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# How do you assess the effect of the February 1 Royal Move on academic freedom for a scholar like yourself?: Note

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## **How do you assess the effect of the February 1 Royal Move on academic freedom for a scholar like yourself?: Note \***

Lok Raj Baral, Ph.D. \*\*

The impact of the February royal move on academic freedom can be felt both subjectively and objectively.

Subjectively, it has made people afraid and paranoid about writing or saying anything that is not liked by the regime. Most social academics, therefore, are reticent in speaking out about the truth. It also depends on the individual academic, his orientation, confidence and values. The regime is more feared than understood. Now the situation is changing, just as any emergency regime does after some time. It blunts its teeth when the media and the members of civil society start questioning its rationale.

Objectively, because the draconian laws are enforced, people are taken to task on the basis of the regime's own subjective thinking. For example, those who had argued for a constituent assembly for ending the present crisis are hounded and punished. In our case, our opinion has been taken as if it poses a serious threat to the regime. So, for the regime, there is no difference between agitators and those who merely state an opinion. I have been invited by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to attend a conference to be held on April 12-14, 2005, but I am still uncertain whether I will be allowed to leave Nepal. Some other academics (very few) might face the same as we did two weeks ago (*e.g., being held by the security forces.*).

Academic freedom cannot be realized without asserting it. As this is not a totalitarian regime, it moves back forth between control and relaxation depending on how much we assert our freedoms.

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\* This question was posed by Ms. Mallika Shakya.

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