Do Nepali attitudes need to be decolonised?

Implications for Nepal from Canada’s indigenous resurgence

For many years of working in Nepal, in 2014 I moved to Vancouver for a university job where many of the objectives outlined by Nepal’s advance movement were being implemented by the First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities that have lived for thousands of years in what is now Canada.

Indigenous nations comprise just over 6% of Canada’s population, whereas advance movement make up more than one-third of Nepal.

Yet, Canada is far ahead of Nepal in creating a just society in which indigenous voices are amplified, indigenous knowledge woven into the public education system and the uninterrupted indigenous connection to traditional territory is recognized and respected.

Canada has seen no haven for indigenous peoples. Canada’s federal and provincial governments institutionalized racist legislation that dispossessed indigenous peoples from their lands, tearing children away from their parents, lodging them in desperate centers, isolating them from their communities and their culture.

For most of my indigenous colleagues in Canada, decolonization is not a metaphor. Rather, it involves implementing tangible, measurable and structural changes in which controls, creating and administering knowledge. Decolonizing education and research are about substance and process, not perception involving a sincere commitment to promoting indigenous voices in the academy and in society.

Nepal’s federal restructuring provides a unique opportunity for the state to engage deeply with the needs, goals and dreams of the hundreds of indigenous communities who contribute to this richly diverse nation. Celebrating and promoting aspiring indigenous voices (whether in Canada, Nepal or in other multi-cultural federations) helps make a country stronger, more representative and more just. It is a chance not to be squandered.

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