

The Principle Directions of DNF

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Honorable Members, delegates and Observers,

The suppressed voices of the exploited Dalits of Nepal have resounded in a concrete manner in the voices of various organizations, institutions and agencies in a fresh democratic environment after the people's movement of 1990.

Dalit indigenous communities and backward women were divided as well as suppressed by the Hindu orthodoxy as well as Brahmanical priesthood structures have come forward in an organized manner for putting an end to untouchability and caste discrimination from the local to the central level for ensuring their human rights and for getting them participate properly in the democratic exercise and for organizing themselves at the level of political participation. This must be considered as a major achievement of our movement.

These organizations engaged in bringing about social changes not only to draw the attention of the society and the nation but they have also been playing a remarkable role in several development and organizing works. They have also participated in the plans and programs to be implemented by the state. In addition to this, they have played an important role in the identification of the major rights holder group/community for involving in national development and have assisted in securing international cooperation for development. The exposition of stain existing in the name of untouchability and caste discrimination is the most sensitive issue, which falls in the domain of the deprivation of human rights to the Dalits and other suppressed communities. That these facts have been made known to all is definitely a major breakthrough made in ten years.

The political parties have so far been ruling over the Dalit community for the last so many years by keeping it away from participation in politics, by dividing it and by using it as their '**vote bank**' even after the restoration of democracy. Thus, at a time when the Dalits are thrown into a dilemma forgetting the common issue of Dalit movement being misled by the whims of political ambition, the Federation has made an attempt to unite the splinter groups in an integrated manner. I, therefore, call upon all to give a serious throughout towards supporting the Dalit movement making the Federation a focal point of the Dalit movement of Nepal

Dear delegates and friends,

In course of the historical process, many organizations came into being and disappeared due to the failure to identify with the social, political and economic conditions of the country and the world. Even though the Dalit movement has gone a long way, it has failed to deliver the desired result and it has not been able to take active part in politics. On the other hand, the orthodox people have still been pursuing the policy of "divide and rule" to abort the Dalit movement and the policy of handpicking a handful of persons and giving them power. Society is dynamic. Conflicts are a regular phenomenon in a dynamic society. It is the failure to manage conflicts and to control the changes that creates anarchy in the society. The leadership and the history of the organization that do not meet the needs of the changing society tend to disappear in course of time.

It is only that leadership which moves with the change of time that remains in the pages of history. Changes that conflicts generate must be dynamic. To ensure dynamism of the movement is an asset of leadership.

I want to point out some challenges of the Federation in the following points:

1. The need to establish the federation as a common umbrella organization of all ideologies, communities and organizations.
2. Need to get all the members participate in the meeting of the federation considering the latter as a common platform of Dalit movement.
3. Need to create a favorable atmosphere among the organizations involved in the federation for augmenting their institutional development and sustainability.
4. Need to develop the federation in an organized and sustainable manner and as a common platform and fully representative body of civil society.
5. Need to make the federation represent the Dalit movement, Train Dalit people and women in national development.
6. Need to stop the tendency of various Dalit organizations to be aloof from the mainstream of the federation and need to extend the federation up to the district level.
7. Need to make the federation and the member organizations democratic, transparent, responsible and professional.
8. Need to make them, movement-oriented.

The Federation was established in 1998 following the concept of **Mr. Hira Viswakarma**, the Dalit intellectual, and **Mr. Motilal Nepali** at the initiative of a few Dalit Organizations.

From 1998 to 2003 it was able to perform fundamental works and to develop in an institutionalized manner under the leadership of **Mrs. Durga Sob**. Now, it could become a center of the hope of 200 Dalit organizations and the focal point of Dalit movement under the young leadership of **Mr. D. B. Sagar Bishwakarma**.

Along with this achievement, we have to shoulder many challenges and responsibilities; In this regard, I call upon all the friends to make responsible decisions. In addition to this I ask you all to think over the question, why the Dalit movement is not united and why the result could not be as desired. The need of the hour is to find out a concrete solution to this problem. We have to identify the forces that work against the Dalit movement. Though the Dalits are hard-working and skillful, they are compelled to live a life of neglect and social boycott and become victims of insult, exploitation, etc. Due to the globalization process, the traditional skill of the Dalits is being replaced. As such, the Dalits are suffering from poverty.

The Dalits who are victims of capitalism constitute the class or community most neglected by the nation. In such circumstance, national mainstreaming of the Dalit community will be a great challenge for the Federation. For this, the Federation must widen its scope. It is our responsibility to enable the Federation to do so. Now, I want to present before you the forthcoming conceptual strategy of the federation.

1. Strengthening of the institutional development:

The Federation is shouldering its responsibility of giving momentum to Dalit movement of Nepal. As it is an umbrella organization it must respect as well as protect the views of all the concerned Dalit organizations. Its main function is to keep under it all the protection, and promotion of member organizations. We must see that any Dalit organization working for human right of the Dalits and Democracy are not out of the Dalit Federation.

In accordance with the decision of the Central Executive Committee of the Federation, the Federation will pay special attention to register

participation of the Dalit organizations of the Tarain, minority and women organizations of the Dalit Community. As this is the most important aspect of the Federation, Establishment Department will be created inside the Federation and it will be mobilized. The Establishment Department will do the work of integrating the Dalit organizations scattered in the country, preparing the profile of those organizations, renewing those organizations, developing their human resource and institutional capacity and extending the activities of the Federation at the district level. Apart from this, Establishment Department will create its regional and district networks and will incorporate the common issues into the regional committee and district committee of the Federation. Member organizations of the Federation are not allowed to be members of the parallel organizations the interests of which conflict with those of the Federation. Those organizations which indulge in double standards and which work against the interests and objectives of the Federation are taken actions by dismissing or suspending them depending upon the nature of the fault committed by them. The policy of strengthening the Federation will be to make it capable and effective in every sector of the Dalit movement.

2. Unity and End of inter-mixing and internal untouchability :

The Dalit community is not responsible for the existing malpractice of untouchability and caste discrimination. This is a social stain forced upon the Dalits by the Brahmins. In this regard, the task of ending untouchability existing among the Dalits themselves and promoting interaction among the Dalits themselves is an important goal. Interaction is not possible without removing internal untouchability. Without inter-action unity will not be effective . As there is enough room for conspiracy of "divide and rule" in fragile unity, another strategy of the Federation will be to launch public advocacy programs and awareness programs designed to end internal untouchability. Besides this, the Federation will act to create a pressure group for making the Dalits accessible to national politics.

3. Proportionate representation:

In order to bring the Dalit community in the international mainstream, the state must provide proportionate representation of the Dalits in every sector in the basis of population . Besides this, the Federation

and its member organizations are struggling hard to ensure the protection of Dalits as part of compensation against the rights confiscated from them. The proportionate representation of other Dalit communities and Dalit women is required to make the Federation fully a representative body and to lend dynamism to the Dalit movement . Also, the Federation must not simply be confident to the Dalit community because other communities become aloof from the federation and they may develop a creative feeling towards the federation. This may be harmful to the Dalit movement. Therefore, the urgent need is to develop the Federation as a common platform of the entire Dalit communities. For this, the Federation has to be widened in the form of Dalit National Federation (**DNF**) by amending the clauses of its constitution. In order to develop the Federation as a common platform of Dalit organizations, proportionate representation of Dalit organizations and 25 percent compulsory representation of Dalit women will be made from the district and regional executive committees up to the central executive committees. This policy will be enforced in the member organizations also.

4. Pro-Dalit politics

The issue of the caste discrimination, untouchability and exploitation of the Dalits' skill and labour is not simply a social issue. The unequal distribution of resources and means, under evaluation of the Dalits skill and labour, and exploitation by a certain privileged class of people has divided the society into diverse groups. The feudal and capitalist classes of people have forced the Dalits to move from their homeland, occupied their land and are ruling socially and politically. The Dalit people who are very much backward are living a miserable life. The question of migration and forceful eviction is tremendously affecting the Dalit population. The Dalits are in the minority where they are living. As such autonomy in a certain area or locality does not contribute to the Dalit upliftment. That is why the issue of proportionate representation has been raised. In view of the geographical diversity and the Dalits' minority status, the political movement of the Dalits cannot succeed. The Dalit movement has sought self-respect, dignity, and proportionate representation for the Dalits and share in the distribution of national means and resources. Therefore, the Dalits must intensify its political campaign in coordination with progressive and democratic forces such as women,

nationalities, Madhesis, peasants, labourers, etc, The politics of effective role in favor of Dalits to be played by all the parties involved in this political campaign is pro-Dalits politics done in favor of Dalits with a common agenda rising above factional politics is wholesome politics. This pro-Dalits politics will play an effective and watch and see role. This awareness-oriented pro-Dalit politics is an important policy of the Federation. This will be an important feedback for the Dalit community.

5. International Solidarity

It is well known to all that there is a great impact of world events in national politics. This is applicable not only in the case of Nepal but is equally applicable in the case of other countries, too. In such circumstance, it is necessary to adjust the issue of the liberation movement of Dalits with the issue of the movement of human rights and democracy. Therefore, the federation as well as its member organizations will adopt the policy of establishing relations with international sister organizations. The federation has already established relation with sister organizations such as National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (**NCHDR**), India, Dalit Solidarity Network, UK, Denmark, Netherlands, USA, France, Spain , Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and some African countries, Besides this, the Federation is the member of Governing Council of International Dalit Solidarity Network (**IDSN**) .Through these sister organizations and **IDSN**, the federation has adopted the policy of making the Dalit movement for human rights an international issue.

6. Collaboration with people's Dalit organizations

Under the multi-party democratic system, it is the privilege of all the people to be involved in parties and the Dalit movement . The Dalit organizations taking initiative in democratic movement are important organs of Dalit movement. The Dalit movement cannot move ahead by neglecting their existence. In order to strengthen democracy , the presence or representation of the Dalit community is necessary. The Dalit organizations play an important role in raising the voice of the Dalits in party meetings and in registering the consensus of the parties. In view of the important role of those organizations, the

Federation will collaborate with those organizations on common issues. Those common issues will be the basic issues of pro-Dalit politics. Though the medium of collaboration, the Federation will adopt the policy of exerting pressure for incorporating the Dalit issue in the 18 point declarations put forth by parliamentary parties, executing the programs regarding the Dalits mentioned in various road maps and declarations and launching programs including reservation for Dalits announced by the state.

7. Sustainable development of the Federation and member organizations

The formation of an organization is not important. What is important is its objectives and its sustainable development. Therefore, for the sustainable development of an organization, emphasis should be given on enhancement of various capacity, skill, manpower development and mobilization of the people. Therefore, in order to make sustainable development of the Federation, regular membership fee from member organizations, special fee for program activity, grants and assistance will be raised.

8. Reservation

His Majesty's Government has announced the policy of reservation of 10 and 15 percent of Dalits Nationalities and women respectively in consideration of the existing socio-political situation. Although this is a positive step, reservation without any clear-cut policy may be ineffective. Therefore, the Federation in collaboration with civil society, and people's Dalit organizations has formed National Reservation Draft Committee. This committee will adopt the policy of making laws for the execution of reservation issue, submitting it to His Majesty's Government and various political parties and creating pressure for their execution.

Reservation is not a gift to the Dalits. It is simply the rehabilitation of rights and dignity snatched from them. The state must restore their rights and privileges through the facility of reservation. On the other hand, the state must have the target of providing the facility of inter-action among various classes, castes, and communities in national development through the policy of

reservation. The Federation is committed to the movement of provoking reservation facility to the Dalits, nationalities and women.

9. Organizational structure

The Federation will establish four departments: Establishment Department, Mainstreaming Women and Minorities Department, Legal Aid Department and International and Coordination Department . The employed workers under these Departments will execute Departmental works . The projects implemented by these Departments will assist in implementing the above working policies. Projects will be implemented so as to fulfil the goals of the federation. Every project will be executed with the objective of supporting the Dalit movement .

Lastly, the Federation will collaborate with all the parties assisting as well as supporting the Dalit movement . Democracy and human rights will be its basic principles. It is the belief of the federation that without democracy the Dalit movement cannot succeed. The Dalits are a dignified, self-respecting and skilled community. Therefore, those who are not dignified and self-respecting, tend to exploit the Dalits thus tearing apart social integration. Therefore, Dalits must re-define their identify and must regain the rights snatched away by the so-called high class people. For this, the Dalits must be united to make the movement successful by forgetting minor differences. Let us redefine our identity in words: "The people who are traditionally skilled and who are rich in art and craftsmanship are the Dalit Community".

Here, I pay rich tribute to known and unknown martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the revolution.

I also extend my thanks to all the friends who are engaged in the work of Dalit movement. Also, I express my gratitude to national and international organizations that have extended assistance.