of the other.

Since the majority community is *Jyapu*, Bhaktapur city is a peasant society. Till 1980, *Jyapus'* livelihood was entirely depended on subsistence farming without any other source of income except for some artisan farmers who were involved in crafts and construction works in agriculture off-seasons. The miserable position of *Jyapu* in land-based economy of Bhaktapur had been observed by an author, "The Newar peasant, who had been exploited also under the Mallas, became even worse off under the new rule (post-unification period). Heavy taxes... forced him to sell his harvest at low prices. Later in the year, when he had to buy grains, he...became dependent on the moneylenders who gradually took over his land and became big landowners. Many peasants lost all their land and became tenants, a situation that remained until the Land Reform Act of 1964 granted the tenants rights to the land they were cultivating, as long as they paid the rent prescribed by the state."¹³

In Nepal, land reform policy has not come as a push factor from peasant movement. It is rather state's initiated progressive programme resulting in class-consciousness among the peasants. In Bhaktapur as in other parts of the country, the land reform measures taken in the post-Rana period created peasants' awareness to their rights and interest. Abolition of some state's imposed exploitation systems i.e. *bethbeghari* and *jhara* (compulsory unpaid labour service to the rulers) in the 1950s led to reducing tension between the state and peasant. But the key issues of land reform, which brought out conflict between the *Sahus* and the *Jyapus* of Bhaktapur city were tenancy rights and land rents. About land-peasant relations in Bhaktapur city, one study found that only 2.3 percent farming households owned all the land they cultivated; 58 percent owned some of the land they worked and supplemented it with additional rented lands; and the remainder were non-land owning tenant farmers.¹⁴ This shows the significance of tenancy rights and land rent as two vital issues for Bhaktapur city's peasants. Previously before the enactment of Land Reform Act 1964, tenants had no legal rights to the land they

cultivated, and the land rent was fixed by unwritten compromise made between landowners and tenants, which was generally in interest of landowners than tenants. The Land Reform Act 1964 was a big achievement in ensuring legal registration of tenancy rights and fixing land rent. But the main problem was implementation of this Act since "the landlords are not cooperative and the administrative rules and procedures are difficult."¹⁵

But the land reform was a crucial question for city dwellers of Bhaktapur because most of them belonged to peasantry and had no other alternative sources of income. To link this vital issue with local politics of Bhaktapur, it would be appropriate to recall the victory of independent candidates in the 1957 elections of BM suggesting a political vacuum that any organized political force could fill up if that served the interest of the majority population of Bhaktapur city. Presumably, the potential forces were the NC, the Communist and the panchayat establishment.

The NC gained credit for its initiation of abolishing *bethbeghari* and *jhara* system in the 1950s. Another remarkable way the party penetrated into the *Jyapu* community of Bhaktapur city was volunteer and informal teaching to them by the NC local leaders. But the NC has never been considered as a pro-peasant party in Bhaktapur, partly because of the upper caste background of its front local leaders and partly because of their role against the land reform programme. The NC leaders of Bhaktapur city welcomed the decision of abolishing *bethbeghari* and *jhara* system because it did not hurt their personal interest. They, however, played an opposite role on the question of granting tenancy rights and fixing land rate by law because of its negative impact on their personal interest as landowners. At organizational level the NC was indifferent to king Mahendra's land reform policy but at the individual level, a number of persons known as Congress sympathizers in Bhaktapur were involved actively against this policy. A local NC leader said "The relations between the NC local leaders and the city people cut off after the 1960 royal coup against democracy since the party leaders were either in jail or in exile when the land reform programme was announced and implemented."¹⁶

Despite the land reform being a progressive step taken by king Mahendra who propounded partyless panchayat system, the establishment largely failed to get credit for it in Bhaktapur context. "At a general level, though directly not visible, there does seem an intra-class alliance between the landlords and the state."¹⁷ Such a general situation corresponded to Bhaktapur that there was a broad informal alliance among the landowners irrespective of their political and ideological backgrounds, vested interest group, and the state's local authorities to avert the spirit of Land Reform Act 1964. The domination of landowning class in state apparatus led to rendering the state machineries ineffective for the implementation of land reform policy. For instance, a study on impact of land reform in Bhaktapur found that the official Peasant Organisation was irrelevant to the cause of peasant movement or peasant interests.¹⁸

The local leaders/workers of the CPN in Bhaktapur, who later turned into a splinter group with a new name, NWPP in 1975, capitalized the land reform issues for the interest of the party. Despite the party centre's ambivalence on this issue and its instruction to the

party activists to limit their role according to the law of the country, the local communists of Bhaktapur took both legal and illegal methods to use the land reform issue for the interest of peasants. Some leading party's peasant activists of Bhaktapur city were involved actively and assertively in launching a series of peasant movements. A leading peasant activist said that the party instigated peasant movements of Bhaktapur were launched in three phases by contents and times. The *Napi* (survey) movement: the implementation of land reform act started with *Napi*, quantification of land and registration of names of landowner and tenant. The activists of CPN-Bhaktapur took assertive role in inserting the name of tenant during the *Napi* time. *Bali katne* (forcible capture of crops) movement: the CPN-Bhaktapur organized peasants against landowners who evicted tenants through manipulation in *Napi*. Several numbers of peasants were involved in capturing crops forcibly in favour of tenants who had been legally deprived from tenancy rights by landowners. *Bharpai* (receipt) movement: the CPN-Bhaktapur launched a movement for written receipt of land rent given by tenants to landowners. This campaign was launched in retaliating landowners' refusal to give written document of receiving land rent and taking it as an excuse for deprivation of tenancy.¹⁹ Because of the party's contribution for the protection of tenancy rights at critical times the NWPP has been considered as the *Jyapu* party. In fact, the NWPP intensified social cleavages between the upper caste and the *Jyapu* of Bhaktapur Newars through inserting the content of class struggle in their relationship. Such socio-economic cleavages have deeply impacted in creating caste and class based political equation of Bhaktapur city- a majority community, *Jyapu*, is with the NWPP and other caste groups favour other parties.

Socio-Economic Change and its Impact on Caste Consciousness

The success of implementing land reform programme in Bhaktapur has wider implications in bringing marked improvements to social and economic conditions of *Jyapu*. Narayna Man Bijukchhe observes "The position of *Jyapus* of Bhaktapur city changed from slave before the 1951 to serf following the abolition of *bethbeghar* and *jhara* systems and finally to peasant after the 1964 land reform."²⁰ Some visible changes of the land reform programme are: use of *Bikashe* seeds and machines in farming and boosting of agricultural economy which naturally helped to improve the financial position of *Jyapus*; repair of houses; increased market activities against the tradition of barter system; and above all rapid increase of students from peasant families. Ash Kumar Koju, Chairman of ward 10, said that Bhaktapur *Jyapus* have become financially able to bear the cost of education only after the Land Reform Act 1964 was implemented.²¹ This view could be substantiated by a record of a school in Bhaktapur city, Vidyarthi Niketan Secondary School, about the number of its students who passed SLC. Among the students who completed SLC from this school, those belonged to *Jyapu* families were only 2 in the 1950s but their number increased to 10 in the 1960s, 82 in the 1970s, and 250 in the 1980s.²² The exposure to the education has contributed to widen *Jyapus'* horizon and in bringing about change in their thinking and behaviour vis-à-vis the upper caste Newars.

Bhaktapur Development Project (BDP), a long run project (1974-1985) under financial aid of German Government, helped in improving the living conditions of

Bhaktapur city dwellers, particularly the *Jyapus*. The BDP's contribution was not limited to providing temporary jobs for larger number of people but also produced several trained manpower in construction works. The upper caste Newars failed to cope with the job and skilled development opportunities provided by the BDP because their status consciousness debarred from involving inferior works i.e. art, craft and construction. The *Jyapu* is temperamentally a hard laborious community and therefore provide labour force to the BDP. The finding of a previous study shows the difference between these two cast groups that the persons 'not in labour force' constituted only 4.8 percent among *Jyapus* but this figure heightened up to 39.1 percent for the upper caste Newars.²³ Taking into consideration of its impact, the BDP could be largely taken a pro-*Jyapu* project, which created consciousness and enhanced confidence among the *Jyapus* for second source of income. Hence, a large number of Bhaktapur *Jyapus* have involved in increasing demands of skilled and unskilled labour for booming industries of construction in neighbouring cities, Kathmandu and Lalitpur.

For the upper caste Newars of Bhaktapur, the land reform programme is third blow against their interest. The reduction of land rent- 23 *pathi* per *ropani*- turned several upper caste Newars into the poor class. Such newly turned poor class has been described as a group of "*kalcha sin wa manacha jaki*" or the people facing the problems of hand to mouth. They failed to make up their economic position since their caste consciousness and arrogance debarred them from involving in the market of wage labour. Two other developments having negative impacts on the economy of the upper caste Newars are closer of Tibetan border in 1959 and the construction of Araniko Highway linking Kathmandu with the Chinese border. Bhaktapur lost its vitality as trade centre between the North and South and between Kathmandu and eastern hills. So they had adversely affected the economy of Bhaktapur, particularly to the upper caste Newars. The general perception that Newars are traders and business group is not valid so far concerned the occupation of the *Jyapu* community. Because only 1.5 percent among the Bhaktapur *Jyapus* were found in business.²⁴ The primary occupation of the upper caste Newars is trade and business. Another major source of income is service. So social and economic changes taking place in Bhaktapur are not for the interest of the upper caste Newars, which led them to seek alternative place for their betterment. Migration by the upper caste Newars to Kathmandu for better economic opportunities and career development is high. The *Jypau* is less mobile community in terms of migration from hometown to other areas. Such a picture of migration also favours the *Jyapus* for continuing in powerful positions in local politics.

The sociology of leadership transformation in Bhaktapur city suggests that social and economic changes taking place since the early 1950s made a background for the emergence of new political situation. The most remarkable one was land reform programme in introducing caste/class conflicts against the traditional system of hierarchical interdependence in relations among the Newars of Bhaktapur city. Its contribution did not only limit to improving economic conditions of *Jyapus* but also in injecting a new culture that they have largely overcome the tradition of their submissive culture vis-à-vis the upper caste Newars. The availability of other sources of cash income led to reduce their dependency on the upper caste Newars. Over time, the caste based

economic disparities between these two groups no longer exist. The economic prosperity of the *Jyapu* community rendered help to lessen the rigidity of caste hierarchy in social life of Bhaktapur city.

The exposure of the *Jyapu* community in educational sector has also brought about changes in social and economic spheres of Bhaktapur city. In the past, education was limited to the members of high caste Newars. The entry of new generation of the *Jyapu* community in educational field has led to bring distinct changes in decision-making power in family and in relations with other caste groups. The aged people are respected in family affairs and in cultural activities, but on the issues of public affairs i.e. politics, the younger men in the family, who have been to school and campus, feel more qualified to deal. The older generation of *Jyapu* community still believe in fatalism, but the younger generation has discontent against their hereditary subordinate positions vis-à-vis the upper caste Newars. Their aspiration and exposure to secular values i.e. democracy and equality have been largely respected by the NWPP. The NWPP, rather than any other party, addressed the *Jyapu* community's aspiration for changes in social, economic and political aspects of Bhaktapur city.

Another important reason behind leadership transformation in Bhaktapur city can be found in observing social psychology of the city dwellers. "Newars of Bhaktapur identify first with their family, then with their caste, next with their *guthi*, and finally, with their *tole*."²⁵ Each caste group of Newars see themselves as "We" and treat other caste groups as "They" and all Newars consider the non-Newars as "Outsiders" and lump them as "*Khaen*" for hill caste Brahmin/Cheetri and "*Saen*" for hill ethnic groups and "*Marsya*" for plain caste/ethnic groups. This explains the absence of non-Newar community in leadership of BM, except for one lone case of the victory of Surya Pratap Rana (Thakuri Chhetri) as Ward Chairman in 1957. Tilak Kayastha viewed that the part of reason why his party- NC- failed to penetrate into the *Jyapu* community of Bhaktapur in the 1950s was that the party front organization, Kisan Snagh- was constituted by *Khain* to whom the city dwellers saw as "Outsiders". The district level leadership of the NC has been dominated by *Khains* since its inception. Its City Committee is mostly constituted by the upper caste Newars. The RPP and the UML are dominated by *Khains*, nevertheless the local Newars constitute the leadership of their own' party City Committee. The NWPP' leadership, both at district and city levels, is mostly constituted by Newar *Jyapus*. The social psychology of 'We, They and Outsiders' has its own impact on the politics of Bhaktapur city.

Among the Newars of Bhaktapur city, *Jyapu* is more homogeneous group bound by intra-caste marriage and by *guthi*, *bhajan* and *dafa* systems that provide platforms for their collective activities in cultural affairs. The upper caste Newars are divided into three hierarchical groups- Brahmin, *Chha-thari* and *Panch-thari*. The untouchables have also three ranking- *Jugi*, *Nae* and *Pore*. Those under the category of the low caste Newars are most heterogeneous. The *Jyapu* being a coherent community, a majority group in total population of city, their caste consciousness, and their assertion for political power work as forces behind their domination in urban politics of Bhaktapur city. The first past-the post electoral system provides a ground for transforming social strength into political

power. It is indeed need to recall a general trend of Nepali politics that political parties usually recruit their own local leaders from locally dominated population.

Political Parties and Candidate Selection

Bhaktapur is stronghold of the NWPP and other parties like the NC, the UML and the RPP are too weak to challenge its dominant position. Despite the NC's long record of working in Bhaktapur since the late 1940s, it has always been poor showing in elections of Bhaktapur municipality. The 1960 royal coup, which forced its local leaders to be in jail for long time or in exile in India, was a big set back. Nevertheless, the NC had never been rooted out from Bhaktapur in adverse situations. The party tried to reactivate itself after the 1980 referendum but only through the student politics. Before it entered into competitive mass politics after the restoration of democracy in 1990, Bhaktapur city had already turned into the NWPP's pocket area. In the post-*Jana Andolan* period, the NC appeared as the most "inactive opposition vis-à-vis NWPP" in the context of Bhaktapur city. The president of NC' Bhaktapur City Committee confessed that the party local leaders did not have vision, programme and strategy to penetrate into the *Jyapu* community, the majority population of Bhaktapur city.²⁶

The condition of other parties is not much different from that of the NC. In the context of Bhaktapur city, the panchayat system produced only few individuals as leaders without mass followers so the RPP could not sustain its old strength in the changed political context after the restoration of democracy in 1990. One of its local leaders said that the RPP existed in Bhaktapur city only in paper not in action and programme.²⁷ The UML or the former ML entered late in Bhaktapur politics. Before this party started its activities in the late 1970s, another communist party, the NWPP, had already expanded its organizational base. A local leader of the UML opines that Bhaktapur city politics can be understood with its two distinct characteristics. First, the NWPP has strong support base among the *Jyapus* and other parties could not penetrate into this majority community. Second, in the given condition, other parties were competing for their own influence among the non-*Jyapu* communities.²⁸ Parties influence in caste based society of Bhaktapur city can be roughly divided into following: *jyapu* with the NWPP, upper caste Newars with the NC, low caste, untouchable and Buddhist Newars with the UML. The RPP has some influence in all above mentioned caste groups. Irrespective of a rough estimate of caste based political equation, all parties have given preference to the majority community of the city while selecting their candidates for the elections of Bhaktapur city.

Table 3
Caste Background of Parties' Candidates for Bhaktapur Municipality
in 1992 and 1997 Local Elections

Caste/parties	1992					1997*				
	NWPP	NC	RPP	UML	Total	NWPP	NC	RPP	UML	Total
Upper Castes	2	7	3	-	12	2	1	4	1	8
<i>Jyapu</i>	15	11	16	7	49	16	3	3	2	24
Low Castes	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	1	1
Untouchables	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Buddhist Newar	1	-	-	4	5	1	-	-	-	1
Non-Newar	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total No.	19	18	19	12	68	19	5	7	5	36

* NC, UML and RPP made an alliance in contesting elections.

The table reveals that more than two-thirds candidates of different parties contesting the 1992 and the 1997 elections to BM are from the *Jyapu* community. In both elections, the NC candidates from this community figure around 60 percent. Elections contesting by *Jyapus* from the RPP went down considerably from 84 percent in 1992 to 43 percent in 1997 elections. Similarly the UML's *Jyapu* candidates were reduced from 58 percent to 40 percent in corresponding period. But the NWPP gave its more candidates from the *Jyapu* community, i.e. 79 percent in 1992 and 84 percent in 1997 elections. The overall pictures of parties' candidates to elections of BM corresponded to a general trend that political parties usually recruit their own local leaders from locally dominated population.

To see it in retrospect from the result of elections, candidates contesting from the same caste status group do not carry the same meaning for all parties. The victory of *jyapu* candidates from only the NWPP and not from other parties suggests the significance of party affiliation. The caste and party identity are two vital factors in determining the result of the local elections of Bhaktapur city. The NWPP has already gained an image as pro-*jyapu* party by its long political standing. It has outstanding record of making substantial contribution for the cause of *Jyapus* at the most important time of tenant-landowners conflicts in the 1960s. Besides, the party has always been with the mass of Bhaktapur city even during the ban on political parties under the partyless panchayat regime (1960-1990).

Before the NWPP came up as a splinter communist group, communists of Bhaktapur penetrated into panchayat since its inception, and Rohit, the then incharge of CPN-Bhaktapur, himself held the post of Chairman of Ward 8 in the early 1960s. Before 1980, persons with communist background had considerable representations in Bhaktapur Nagar Panchayat and three of them (Bishnu Prasad Nepali, Babu Kaji Basukala and Lakhan Das Banepali) even succeeded in holding the post of *Pradhan Pancha*. Such a penetration strategy later turned into participation in panchayat elections after the 1980 referendum. The NWPP captured almost all seats of Bhaktapur Nagar Panchayat in the 1982 and the 1987 local elections. The party's candidates, Karna Prasad Hyaju and Govinda Duwal, got victory in the elections of National Panchayat held in 1981 and 1986 respectively. The party justified its involvement in panchayat with an explanation that "Election also provides a political platform to wage class struggle." This strategy was

formally expressed in words, “NWPP decided to adopt and apply the Leninist doctrine of using bourgeois elections in order to arouse the class consciousness among the masses on the one hand and to expose the bourgeois exploitation on the other.”²⁹ This line of thinking remains unchanged despite the NWPP appeared as one of the parliamentary parties and the number of its representations in the House of Representatives are: 1, 4 and 1 in the first, second and third tenure of parliament respectively.

Being a non-conformist party vis-à-vis parliamentary democracy, it professes Marxism and Leninism as its ideology and Mao’s thought as its guiding principle.³⁰ The NWPP asserted its ideological position, “Participation in bourgeois elections does not mean that we expect to emancipate the working class from the suckles of bourgeois slavery through parliamentary means. Parliament is merely a legal mean to wage life and death struggle against the parasitic bourgeois system.”³¹ Though the NWPP has projected itself as a non-conformist force to the panchyat and the parliamentary system, the party, through making a tactical alliance with the establishment, has always taken advantages in activating itself through underground and open politics. This rendered help to it to be in touch with the mass either way.

The NWPP has some influence in the Mid-west hill districts in addition to Bhaktapur, as shown by victory of its two candidates, one from Jumla and other from Kalikot district in the 1994 mid term elections. But defection from the party by these two members of the House of Representatives led to localize the NWPP in Bhaktapur district only. Though the party contested for 43 constituencies from 19 districts but it could gain only one seat from constituency-1 of Bhaktapur district in the 1999 elections. One of the reasons for making the NWPP popular among the *Jyapus* of Bhaktapu is that the party Chairman, Rohit, took shelter in their houses during his underground period. Despite being an upper caste Newar, he crossed caste barrier in taking meals from *Jypau* families. By this way, Rohit capitalized *Jyapus*’s psychology that they become happy if an upper caste Newar takes meal in their house.

Coming back to the question of candidate selection, parties would consider a number of factors before they take final decision. As Bhaktapur is stronghold of the NWPP, other parties have no more choice though they selected their own candidates for the post of Mayor among the local leaders having long service to the party. For other posts like ward chairman and members, they always faced problems to give candidates from all wards of Bhaktapur municipality. So this section primarily deals with candidate selections by the NWPP.

The NWPP is personality-based centralized party dominated by Rohit who has held the post of party Chairman continuously since its establishment in January 1975. This factor counts though the party City Committee has formal authority in selection of candidates for the elections of BM. But taking into consideration of three things— one party Chairman Rohit being inhabitant of Bhaktapur city; two the party City Committee is headed by one of the members of the Central Committee; and three status of party’s candidate for Mayor post being a member of the party Central Committee— one can easily assume the centralized tendency in the NWPP in producing its local leaders. It,

however, does not mean that the party completely overlooks the opinion of party activists. For both the 1992 and 1997 elections, the party called meeting in each of 17 wards of Bhaktapur city in which the party organization leaders of the ward level, party sympathizers, and voters participated and gave their own opinions regarding the appropriate candidates for their own ward. At institutional level, the party Ward Committee, City Committee and some central leaders involved in candidate selections for the elections of BM except for the post of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for which the party Central Committee decided directly. A mixed of centralized and decentralized way of decision making in candidate selection can be found in expression of Prem Suwal, “I contested to the post of Mayor as per requested by the party City Committee and instruction of the Central Committee.”³²

Among several factors to be considered for candidate selection by the NWPP, the primacy of caste factor is too obvious since most candidates to the elections of BM are from the *Jyapu* community. The party has also maintained caste balance in all local elections that its candidate to the second top post, Deputy Mayor, had always been from non-*Jyapu* community, mostly Buddhist Newar. For ward 4 and 8 of Bhaktapur city the party had picked up persons from the upper caste Newars while giving its candidates to the post of ward Chairman in all the last four local elections considering the fact that non-*Jyapu* communities are in majority in these wards and also in ward 16. Furthermore, the party had also maintained area balance in giving 5 candidates, one Chairman and four members, for the election of Ward Committee. Each ward constitutes with four or five *toles* and the party had usually given candidates from each *tole* that there would be representations from each *tole* in the elected body of Ward Committee. Moreover, the NWPP tried it best to avoid the rich person to be involved in popular politics. Gyan Bahadur Nyanchain told his case that the NWPP offered him to contest the post of *Pradhan Pancha* in 1982 local election but at the cost of leaving his involvement as owner of brick factory.³³ Besides, personalities, party loyalty, educational background, willingness to serve the people are some of the factors the party considered in selecting its candidates for the elected bodies.

Personal Profile of Municipality Members

Some aspects related to social and economic characteristics of BM members (including Mayor and Deputy Mayor) distinctly show the transformation of urban leadership of Bhaktapur city from the traditional elite of the upper caste Newars to the *gyapas*. The upper caste Newars constitutes only 3 in addition to 1 Buddhist Newar. They have distinct characteristics from other fellow members belonging to *Jyapu* in their occupation and family background. They are from elite family background and their major occupation is Business. But none of BM members from the *Jyapu* community, which constitutes majority among the elected members of BM, is from the elite family background. They are from peasant family and their major occupation is agriculture. But irrespective of different caste status among the BM members, all of them have common class background since they are all from the middle class.

Among 19 BM members including the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, 11 are from middle aged group followed by 5 youngsters and 3 old aged group. All are Hindus except one Buddhist holding the post of Deputy Mayor. This figure corresponds to religion-wise population distribution of Bhaktapur city. Only three of 19 BM members are less educated whereas majority of them have attended higher education, suggesting the education as one of the important factors for leadership building in the urban area.

NWPP has an absolute control in the local government of Bhaktapur city except for one representation from each of the NC and the RPP in total 19 elected members of BM. Most of their political career started in the post-referendum period through their involvement in party activities. Some of them have long political career and record of being political sufferers. Most elected leaders have come from those persons who served in the party's local committees- ranging from Ward to District Committee. 12 out of 19 BM members hold post in different levels of the party local committees. Three, including Mayor and Deputy Mayor, are members of the NWPP' Central Committee. Nevertheless, majority of BM members lacked non-political support base, except the caste factor, for their emergence as local leaders. Few could have influenced the business and teaching communities by their affiliation and previous job. Majority of them have simply identified themselves as 'social worker' for their convenience without record of substantial contribution to social service sectors. The caste and party identity are the two major sources of their political power.

Table No. 4
Social, Economic and Political Profile of Municipality Members

Subjects	Mayor	Deputy Mayor	Members
I. Sex			
1. Male	1	1	16
2. Female	-	-	1
II. Age			
1. Young (18-35)	-	-	5
2. Middle (36-50)	1	1	9
3. Old (51-)	-	-	3
III. Education			
1. Literate/School level	-	-	3
2. Higher Education	1	1	14
IV. Religion			
1. Hindu	1	-	17
2. Buddhist	-	1	-
V. Economic Status			
1. Rich	-	-	-
2. Middle	1	1	17
3. Poor	-	-	-
VI. Occupation			
1. Business	-	1	4
2. Agriculture	1	-	12
3. Service	-	-	1
VII. Caste			
1. Upper Caste	-	-	3
2. <i>Jyapu</i>	1	-	14
3. Buddhist Newar	-	1	-
VIII Family Background			
1. Elite	-	1	3
2. Farmer	1	-	13
3. Service	-	-	1
IX. Political Background			
1. Party Activism	1	1	14
2. Panchayat	-	-	2
3. Nothing	-	-	1
XI. Party Affiliation			
1. NWPP	1	1	15
2. NC	-	-	1
3. RPP	-	-	1
XII. Status in Party			
1. Supporter	-	-	1
2. Members	-	-	3
3. Party' Local Committees Members	-	-	12
4. Central Committee Members	1	1	1
XIII. Affiliated Area			
1. Business	-	-	2
2. Teaching	-	-	4
3. Social Workers	1	1	10
4. Others	-	-	1

In retrospect, the caste, class and sex composition of BM members raise doubts to the NWPP's ideological credential as a communist party committed for the cause of 'have not' class and deprived sections of society. All members of the BM constitute middle class, showing a complete absence of representation from rich as well as poor class. One can find a broad combination of caste and class in Bhaktapur city that the low caste Hindu Newars and untouchables are relatively poor and deprived sections of society. With a realization of non-representation of downtrodden strata of society in power structure of the country, the state provides a legal provision to coopt them in local leadership structure.³⁴ But this legal provision is not properly followed by the BM and the NWPP since only two from the low caste Hindu Newars were selected from among 18 nominated members of Bhaktapur Municipal Council. Sixteen nominees are from the *Jyapu* communities and the two nominated members of BM are also from the same group, showing the NWPP's bias against untouchables and non-*Jyapu* communities. The logic of Rohit can be refereed here, "The NWPP has tried to win the heart of socially low caste *Jyapus* and those upper caste Newars who suddenly turned into poor class after the implementation of land reform programme. But the party is not yet success to take confidence of the later groups mainly because of the party's past role during land reform programme, which really hurt the interest of the upper caste Newars. The party could not yet build its support base in the low caste and untouchable communities."³⁵ So, one can draw a conclusion that the NWPP is overwhelmingly preoccupied with caste politics rather than class ideology in producing local leaders for Bhaktapur city.

Governance

This section focuses on leadership's capacity to provide good governance. While dealing with leadership-governance interface in the context of Bhaktapur city, two things need to be highlighted. One, as the NWPP being a personality-based party, the party leaders working in organization or in elected bodies are overwhelmingly subdued by dominant personality of Rohit. This can be seen in BM leaders' self-perception about their position. Mayor Prem Suwal considers himself as merely an agent carrying out his party's vision embodied in the election manifesto.³⁶ Similarly, Ash Kumar Koju used a metaphor of *Hulaki* (postman) in defining his role and function as an elected representative. He said, "As Ward Chairman, my primary duty is to link the needs of *wadabasi* with municipality's development projects."³⁷ So it would be more appropriate to treat BM members from the perspective of institutional leadership in analysing BM's vision, policy and programmes.

Another significant part related to leadership-government interface is empowerment of the local elected bodies in both content and volume of their power, authority, and responsibility after the enactment of Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) 1999. "The LSGA has empowered the municipalities of Nepal, with challenging roles, responsibilities and functions, so that they could eventually perform as full-fledged decentralized, autonomous, and self-governing local bodies, to cater to the needs of their townfolk."³⁸ How far the BM succeeds to cope with its new challenges and opportunities in its objective to provide good governance. Resource generation and mobilization are important to enhance its capacity to serve the city and city dwellers. Another vital part is

the people's participation in local governance. Of many mobilizing agents, political parties and civil society have crucial role in bringing the masses in development projects and other activities related to local governance. This section will try to analyse the performance of BM leaders under three sub headings: vision, resource generation and mobilization, and people's participation.

Vision: Making Bhaktapur a Cultural City

With a slogan "Creation of our predecessors- our art and culture", BM is heading towards making Bhaktapur a cultural city. Its other objectives such as city cleaning, promotion of tourism, educational development, sewerage facilities, conservation of historical monuments and heritage etc. are integrated into its main thrust of developing itself as a cultural city. The table below shows a combination of BM's vision, its policy/programme and its development projects.

**Table No 5
BM' Vision, Policy and Projects**

Vision	Policy/Programme	No of Projects undertaken (1954-1998)	
1. Declare Bhaktapur as a cultural city	1. Assist to conserve individually owned private houses with archaeological values	1. Sewerage	55
2. Preserve heritage and traditional culture	2. Fund to encourage and protect traditional folk dance, prayers, dafa and guthi	2. Renovation of Temples	57
3. Make it pollution-free and cleanest city of Nepal	3. Build treatment pound for sewerage	3. Renovation of satal and pati	70
4. Develop it as a tourist centre	4. Making Hanumante river pollution-free	4. Renovation of stone taps	11
5. Restore traditional art and craft	5. Expand skill and employment oriented education	5. Renovation and reconstruction of pounds	31
6. Make it corruption-free and transparent	6. Take preventive measures for public health	6. Stone/brick roads	291
7. To have 100 % literacy rate and produce at least one graduate from each house hold	7. Financial aid to promote education and sport	7. Renovation of wells	49
	8. Integrated Town Planning	8. Building construction	54
	9. Establish children park, model school and kindergarten	9. Others	161
	10. Mobilization of civil society and other social groups to promote people's participation in local governance		

Source: NWPP's election manifestos, 1992 and 1997; Interviews; Budget of Bhaktapur Municipality, 2000/21.

The idea of making Bhaktapur a cultural city is motivated by many factors i.e. preservation of beauty of an old city, generation of financial resources, and retention of political support. In efforts to draw the attention of government and people to the proposal of making Bhaktapur a cultural city, the NWPP and BM highlighted a number of unique characteristics of Bhaktapur city. Bhaktapur has rich architectural and urban heritage; it has remained ethnically, religiously and culturally homogeneous in comparison to other cities of Nepal; built urban and architectural heritage dating back to 14-15 centuries has remained relatively well preserved; the city has largely maintained the traditional culture, custom, art and craft; and it is enlisted in the World Heritage list. It would be relevant here to recall the observation of E.A. Powells, "Were there nothing

else in Nepal save the Durbar Square of *Bhatgaon* (Bhaktapur), it would still be amply worth making a journey halfway round the globe to see."³⁹ Since the preservation of heritage is the main ground for the justification of making Bhaktapur a cultural city, credit should be given to BDP (1974-1985) for its catalyst role in launching programme of city cleaning and renovation of historical monuments of Bhaktapur city. After the termination of BDP project, BM has expedited these programmes and eventually proposed for the formal recognition of Bhaktapur as a cultural city after the 1997 elections.

The proposal of developing Bhaktapur as a cultural city is closely link with BM's objective to convert Bhaktapur as a tourist destination and thereby generate new source of income. From July 1993 (when BM introduced tourist entry fee) to June 2000, BM collected US \$ 332,320,9 from tourists who visited city core area.⁴⁰ The tourist entry fee has become good source in generating internal resources which has contributed more than 50 percent of BM' annual income since the last few years. The NWPP's interest to sustain its political influence in Bhaktapur also counts as a factor behind BM's proposal of making Bhaktapur a cultural city. The land reform is now outdated issue for Bhaktapur. The city is equipped with minimal level of infrastructure development i.e. electricity, roads, drinking water, transportation and communication etc. The prospect of industrialization is not feasible nor can it be developed as an agricultural city. So the best alternative way is to convert it into a tourist destination centre. In a cultural city, city-dwellers would have less burden to pay (tax) the cost of development and it also discourages migration from outside. The projection of Bhaktapur as a cultural city has become a political strategy and programme to maintain demographic balance, which is also a political interest of the NWPP.

For heritage conservation, tourism promotion and city cleaning— three major ingredients of making Bhaktapur a cultural city— BM has taken some notable steps, such as restoration and maintenance of historical monuments; conservation of traditional art, culture and heritage; regulation for construction and reconstruction of private house in old architectural style in the areas of Protected Monument Zone; subsidy (up to 100 percent) in materials required for the reconstruction (in the old architectural style) of private houses with archaeological value; financial and other incentive to *bhajan*, *dafa* and *guthi* for the protection and promotion of traditional music and folk dance; restriction for pollution-prone industries and relocation of previously established industries from the core city area; and ban for heavy vehicles to enter into the city and prohibition to all kinds of vehicles in Durbar Square area. In addition to BM' own initiations in creating a conducive environment for developing Bhaktapur as a cultural city, the NWPP has constantly pursued to get formal recognition of the government. The party Chairman and member of House of Representatives, Narayan Man Bijukchhe, has pushed and pressed for it in one way or the other. He presented a private bill (Conservation of Art and Culture) and drew the attention of parliament several times for the constitution of a National Committee for the Preservation of Art and Culture, a separate court to look after the subjects of Protected Monument Zone, and the establishment of University of Traditional Art, Culture and Architecture.⁴¹ He even put the case before the king during his audience. His efforts brought out results but in different shape that the government

documents i.e. Ninth Plan and LSGA⁴² have made provision for the declaration of cultural city, though the government has not yet formally recognized Bhaktapur as a cultural city.

The scope of proposed idea of making Bhaktapur as a cultural city goes beyond the conservation of urban heritage. The overall activities carried out by BM are put under its broad objective of developing the town as a cultural capital of Nepal. BM has broader responsibilities. The running of two colleges for three subjects (science, management, and engineering) by the BM with a modest and reasonable tuition fee is widely appreciated. But its emphasis on conservation of urban heritage, tourism, and city cleaning has led to its lesser involvement in other areas. Lack of pure drinking water and the poor state of health service are two major problems facing the city dwellers to which BM shows least concern. A study shows a trend of BM's decreasing investment in health and education sectors.⁴³ Its commitment for the establishment of employment-generated industries was limited to direct benefit for only 36 persons in the last five years from 1997-2002.⁴⁴ The NWPP's promises, made during the 1997 local election, to build a city hall and treatment ponds, are listed in the failed areas in the party's evaluation to the performance of BM.⁴⁵ In fact, BM has given overdose to the conservation of urban heritage, city cleaning and tourism promotion at the cost of development in other areas. Yet it continues to push its objective to make Bhaktapur a cultural city.

Of course, Bhaktapur deserves to be a cultural city because of its unique characteristics. But the leadership of the NWPP and BM has not yet given specific contents and characteristics for the proposed cultural city. Neither is this agenda put for public debate and discussion nor could consult with members of civil society and political parties. Rabindra Kharbuja, a local leader of NWPP and Chairman of ward-15, confessed that BM's proposal of cultural city was discussed only in the Municipal Council meetings and in a seminar organized by BM and participated in by experts and the officials of concerned ministries. The proposal of cultural city could not get much publicity except in a weekly newspaper *Sramik* and a monthly magazine *Bhaktapur*, run by the NWPP and BM respectively. It has yet to put forth before civil society members and parties' local leaders and the idea as such has yet to reach the masses of Bhaktapur city.⁴⁶ So the citizens and leaders of Bhaktapur are not sensitised for developing Bhaktapur as a cultural city.

Table No. 6
Leader-People Interface

Nature and Ranking of Visitors	Ranking		
	1	2	3
Party Workers	-	9	6
Other Party Activists	-	6	8
Ordinary People	16	-	-
Opportunists	-	1	-
People's Demands in Priority order	Ranking		
	1	2	3
Individual Interest	1	6	10
Recommendations for Official Work	15	3	-
Collective Interest and Development	2	9	7
Response			
Use of Position to Influence in Decision Making	4		
Recommend to Concerned Authority	6		
Do Only Under own' Jurisdiction and Discretion	8		
Tactfully Avoid	-		
Others	-		

In response to a question about type of visitors to the leaders' house and office, BM members identified ordinary people first in ranking order, followed by the NWPP workers and other parties' activists respectively. The purpose of visits, in ranking order, was to seek help and assistance from their respective Ward Chairman for their work related to government offices. A tendency of seeking leader's help for personal interest i.e. job, business, family dispute etc. is also strong. The BM members expressed that the issue related to collective interest and development also figure in the list of people's demands. On leaders' response to citizens' demands, 8 BM members said that they entertained only those issues that come under their own jurisdiction. Those who said that they used (abused) their position in favour of their clients are smaller in number (only 4). On the whole, the proposal of making Bhaktapur a cultural city did not figure in people-leader dialogue, suggesting that this agenda was top heavy. Even the Municipal Council members appeared least concerned with the agenda of cultural city. This was reflected in the list of 48 point suggestions made by Municipality Council members during its 8th session in March 2001; out of which 10 points were related to improvement in municipality administration, 8 on city cleaning, 7 on education, health and road, 5 on conservation of urban heritage, 5 on welfare to women and children, and 3 on income generation.⁴⁷

In principle, local leaders of other parties affirm the idea of developing Bhaktapur as a cultural city, but they have complained against the NWPP and BM for not pursuing an all party consensus to such a big agenda and long-term goal. To what extent the leadership of BM bypasses other parties can find in reaction of the president of the NC's City Committee. He said, "I have come to know BM's decision to convert Bhaktapur as a

cultural city through media. My party was never consulted before and after this decision.”⁴⁸ The failure of BM to take confidence of the local leaders of other parties has negative impact in its pursuance for formal recognition to its proposal of cultural city by the central government. BM leaders largely perceived the central government and bureaucracy in negative light while identifying major problems they are facing to work as people’s representative at local level.

Table No 7
Responsibilities and Obstacles

Three Major Responsibilities		Three Major Obstacles	
Empowerment of people and local elected bodies	18	Party’s intervention and pressure	-
Social mobilization and change	18	Lack of coordination between government and party	-
Institutionalisation of own’ party	10	Lack of opportunity to increase leadership capability	3
Uplift of disadvantaged and handicapped	4	Lack of resources	12
Infrastructure development	3	Non-cooperation from or lack of coordination with local line agencies	11
Others	-	Lack of adequate rights and power	11
		Centre’s control and intervention	9
		Corruption	-
		Others	4

While responding to the question about three major responsibilities of people’ elected representatives, all BM members stood for ‘empowerment of people and local elected bodies’ and ‘social mobilization and change’. Ten of them identified ‘institutionalisation of own party’ as one of their major responsibilities. The agendas like ‘uplift of disadvantaged and handicapped’ and ‘infrastructure development’ received least priority. They have faced a lot of problems in holding their responsibilities. The major obstacles as they pointed out are: ‘lack of resources’, ‘lack of proper coordination with bureaucracy’, ‘lack of adequate power’ to the local government, and ‘the centre government’s control and intervention.’ All indicate their perception and experiences that the NC government has not provided proper support and cooperation to local government of Bhaktapur city dominated by the NWPP. Such a general pattern of relationship between the central and the local government, in a situation that two different parties hold power at the central and local levels, suggests a difficulty of BM in pursuing for the government recognition of Bhaktapur as a cultural city. Both the central government and local leaders of other political parties are non-cooperative to the NWPP and BM’s proposal of making a cultural city. Parties’ position reflects citizen behaviours vis-a- vis-BM. For instance, many houses in the main road of Bhaktapur city belong to the upper caste Newars and most of them are hostile to the NWPP. So the BM is facing problems to implement its project of reconstructing the private houses in the old architectural style.

Resource Generation and Mobilization

During the operation of BDP (1974-1985), which looked after the town development of Bhaktapur city, BM or the then Bhaktapur Nagar Panchayat existed mainly as political and administrative unit. After the termination of this project, BM has come up as a development unit as well. Moreover, the LSGA enlarges municipality's responsibilities into 82 specific functions, which are categorised, by a scholar, into six broad areas: financial management, physical and infrastructure development, environment, health and education, social, cultural and community welfare, municipal administration and management, and legal affairs.⁴⁹ To quote Nepal: Human Development Report 2001 for increased role of local elected bodies, "Local governments are now responsible for health, education, quality and standards; drinking water and sanitation; women's development, service to the elderly, deprived, and children; protection of culture, heritage, and ethnic traditions; education in mother tongue; etc. They must also provide services in agriculture, live stock, and marketing; promote tourism; create income and employment opportunities at the local level; promote cottage industry; handicraft, and small industry, develop commerce; build and maintain trails, roads, bridges, irrigation, embankments, community building, dumping sites, and solid disposal sites; and undertake land use planning and zoning."⁵⁰ To fulfil such increased roles and responsibilities, a municipality obviously needs more financial and other resources.

Bhaktapur is neither an industrialized city nor is it a big business centre. This indicates BM's limitation to collect revenue from the city dwellers. It could collect less than Rs.10 million from 110 tax items in the Fiscal Year (FY) of 2000/2001, which contributed only 6.41 percent in total annual budget of Rs.143, 92, 3, 528. The grant from the central government was also negligible- Rs. 300,000.⁵¹ BM received a share of estimated Rs. 216, 000,00 from Local Development Tax, accounting for just 15 percent of total budget. But, Bhaktapur being a tourist destination, it has potentiality of generating internal source from tourism sector. Most remarkable is introduction of tourist entry fee since July 1993 and the rate increased from US \$ 1 to 5 in July 1996 to US \$ 10 from January 2001.

Tourist entry fee has become substantial source of income of BM. A year before the introduction of this system, its annual budget was only Rs. 21.9 million which increased rapidly to Rs. 169. 6 million in FY 2001/2002. In the initial period, the contribution of tourist entry fee was 10-12 percent in total budgets and 19-24 percent in BM's internal revenue. This figure suddenly increased to 41-52 percent of total annual budget and it alone covered 56-70 percent of total internal revenue of BM after the rate of tourist entry fee increased in 1996 and 2001.

Table No. 8
Budgets of Bhaktapur Municipality from FY 1992/1993 to 2001/2002

FY	Total Budget	Internal Source			
		Total	Tourist Entrée fee		
				% in total budget	% in total internal income
1992/93	219,23	103,51	-	-	-
1993/94	357,99	226,66	436,7	12.19	19.26
1994/95	510,45	200,59	488,8	9.57	24.36
1995/96	469,27	246,15	570,9	12.16	23.19
1996/97	752,69	577,99	322,06	42.78	55.72
1997/98	919,72	621,82	379,07	41.21	60.96
1998/99	100,869	625,74	439,84	43.63	70.29
1999/2000		756,08	461,30		61.01
2000/01	143,924*	111,974	745,02	51.76	66.53
2001/02*	169,613	128,399	800,00	47.16	62.30

* Estimated

Source: Budgets of Bhaktapur Municipality

BM has fairly a good record of mobilizing its resources for development budget. Nearly 50 percent of its total budget of the FY 2001/02 is allocated for development budget. Out of Rs 80 million development budget Rs. 8 million is allocated under the heading of ward budget and distributed approximately Rs. 500, 000 to each of total 17 wards. The rest, 90 percent of development budget has been handled by municipality suggesting centralization in fiscal administration. Small projects, which cost less than 300, 000 are generally conducted through ward level projects and other projects of higher cost are handled under the municipality level project. Planning of both the ward level and municipality level projects is a long process in which a number of people and institutions i.e. party, elected representatives, citizens etc. get involved. Rabindra Kharbuja, Convenor of Construction and Physical Development Committee of BM, informed that the development planning has to pass seven stages: opinion collection in different *toles* of a ward, consideration of the party (NWPP) Ward Committee' agendas, aggregation of demands by the elected Ward Committee consisting of ward Chairman and four members, submission of list of projects to Municipality Board, site visit by members of Construction and Physical Development Committee, decision by Construction and Physical Development Committee in presence of chairman of concerned ward committee, submission to Municipality Board for approval, and passed by Municipal Council meeting.⁵²

BM, dominated by the NWPP's representatives, has largely maintained economic discipline in management of development projects. Perhaps this is an exceptional case that an applicant for party membership to the NWPP must inform his/her property⁵³ and this is the first party, which publicly disclosed the party expenditure in the 1999 general elections. BM is the first among the local elected bodies, which made an agreement with Transparency International, Nepal on 26 February 1999 for an integrity system.

According to this agreement, “an integrity system will be implemented in all activities of public offices in Bhaktapur. Transparency will be maintained in providing services, supply of goods, services or materials, decision making process and other activities of public concerns.”⁵⁴ Berlin based Transparency International also gave a title of “Island of Integrity” to BM.

BM has never entered into *theka* (contract) system for its development projects and the logic behind it is to keep people’s representatives far away from corruption and commission. For the mega project i.e. Libalibi town planning of Rs. 60 million, BM handled itself under the *amanat* system. All projects in Bhaktapur are being implemented through user group, not through contractors. The local leaders of other parties suspected of BM’s public posture as least corrupt institution but they failed to give evidence except making point of financial irregularities mentioned in Audit Reports. They also blamed for not including non-NWPP persons in constituting user group. NWPP’ representatives to BM acknowledged the domination of pro-NWPP among the members of user group but dismissed the charge of complete exclusion of other parties’ sympathizers from development projects. BM members also did not completely deny the case of small leakage of money and material of development projects handled by user groups. However, Dhruva Livi (a local leader of RPP, Chairman of ward 11, and member of Planning Supervision and Monitoring Committee of BM) felt the existence of a separate monitoring system of the NWPP, which operates clandestinely and checks the user groups.⁵⁵

Handling of development projects through user group is a slow process for two reasons. One, it is non-paid job and the second is bureaucratic hurdle to get second and third instalment of money allocated to development projects. Moreover the leaders of BM felt the decline of people’s volunteer participation/contribution, which would have natural effects in implementation of development projects. A mid-term review of development projects of FY 2000/01 shows that out of total 114 ward level and municipality level projects approved, only 26 were completed, 24 were being undertaken, and 64 were untouched.⁵⁶ This indicates a fact that the NWPP had of course received votes from city people but it largely failed to mobilize them for development activities.

People’s Participation

Political parties and civil society are two major mobilizing agents. The ability of BM leadership to cultivate political and civil society will largely determine the degree of people’s participation in local governance of Bhaktapur city. Its relations with the NWPP, ruling party in Bhaktapur context, are regulated by a premise of party’s supremacy over elected bodies. Since headquarter of the party is in Bhaktapur and the party Chairman is inhabitant of Bhaktapur, BM receive order and instruction from the central level very frequently. At institutional level the NWPP’s Bhaktapur City Committee controls over its representatives in the BM. In addition, there is a separate unit in party— Elected Committee— constitute by some core leaders among the party organizers and elected representatives, which takes major decisions on policy matters and BM is bound to follow it, according to Mayor Prem Suwal.⁵⁷ The meeting of Elected Committee precedes

meeting of Municipality Board. BM members belonging to other parties felt that their counterparts of NWPP enjoyed individual freedom at the level of debate and discussion but they followed their party's instruction while taking decisions by Board meeting on all issues and questions. Since BM leaders perceive themselves as an instrument to carry out the party's policy and largely operate under the control of party organization leaders, they obviously receive cooperation from the party. In fact, the NWPP has supplied its cadres and sympathizers to development projects and other activities launched by BM.

BM's relations with other parties appear unfriendly. Rabindra Kharbuja sees it at two levels. At ward level, Ward Chairman generally consults local leaders of other parties, but at municipality level mutual consultation and cooperation between BM and leaders of other parties is very low. Part of its reason is that BM does not need to take confidence of other parties as their representation in this elected body is very nominal. Parties are too weak to check and control the activities of BM. To what extent BM disregards other parties can be observed by a case. The president of NC City Committee said there was a lone case of receiving a letter of invitation to his party from BM to consult on pity issue, holding Bisket festival peacefully.⁵⁸ Leaders of other parties also felt that they have not been treated more than as the members of civil society by BM. Moreover, opposition accused BM of its discriminatory behaviour against non-NWPP voters. Such political parochialism was observed in BM's administrative and judiciary works. Besides, BM administration is widely criticized for its delay and slow service to citizens, particularly in getting permission for construction and renovation of private houses. Politicisation of municipality administration is too obvious. Opposition parties largely appear indifference and uncooperative to BM. The state of poor relations between BM/NWPP and other parties has negative impact on the involvement of civil society in local governance.

The LSGA states that participation of civil society in local governance is mandatory. But BM follows it partly. The civil society existing in Bhaktapur can be broadly categorised into four groups: NGO, interest group/professional organizations, club/team and traditional social groups i.e. *guthi*, *bhajan*, *dafa* etc. The first two kinds of civil society groups are largely dominated by non-NWPP persons and have been largely excluded in BM's programmes and activities. To make NWPP's own space to the upcoming trend of civil society, BM has adopted a separate rule of NGOs registration in its office against the law of NGO registration only in district administration office or in Social Welfare Council. There are altogether 43 NGOs registered in BM and most of them are sport related and run by the NWPP's activists. These clubs and teams are receiving financial assistance from BM and they reciprocate with their involvement in different programmes and activities called by BM and the NWPP. The most important and active social institutions in Bhaktapur are *dafa*, *bhajan* and *guthi*, which have been patronized by BM. They have participated actively in cultural programmes organized by BM. The NWPP's political bias and BM's partition behaviour to certain types of social organizations lead to a state of non-cooperation between modern form of civil society and the elected leadership of Bhaktapur city.

In conclusion, to understand the question that why the NWPP has constantly received support from the majority voters of Bhaktapur city, some points that described above

need to be recapitulated. The most important contribution made by the NWPP is building of confidence among the *Jyapus*, hitherto suppressed community, through providing them opportunities to play lead role in political, social and cultural affairs of the country. Though BM lacks charismatic leader, its members have individually and collectively maintained personal integrity and economic discipline, which help them to foster their public image. BM has also maintained transparency particularly in financial matters and development projects. It is constantly pursuing the agenda of cultural city and has invested a lot of financial and human resources. Some other works of BM, which are appreciated by leaders of other parties too, are noteworthy i.e. generation of financial resources through tourist entry fee, city cleaning, renovation of historical monuments (temples, *pati*, *pauwa*, and *math*), conservation of urban heritage, revival of traditional art, culture, custom, music and folk dance etc. Despite such works carried out by the BM, there is a feeling that this local institution continues to be bias against its adversaries. It, therefore, needs to overcome its prejudices in order to ensure wider people's participation in its endeavours.

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- ¹ Robert Il Levy, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1990; Steven M. Parish, *Hierarchy and Discontents: Culture and Politics of Consciousness in Caste Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.
 - ² Mary Shepherd Slusser, *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of Kathmandu Valley*, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998 (Reprint); Mary M. Anderson, *The Festivals of Nepal*, Delhi: Rupa and Co., 1998; Ronal M. Bernier, *The Temples of Nepal*, New Delhi: S chand and Company Ltd., 1970; Jagadish Shamsher, *Bhakatapur ko Nah-Gan*, ... Several articles written by Lila Bhakta Munankarmi and Published in different volumes of *Bhakatapur* (A monthly magazine published by Bhakatapur municipality).
 - ³ Niels Gutschow and Bernhard Kolver, *Ordered Space: Concepts and Functions in a Town of Nepal*, Germany: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner GMBH Wiesbaden, 1975; Ane Haaland, *Bhakatapur: A Town Changing*, Kathmandu: Bhakatapur Development Project, 1982; Rajeshwar Acharya and Hamid Ansari, *Basic Needs and Government Services: An Area Study of Bhakatapur Town Panchayat, Nepal*, Kathmandu: Centre for Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University, 1980.
 - ⁴ See Robert D. Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elite*, New Jersey: Prentic-Hall Inc., 1976.
 - ⁵ Lok Raj Baral, Krishna Hachhethu and Hari Sharma, *Leadership in Nepal*, New Delhi: Adroit, 2001, pp. 48-49.
 - ⁶ Krishna Hachhethu, *Party Building in Nepal: Organization, Leadership and People*, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 2002, pp. 81-92.
 - ⁷ Levy, *Op. Cit. 1*, p.59.
 - ⁸ *Ibid*, p.73.
 - ⁹ *Ibid*, p.72.
 - ¹⁰ Gutschow and Kolver, *Op. Cit. 3*, p. 40.
 - ¹¹ Interview with Narayan Man Bijukchhe on 26 December 2001.
 - ¹² Parish, *Op. Cit. 1*, p. 5.
 - ¹³ Haaland, *Op. Cit. 3*, p. 16.
 - ¹⁴ Yasuko Wachi, "The Newar Peasants of Bhakatapur Nagar, Kathmandu Valley", *The Journal of Social Science*, No. 199, October 1980.
 - ¹⁵ Sushil Raj Pandey, *The Political Economy of Nepalese Land Reform*, Kathmandu: Himalayan Pioneers for Public Service and Research, 1985, p. 145.
 - ¹⁶ Interview with Tilak Kayastha on 25 December 2001.
 - ¹⁷ Pandey, *Op. Cit. 15*, p. 161.
 - ¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.72.
 - ¹⁹ Interview with Jyan Bahadur Nyanchain on 27 December 2001.
 - ²⁰ Interview with Narayan Man Bijukchhe on 26 December 2001
 - ²¹ Interview with Ash Kumar Koju on 24 December 2001.

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- 22 *Vidyarthi Niketan Secondary School: Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1998.*
23 Acharya et. Al., *Op. Cit.* 3 p. 111.
24 *Ibid.*
25 Haaland, *Op. Cit.* 3, P. 19.
26 Interview with Babu Raja Joshi on 26 December 2001.
27 Interview with Utam Bati on 27 December 2001.
28 Interview with Raja Ram Ranji on 27 December 2001.
29 *Workers- Peasants*, Vol.1, No.1, January-February 1994, p. 1.
30 *Constitution of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party* (Amended in 1991), p. 5.
31 *Op. Cit.* 29, p.3.
32 *Bhaktapur*, Year 15, No. 8 July 1997.
33 Interview with Gyan Bahadur Nyanchain on 27 December 2001.
34 The Act states, "No more than 6 persons and no more than 20 persons (but only two for Municipality Board) including women nominated by the Municipal Council from amongst those social workers, socially and economically backward tribes and ethnic communities, down trodden and indigenious people living within the areas of municipality, belonging to the class whose representation in the Municipal Council does not exist and who are in possession of the required qualifications to become the members of Municipality Council under section 78." See, *Local Self-Governance Act, 1999*, Kathmandu: Ministry of Law/HMG, 2000, p. 60.
35 Interview with Narayan Man Bijukchhe on 26 December 2001.
36 Interview with Prem Suwal on 19 December 2001.
37 Interview with Ash Kumar Koju on 24 December 2001.
38 C. K. Jayarajan, "Local Self Government Act and its Implications for Human Resource Development in Municipalities in Nepal", *Administration and Management Review*, V. 13, No. 2, August 2001, p. 1.
39 Quoted in *Bhaktapur: A Cultural City*: Kathmandu: Bhaktapur Municipality, September 2001, p. 2.
40 *Ibid.*, p.3
41 *Text of Bill on Conservation of Art and Culture* (Tabled by Narayan Man Mijukchhe to the House of Representatives in 1995); Different volumes of *Pratinidhi Sabha ma Kamred Rohit*.
42 NPC/HMG, *Ninth Plan*, Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, p. 599, *LSGA, Op. Cit.* 34 , p.70.
43 MLD/HMG and UDLF, *Detailed Revenue and Expenditure Breakdown and Basic Financial Information of 58 Municipalities of Nepal, 1995/6-1998/99*, Kathmandu: Ministry of Local Development/ His Majesty's Government and Urban Development through Local Efforts, 2000, p. 33.
44 *Bhaktapur*, Year 19, No. 11, August 2001, p. 1.
45 *Bhaktapur*, Year 19, No. 12, September 2001, p. 4.
46 Interview with Rabindra Kharbuja on 27 December 2001.
47 *Bhaktapur*, Year 19, No.6, April 2001, pp. 28-29.
48 Interview with Babu Raja Joshi on 27 December 2001.
49 Jayarajan, *Op. cit.* 38, p. 4.
50 UNDP/Nepal, *Human Development Report 2001*: Kathmandu: United Nations Development Programme, 2002, p. 77.
51 *Budget of Bhaktapur Municipality, FY 2000/2001*, p. 1.
52 Interview with Rabindra Kharbuja on 27 December 2001.
53 *Constitution of Nepal Worker and Peasant Party*, p. 21.
54 *Transparency International, Nepal Newsletter*, Vol. 2 March 1999, p. 2.
55 Interview with Dhruva Livi on 24 December 2001.
56 *Bhaktapur*, Year. 19, No. 8, May 2001, p. 33.
57 Interview with Prem Suwal on 19 December 2001.
58 Interview with Babu Raja Joshi on 27 December 2001.

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