



Problematizing Indian Nepali Literature through the study of Nepali periodicals

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Abstract: *The category Nepali Literature is used extensively as an umbrella term when referring to Nepali Literature from both India and Nepal. This ambiguous category may either mean Nepali Literature of Nepal or Nepali Literature from different parts of India. Hence, the usage of the category Nepali Literature becomes really necessary to be clarified in India. Therefore, according to their geo-political location Nepali Literature needs to be categorised. The beginning of Nepali Literature in India and Nepal has been in a completely different manner. So, this paper deals with the location and history of Indian Nepali Literature which is different from Nepali Literature of Nepal.*

Key words: *Nepali Literature, Indian Nepali Literature, Nepali, Indian Nepali, Periodicals, Nepal, India, literature, history, location.*

1. INTRODUCTION: The category Nepali Literature is used extensively when referring to Nepali Literature of both India and Nepal. The usage of this broad category is prone to create confusion in the minds of the readers. Hence, categorising Nepali Literature geographically and historically becomes significant in this paper.

In order to explore Indian Nepali Literature, it becomes essentially important to understand the term 'Indian Nepali'. Who is an Indian Nepali? Indian Nepali is a community of people who are of Nepali origin and are Indian citizens. To be precise, to understand the origin of Indian Nepalis it is vital to talk about the history of the Treaty of Sagauli signed between East India Company and Nepal in 1816. Indra Bahadur Rai states in his essay "After the Anglo Nepalese War, through the Treaty of Sagauli (1816), Nepal was made to cede lakhs of square miles of Nepalese territory to the British East India Company, together with the Nepali people living thereon. These were the forefathers of today's Indian Nepalis (Poddar and Prasad 174). Hence, the Treaty of Sagauli of 1816 is crucial to understand the origin of Indian Nepali. So, this Indian Nepali from the late nineteenth century started producing Nepali Literature from different parts of India.

Indian Nepali Literature may be defined as the Nepali Literature produced from different parts of India. The literatures from states such as Assam, Gujarat, Manipur and, Odissa does not need to categorise theirs as 'Indian Assamese or Indian Gujarati' literature. However, Indian Nepali Literature on the other hand needs to be specified to have a separate identification from Nepali Literature of Nepal. India has recognised twenty-three national languages under the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Amongst the twenty-three scheduled languages, Nepali is also included in such category of languages. Although having been included in the Indian Constitution, Nepali still faces wider recognition especially in the mainland India. The recognition of Nepali as a language is always attached with the nationality of Nepal. In addition to this, Indian Nepali Literature also faces the same crisis as well. Since the late nineteenth century Indian states such as Benaras, and northern parts of West Bengal: Darjeeling were the major centres for the cultivation of Nepali Literature since the early twentieth century in India. Therefore, it is crucial to keep in mind these particular centres when talking about Indian Nepali Literature. In addition to this, Nepali is an official state language of West Bengal and Sikkim.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: There are several papers published on Nepali periodicals. A paper titled "A history of magazines in Nepal" discusses the Nepali periodicals published from Nepal and India altogether. Therefore, putting



together Nepali periodicals of Nepal and Indian Nepali periodicals would in some extent create confusion when reading Nepali Literature. Grisma Bahadur Deokota's *Nepali Chapakhana ra Patra Patrika Ko Itihas* also deals with Nepali periodicals of Nepal and India altogether. So, the assembling together of Nepali periodicals of both India and Nepal would create confusion in the minds of the readers. Hence, this paper tries to deal with Nepali periodicals of Nepal and Indian Nepali periodicals separately. Some notable authors such as Jiwan Namdung has specified in his book on *A history of Modern Indian Nepali Literature* which specifically discusses the history of Indian Nepali Literature in a systematic manner. Namdung's usage of the category Indian Nepali Literature makes it crystal clear to understand for the readers. The category is also used more profoundly by another noteworthy Nepali writer Asit Rai in his *Bharatiya Nepali Sahitya ko Itihas* which deals with the detailed history of Indian Nepali Literature. Namdung and Rai's usage of Indian Nepali Literature in a way attempts to give a clear understanding of Indian Nepali Literature as different from Nepali Literature of Nepal.

3. DISCUSSION: To erase the confusion related to Nepali Literature it is imperative to understand that Nepal is a separate country and has its own Nepali Literature. To understand the complexities related to Nepali Literature it is advisable to be clear about the geographical location of Nepal. Nepal is a landlocked country located to the east of India. A country which remained untouched from the hands of the British colonisers. Nepal was an autocracy ruled by Chandra Sumsher Jung Bahadur Rana from 1901 to 1928. Under his rule, the freedom of expression was strictly prohibited. As a result, many Nepali aspirant scholars entered India to fulfil their scholarly quests. These scholars when they shifted to India especially Benaras, they started expressing against the tyrannical Rana rule through various mediums. So, the publication of Nepali periodicals becomes one of the possible mediums for the scholars to express their discontent regarding Rana oppression in Nepal. Therefore, India served as a place of refuge for these scholars from Nepal from where they expressed themselves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The beginning of Indian Nepali Literature is really different from Nepali Literature of Nepal. In India along with the Britishers, Christian missionaries also started to take its foot in different parts of India in the late nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth century, the Eastern Himalayan region of India also witnessed the arrival of the Christian missionaries. It was the purpose of the Christian missionaries to seriously translate the Bible into as many languages as they can. Hence, the Bible translation into Nepali becomes a major agenda of the Christian missionaries in the Eastern Himalayan region. The corpus of Nepali Literature at this time comprised of few lyrical compositions such as *sawai*, *lahari* and *geet*. From the time of their composition that is during the late nineteenth century is considered the beginning of Indian Nepali Literature. According to Indra Bahadur Rai Indian Nepali Literature began with the compositions of *sawai* and *lahari* composed by Gorkha soldiers and tea garden workers in Darjeeling respectively. In the early twentieth century Indian Nepali Literature shifted from oral to print. So, the late nineteenth century is really the beginning of Indian Nepali Literature. The presence of the Christian missionaries and their mission activities prompted the Indian Nepali Literature to flourish.

While in Nepal the start of Nepal Literature has been in a different manner. Kumar Pradhan, a renowned Nepali historian mentions in his *A History of Nepali Literature* "the writers of Nepali Literature in Nepal belong to upper castes and Newars". Newar, a group of people belonging to Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman ethnicities in Nepal valley is considered the beginning of Nepalese people. Hence, it is discernible that the start of Nepali Literature in Nepal is different from India. In the preface to his book, he adds Nepal is a country where Nepali is an official language and along with it other ethnic dialects are also used such as *newar*, *magar* etc. So, the literature produced from Nepal is known as Nepali Literature. The Nepali periodicals has witnessed a tough and daunting beginning in Nepal during the Rana rule as compared to Indian Nepali periodicals. At the time when periodicals such as *Gorkhay Khabar Kagat* (1901), *Upanayas Tarangini* (1902), *Madhavi* (1906) and, *Sundari* (1908) was being published in India without any restraint, the publication of periodicals in Nepal such as *Sudhsagar* (1935) and *Gorkha Patra* (1901) had to undergo thorough scrutiny before being published.

4. ANALYSIS: The publication of *Gorkha Patra* in the year 1901 heralds the beginning of Nepali periodicals in Nepal. The editorial section in *Gorkha Patra* titled "Kartavya Path" in the thirteenth issue discusses about the responsibility of man as a social being in a society. How can men be a *Mahapurush* or achieve the position of great men? This editorial section reflects the condition of society in Nepal where the periodical tries to guide its readers regarding their responsibility in a society. In issue twelve of the periodical, an article titled "Gahana" (Jewellery) informs the readers about the proper usage of jewellery. Therefore, *Gorkha Patra* can be credited for fulfilling the responsibility of a periodical by educating the minds of the readers in Nepal. At the time when *Gorkha Patra* was being published from



Nepal, in India an iconic periodical *Gorkhay Khabar Kagat* started to get published from Darjeeling. This periodical is considered as the first Indian Nepali periodical. The publication of this periodical also heralds the beginning of periodical literature in Darjeeling during the early twentieth century. The responsibility of *Gorkha Patra* was to make its readers aware of the world outside Nepal by publishing news and recent happenings. The purpose of Nepali periodicals in Nepal was to inform the citizens of Nepal about the social and financial aspects of life. The publication of *Udhyog* (1936) informs its readers about the commerce and industry sector in Nepal. This periodical specifically focussed in making readers aware of the economic condition of Nepal making readers aware of the situation of commerce and industries in Nepal. *Sahitya Shrot* started to get published from Nepal in 1935. The periodical published content related to literature and language development in Nepal. In 1952 a periodical named *Mahila* started to get published especially emphasised on women issues. Besides this, the periodical also focussed on promoting women writers in Nepal. The periodical *Balsakha* published from 1952. By the name itself, the content of the periodical focussed in catering to Childrens readers of that time. The publication of *Balsakha* is a new venture undertaken by the publishers of Nepal especially meant to attract the children's minds. Another periodical named *Pratibha* started to get published from 1953 whose central focus was to enlighten women on various aspects of life. *Swasnimanche* also started to get published from 1959. This periodical published article related to education, culture, law and society. The periodical named *Gharelu Ilum* started to get published in order to promote domestic and small-scaled cottage industries in Nepal. Since the country was under the Rana hands, the periodicals in Nepal became a vehicle to connect the citizens of the country with the outside world.

A periodical named *Madhupark* started to get published in 1968 also contributes to Nepali Literature. In the twelfth issue of this periodical a comparative analysis titled "Darjeelingay Ramita" of the novel *Aja Ramita Chha* of Indra Bahadur Rai by Tana Sharma is also a proof that this periodical also published articles related to Indian Nepali Literature. The publication of this article proves that Nepali Literature of Nepal and Indian Nepali Literature is a separate category. In the same issue an article titled *Nepal ko Audhokikaran Bhumika* written by Prem Bahadur Shahi discusses the economic progress of Nepal during the publication of this periodical. In issue one of this periodical, a poem titled *Upahar* by M. B. B Shah evokes the spirit of patriotism for his motherland Nepal. In this poem he expresses that his life is like a gift communicating his love to the people of Nepal. In the thirty-sixth issue of *Nepali* an article titled "Aafno Bareyma" by Paras Mani Pradhan informs about the initial days of publishing the iconic *Chandrika* from Kurseong. Paras Mani Pradhan is one of the renowned stalwarts of Indian Nepali Literature since the early decade of twentieth century. *Chandrika* is one of the prominent Indian Nepali periodicals which has greatly enriched Indian Nepali Literature throughout its entire publication. The publication of this article is a proof that when Nepali periodicals were being published in Nepal, Indian Nepali periodicals were also being published from India simultaneously. Thus, Indian Nepali Literature and Nepali Literature of Nepal should not be put together in a single category Nepali Literature.

During the time when Nepal was publishing periodicals, India was also at its peak of publishing Nepali periodicals. The prominent Indian Nepali periodicals in the twentieth century are: *Chandrika* (1918), *Gorkha Sansar* (1926), *Tarun Gorkha* (1928), *Adarsha* (1930), *Gorkha Sewak* (1935) and, *Bharati* (1949). The publication of *Gorkhay Khabar Kagat* made the people of Darjeeling aware of print and truly announced the beginning of print. *Chandrika* ideally emphasised on using grammatically correct Nepali which eventually led to the standardization process of Nepali. After *Chandrika*, periodicals such as *Gorkha Sansar* (1926) and *Tarun Gorkha* (1928) also contributed to Nepali literature and language through their publication. The main aim of these two periodicals was to serve the mother tongue Nepali. In 1930 *Adarsha* started to get published focusing in enlightening the readers about the benefits of agriculture. The periodicals published several articles informing readers about cash crops in the hilly areas such as the cultivation of oranges and other fruits. *Gorkha Sewak* was the mouthpiece of Gorkha soldiers recruited in the army. The periodical mainly published content about the events of the Gorkha soldiers. The publication of news in and outside India in these periodicals have greatly contributed in connecting the readers to the outside world. In the first half of the twentieth century when India was witnessing a peak of periodical literature, *Udaya* from Benaras started to get published in 1937. The contents of *Udaya* were didactic in nature. The short stories and articles published in *Udaya* always reflected the moral lessons for the readers. In the thirteenth issue an article titled "Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi" discusses Gandhi's philosophical idea of non-violence and non-cooperation movement adhered during the independence of India in 1947. The purpose of this article is to inform the readers about the importance of non-violence adopted by Mahatma Gandhi. Thus, the purpose of this article could be to softly incorporate the idea of Indianness or being Indian Nepali to its readers. Another periodical named *Bharati* started to get published from Darjeeling in 1949. In the editorial section of the periodical the editor emphasizes on the importance of mother-tongue; Nepali to its readers. Therefore, the periodical becomes intentional throughout its issues to give more importance in the learning of Nepali to its readers. Another major theme in *Bharati* is being Indian Nepali to serve the mother-tongue; Nepali. As can be found in every issue of *Bharati* where the editor mentions the slogan on top of every issue "Nepali Bharati Bani Garau Nepali



ko Sewa/ Bharati ko Sewa” which translates to being Indian Nepali let us serve our mother tongue or *Bharati*. At the publication of this periodical, spreading the awareness of Nepali as a mother tongue was the constant agenda. This slogan also signifies the attempt of *Bharati* in trying to affirm the idea of being Indian Nepali to its readers. In the first issue of *Bharati*, one of the editors RupNarayan Sinha mentions the contributions of organisations such as Nepali Sahitya Sammelan of Darjeeling and Nepali Bhasha Prakashini Samiti of Nepal in spreading the mother tongue and Nepali Literature respectively. In this editorial section he does mention the Nepali Bhasha Prakashini Samiti of Nepal. Therefore, Sinha mentioning the literary organisations of both India and Nepal in *Bharati* suggests that these two organisations were working for their respective Nepali Literature.

5. CONCLUSION: In Nepal, the publication of Nepali periodicals made citizens aware of their social and financial responsibility. The Nepali periodicals in Nepal was focussed on society, economy, literature and culture of Nepal. While Indian Nepali periodicals since the beginning advocated for the use and importance of Nepali language to its readers. Paras Mani Pradhan and, Rup Narayan Sinha, the notable editors of *Bharati* mainly exhorted the readers to be aware of mother tongue. The primary focus of Indian Nepali periodicals was mother tongue and the periodicals also touched upon issues of women, agriculture and, children’s literature.

India and Nepal are countries having Nepali speakers and Nepali Literature. So, the moment this category Nepali Literature arises, there is always a high possibility of confusion. In the context of Nepal, there is no confusion regarding the category Nepali Literature. While in India this category needs to be specified as Indian Nepali Literature. Therefore, Nepali Literature had to be explained location wise. While dealing with this ambiguous category two important points should be clarified. Firstly, understanding the geopolitical locations of these two countries. Second, is the beginning of Nepali Literature in India and Nepal have been in a completely different manner as has been discussed in the above paragraphs of this paper. Hence, the attempt of this paper is to put Nepali periodicals of Nepal and Indian Nepali periodicals separately in order to erase the confusion related to the use of ambiguous category Nepali Literature.

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